



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Idle Hands are the Devil's Workshop



Proverbs: Search for Wisdom, Part 7

Tim Badal | August 31, 2014 | Proverbs 6:6-10

Let us turn to God's Word and learn from the Book of Proverbs. We are continuing our series on searching for wisdom in every area of life. Today we are focusing on Proverbs 6. Proverbs are a wonderful – and witty – tool that God uses to point us in the right direction. One Biblical scholar and author once said that the Book of Proverbs is “theology dressed in everyday clothes.” At times, theology can be stuffy and difficult to understand. Speaking in proverbs is a way to present profound truths about God and about ourselves – our sin and our pursuit of righteousness – in everyday language.

Last week, I addressed a sin of commission: the things you do that get you into trouble. This week I'm going to address a sin of omission: the things that you don't do that you should do in order to receive the blessings that come from God. On this **Labor Day** weekend, as you take time to rest from the business of life, I want to speak on laziness. God's Word addresses this issue seriously. Proverbs 6 will be a springboard as we learn from the smallest of creatures what it means to labor well in every area of our lives: our work, our families and our friendships.

Proverbs 6:6-10:

⁶ Go to the ant, O sluggard;
consider her ways, and be wise.
⁷ Without having any chief,
officer, or ruler,
⁸ she prepares her bread in summer
And gathers her food in harvest.
⁹ How long will you lie there, O sluggard?
When will you arise from your sleep?
¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
¹¹ and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
and want like an armed man.

Father God, we come before You and ask for Your blessing on the reading of Your Word. May we listen to it and apply it to our lives. Lord, I pray that we would not be lazy in listening to this message, or in serving You. Whether we're serving as a co-worker, a teacher, a parent, an elder or a pastor in the church, may we be known as people who serve well because we serve with all our hearts. Lord, may we do this so that You will be glorified. May unbelieving people see that Christians are serious about following Your Word. Lord, I pray that we would be impressed by Your Word. May we be challenged by it so that we'll live differently as we leave this place. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

When you look at the title of this message, you might be tempted to think, “Well, that’s great! I’m so glad Tim is going to preach on laziness because so-and-so needs to hear this message.” Some of you are looking at the teenager down the row and thinking, “Junior, you better listen up! Pastor Tim has a message for you.” However, all of us struggle with this issue of laziness. At times the struggle is so subtle that you don’t even recognize its presence. Laziness can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Maybe you are an early riser. You can still be lazy. Maybe you stay up until all hours of the night. You can still be lazy. You could be employed or unemployed and still be lazy. You need to recognize that laziness keeps you from doing God’s best in your life.

You might find humor in culture’s understanding of laziness:

- “I was going to do something today, but I haven’t finished doing nothing from yesterday.”
- “Rabbits jump and they live for 8 years. Dogs run and they live for 15 years. Turtles do nothing and they live for 150 years. Lesson learned.”
- “Just do it... tomorrow, and just enjoy today.”
- “If there was an award for laziness, I’d probably send someone to pick it up for me.”
- “You can call me lazy. I call it selective participation.”
- “I’m not lazy; I’m just in my energy-saving mode.”
- “Organized people are just too lazy to look for things.”
- “If you can’t reach it, you don’t need it.”
- “I’m very busy doing things I don’t need to do in order to avoid doing anything I’m actually supposed to be doing.”

The Bible considers laziness a serious issue. You live in a world that is inundated with laziness. The lure of deferring your responsibilities can be appealing. However, laziness is not simply a bad habit or something to joke about. It’s a sin that affects the whole of who you are as a Christian and it needs to be ruthlessly rooted out. Proverbs describes the characteristics of a lazy person. You need to hear this because you have far too many excuses and as a result you are falling prey to this subtle sin. The Word of God stands before you as a gentle, yet stern, reminder that even the subtle sin of laziness misses the mark before a holy God.

Within the Book of Proverbs, the lazy person is encapsulated by the word “**sluggard**.” That word is defined simply as a person who is spiritually, emotionally or physically apathetic. The sluggard neglects the things of God, as well as the physical and emotional necessities of life. Whether his or her laziness is intentional or just careless, the sluggard wastes away because of his or her actions.

But some will say, “What is so bad about laziness? Is it really hurting anybody?” A life of laziness is inconsistent with the life of a Christian. God has created you to be a good steward of the life you live and the world in which you live. One day God will gather His children and ask them how they spent His good gift of life. On the Day of Judgment, your laziness will determine the rewards that you will receive. It is good and right for us to study this subject because being a productive person reflects the attributes of God.

1. Laboring Dates Back to the Beginning of Time

Throughout all of human history people have been working for a living and for their own wellbeing. Keep your finger in the Book of Proverbs and turn back to Genesis 1. If you ever have wondered where to get a theology of work, you need to look at **Genesis 1-2**. The first thing that we learn about God is that He is eternal. “*In the beginning God...*” Once God establishes that He is not bound by space or time, He moves to the second attribute that He wants us to know. “*In the beginning God created* – or worked to create – *the heavens and the earth.*” God is a working God. He is a creating God.

Our Creator wasn’t lazy

We need to understand that the first picture of God in the Holy Scriptures is not of a God Who is lounging about, enjoying some rest and relaxation. I was watching an old movie about a Roman emperor. At one point in the movie, he is lying on a large chaise chair, people are fanning him and a beautiful woman is holding a cluster of grapes over his mouth. Whenever he got hungry, he would just reach a little bit and grab one of the grapes. That is not the picture of God that we get in the book of Genesis. We have a God Who rolled up His sleeves to create by the power of His Word all that is seen and unseen in the universe.

God is not a God Who revels in His days off. He does not sit there and say, "Maybe I'll get to that tomorrow." He is a hard working God. Open your eyes and look at the world around you. See the sky and the beauty of the stars. God was serious about His creation. Look at the plants and animals that God has created. Each of them has their own habitation; each of them has a place in this world. Think about the special creation of human beings; none of us are identical.

When God created, He didn't do it because it was His job. In the creation story, God never says, "Another day! I guess I've got to go to work. I've got to separate the light from the darkness and the water from dry land. I wish this project was over." No, He did it for His enjoyment. God enjoyed rolling up His sleeves and working to accomplish what He wanted to do. After each day, He would announce to the angels around Him, "This was good." At the end of the day, He didn't take His time card and put it in the machine and say, "I'm done. I'm out of here." He is a God Who reveals Himself to His creation every minute of every day.

We could stop this message by simply saying this: the reason why Christians cannot be lazy is because we serve and worship a God Who shows no laziness whatsoever. Because He is a God Who works and creates, Christians ought to imitate Him. None of us should be lazy. Let's close in prayer. It's as simple as that, right? We can't be lazy because our God in heaven isn't lazy.

God completed the task before Him

Many of you know that Amanda and I have recently added a family room onto our house. We started the week of Halloween last year. My goal was to be in that room on Christmas morning. When we had our elder open house on December 23rd, we still didn't have carpeting, but on Christmas morning we walked into a fully finished room. We worked hard to get that accomplished. However, on the outside, nothing was done. For the next three months, my neighbors had to see "Menard's Tyvek" wrapped all over the side of my house. I thought to myself, "As long as I am content with what I have on the inside, who cares about the outside? Man, it's good to be done!" And one of my friends told me, "You're not even half way done!" I'm still working on that project. How many things are left uncompleted in your life?

Aren't you glad there aren't parts of creation that are unfinished? Imagine going to the Grand Canyon with your kids and there's a sign from God: "Sorry, not completed. Work in progress." Aren't you glad that there isn't, "Pardon our dust: we're still creating this place." God, in those six days of creation, got the job done. There aren't parts of the sky left unpainted. You don't have to think, "God's going to get around to that. He's just got to find a reliable painter to paint the sky and the clouds." The moon doesn't look like the **Death Star** in the early part of **Star Wars**: half completed. God completed His task. Aren't you glad that you're walking around as a fully functioning human being? You're not waiting for parts from Amazon that God has on back order for you. God was faithful in His work to make sure that the project of creation, and all it involves, was completed. Nothing has been left undone.

Have you completed the tasks before you? These are reminders that God is not some procrastinator or some bump on a log. He does the job and He gets it done. In **Galatians 4:4-5**, the Apostle Paul says, "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*" God has been faithful to that in every aspect of human history. At the right time, at the right moment, when that final particle of sand in the hourglass fell and hit that bottom chamber, God sent His Son. God has been faithful in His job. If we serve a faithful God, then as a follower of Jesus Christ, we should strive to listen to the words of Jesus Who says, "*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (**Matthew 5:48**).

God calls us to work, not as a curse...

God calls us to work. Working is not a result of the Fall. **Genesis 2:15** says, "*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*" Now, Adam isn't asked to work because he had failed to be in before curfew, or because he hadn't eaten his vegetables, or because he had broken some rule that God said, "Here's your punishment, kid. You didn't listen to Me. I'm going to make you work." At this point in Genesis 2, Adam is still sinless. He is living in perfect fellowship with God and with the rest of creation. There are no thorns. There are no thistles. The devil hasn't even shown up yet. In this perfect fellowship God says, "I've got an assignment for you. I want you to work."

It isn't until **Genesis 3** that sin enters the world. If you go into work and say, "Why am I cursed to work every day? Why do I have to exert energy? What a terrible curse from sin!" then your theology is wrong. Work has always been a gift, not a curse. When sweat drips from your brow and life is difficult, you might ask, "Why has God cursed me in this way?" Recognize that work itself is not a curse, but the pain and difficulty of it.

...But as a command for our good

God has commanded you to work as a blessing. What an offensive statement on a weekend like Labor Day. In a world where we say, "Thank goodness it's Friday!", where we work for our weekends, and where Monday is the most difficult day of the week, work sure does seem like a curse. However, God says it is given for our good. I want to give you a couple of reasons why work is good for you and why you should count it a blessing.

1. **Work enables you to be a creator, just like God is the Creator.** You have an opportunity to build and create in the world that God has created. You can take what God has given you and make something for others. When you work, you show your ingenuity and reflect the glory of God as a creative God. Whether you're at home with the kids, in the work place or in school, you have an opportunity to declare the glory of God by being a creative, ingenious person.
2. **Using our God-given abilities demonstrates God's creative power.** Some of you are really good at swinging a hammer. Others have an unbelievable knack with numbers or administrating a job. Still others have an unbelievable ability to sell things and help people understand their need for certain products. Still others are really good at serving people. The variety of jobs serves as a reminder that God has gifted His people in a multitude of ways. In the [Bee Movie](#), the two main bees are talking with each other about graduating from school and about how there are nine jobs they get to choose from. Aren't you glad there are more than nine jobs in this world? God's creative power is shown in how He has gifted His people to do a myriad of tasks for the good of others.
3. **Work offers protection and provision.** When you work, you earn money that enables you to give your family a place to live, food to eat, clothes to wear, as well as to serve other families. It is also a way of protection. Work keeps us from sin and trouble. I read a study recently on the plight of the urban ghetto where the author said, "If we could make the ghettos centers of commerce and work, it would cut the crime rate exponentially because the men of my neighborhood would be too tired after a day of working to commit crimes." My dad used to say, "You need to be home by 11:00 because after that time, there's nothing to do, and when there's nothing to do, young men find themselves in trouble." Because I didn't listen to his advice, I was arrested many times as a young man. Each time I was arrested as a high school student, it was in the late hours of the night. We would sit around as a group of dumb, young teenagers and say, "What do you want to do?" "Well, I don't know. There's nothing to do." By that point, we should have put the handcuffs on ourselves and taken out the middle-man! When you have nothing to do, you will find yourself in trouble. Idle hands are the devil's workshop. David should have been with his armies when they were off at war. Instead he stayed and found himself with nothing to do on the roof of his palace. [What happened?](#) He ruined his life because of inactivity and laziness. He should have been at work. Had he been at work, he would never have found himself in a compromising situation with Bathsheba.

2. Laziness Can be Detected by Asking Three Questions

How do you know if you're lazy? Ask yourself the question, "Am I truly lazy?" Look at your life as a whole and ask the question, "Has this subtle sin infiltrated my life?" Proverbs talks about the lazy person in humorous ways. The lazy person is a sluggard who is hinged to his bed ([Proverbs 26:14](#)). Does that describe you?

Question #1: Do you extend the deadline?

In [Proverbs 6:9-10](#) lazy people often extend the deadline. "*How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*" The picture in this verse is of parents who wait and watch for their teenager to wake up. "Is he going to wake up at 8:00? 9:00? 10:00? 11:00? 12:00?" Do people wait around for you? Do you make your appointments on time? When you say that you're going to be somewhere or have something completed, are people waiting on you because you're not there? Do you fulfill their expectations or are you always running late? Are you always seeking for more time? "Just give me another day, teacher, and the homework will be done." "Give me another week, boss, and I can have the presentation ready." Do you find yourself extending deadlines?

Question #2: Do you make excuses?

In [Proverbs 22:13](#) we hear from the sluggard again. "*The sluggard says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!'*" Why in the world would the sluggard say that? It's an excuse! "The reason why I can't work today, why I can't be the carpenter that I'm supposed to be, or the salesman, or the student that I'm supposed to be is because something bad may happen to me." You fill

people's ears with excuses to cover up your laziness. "Traffic was a bear." "The kids made me late." "The dog ate my homework." "My car broke down." "The weather got in the way." Or, "There's a lion out in the street."

No matter how fabricated your excuses are, they are usually lies because what made you late was your own laziness. Is your life full of excuses? Understand that laziness is not what God desires for His people.

Question #3: Do you try to expend as little energy as possible?

Proverbs 20:4 says the following: *"The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing."* When everybody else is working and busy doing things, are you sitting at home watching TV? In **Proverbs 26:15**, *"The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth."* Holy cow! Are you so lazy that when you dip that Ruffles potato chip into the French onion dip, you're too lazy to bring it out and eat it? Do you start a task and leave it unfulfilled to your own demise?

Have you ever watched a nauseating and boring television show because you couldn't find the remote? I have watched some of the most boring Discovery Channel shows because the remote was 15 feet away from me. We don't want to expend energy.

Question #4: Do you expect someone else to get you moving?

Look back at **Proverbs 6:6-7**: *"Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, She prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest."* The ant gets its work done. It doesn't have to be rattled out of bed. It doesn't have to be managed. The ant knows what it needs to do and does it.

Ants are not lazy. There are three things that we can learn from ants in this proverb.

1. **They dedicate their minds to the task before them.** Have you ever looked at ants? When there's a dead carcass on the anthill, you'll see one of the ants go and try to get it and say, "Hey, this creature is three times my size. I'm going to leave it there. I'm going to go get my buddies and we're going to come back and pull this off to the hill together." They're using their minds.
2. **They have a long-term mindset.** The proverb says, *"She prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest."* They recognize that opportunities aren't always going to be there. They have to be ready to accomplish what needs to be resolved today so that there will be a happy tomorrow. Some of you in high school are thinking, "You know what? Who cares about finishing school? I'll find something." There will be a time when the person interviewing you for a job is going to say, "Where did you go to college?" Or, "What degree do you have?" And you're going to be saddened to find out that you can't have certain jobs because you don't have a degree. Laziness can cost you.
3. **They are self-motivated.** No ruler, no chief, no parent tells the ants what to do. They don't need people constantly harping at them to do something. Two weeks ago, we went to an open house for Noah's first year in junior high. We heard every teacher say, "Elementary school is over. We expect more from our junior high students. Your kids better be on top of things. Welcome to sixth grade. They're going to be given assignments. They're going to have to plan. They're going to have to be stewards of their time. So parents, you better understand that your kids are going to be held more responsible in sixth through eighth grade than they were in first through fifth grade." The Bible is telling us the same thing. You and I must be responsible to get the job done.

3. Living Productive Lives Involves both Diligence and Trust

Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 10:31** that *"...whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* That includes our labors. The New Testament is clear about laziness and the Christian life. In **1 Thessalonians 5:14**, the elders of the church are to admonish others which means to warn or encourage very strongly. What are elders to warn against? Idleness. And that's just a different word for laziness.

Then in **2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**, as if the Thessalonian church hadn't gotten enough admonishment, Paul brings this up:

⁶ Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you walk in idleness,

not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³ As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

Some of you might think that being a pastor or an elder is easy. However, some of the most hardworking people I know are pastors within this church. You have elders who serve you well. They work every day in the workplace and then come to elder meetings, and go to counseling sessions, and hospital visits, for the good of the church. They work hard for two reasons:

1. To glorify God.
2. To be a model of what it means to serve God well, both in the work place and in the church.

God's sovereignty

We need to recognize that when we labor, we cannot labor outside of God's sovereignty. This message can sound a lot like a "try harder, do more" kind of message. I don't want you to walk away saying, "Well, I've got to roll up my sleeves and get to work."

This last week I worked really, really hard. The hours kept piling up. I came home sweating every day. Nothing went right. Things broke down. In those moments I needed to recognize that God is in control of the details. In those moments I can't get angry and start yelling and screaming at people. God called me to be self-controlled.

Maybe you studied hard for a test all week only to find out the test was on something totally different than what you prepared for. Maybe you felt like all your hard work on that last project was for naught. It is in those moments you need to pray, "Lord, I did my best and it didn't work out the way I wanted. I'm so glad You are in control. I'm going to trust You. I'm going to trust that my labors for You, and my employer (or my family), will be productive. So I'm not going to get angry and I'm not going to sin; I'm going to rely on You."

Our responsibility

God's sovereignty never negates our responsibility. In **1 Corinthians 15:58** you are told to abound in the work that God has for you. Are you abounding? Are you serving God well? Are you abounding in every good work for the glory of God?

How would you answer these questions:

- Are you abounding in good works in your job?
- Are you responsible?
- Are you known in the work place, or in school, as one who gets the job done, reflecting the attributes of God by being faithful to your commitments?
- How about in your life as a human being, as a parent, as a spouse?
- Would your neighbors say, "Yeah, he's a responsible neighbor. He takes care of all that he needs to. He's a faithful community member. When he says he'll do something, he fulfills it"?
- Is your life a walk of laziness or of steadfast laboring?
- How about in your worship?
- Are you lazy in your devotions with the Lord?
- Are you lazy in your prayer life?
- Are you lazy in your evangelism?
- How about your attendance at church?
- How about listening to a sermon? Have you checked out already?
- How about your giving?

Brothers and sisters, we have been confronted by God's Word about the laziness in our lives. How is laziness impacting you? Maybe because of neglect you've lost a marriage. Maybe because of laziness you weren't accepted to the college of your choice. Maybe because you were shirking your duties you are unemployed. Or maybe because of laziness in your spiritual disciplines you have left yourself vulnerable to temptation.

Amidst your laziness you can look to Jesus Who was tempted to be lazy. "Turn this stone into bread. That will take care of your hunger issue" (**Matthew 4:3**). Jesus didn't give up. Jesus didn't quit. **Hebrews 12:2** says that Jesus endured the cross and scorned

its shame. When He accomplished the greatest job ever given to anyone, He uttered these words to lazy sluggards like you and me, "*It is finished*" ([John 19:30](#)). He completed it. Because of that, you can rest in the love and forgiveness of God, knowing that on the Cross He paid for your laziness. Now He calls you to imitate Him in all ways, including not being lazy. Repent of it. Turn from your wrong ways. Dedicate yourself to living a productive life for His Kingdom by His grace.

Let's pray.

Father God, we have pushed things aside. Lord, we've chosen the easy path, the restful and relaxing path. We recognize that we can make every task a god so Lord, I pray that we would use our minds and our Bibles this week to know the balance between laziness and productivity. Help us recognize that when we finish tasks, we are modeling for our children, our neighbors, our friends and family what You did in finishing the tasks before You. So Lord, may we recognize that there's a spiritual value to getting the job done. Lord, let tomorrow be a day to rejoice in the work that You've given us and the opportunities we have in our workplaces and in our schools to model Christ-likeness, to share the love of Christ and to be a blessing to the world around us. Now send us forth from this place, Lord. I pray that each day would be a productive one. May we live productive lives so that we can serve one another and serve You with the grace that You give us. It is in Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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