

What happens when you hire the wrong people? (26:10)

THE TEXT (NASB)

Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.

The great [God] that formed all [things] both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth the transgressors. KJV - Proverbs 26:10

INTRODUCTION



Indiscriminate hiring produces random disasters.

We must take care: Employees are have power, either beneficial or harmful, but never neutral.

Foolish hiring requires frequent firing; which destroys corporate capital and morale. How can you avoid it?



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COMMENTARY

Analyzing this proverb requires us to resolve a major discrepancy in its translation. The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) and the *King James Version* (KJV) diverge quite significantly.

NASB and most newer translations read: “Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.” Meanwhile, the Classic KJV and other older translations read: “The great [God] that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.” Now that’s a divergence!

Translation



There Hebrew text only has seven words. The last six words are identical in the source texts of both the NASB and the KJV. The controversy centers on the first word: רב (r??, pronounced “rav”). It’s either RAB (Strong’s number 7227), meaning “archer” or RAB (Strong’s number 7228) meaning “great one.” The Hebrew lettering is the exactly the same. The only way that we can determine which word to use is through the context of the verse. So...

Other Translations

Hebrew linguists have long chewed over this text, with most modern translations opting for the “archer.” This makes sense, since the broader context includes everyday items like dogs, thorns, stones, and drunkards. The Jewish Publication Society translates the text in their 1985 *New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* as: “A master can produce anything, but he who hires a dullard is as one who hires transients.”

Martin Luther’s translation works the same way. Reading as, “Ein guter Meister macht ein Ding recht; aber wer einen Stumper dingt, dem wird's verderbt.” This becomes in English, “A good master makes a thing right; but he who hires a bungler, by him it is spoiled.”

Classic Comments



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Albert Barnes' *Notes on the Bible* (1830) clarifies:

The word "God" is not in the original, and the adjective translated "great" is never used elsewhere absolutely in that sense. The simplest and best interpretation is: As the archer that woundeth everyone, so is he who hireth the fool, and he who hireth every passerby. Acting at random, entrusting matters of grave moment to men of bad repute, is as likely to do mischief as to shoot arrows at everyone.

Careful Hiring

As for the variation in the proverb's last six words, the modern KJV now reads, "but he who hires a fool is like one who hires one passing by." What can we learn from this? Don't be blindly loyal to one English translation—even the Classic KJV. The text provides a message for a corporate Human Resources or any entrepreneur hiring workers. Avoid two types of people, if you want to avoid carnage: **A fool** (even a cheap one) or **those who pass by**.

Translation: *Fool*



The Hebrew word for *fool*, "kesil," is used sixty-nine times in Scriptures. It appears first in Psalm 49:10, where "kesil" is translated as "stupid": "...he sees that even wise men die. The stupid and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others."

According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT), Proverbs uses three words rendered as fool:

1. KESEL – the dull or obstinate, typically making stupid choices.
2. EWIL – the morally insolent, foolish in a lack of respect.
3. NABAL – the boorish, with a mean mean or contrary disposition.

KESEL is used extensively in Proverbs and is most concentrated in the first twelve verses of Proverbs 26 as it advises us on dealing with fools.

A KESEL fool is a serious liability to any organization, but someone worse is described in



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Proverbs 26:12—someone who is wise in his own eyes, and too smart to be corrected. See Proverbs 19:1 to learn more about the KESEL fool.

Translation: *pass by*

The second type of worker to avoid is the drifter, as the *God's Word to the Nations* (1995) version puts it. The Hebrew word for *those who pass by*, “abar,” is used almost five-hundred times in the Bible. According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*:

The main idea of this word is that of movement. As a rule it is the movement of one thing in relation to some other which is stationary, moving, or motivating. Some have said that the simplest translation of “abar” is “to pass” but this does not really cover the various nuances.

I appreciate the comments of the Pulpit Commentary (first published 1880) which gets to what I believe is the central message:



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A rich man, in the nature of things, grows richer; but there are exceptions to this rule; for he who employs stupid and incapable people to do his business suffers for it in property, reputation, and probably in person also.

Employers Take Note



I believe this proverb is a clear warning to employers. Don't hire workers who are unstable or transient. In other words, don't make an employment commitment to those who avoid commitments of any kind. If they have no permanent address, for example, then they will likely not stay with a job. If they have not been dedicated to a disciplined course of studies and training, they will be less likely to be dedicated to a specific job. An academic degree or diploma is a sign of past commitment to finish a task.

Replacing and retraining workers is costly. The expression “those who pass by” might refer to job-hoppers, transients, or people who are often unemployed—people not burdened with ongoing obligations. It may also be an indirect warning against using too much contractors, rather than permanent employees. I recall hearing that the Canadian airline, *West Jet*, would have five phone conversations with applicants before scheduling a live interview, but their subsequent hires were almost always long-term.

Hire very carefully.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus had much to say about dedication to the job.

Describing Himself:

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.”

John 10:11-13.

Jesus exemplified dedication to His job. He died “on duty” (John 19:30).

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Pray for discernment when hiring. Have many interviews and check all references.
- Develop thorough screening tests in selecting employees.
- Spend the money to have an excellent recruiting department.

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



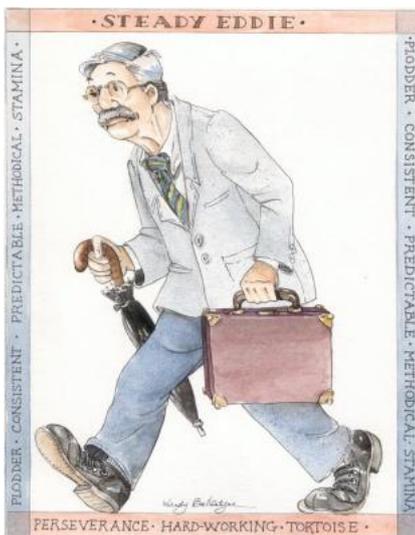
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KEY WORDS

assets, diligence, employees, employers, Human Resources, laziness, less assets (quantity), liability, 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!

