

What can you do to avoid poverty? (19:15)

Laziness casts into a deep sleep and an idle man will suffer hunger.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Laziness casts into a deep sleep and an idle man will suffer hunger.

Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. KJV - Proverbs 19:15

INTRODUCTION



We are designed to work. It's hard to do nothing, and we soon grow weary.

Idleness brings poverty, and sleeping more brings more sleep.

How do we escape this vicious cycle?



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COMMENTARY

Translation: *Laziness*



This proverb has the Bible's first occurrence of this Hebrew word for laziness, עצלָה ('ăṣ•lāh, pronounced "ats-lah"). This feminine form 'ăṣ•lāh is used only two other times, once more in Proverbs 31 to describe a woman who is not that, not lazy. It is also by Solomon at Ecclesiastes 10:18, where it is translated as indolence: "Through indolence the rafters sag and through slackness the roof leaks." Understandably, the masculine form is used much more frequently in Proverbs, appearing first in Proverbs 6:6, where the sluggard is advised to adopt the work ethic of the ant. Its Hebrew root word "asel" occurs only once. In Judges 18:9 the Israelites are told to occupy the Promised Land vigorously, not sluggishly, or as the God's Word version puts it, "Don't just sit there."

We are all offered promising opportunities, but if we just sit there, nothing is gained. The Promised Land had to be cleared of its ungodly prior tenants. That meant war, and war is the hardest kind of work. Afterwards, even in the "land flowing with milk and honey," the cows need to be milked and the honey gathered from bees that sting.

Translation: *Idle*

The Hebrew word for idle, רמיה (remiy•yāh, pronounced "re-mee-yah"), has complex origins. Sometimes remiy•yāh is translated as "deceitful" or "fraudulent." It is used in the books of Job and Psalms to refer to the deceitful tongue. So God thinks that idleness and deceitfulness are closely related. This word is also used in Proverbs 10:4, 12:24, and 12:27.

Lazy people tire easily. They accomplish little, rest soon, and end up even poorer. Ironically they get tired from doing nothing—the opposite of what we might expect. Lazy people are often complainers. Instead of assessing the challenging task and then planning to get it done, they complain, seek sympathy, and waste energy, looking for an excuse to escape.

Sources of Poverty



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Those who naively want to eliminate all poverty through social engineering need to distinguish the various causes of poverty. Some, like earthquakes, wars, or revolutions, are out of our control. But others—like our work ethic—are very much in our control. It's not politically correct to say it, but poverty can be the proceeds of laziness. Some people suffer hunger simply because they choose to be idle. The text does not say “may” suffer hunger, but “will” suffer hunger. No work, no food. That's the universal law.

Free Food

What happens when those who choose to be idle (not those with disabilities or illnesses who can't work) are given food without work? What becomes of able bodied men who are fed for free? From the example of the aboriginal, First Nations' peoples of Canada, many lose their sense of dignity and self-respect. They often turn to drug and alcohol abuse. Free food from a secure source produces laziness and aimlessness—a vicious circle. It's amazing how hunger and insecurity motivate work. Some unemployed quickly find some type of work once government unemployment benefits cease. Sadly, others turn to crime and prefer to steal rather than serve.

Excess Sleep



Too much sleep causes drowsiness. If we stay in bed after receiving just enough sleep, we become more tired. Excessive rest is not refreshing, but debilitating. On the other hand, it is invigorating to do the right kind of work well. It feels good to do a good job. We get a sense of accomplishment and achievement, boosting our zeal for the next challenge. Good work is energizing. That's why some say: “If you want something done, give it to a busy man.” Those who are busy have learned how to get things done, by getting things done.

Ray Comfort, a New Zealand evangelist, describes laziness as the battle of the blanket. Do you want to get out of bed fast? Eat less. Exercise more. Enjoy the Sabbath rest. Plan your day the night before. Or if you want to try another technique, as you lie there snoozing, imagine that your house is on fire. You'll be up in a flash!

Classic Comments



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Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary (1706) notes that the lazy are "dreaming much, but doing nothing." How true! I have seen lazy folks with great plans and magnificent ambitions, who were unwilling to cut the grass in their own backyard.

In John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible (1750), we read: "Slothful persons are generally sleepy, and are very desirous of sleep, and indulge themselves in it; they spend their time, day and night, in sleep and drowsiness; and are quite careless and unconcerned about either their temporal or eternal good." So, it's foolish to think we might be careful about our eternal good, if we won't be careful about our temporal good.

In his *Exposition of Proverbs* (1846), about this text, Charles Bridges observes:

All experience and observation attest the fact that slothful habits destroy mental energy, and idleness is the road to want....Even when the slumber is not a deep sleep, its partial influence is the dead palsy upon active perseverance. He has not the thorough use of his wakeful faculties. And if he has (and who has not?) made a false step, there is no energy or effort to repair it. And if there be any reward of perseverance; sloth will never find it; the idle soul will suffer hunger.... Mind thy work and thy conflict more than thine ease and comfort; else wilt thou be, not a conqueror but a captive.

About "false steps," Bridges provides a footnote with advice from the French general Marshall Turenne (d.1675): "When you make a false step, spend not a moment in vexing yourself, and moaning over it; but think how it may best be repaired, and instantly set about it."

The comforts of laziness are like sweet poison. Enjoy them at your own financial and eternal peril.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus worked hard and slept little. Sometimes He prayed through the night (Luke 6:12), but he also took naps.

Once, exhausted from preaching and healing, he fell asleep in a boat, just before a fierce storm struck. When He was awakened by His disciples, Jesus did more good for the voyage than all their combined seamanship. He commanded the storm to be still. His disciples, utterly amazed, asked each other, "Who is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?" Matthew 8:27.

Assistance from Jesus helps us more than our very best efforts.



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APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- View laziness not as a comfortable friend but as your financial enemy.
- Evaluate your sleeping patterns. Consider using a short daytime nap for refreshment if you have the opportunity.
- Beware of "pretend work." It is easy to fool others, making ourselves look busy, but not putting genuine effort into the task.

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



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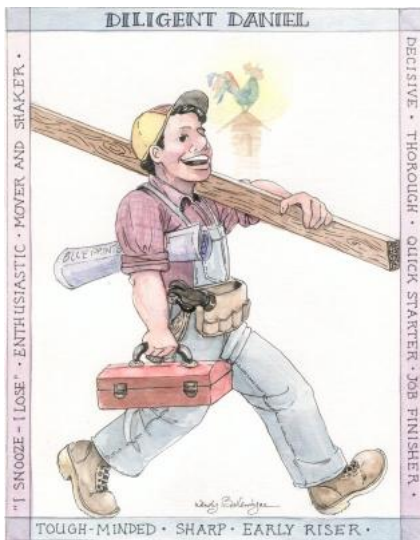
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KEY WORDS

alcohol, diligence, hunger, laziness, less assets (quantity), productivity, self-control, sleep, thief, suffering, 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).

