

# Do you employ saboteurs? (18:9)

He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.

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## THE TEXT (NASB)

He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.

*He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster. KJV - Proverbs 18:9*

## INTRODUCTION



Day-dreamers plant time-bombs.

A new hire always seems helpful, but the unnoticed slacker imperceptibly sows seeds of destruction; gradually, unexpectedly, little troubles sprout up, and then big problems spread.

Shirkers who unexpectedly slack off cause more harm, than if they'd never started working at all.



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## COMMENTARY

This proverb isn't concerned with a lack of initiative, but with a deficit of consistent effort. Other proverbs deal with laziness, like being simply too lazy to get out of bed (Proverbs 6:6), but here the vice is a lack of stamina or wandering attention. The situation here is someone adequately managing his duties, but then just stopping, for whatever unspecified reason. A worker had a firm grip on the job, and then just dropped it. The work was begun well, but then orphaned.

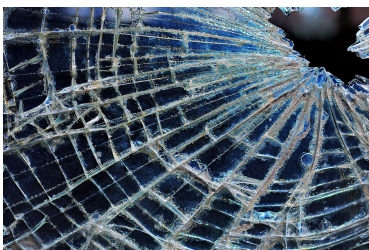
### Translation: *slack and destroys*

The Hebrew word for “slack” here, רפה (rā•pāh, pronounced “rah-pah”), is used forty-five times in the Bible and first appears in Exodus, where it's translated as “let go” and “idle.” Rā•pāh is also translated as “release” and “fail.”

The translation “him who destroys” is the Hebrew noun, מַשְׁחִית (măš•hîṭ, pronounced “mash-kheeth”), which is used 24 times in the Bible, pointing to “one who causes destruction and death.”

What causes a person to slack off in his work? It might be weariness, weakness, accidents, or distractions. Many of these are preventable.

## Production Problems



Weariness can be pushed back by periodic rests during the job. So scheduling breaks, brief entertainments, and vacations is important. We need to attend to pacing a job. Weakness can come from a failure of strength or a simple lack of nourishment.

Distractions come easily. Focusing steadily on a task is often difficult, but critical for success. Books like Les Hewitt's *The Power of Focus* educate in the importance of consistent concentration. The only difference between an ordinary flashlight and a hand-held laser is concentrated and unified light waves. Distractions are many and many-sided! Other texts deal with this problem of distractions. Distraction may be even more harmful than weariness.

Sickness is another cause of slackness. If someone is sick, delaying a project may be better



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than starting and then finishing poorly. If we know we can't carry through on a job, then we're better off not starting at all. Allowable sick days are good policy, if we're to work at optimum capacity.

Someone slack in his work needs constant supervision, like police surveillance of a potential terrorist. The cost of supervising workers with low or negative productivity will cripple any organization. That's why it's critical to hire the right workers. They must have both initiative and stamina. A company's hiring policies and procedures are vital to its success.

## Lack of Vision

Three masons working down in a hole. A passerby stops and asks each man what he is doing. The first replies, "Can't you see? I'm laying these dumb blocks, one on top of the other. It's a boring job, and I hate it." The second replies, "I'm working to feed my wife and kids at home. It's a job, and it pays the bills." The third man says, "Can't you see? I'm building the foundation of the greatest cathedral in the country." Which of these three men, doing the same task, will slack off in his work? And could their supervisor inspire either of the other two?

If a person loses inspiration and motivation, the perspiration will soon cease. So here lies the most subtle duty of supervision. We can supervise our workers to make them "do the job," or we can supervise them to help them "love the job." We need to remember the lesson from our youthful days in the workforce: Any boss could simply look angry and growl, "Get it done!" The great boss would come over and ask, "Do you understand what you're doing?" and "Is there anything you need to do it better?"

One of the great lessons in life is that people can surprise us. We can hire someone who ends up a hopeless slacker. We can also hire someone who suddenly comes afire with enthusiasm, given a little encouragement and appreciation. Our duty is, "love your neighbour," so our duty as supervisors is to help our workers make the best of themselves. As the classic commentator Matthew Henry said of this proverb, "An omission of duty is as serious as a commission of sin."



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## OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work," John 9:4.

Jesus was a worker who stayed on task. The day before He died, He said to His Father, "I glorified you on the earth, having accomplished the work, which You have given Me to do," John 17:4. And just before He died, Jesus said, "It is finished," John 19:30. Jesus was focused on His task and did not deviate from it until the job was done.

Jesus did all things well (Mark 7:37) and was voluntarily, enthusiastically obedient to His Father, even though it meant a horrible, excruciating death (Philippians 2:8).

## APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Avoid taking on jobs unless you're reasonably confident you can finish them well.
- Schedule rests during your job so you have the energy to finish well.
- Reject all distractions and stay focused on the job to finish well.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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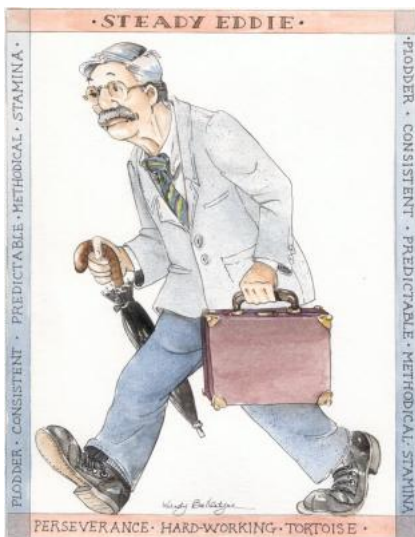
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## KEY WORDS

consistency, destruction, endurance, failure, focus, laziness, less assets (quantity), motivation, productivity, sickness, supervision, work, bf serving others

## ILLUSTRATION

### Who is Steady Eddie?



Steady Eddie is a rather boring person. In Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare, Eddie is the tortoise. He's a plodder; he's consistent; he's predictable; he's methodical. One of the greatest inventors of all time, Thomas Edison, defined genius as "One percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Steady Eddie doesn't have the full one percent of inspiration but he generates perspiration and produces good results.

Charles Walter, a highly-experienced financial planner and insurance agent, said that after decades in the business he has observed the following: It's not the educated and talented who usually win, but the plodder with stamina and perseverance.

Steady Eddie often shows up in financial planning literature to some degree. For example we catch a glimpse of him in that best seller, "The Wealthy Barber." Barber Roy, the main character in the book, "hadn't missed an entire day of work in thirty-seven years for any reason. He even opened on the morning of his daughter's wedding." Wow! I've known people who haven't had a sick day in ten years, but thirty-seven—now that's impressive! (It's also fictional!)



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It boils down to this: In order to make many financial strategies work, we ourselves need to keep working and generating cash flow. Without the steady cash inflow we will continually change our strategies to meet unexpected bumps and potholes in the road. Without the discipline of work we often lose our own health and sharpness.

Steady Eddie won't quit his day job to become a singer. He's not glamorous. He's not intellectual. You might say that he is rather boring—and you're probably right, but I'll tell you another thing about him: Eddie's not broke!

