

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

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

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## 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 practices lead to disaster.

Be careful whom you hire. Employees wield power; they are either productive or destructive, not neutral.

Foolish hiring requires frequent firing. It destroys an organization's wealth. How can you avoid it?



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## COMMENTARY



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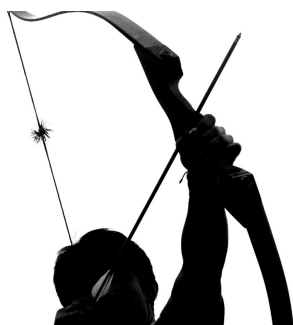
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Before we analyze the text we must note and deal with a major translation discrepancy. How can the updated *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) and the *King James Version* (KJV) vary so significantly in their translations?

New American Standard Bible and most newer translations: "Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by."

King James Version and some older translations: "The great [God] that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors."

## Translation



There are only seven Hebrew words in the text. The last six words are identical in the source texts of 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.

## Other Translations

There has been much study on this text by experts in Hebrew, and all their scholarship results in most modern translations using the word "archer." This makes sense to me as the context includes everyday common items such as dogs, thorns, stones, and drunkards. The Jewish Publication Society translates the text in their 1985 *New Translation of the Holy Scriptures*: "A master can produce anything but he who hires a dullard are as one who hires transients."

The same idea comes across from Martin Luther's translation. I show it first in German for those of you who know German and then in English. "Ein guter Meister macht ein Ding recht; aber wer einen Stumper dingt, dem wird's verderbt." Now in English, "A good master makes a thing right; but he who hires a bungler, by him it is spoiled."

## Classic Comments

I appreciate the commentary by Albert Barnes' in *Notes on the Bible* (circa 1830) as he clarifies:

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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

Now as for the variation in the last six words of the text, the modern KJV reads “but he who hires a fool is like one who hires one passing by.” What can we learn from this? Be careful not to be blindly loyal to one English translation (e.g. KJV). The text provides a message for a corporate Human Resources Department or anyone who is hiring workers. Avoid two types of people if you want to avoid carnage: **a fool or those who pass by.**

## Translation: Fool



The Hebrew word for *fool*, “kesil,” is used sixty-nine times in the scriptures. It appears first in Psalm 49:10 where kesil is translated as “stupid”: *For 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 – Referring to the dull or obstinate one—not to mental deficiency, but to a propensity to make wrong choices.
2. EWIL – Referring to moral insolence.
3. NABAL – Referring to the boorish man of mean 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 there is someone worse described in Proverbs 26:12—someone who is wise in his own eyes; someone who is too smart to be corrected. See Proverbs 19:1 to learn more about the KESEL fool.



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## 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:

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 the text is a 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, that is not burdened with ongoing responsibilities. It could also be an indirect warning against using too much contract labourers as opposed to permanent employees. I recall hearing the Canadian airline, *West Jet*, would have five telephone conversations with applicants before proceeding with an onsite interview.

*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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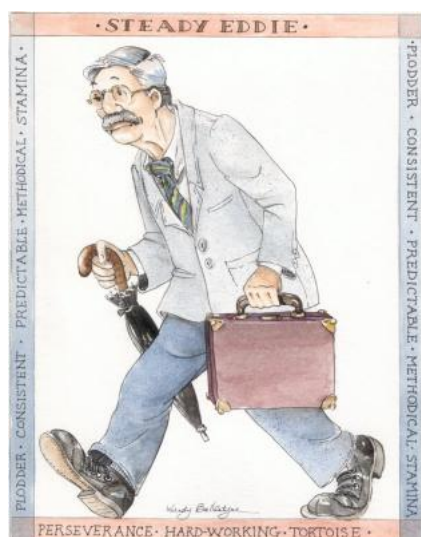
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## KEY WORDS

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!

