

How can you be sure of making a profit? (14:23)

In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

THE TEXT (NASB)

In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. Classic KJV - Proverbs 14:23

INTRODUCTION



Talk is cheap, and we get back what we pay for it. Actions don't only speak louder than words—they achieve more than words.

There's a time to stop all the planning, discussion, and deliberation. We need to do the task at hand. If nobody acts, when it's time to act, the result is loss. We hate committees, because there's often too much talk and too little action. The committee: "A group of people who individually can do nothing, and who collectively decide nothing can be done."

Read on.



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COMMENTARY

Translation: *Labour, Mere Talk*



The Hebrew word for “labour,” עֲצַב (ʿăṣēḇ, pronounced, “eh-tseb”) does not indicate mere motion or activity. It’s used seven times in the Scriptures, most frequently translated (KJV) as “sorrow,” meaning grievous, painful toil, physical or mental. It means hard work! It’s first used in Genesis 3:16 to describe the pain and labour of childbirth. Having seen my wife give birth to our ten children, I know that labour means agonizing work.

Sometimes real discussion is necessary for profit, but the Hebrew phrase translated “mere talk,” not certainly is, (“yeem-ta-pah-se var-de” pronounced ,yîm•tă•śepā debār) דַּבַּר־שִׁפְתַּיִם productive deliberation. The NKJV translates it best as “idle chatter.” The English expression “chit-chat” captures the meaning and some of the audible rhyming in the Hebrew, like birds chirping.

Screening Workers

My friend George is a construction superintendent, overseeing many men in his crews. When assessing potential sub-contractors, he avoids the talkative. From his years on the job-site, he’s learned that heavy talkers are usually light workers. It almost seems that the lazy ones use verbal smokescreens to divert attention from their meager output. Happy productive activity always involves at least some pain and discomfort.

This proverb warns against idle chit-chat... like the proverbial water cooler or coffee pot chatter. We can all make real human contact in 30 seconds of friendly greetings and quick family updates, but left unchecked, that can easily grow to ten minutes, twenty minutes—a theft of the employer’s time.

Classic Commentaries

Renowned Reformation preacher Matthew Henry comments:



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Industrious people are generally thriving people, and where there is something done, there is something to be had. The stirring hand gets a penny. It is good therefore to keep in business, and to keep in action, and what our hand finds to do to, do it with all our might.... Talking, without working, will make men poor. Those that love to boast of their business and make a noise about it, and that waste their time in tittle-tattle... neglect the work of their place and day. They waste what they have.

Activity IS NOT Productivity

This proverb does not say, “in all activity there is profit.” Some activity is also useless, a distraction from our real purpose. Read more about this important distinction in Proverbs 12:11 with the question, [“How can you be busy, yet still end up poor?”](#)

Further, talk can sometimes be productive, necessary, and constructive, if it is focussed on the task at hand. After all, productive deliberation includes the most profitable time-tabling. So the central message here is, sooner or later, if there’s going to be anything profitable in the talk, the talk must stop, and the work must start.

Idle words are a kind of cowardice. It takes courage to start moving on a job, than to talk about the job and never get moving.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus warned His followers against useless small-talk.

Jesus said, “For every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment,” Matthew 12:36 (NKJV). Note that Jesus does not say, “For every evil word,” but “For every idle word.” Clearly Jesus wanted words to be beneficial and productive.

Useless words can be harmful. They often prevent the words of someone else, who really needs to be heard. Idle words short-circuit productive listening. So as an old saying goes, “Blessed is the man, who having nothing to say, abstains from giving us verbose and endless proof of that fact.”

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Avoid idle chit chat.
- Work diligently and talk as little as necessary.
- Don't be fooled by those who are big talkers; often that's all they are.

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



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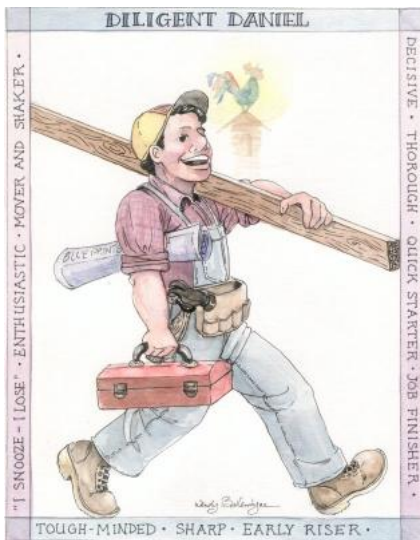
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KEY WORDS

focus, industriousness, laziness, more assets (quantity), poverty, productivity, profit, supervision, work, 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).

