

How to get a promotion. (12:24)

THE TEXT (NASB)

The hand of the diligent will rule, but a slack hand will be put to forced labour.

The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under tribute. Classic KJV - Proverbs 12:24

INTRODUCTION



All else being equal, the harder people work, the higher they rise in responsibility, in management.

This proverb deals with two extremes: The ruler and the slave. But there are many postings or stations in-between. The text implies that management works harder than “labour.” So there’s a common maxim: “The harder I work, the luckier I get.”

Ironically, those who want to take it easy, cannot. Those who try to avoid work are forced to work, usually in low-skilled, low-paid positions under constant supervision. Those who can successfully supervise such labourers need many skills; they add value to an organization and win promotions.



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COMMENTARY

God makes work necessary, obligatory and ultimately satisfying and happy. Those who choose to avoid work, make themselves miserable and have work forced on them. Please note the caveat “all else being equal.” Really, it’s never equal. Here are two special situations.

First, immigrants (including my parents, fleeing communism in the late 1950s) must take on less desirable jobs. Refugees and immigrants who must toil at low-skill, low-paid work are not the subjects of this proverb.

Second, well-intended, but ill-conceived government welfare programs sometimes provide assistance to those shunning any sort of work. Sooner or later, government subsidies for laziness will run out. The truth behind this proverb will outlast these naive governments.

Translation: *Diligent*



The Hebrew word for “diligent,” חרוץ (*ḥā•rûṣ*, pronounced “khah-roots”), can also be translated “sharp.” It stems from a root implying decisiveness. The diligent are not double-minded. They avoid second-guessing themselves. King David, the father of Solomon, was commanded to “be sharp” (2 Samuel 5:24) when he heard a sound in the trees. He needed to act quickly and aggressively. The origin of the word “sharp” implies a cutting that cannot be reversed. Carpenters have an expression: “Measure twice; cut once.” This maxim alludes to the principle of planning and double-checking before the job is started.

Translation: *forced labour*

The Hebrew word for “forced labour,” מַס (*mās*, pronounced “mas”), may be translated as “forced payment.” Taxes are forced on both the lazy and diligent. If the word “tribute” is read as meaning taxes, it may imply that those who are not slothful will pay less in taxes, not because they earn less, but because they look for legitimate ways to reduce taxes. As a tax accountant, I have found this to be true. Often with some effort, the taxes we pay can be reduced, legally.

Translation: *Taxes*

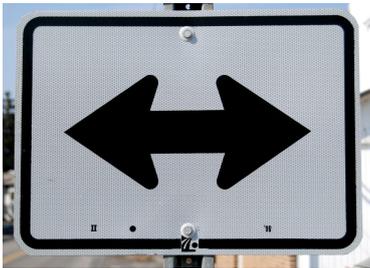
Whether the Hebrew word, *mās*, is read to mean taxes, a franchisee fee, or some other legal



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obligation, the sense is the same: Laziness brings with it undesired payments to unwanted masters. Those who are lazy are forced to do the unpleasant, because they've made whatever they do unpleasant. They cut themselves off from the community, because any community is always at work, and as Paul writes (2 Thessalonians 3:10), "If anyone is not willing to work then he should not eat."

Indecision or Commitment



This text is a warning against the classic "flip-flop." It suggests much is lost through indecision. In the business world, a "sharp" individual is someone intelligent, bright, and talented who focusses on his work. Such people are not always right in their decisions, but they take firm stands and either succeed now, or learn from their errors and succeed later.

In the business world, prolonged indecision is usually more costly than the wrong decision. In his book, *The Seven Laws of Leadership*, one of Charlie Tremendous Jones' laws is: Make a decision and then stick to it, commit fully. Don't then worry about it being the right decision, but make it right. Put all the effort into implementing the decision once taken. Make the outcome profitable, despite the costs.



How to get a promotion. (12:24)

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus is looking for commitment. He said, “I would that you were hot or cold, but because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth,” Revelation 3:15. Jesus also said, “No one, after putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God,” Luke 9:62. Diligent obedience is also called faithfulness, and this quality comes from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,” John 8:36. He does not want people to be slaves of their sin, and He warns his servants not to be lazy. When Jesus called His apostles to follow him, they were all working, on-the-job (James & John, Matthew 4:21, Matthew, Matthew 9:9, Peter, Luke 5:8-10). Christians are “saved to serve.”

In the parable of the talents, the servant who buried his talent and did not put the resources entrusted to him to profitable use, was called “wicked and lazy.” He was fired from his job and cast into a place of torment (Matthew 25:24-30).

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Learn to be a self-starter, rather than being forced to work by other people.
- Work is unavoidable. Learn to enjoy it. That, in itself, requires effort, as a skill to be developed and maintained.
- Don't envy those in leadership. It took much effort to get there.

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



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KEY WORDS

decisiveness, diligence, hard, industriousness, initiative, laziness, leadership, management, more assets (quantity), planning, slavery, supervision, taxes, of serving others

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Diligent Daniel?



Diligent Daniel is a friend of Steady Eddie. Whereas Steady Eddie is known for his staying power, Diligent Daniel is known for his decisiveness and thoroughness. He is an early riser, a quick starter, and a job finisher. There's no room for procrastination here.

Daniel is tough-minded and sharp. He tells himself each day, "I snooze- I lose." He pushes himself and calls himself lazy. He is tough on himself—not rough.

He's the one Benjamin Franklin was thinking about two hundred years ago when he came up with the maxim, "Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, WEALTHY, and wise." Daniel's also the one the author Oswald Chambers described with the words, "The heights by great men reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight, but they while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night."

Daniel is more of a thinker than Steady Eddie, but is known for his enthusiastic work capacity, not his brilliance. He's a mover and a shaker. He's not afraid to get his hands dirty and is in good physical condition. He's a builder. He starts the job right away and gets it DONE. He doesn't flip-flop in this thinking. He is not double-minded. He remains humble while exuding confidence.



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One of his favourite financial tools is the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP).

