

What people should you avoid? (23:20-21)

THE TEXT (NASB)

Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.

Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. KJV - Proverbs 23:20

INTRODUCTION



Beware of compulsive consumers.

Excess consumption brings poverty. Even good things must be limited.

We must be careful with whom we associate, lest we unthinkingly pick up their habits. Other people's lifestyles are contagious. If we're careless in our society, we invite poverty.



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COMMENTARY

Clearly poverty should be avoided. Clearly we ought not clothe ourselves in rags. Clothing should be of constant quality—ample for modesty, protection from the elements, and attractive in appearance. Yet this proverb gives us a clear command, less about our wardrobe, and more about the companions we keep. Being “clothed in rags,” like our everyday friends, might creep into our lives without our realizing it, without our knowing how or why.

Dangerous Associations

The text warns against associating with the wrong crowd. We are told, “Do not be with” certain people. Often the first step towards a habit or lifestyle is merely consorting those who practice them—all through the power of influence. We tend to copy the manners and styles of those we “hang out with.” Habits, good and bad, rub off, so we must be careful.

Two Traps



Excess consumption of alcohol and foodstuffs are both forms of substance abuse, this proverb warns. Either leads to poverty, because both lead to “drowsiness.” So US President Thomas Jefferson reportedly said, “Rise from the table with an appetite, and you will never sit down with one.” Eat just enough to satisfy your needs, and you’ll remain able to satisfy them at the next meal. Compulsive overeaters suffer from just the sort of physical and emotional problems that undercut their earning potential.

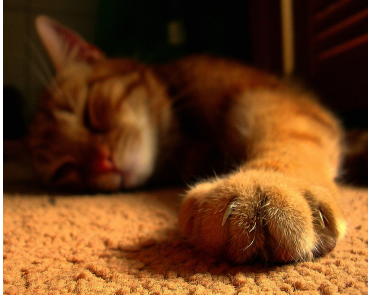
Abstainers Beware

The text does not propose total abstinence from alcohol. It inserts the word, “heavy,” implying that a little alcohol is reasonable. A righteous few, committed to total abstinence, cite biblical texts in support of their principle, but they can’t honestly use this text.

Translation: *Drowsiness*



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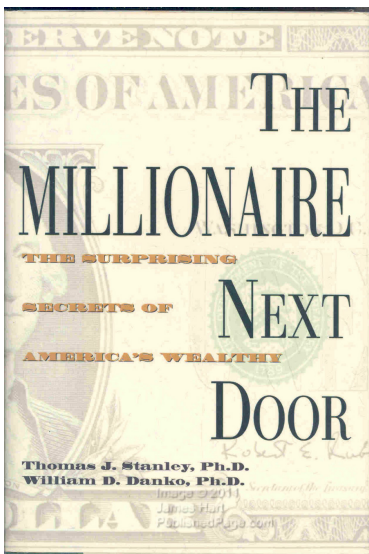


The particular Hebrew word for “drowsiness” here, נומה (nû•māh, pronounced “noo-mah”), is used only this once in the Bible, but it’s derived from a word, frequently used, that means “slumber,” as in Proverbs 6:4, 6:10, and 24:33. It’s distinct from the Hebrew word for healthy sleep, and almost always used in a pejorative sense, implying laziness or wasteful indolence. The LORD grants deep and refreshing sleep to his beloved in Psalm 127:2, because sleep is good. Drowsiness however is dangerous. Those who eat and drink lightly earn a healthy sleep, while drunkards and gluttons slumber. Our time is the total gift of our Creator, the only thing truly ours to spend, so surely lounging, neither fully asleep nor awake, is utter waste.

Nutrition and Finances

While this text warns against excess eating and drinking, another (Proverbs 21:17) warns against luxurious consumption. And a third even warns us against dining lazily. Eating quickly does not always mean eating much. Everything must be adjusted to a person’s individual metabolism, yet the general principles stand and should not be ignored.

Under-Consuming



In a society driven to over-consume by advertisers and retailers, it’s hard to live intentionally below our income, but that’s precisely what we must do to achieve financial freedom. In Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko’s book, *The Millionaire Next*



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Door, we read about millionaires who could drive brand-new luxury cars, but choose instead to drive used sedans. The top characteristic of most millionaires in North America is that “they live well below their means.” They take extraordinary steps to save money. They’re willing to pay for quality, but not for image. They most certainly are not heavy drinkers or gluttons. Check out this important book: [The-Millionaire-Next-Door](#).

Fasting – Perhaps One Day A Week

The habit of fasting can help to train us in an under-consuming lifestyle. Even fasting for one day a week will promote this habit. Fasting teaches your body to use the fuel it receives to optimum capacity. If it becomes accustomed to eating extravagantly, it will grow fat and lazy. If you can’t fast, then try eating smaller meals, then wait a half-hour to see if you’ve had enough.

Time Lost Through Excess Consumption

Excessive consumption wastes time. Irreplaceable moments are spent eating, drinking, and lying down to rest, while the digestion does its “work.” This steals time from other, more productive activities. The body can’t use the excess, so it’s a “lose-lose” situation.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Despite being the leader of his many disciples, Jesus often did not pack food for his followers (Matthew 12:1-3, Matthew 16:5-7, Luke 9:13).

Yet Jesus fed thousands miraculously, more than once (Mark 8:19,20). He was also more concerned about a higher form of nutrition (John 6:26-59).

When it came to loving people, Jesus did not avoid sinful drunks and gluttons. He was a friend to all, much to the dismay of the religious elite (Luke 7:31-34). In fact, Jesus came to save sinners, including over-consumers (Matthew 9:13).

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Learn the discipline of fasting—perhaps one day a week.
- Learn to appreciate higher forms of pleasure rather than merely eating and drinking. In the natural realm consider singing, dancing, working, sex (in marriage!) and sports. In the supernatural realm, consider singing, praising, thanking, praying, working, and building.
- Identify your own personal drowsy down-times in your day and work to minimize them.

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



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KEY WORDS

alcohol, appetite, gluttony, less assets (quantity), lose-lose, poverty, self-control, self-indulgence, sleep, companionship, bf spending

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Quick Buck Betty?



Quick Buck Betty wants to make money fast, and is always looking for “hot tips.” Researching and understanding investments takes too long; she just cares about the returns—especially the short-term returns.

It doesn't matter how the money is earned—in fact she'd rather not know at all! Betty is just eager to “make it” or, even better, have someone else make it for her. She has little time for Steady Eddy and Diligent Daniel—their methods take too long.

Betty views the stock and bond markets like the lottery and casino. She doesn't invest; she gambles. She likes to “play” the markets. Day trading is one of her passions.

