

Laziness: How does it grow? (19:24)

The sluggard buries his hand in the dish but will not bring it back to his mouth.

THE TEXT (NASB)

The sluggard buries his hand in the dish but will not bring it back to his mouth.

*A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.
KJV - Proverbs 19:24*

INTRODUCTION



Laziness is nurtured by others. Then the lazy won't even feed themselves.

How do they survive? It's easy. They wait for someone else to feed them. They would rather be served than serve themselves.

Unfortunately, we all have that within us, the seeds of laziness.



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COMMENTARY

his message must be very important, since it's repeated almost verbatim in Proverbs 26:15, "The sluggard buries his hand in the dish. He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again." Check the question: [What do eating styles reveal about working styles? \(26:15\)](#)

Can people really become too lazy to eat? Yet our strongest instinct is self-preservation. So I believe that careful contemplation of this text suggests a remedy to one common cause of laziness. But before we get to that, we must deal with a translation discrepancy between the "dish" (NASB) and the "bosom" (KJV).

Translation: *Dish*



The Hebrew word for "dish," צלחת (šāl•lā•hāt, pronounced "tsal-la-hath"), means saucer or bowl, something with a concave surface. šāl•lā•hāt is used only five times in the Scriptures. Why it's sometimes translated as "bosom," I'm not sure. This may refer to people holding a bowl in their laps when they eat, or perhaps using their lap as a bowl to hold grain. But both words refer to concave containers.

There is some opportunity for levity in this word. šāl•lā•hāt is used first in 2 Kings 21:13, where God says: "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish." For those who say a man's place is not in the kitchen, note that even hundreds of years before Christ, when Second Kings was written, men were already in the kitchen, drying dishes. And one also finds an amusing translation in the Douay-Rheims Bible (1899): "The slothful hideth his hand under his armpit and will not so much as bring it to his mouth." His armpit is his dish? I hope not!

Feed Me!

The text says the sluggard "will not" bring his hand back to his mouth, not "cannot," due to illness or weakness. If someone is too lazy to eat, how does he survive? Easy, someone else feeds him! But there are natural consequences for irresponsible actions, an education that should be allowed. If the sluggard won't eat, then don't feed him. After a few hours, days, or weeks his hunger drive will teach him to resist his laziness.



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“Creating a Culture of Sloth”

A National Post article of May 20, 2014, described the employment and unemployment situation in different parts of Canada:

The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)... provides courses in technical training... Registration tickets for a course in crane operation—where students learn to ‘service and operate the hoist and swing equipment used to move machinery, materials and other large objects’—were to be issued on Thursday night. On Monday morning, at 7 a.m. sharp, the first applicant arrived to camp in the hallway for the four-day wait. By Wednesday, another 60 applicants had joined the line, bringing sleeping bags and blow-up mattresses.

‘It’s the short-term pain for the long-term gain ... you have to do what you have to do,’ said Terri Tacink, one of the early arrivals. ‘My parents are cutting their vacation short to come home to look after my kids.’

Meanwhile, across the country in New Brunswick, Cory Guimond was bemoaning the closure of his family boat-building operation after 60 years. Unable to find local workers willing to sacrifice unemployment benefits for the sake of a job, he recently moved across the border to Maine, where he now has 10 employees and expects to have 20 in another month.

Better pickings in Alberta is one reason for New Brunswick attitudes, he told the National Post’s Joe O’Connor, but rich jobless benefits are a big impediment. ‘When you can also get \$400 a week back home for doing nothing, why would you go to work for me for an extra hundred bucks? That’s the mentality back home.’

New Brunswick has Canada’s highest youth unemployment rate, and at 10.5%, one of the highest general unemployment rates. Alberta and Saskatchewan have the lowest rates, at 4.7% and 3.4% respectively. Strong Western economies clearly act as a lure for people looking for work, especially those willing to accept some inconvenience in return for a decent job...

Prince Edward Island has a jobless rate of 11.7%. When Ottawa introduced stricter new EI-eligibility rules last year, a single mother went on a month-long protest after being denied benefits for refusing to commute... Marlene Giersdorf said she couldn’t find a job in her hometown of Montague, P.E.I., which has a population of about 2,000, and she didn’t want to make the 40-minute drive to Charlottetown because she lacked a car. Her benefits were reinstated after her case drew national attention.



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It's no news that these small provinces have weak job markets. But there also is a cultural element at play here: Over time, many Canadians in these areas have come to accept the idea of long-term dependence on government handouts as a normal and non-stigmatized way of life—even when jobs are available. Mr. Guimond once employed close to 30 people, but found it increasingly difficult to hold onto workers who found they could live on part-time work and unemployment benefits. He'd still be operating in his home province if he could find people who were culturally conditioned to work for a living.

In February, a provincial report warned that Nova Scotia faces a threat to its “basic economic and demographic viability” because of its innate suspicion of free enterprise and preference for government programs. Nova Scotia has had the country's poorest performing economy for the past 20 years, it says, and could see its population fall by a further 100,000 as young people leave in search of work.

As the Atlantic Provinces struggle with this crisis, there is a lesson for the country as a whole: Governments don't “create” jobs by pouring money into make-work programs, nor do they spur long-term growth by propping up struggling industries. At best, they manage the decline while crowding out the free enterprise operators that make a more lasting difference. Those who stay at home learn to live on limited budgets and government subsidies, while the more ambitious souls line up in Alberta hallways for a chance at a more self-reliant future.

Classic Comments

Matthew Henry comments (1706) on this text: the sluggard would “rather starve than stir.” I respectfully disagree. I believe that, given enough time—and the absence of unnecessary assistance, the desire for food will overpower the desire for ease. People become lazy by having done for them what they could and should do for themselves. It starts young.

Training—Early and Always



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Raising ten kids, my wife and I learned a few lessons about training. If we spoon feed a child too long (beyond a year) it's good neither for the child nor for us. The earlier children learn to feed themselves, the better. It's messy at the start, so don't put too much food on a toddler's plate. And as children grow, they need more responsibility for their own upkeep. Our five-year-old recently wet his bed, something he hadn't done for years. The next day, he said, "I think I wet my bed last night. Mom needs to change the sheets." And I answered, "No, you need to change the sheets." I helped him a little, but he did most of the work.

This principle works on the job. I saw an example recently when my assistant made an obvious but simple clerical error. The financial institution receiving the document then refused to process it until it was corrected and initialed *by the person who first made the error*.

Unhealthy Dependency



When we do for others what they can and should do for themselves, we create an unhealthy sense of dependency, and we rob them of an opportunity to grow stronger. I once learned of a boy who watched butterflies struggling to emerge from their cocoons. He decided to help one very carefully with two toothpicks. His "help" was successful, but to his dismay, the butterfly could not fly. He learned later that the struggle to exit the cocoon was essential for proper muscle development in a butterfly. Similarly, well-intentioned but unwise "help" causes problems for people, since it naively nurtures laziness.

Those who habitually receive free service often don't learn to work for themselves. They don't develop a good work ethic and they soon lose all self-respect.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus was the greatest servant of all time and no ordinary man. Ordinary men are takers, first, and then some good men are also good givers.

Jesus Christ gave everything and got nothing. He perfected self-control beyond the point of starvation (Matthew 4:2-4), then offered himself as a source of nourishment. That's bizarre! He said, "I am the bread of life... Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you," John 6:48-56. That's how He was described by John the Baptizer: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"—the sacrifice and the sustenance (John 1:29).

Utterly ridiculous! Unless Jesus was, and is, God Almighty.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Don't do for others what they can and should do for themselves.
- Read the various texts with the Keyword "laziness"
- Train your children to act responsibly; don't be doting parents.
- Shape government policies to promote private enterprise not dependency on the state.
- START SAVINGS SMALL. In other words don't despair if the savings seem insignificant at first.

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



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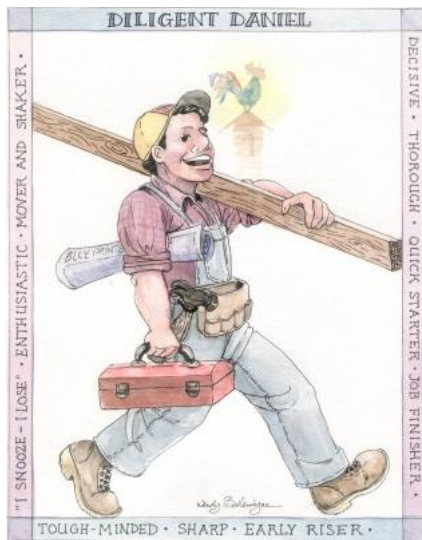
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KEY WORDS

family, compassion, diligence, government, hand, initiative, less assets (quantity), maintenance, work, mouth, laziness, 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).

