

What is the first step out of poverty? (20:13)

THE TEXT (NASB)

Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; open your eyes and you will be satisfied with food.

Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread. KJV - Proverbs 20:13

INTRODUCTION



Wake up! The step out of bed is the first step out of poverty.

Sleep is necessary for rest and refreshment, but too much sleep brings poverty. You snooze; you lose.

How can we wake up easier? What if we treasured each day for the treasure it is?



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COMMENTARY



Productivity begins with waking up, and opening those heavy eyelids. So this proverb deals with the first few seconds in the waking-up process, while other texts such as Proverbs 6:9-10 warn against extended slumbering and snoozing.

Some causes of poverty are unavoidable, but here is one that we can all fix: Too much sleep. The lazy lie in bed too long. Too much sleep can cause as much trouble as too little sleep. Sometimes leaving poverty doesn't need any special tools, talents, intelligence, or education, but just better sleeping habits and a desire to seize the day and be grateful for the day.

Translation: *Open*

This lesson isn't for anyone needing a power nap, but for those who sleep longer, when they've slept enough. I say this for two reasons. First, the admonition is to open your eyes, not keep them open. A short nap can be very refreshing and actually increase productivity.

Second, the Hebrew word for open, **נָפַח** (*pā•qāḥ*, pronounced "pah-qakh"), is used first in Genesis 3:7, as the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened for the first time to something new. It means "open up" rather than keep open or resist closing. If we don't "open up," we're saying that we're not eager for the day to come—and we're not grateful to God for this new day and all the opportunities it will bring.

Sleep Patterns



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A quick rise does not mean that we'll be sleep-deprived. The human body needs a certain amount of rest, and we should learn to use power naps to our benefit. Studies on sleep have shown that a combination of napping and a medium-length, nightly sleep is healthier than just sleeping too long. Learn more about the benefits of a 15-30 minute nap at this website on stress management: [Don't sleep more; sleep better.](#)

The text implies that the poor are those without food—not those without cars, appliances, or houses, but without food. This underscores that the biblical poverty line is no more than sufficient food and clothing. Even the “poor” in most First World countries have ample food and would be deemed rich by many in the Third World, who are typically happier.

Great Inventors

George Washington Carver was a man who built his own professional success, and contributed tremendously to his country's prosperity by rising early and focusing immediately on work. Carver's normal wake-up time was 4:00 am, and he went straight to his lab. He was so attached to his agricultural research at the pioneer black Tuskegee Institute, he refused a job offer from fellow inventor Thomas Edison, promising \$100,000 a year (about \$10 million today).

Classic Comments

John Oswald Sanders, the legendary founder of the Inland China Mission, once said, “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.”

In his Complete Commentary (1708), evangelist Matthew Henry comments on this text:

Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessaries, which should have been gotten by honest labour; therefore, though thou must sleep, yet love not sleep, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for further work...



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Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightst always be employed in some good exercise. We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it, and otherwise they shall have no good of them. They that love sleep are likely to come to poverty... because they contract a listless, careless disposition... still half asleep, never well awake...

Look to thine advantages and do not let slip thine opportunities. Apply thy mind closely to thy business and be in care about it... Open thine eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread; if thou dost not grow rich, yet thou shalt have enough; and that is as good as a feast.

Henry's point is that those who love sleep are "never well awake." They are dozy. They don't really appreciate the day before them. A lack of attentiveness, the child of gratitude, will surely lead to low productivity in their waking hours, and eventually poverty.

I still like most one of the favorite sayings of my dad, Erwin A. Lipp: "Look, Listen, and Learn. And looking comes first, by opening our eyes."

Early Morning Exploits



It's amazing how quickly my children get out of bed and dressed when they know today we leave for vacation. Jumping up is evidence of how grateful they are for the new day.

It seems that God is more an early-morning person than a late-night person. Note this from Jeremiah 35:13-15 (KJV):

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.... I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying: Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings...



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We also read in Isaiah 50:4: “God awakens me morning by morning.” This implies that God views each successive day with fresh excitement. He wakes up his workers early to go about the day’s business. So we shouldn’t need an alarm clock, but grow sensitive to God’s personal wake-up calls. In conquering the Promised Land, the Israelite general Joshua, 80-plus in years, set the pace by rising early (Joshua 3:1, 6:12-15).

“On the Other Hand...”

The counterbalancing truth to this proverb is found in Psalm 127:1-2: “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it. Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late to eat the bread of painful labours; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.”

So, though this proverb extols the importance of wakeful productivity, Psalm 127 reminds us that our efforts will be effective only if the LORD blesses and protects our work.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Very early in the morning of the day Jesus was executed, while in the garden of Gethsemane, he told his disciples, “Watch and pray,” Matthew 26:41.

The events of the next day and then three days would be radically different than anything they had experienced in their previous three years with Jesus.

Understandably, the disciples were unfortunately overcome by sleep—partly the result of a hefty Passover feast. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if some of them had fought off their drowsiness and spent time in prayer. Prayer refreshes and strengthens us.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Go to bed early so you can get up early. Read Footnote 1 on *Tom Corely's book Rich Habits: The Daily Success Habits of Wealthy Individuals*.
- Stay in good physical and emotional condition so that your body’s sleep requirements will be minimal.
- Ask yourself why you love to sleep in. Are you trying to avoid something?

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



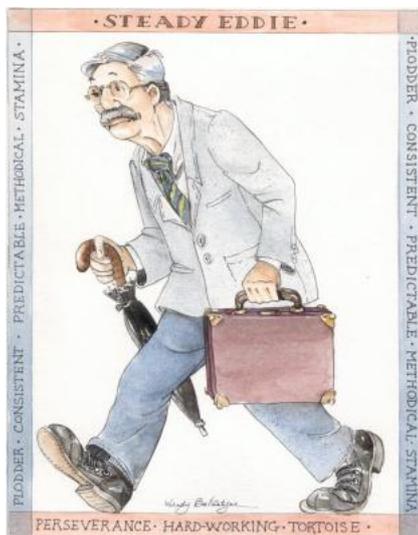
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KEY WORDS

diligence, food, industriousness, laziness, less assets (quantity), LORD, poor (Hebrew verb), poverty, productivity, sleep, 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!



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FOOTNOTES

1. In his 2010 book, Tom Corley's *Rich Habits: The Daily Success Habits of Wealthy Individuals*, Corley found that rich folks rise early to take full advantage of the wee morning hours. Forty-five percent of Corley's research subjects wake up at least three hours before they need to be at their day jobs. They use these hours to focus on personal improvement - reading educational books, blogs and trade journals. And they squeeze in some type of physical fitness, too. (Mary Hunt Epoch Times, February 24- March 2, 2022)

