

What can you do to flourish financially? (10:4)

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

*He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.
Classic KJV - Proverbs 10:4*

INTRODUCTION



Focus on your task. Some workers stay on task, and others don't. Some concentrate; others daydream. There's an old adage, "A professional is an amateur who doesn't get distracted."

All else being equal, our personal work ethic makes us either poor or rich.



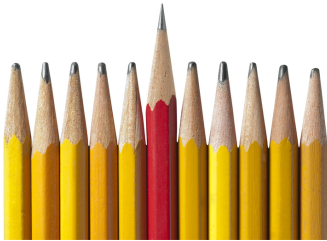
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COMMENTARY

The first and last words in this text, poor and rich, are brackets nestling a priceless gem. The only instrument here is the hand—but then our personal attitude. Market conditions or government regulations are beyond our control. Being negligent or diligent is under our control. Being negligent or diligent is our free choice. The text contrasts two people doing similar work with their hands. (“Hand” doesn’t imply manual labour—some develop better keyboard skills.) The only distinction between these two workers is found in the words “negligent” and “diligent.”

Translation: *negligent, diligent*



The Hebrew word for negligent, רמיה (remiy•yāh, pronounced “re-mi-yah”), is used 15 times in the Old Testament. Ten times, it’s translated with connotations of dishonesty, deceit, or misleading another person. The other five times, it’s rendered as a form of laziness. There’s a fine line between dishonesty and laziness. We may not think that slacking off is stealing from our employer, but it is. We’re not merely stealing from our company, but robbing ourselves of the real satisfaction in our work.

The Hebrew word for diligent, חרוץ (ḥā•rûṣ, pronounced “khah-roots”), is used 18 times in the Old Testament. A close derivative is the poetic Hebrew word for gold. Its root expresses the qualities: Determined, decisive, sharp, and hard. The notion “determined” implies a decision that cannot be changed. In its “sharp” etymology, the notion of “cut” is evident: something incised it cannot be altered. We often call someone who is determined, clear, and decisive as being “sharp,” not “dull.”

Definitely Decided!

Sometimes people lack diligence from a mental or physical infirmity; perhaps they can’t concentrate on a task for more than a few moments—and therefore they can’t earn an income. But almost all negligence is a voluntary habit: The distractions of a wandering mind. So a common cause of car accidents is indecision: Confused or clouded attention, trying to drive in more than one direction at once. Can’t do it. The Bible says, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,” James 1:8.



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Many people spend too much effort trying to make the “right decision,” and too little effort in making their decisions “right.” In his book, *Life is Tremendous*, Charlie Jones hammers this point: “The key to vocational success is not proper training, aptitude, or *pull* with the boss, but making the job decision, making it yours and dying by it.”¹ Even more clearly: “Don’t spend your life trying to make the right decisions; invest your life in making decisions and then making them right.”²

Classic Comments



Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary on this text:



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Those who deal with a deceitful hand... those who think to enrich themselves by fraud and tricking, will in the end impoverish themselves, not only by bringing the curse of God on what they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men; none will care to deal with those who deal with sleight of hand.

Gill's *Exposition of the Entire Bible* describes someone who pretends to work, using “trickery and deceitful ways” to make a show of working. Such workers don't prosper for long.

Personal Experience

One summer, working between school semesters, I got a warehouse job, joining three other young men doing mostly paperwork and photocopying unpaid invoices. The company, Har Nal (now defunct), was trying to collect on its receivables. It was monotonous, repetitive work. I was bored within an hour and had to play “mind games” like, how many copies can I make in thirty seconds? Can I beat the photocopier with an extra copy before the sound of its fan changes? I didn't joke around much with the other guys, but I sympathized with them. To keep my mind from turning to mush and feed my soul, I memorized the Sermon on the Mount, and God gave me patient strength.

We four were working in the warehouse, where nobody was watching. So after two weeks, the boss called us in and said the work was done. I knew it was a temp position, but I'd hoped it would last longer, since I needed money for school. He laid all of us off, but as we were going out the door, he called me aside and asked if I would come back the next week for some extra work. I then continued on alone in the same job. And the next summer, given my “office experience” I got a much better, higher-paying summer student job with Shell Canada.

Every job involves drudgery, so every job requires diligence. And—you will discover—diligence can make even drudgery satisfying.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus demonstrated the quality of decisive determination at a critical point of his life on earth. “When the days were approaching for His Ascension (His death, resurrection and return to Heaven), He was determined to go to Jerusalem,” Luke 9:51. The original word in Greek for “determined” is also translated as “set his face.” This expression denotes intense focus and resolution toward one purpose.

Jesus knew that the physical and spiritual agony of death on the cross awaited Him in Jerusalem, but He was unswerving. His target was returning home in Heaven with His Father—after His work on Earth was complete. Like Moses (Hebrews 11:26).

Moses endured intense frustration, but in Jesus’ case, the agony was much more horrible than Moses’ troubles. Like Moses, Jesus focused on future joy of a job well done (Hebrews 12:2).

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Evaluate your work ethic. Are you diligent, focused, and concentrated on your responsibilities?
- Do you know what your job responsibilities are? If you have no business plan, or clarity of critical success factors then you will likely drift and waste time.
- *Do not confuse activity with productivity.* Identify activities that are neither profitable nor beneficial. Eliminate them from your work routine.

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



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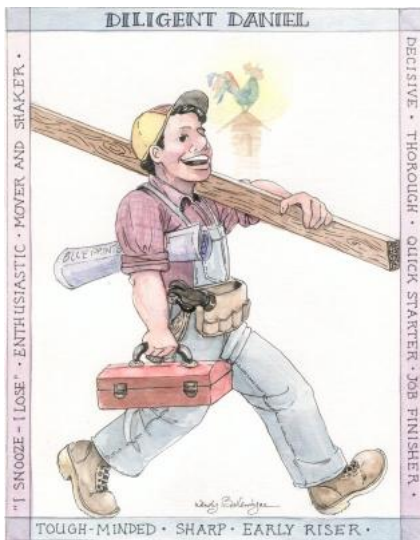
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KEY WORDS

decisiveness, diligence, dishonesty, focus, hand, industriousness, laziness, less assets (quantity), productivity, rich, work, poor (rāš pronounced “rash”), 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).



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FOOTNOTES

¹Charlie Jones, *Life is Tremendous* (Tyndale House Publishers 1981). page 73

²Ibid. page 83

