

# INDUSTRY AND LAZINESS

*"Go to the ant you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise." (6:6)*

**INTRODUCTION**—Nothing worthwhile was ever accomplished without hard work. On the other hand, laziness and sloth hinder and impoverish a man (10:4-5,16; 13:11; 18:9).

Of all the people in the Bible, the most ridiculous person described is the sluggard. God actually makes fun of him. *"Clearly the sages enjoyed poking fun and pouring ridicule on this lazy fellow. They have saved some of their best humor and liveliest imagery for him. As we read their proverbs we are meant to smile. We are also meant to recall when we got out of our beds this morning and how we spent our time today."* (Kenneth Aitken, *Proverbs—The Daily Study Bible Series*, p.118).

## I. MARKS OF A SLUGGARD

- A. Love of Sleep (26:14). Hinged to his bed, tossing back and forth, he sleepily thinks 'just a few more minutes' (6:9-10; 24:33). He cherishes sleep as an escape from responsibility. Rest benefits the hard worker, but it hinders the sluggard (20:13; 19:15).
- B. Inability to Start (10:4; 21:25-26; 6:9-10; 24:33). 'Later' and 'tomorrow' are the sluggard's favorite times for accomplishing his tasks.
- C. Inability to Stick With a Task to its Conclusion (19:24; 26:15). He makes a promising start but doesn't have the endurance and energy necessary for completion (12:27). He works hard to achieve something then lets it go to waste.
- D. Excuses. He will find 101 reasons not to do something—it is either too cold (20:4) or too dangerous (22:13; 26:13), or too something (cf. Ecclesiastes 11:4)! He is a master of excuses, no matter how wild or ridiculous!
- E. Talks About and Desires Success (13:4; 14:23; 21:25-26). He is as ambitious as anyone, but that appetite which drives the worker to **action** drives the sluggard to **frustration** (13:4; 16:26). He does not have, because He lacks diligence.
- F. Full of Advice (26:16). He thinks his days of observing other people work has made him wise and insightful.

## II. CONSEQUENCES OF LAZINESS

- A. Self-Evident Ruin (24:30-34). It cannot be hidden.
- B. Suffers Poverty and Want (12:11; 19:15; 20:4; 24:34; 28:19; cf. 6:11). He obtains nothing for himself, God refuses to give him anything and forbids others from providing for him (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
- C. Loses His Independence (12:24).
- D. Perpetual Frustration of Getting Nowhere (15:19; 13:4; 14:23; 21:25-26). He is trapped in his own self-perpetuated cage.
- E. Irritant to His Employer (10:26; cf. 25:13). If you want a task performed well and quickly, don't select a person with a lot of leisure time—always pick a busy person.

## III. THE INDUSTRIOUS, HARD WORKER

- A. Self-Motivated and Disciplined (6:6-8; cf. Romans 12:11).

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- B. Knows the Necessity of Doing Work When it Needs to Be Done (10:4-5; 20:4; 28:19). Not when it is convenient. Neither does he put it off until it is too late to accomplish that work.
  - C. Receives Recognition (22:29).
  - D. Rewarded for His Industry (10:4; 13:4).

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—**

- 1) *Is the sluggard one who lacks ability **or** does he lack zeal and energy?*
- 2) *How are the sluggard and the destroyer related (18:9)? What will be their common fate?*
- 3) *What is necessary before any person should be able to rest? What necessarily precedes rest?*
- 4) *Why is a sluggard unable to accomplish much?*
- 5) *Even though his excuses seem legitimate, why does the sluggard really make excuses?*
- 6) *May a lion sometimes be real and the excuse valid (26:13)? What should be done in such a case?*
- 7) *What is the only work a sluggard does on any project (26:16)?*
- 8) *Why does the slothful man lose his independence (12:24)?*
- 9) *Why does he never get anywhere?*
- 10) *How do you feel about a lazy employee (10:26)?*
- 11) *Why do busy people complete tasks better than people with more spare time?*
- 12) *What lesson is implied in the ant's having no chief or overseer (6:6-8)?*
- 13) *Why does no one ever praise the sluggard (22:29)?*