

How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

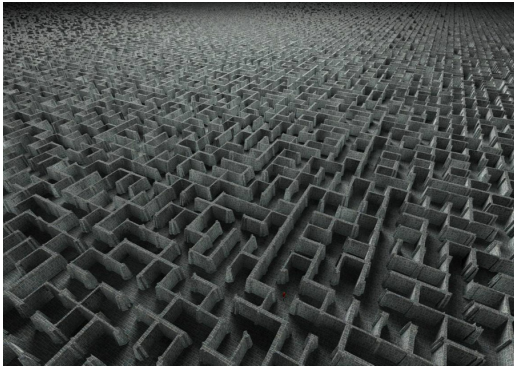
The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square."

THE TEXT (NASB)

The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square."

The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. KJV - Proverbs 26:13

INTRODUCTION



Lazy folks are overly timid, irrational alarmists.

They fabricate bizarre excuses to justify inactivity. With vivid imaginations, they avoid work.

They tell others to do the same. Laziness spreads.



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COMMENTARY

Whenever a truth is repeated we should pay double attention. The text appears again, almost verbatim, in Proverbs 22:13: Take a more in-depth look here: [Are you taking the right risks?](#)

Translation: Sluggard

The Hebrew word for **sluggard**, עצל (ah-tsel), pronounced “ah-tsel”), is used fourteen times in the Bible, always in Proverbs, and appears four times in Proverbs 26. It stems from the verb to be sluggish, which is used only once (Judges 18:9), where it translates as “be still” or “just sit there.” עצל has the connotation of delay and procrastination.

Lions and Lethargy



Having lived most of my life in Canada, I know little about **lions**, but I do know they tend to avoid humans. If they should attack people they prefer to attack individuals while they are alone. Lions avoid crowded high-traffic zones. There is a .000001 percent chance of a lion being **in the open square**. Lions like to hunt at night when men and women are sleeping (Psalm 104:20-23). If the sluggard was really afraid of lions, then a crowded city street in broad daylight would provide safety. In fact, a lion demonstrates the exact opposite attitude to the sluggard. The lion is bold but a sluggard has, as Charles Bridges describes, a *cowardly spirit*.¹

This sluggard sees lions (dangers) everywhere but he overlooks the power of lethargy in his own life—like an internal destroyer. Sin is a power that lurks within—causing more harm than any external foe since it’s always with us (Romans 7:21-25).

Problems: Found or Resolved?



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When I was with a management consulting firm contracted by a multi-billion dollar offshore oil rig we ran into some resistance with some of the client's staff. My boss told me something I'll never forget. He said there are basically two types of people in business: The problem finders and the problem solvers.

Problems and opportunities exist everywhere. Some people make it their life purpose to identify as many problems as they can. They find every reason why things will go wrong and talk at length about all the risks and dangers—real and imagined.

Classic Comments

Note the observations made by Matthew Henry:

As men's folly makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish.

1. What the slothful man really dreads. He dreads the way, the streets, the place where work is to be done and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates everything that requires care and labour.
2. What he dreams of and pretends to dread—a lion in the way. *When he is pressed to be diligent ... this is his excuse ... There is a lion in the way, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions frequent woods and deserts; and, in the day-time, when man has business to do, they are in their dens.*

Problems and the Promised Land



According to the text, a lazy person will amplify and even fabricate problems rather than being productive. Instead of applying the SIB-KISS principle (See it Big—Keep It Simple Stupid), problem finders identify all the real and imagined reasons why something cannot be done.



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A talkative sluggard poses another problem: Others believe him. Sluggards discourage action.

We find a biblical example of this in the account of the twelve Israelis spying out the Promised Land. Only two wanted to proceed. The other ten spoke of giants in the land who made them look like grasshoppers and of cities with walls "fortified to heaven." They exaggerated the obstacles to justify their laziness (Numbers 13:25-33 and Deuteronomy 1:28).

Laziness is closely related to lack of confidence in God's willingness and ability to help with noble endeavours.

Entrepreneurs

The road and the open square are used for transit or as places of trade, marketplaces. Thus sluggards cut themselves off from opportunities to give and receive benefits. They avoid the marketplaces by their own choosing. They are their own enemies with a cowardly spirit rather than an entrepreneurial one. On the other hand, workers take risks.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus feared no one, other than His Father.

Even His enemies said, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances," (Matthew 22:16).

Jesus was certainly NOT lazy.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Test market your products/services. Don't be afraid to get out into the marketplace for a reality check. It may be painful but it will be helpful.
- List your fears. Then, beside each fear, mark down the probability of it happening. What does each fear prevent you from doing? How does it limit you?

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



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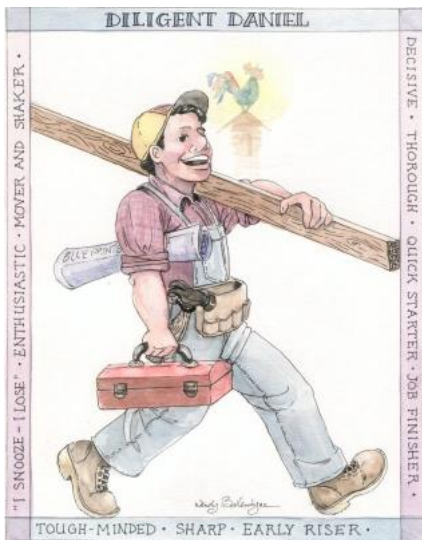
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KEY WORDS

danger, diligence, excuses, initiative, laziness, less assets (quantity), productivity, risk, safety, bf 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).



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FOOTNOTES

1. A Modern Study In the Book of Proverbs. Charles Bridges' Classic Revised for Today's Reader by George F. Santa Mott Media 1978

