

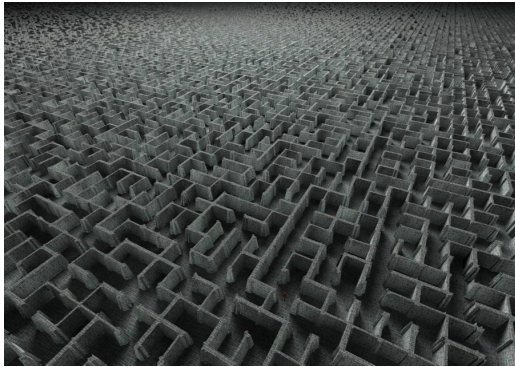
How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

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 either are, or pretend to be, overly timid, irrational alarmists.

With their vivid imaginations, sluggards fabricate bizarre excuses to avoid work.

Given their bad example, laziness becomes contagious.



How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

COMMENTARY

Whenever a truth is repeated we should pay double attention. The text appears earlier, almost verbatim, in Proverbs 22:13. Take another 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 move sluggishly,” used only once in Judges 18:9, where it is translated as “be still” or “just sit there.” So, עצל has connotations of delay and procrastination.

Lions and Lethargy



Having lived most of my life in Canada, I know little about **lions**, but I know they typically avoid human settlements. Their attacks on people usually happen in forests, far from crowds. They usually hunt at night, when people are sleeping (Psalm 104:20-23). So, there’s maybe 0.001% chance of a lion hunting **in the open square** in daylight. If the sluggard truly feared a lion, then the safest place would be a crowded street. The sluggard is certainly not lion-hearted. A lion may be bold, but as Charles Bridges suggests, the sluggard has a *cowardly spirit*.¹

This sluggard sees lions (dangers) everywhere, but he overlooks the fatal danger of his own lethargy—like a parasite. Sin is a power lurking within, causing more damage than any external predator, since it’s always with us (Romans 7:21-25).

Problems: Found or Resolved?



How can you identify laziness? (26:13)



When I was with a management consulting firm, contracted out to a multi-billion dollar offshore oil rig, we got some friction from some of the client's staff. My boss then said something I'll never forget: There are two kinds of people in business—problem finders and problem solvers.

Problems and opportunities exist everywhere, usually side-by-side. Some people make it their life purpose to find as many problems as they can. They find every imaginable reason why things will go wrong, and they rant on endlessly about all the risks and dangers—real and imagined.

Classic Comments

Matthew Henry (d. 1714) ties it all together:

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 this proverb, a lazy person amplifies and even invents



How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

problems, rather than “just doing it.” Instead of applying the SIB-KISS principle (See it Big—Keep It Simple, Stupid), problem-finders circle back to all the vague possibilities and reasons why something can’t be done.

Talkative sluggards pose another problem: Others believe them, discouraging action.

We find a biblical example in the account of the twelve Israelites, spying out the Promised Land. Only two had the courage to proceed. The other ten spoke of “giants in the land,” who made them feel like grasshoppers, and cities with walls “fortified to heaven.” They inflated the threats to justify their sloth (Numbers 13:25-33 and Deuteronomy 1:28). As a result, God kept them all exiled in the Wilderness for forty years, until the old generation died off—a major liability.

Laziness or sloth is really a lack of confidence in God's Providence, His ordering and empowering His own noble endeavours and our own. We trust our own imaginations and inertia, in resisting His great adventures.

Entrepreneurs

The road and the open square are places of transit and trade, byways and markets. So sluggards cut themselves off from opportunities to give and receive benefits. They avoid the marketplaces by their own choice. Their spirits are cowardly, rather than entrepreneurial. Real 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



How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

- 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.



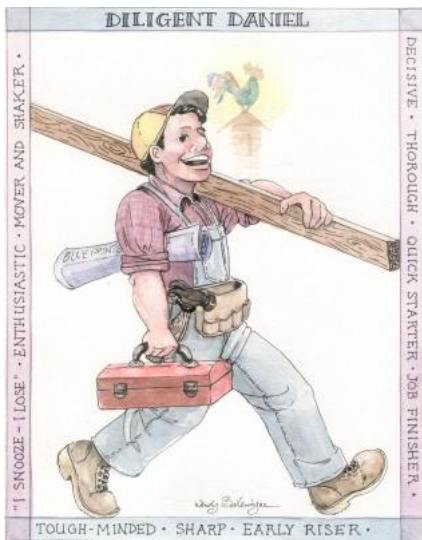
How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

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.



How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

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



How can you identify laziness? (26:13)

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

