

Work Ethic
The Eternal Value of Work—part 2
November 3, 2019

If you work a forty hour job, the majority of your Monday-to-Friday waking hours are invested there. Our work ethic tells us a lot about our character, as we'll see this week.

DAY 1: The sluggard

1. We tend to **work** on one of two ends of a teeter –totter. Either we make work an idol or we work at the lowest possible level, just enough to “get by.” There are different work “traps” we can fall into, and then make as a way of life. One of them is what Proverbs calls the “**sluggard**.”

3. For each of the verses below, jot down the characteristics of the sluggard that Proverbs is emphasizing:

*Proverbs 15:19 The way of the **sluggard** is blocked with thorns, but the path of the **upright** is a highway.*

*Prov. 21:25 The **sluggard's** craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.*

*Prov. 22:13 The **sluggard** says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!"*

*Prov. 19:24 The **sluggard** buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!*

*Prov. 26:15 The **sluggard** buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*

3. What characteristics of the sluggard stand out to you?

4. Do you see yourself in any of these verses? Which ones?

DAY 2: The sluggard—part 2

1. We'll look at more verses of the sluggard. Under each verse, jot down what characteristics Proverbs tells us of the sluggard.

Proverbs 26:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!"

Proverbs 26:14 As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.

Proverbs 26:15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

Proverbs 26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly.

*Proverbs 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?
¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- ¹¹ and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.*

2. Several observations strike me from these verses.

- a. The sluggard finds excuses in problems that are not real problems.
- b. The sluggard is full of excuses.
- c. The sluggard doesn't finish projects.
- d. The sluggard "knows better" than anyone who could give him good advice.
- e. The sluggard makes "little" compromises with his time.

3. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The diligent

1. Today, we'll look at the man who is the opposite of the sluggard. He is the diligent man.
2. Under each verse jot down what characterizes the diligent person. And, how is the diligent man contrasted in these verses?

*Proverbs 21:5 (RSV) The plans of the **diligent** lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to want.*

*Proverbs 13:4 (RSV) The soul of the sluggard craves, and gets nothing, while the soul of the **diligent** is richly supplied.*

*Proverbs 10:4 (NIV) Lazy hands make a man poor, but **diligent** hands bring wealth.*

*Proverbs 12:24 **Diligent** hands will rule, but **laziness** ends in slave labor.*

*Prov. 12:27 The **lazy** man does not roast his game, but the **diligent** man prizes his possessions.*

3. Looking back over these verses, answer the following questions:
 - a. How does diligence affect the ability to generate income?
 - b. What factors hinder producing income?
 - c. Is the craving to gain more enough? Why not?
 - d. How does diligence or the lack of it affect finishing projects? What happens when projects are not finished?
4. What strikes you most about diligence?

DAY 4: The sloth, and a few others...

1. Today, we'll look at a few "others" who torpedo our work ethic.

2. First, we'll look at the "sloth." Jot down the characteristics of the sloth:

*Proverbs 12:24 (RSV) The hand of the diligent will rule, while the **slothful** will be put to forced labor.*

*Proverbs 12:27 (RSV) A **slothful** man will not catch his prey, but the diligent man will get precious wealth.*

3. Jot down the characteristic of each of these people:

*Proverbs 19:15 **Laziness** brings on deep sleep, and the **shiftless** man goes hungry.*

*Proverbs 18:9 One who is **slack** in his work is brother to one who destroys.*

*Proverbs 14:23 (RSV) In all toil there is profit, but **mere talk** tends only to want.*

a. The "lazy"–

b. The "shiftless"–

c. The "slacker"–

d. The "talker"–

*Proverbs 22:29 (RSV) Do you see a man **skillful** in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.*

4. Do you know someone who is skillful in their work? What strikes you about them?

5. Do you identify with any of the "characters" in today's devotional? Which one?

6. What would you like to do as a result of today's devotional?

DAY 5: Taking care of the “bones.”

1. Sometimes, as Christians, we minimize our possessions. There is a “good” reason for that. We know that possessions cannot make us content or bring us peace.
2. But there is a bad reason to minimize the stewardship of our possessions. We live in a world where things break, decay, or bad life events can occur that can cause us to lose most everything.
3. I think of possessions as the “bones” of life. A house, bank account, refrigerator, a yard, etc. are like the skeletal bones of our home life. They provide a framework in which to build a marriage, a family and a ministry to people.

Proverbs 27:23 Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; ...

4. What are we commanded to do in this verse?

Proverbs 27:24... for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.

5. Why are we commanded to give careful attention to what we have?

Proverbs 27:25 When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. ²⁷ You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family and to nourish your servant girls.

6. What strikes you from these verses?

*Proverbs 24:30 (RSV) I passed by the field of a **sluggard**, by the vineyard of a man without sense; ³¹ and lo, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. ³² Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, ³⁴ and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.*

7. We finish with vivid pictures of laziness and some important lessons. What strikes you from this passage?