

# Lazybones

(by Pastor Trent Boedicker)

Text: Proverbs 6:6-11)

1/24/15

*Go to the ant, O sluggard,  
Observe her ways and be wise,  
Which, having no chief, officer or ruler,  
Prepares her food in the summer  
And gathers her provision in the harvest.  
How long will you lie down, O sluggard?  
When will you arise from your sleep?  
“A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to rest”—  
Your poverty will come in like a vagabond  
And your need like an armed man.*

Ants are amazing creatures aren't they? Did you know that for every person who is alive, there are about million ants? You could put every human in the world on one side of a scale, and every ant on the other, and our weight would almost equal out. In fact the ants might actually weigh a little bit more. That's kind of scary. Ants live longer than any other insect, surviving up to thirty years. And they live on every continent in the planet except for one...ironically: Antarctica. Ants are one of the strongest creatures, in relation to their size. They are able to carry fifty times their own weight, while hanging upside down. They even work together to move heavier objects. Ants are busy. In a square mile, they move around 50 tons of soil per year. And they build amazing colonies underground. If you were able to shrink down to the size of insect (like in the movies) and climb into an anthill, you would get lost in the maze of tunnels. It would be like wandering the streets of a major city. The largest ant colony ever discovered was more than 300 miles wide.

I have to admit, compared to the ant, I feel a little lazy. I get worn out shoveling snow, but on a daily basis these little creatures carry what would be the equivalent of several tons of dirt.

(<http://antark.net/ant-facts/>)

What kind of worker are you? Are you industrious like the ant? Or do you have a difficult time getting motivated to roll out of bed on Monday morning? Have you ever called in sick, because you didn't feel like going in that day? Have you pretended to be busy at your desk, while you were actually checking Facebook? Have you ever stretched your 15 minute break to a half hour? We all have days when we don't feel like showing up, and we are tempted to ignore our responsibilities, but those lazy days can become a pattern, and a habit, and the way we approach life. When that happens, it creates problems for us and others.

In every society there are people who just don't like to work. I'm talking about those who could, if they wanted to, but they are unwilling to put forth the effort. The book of Proverbs calls that person the "sluggard," or in modern terms "lazybones."

In our study so far, we have seen that Solomon wrote Proverbs to train young men and women in the ways of wisdom, and this would be an important lesson for them to learn. Sometimes young men and women have a difficult time making the transition of leaving home and entering the real world. For years, their parents have been there to take care of them and look after their needs. They didn't have to worry about things like: What am I going to eat? Where am I going to live? What am I going to wear? Mom and dad provided for those essentials. But there comes a time when a person must take responsibility for themselves. Life is going to be difficult for those who do not learn that lesson along the way.

These verses show us the value of having a good work ethic. **Whether it's in the classroom or the office, or the factory or the field, the hospital or the home -God's people ought to do their best.**

## **1. First of all, we should work hard in order to earn a living.**

Again, look at verses 6-8: *“Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.”*

Ants are always on the move, foraging for food. If you have ever gone on a picnic in the park, on a warm summer day, you have probably had to shoo away those pesky little creatures. They don't mean any harm, they're just helping themselves to the crumbs, and carrying whatever they can back to the colony. Hardwired into them is the instinct to search for food while it can be found. Cold weather is coming. Rather than waiting until tomorrow, when it may not be as easy to find nourishment, they take advantage of the opportunities they have today.

That's a good lesson for us. Staying in bed all day doesn't put food on the table. If you don't show up for work, you're not going to bring home a paycheck. Money doesn't grow on trees, and even if it did you would have to make the effort to go out and gather it.

When the alarm clock goes off on Monday morning, you would probably rather stay where you are, under the warm covers, instead of making the commute to work. But you like to eat, and you enjoy having a roof over your head, so you get up and get going. There are probably a hundred things you would rather be doing than typing reports / going to meetings / answering phones / loading parts into the machine... but you realize, come payday, your efforts will be worthwhile.

On the other hand, the lazy person doesn't think ahead, he's not planning for tomorrow. All he can think about is right now. He's too busy having fun to go look for a job. He stayed up too late with his buddies last night, and so he can't wake up in the morning. He got fired last week, but that didn't bother him very much, because he never liked that job anyways. Meanwhile, a stack of late notices is piling up in the mailbox.

Verse 9 asks: “*How long will lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*” How does the lazy person respond when you try to wake them up? “Billy, it’s time for school. You have to get up now or you’re going to be late!” “I just need five more minutes mom, let me hit the snooze button one more time, I just to rest a little longer.”

Verse 10 answers: “*A little sleep a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest. Your poverty will come like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.*” In essence, the lazy person is robbing from himself. The fridge is empty and the cupboards are bare, because hasn’t done anything to fill them. His lack of motivation is plundering his home.

There is reward for working hard, but there are consequences for those who won’t do anything to help themselves.

*Our kids have learned that lesson the hard way. Sometimes we offer a reward to our kids if they help out around the house. If you guys pick up the living room, you can have a package of fruit snacks. Oh boy! They love fruit snacks, and so they leap into action. But there are times when one of them won’t want to help. They pretend, while the other two do all the work. They are kicking back on the couch, taking it easy, while brother and sister put away toys and carry dirty clothes to the laundry room. When it’s all done, and we’re passing out the fruit snacks, the one who didn’t help is holding out their hand wondering “where are my fruit snacks?” Sorry, you didn’t do anything. You only get the reward if you help. Of course, they don’t like that very much. But they should have thought about that when there was work to be done. / in the real world you don’t get the reward unless you’re willing to put forth the effort*

**Proverbs 28:19** “*He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.*”

There is a reward for hard work, but a consequence for the person who insists on being idle. Who’s going to take care of you, if you’re unwilling to take care of yourself?

We should point out that not everyone who suffers from poverty is there because they are lazy. There are a lot of hard working people who fall on hard times, and work two or three jobs just to scrape by. So don’t assume that a person struggling to make ends meet is in that situation because they are unwilling to work. But a lazy person who is unwilling to work will most certainly end bringing hardship upon themselves.

## **2. We should also work hard in order to earn a good reputation with others.**

Going back to the example of the ant, in our passage, Proverbs 6:7 tells us that they have “...no chief, officer, or ruler...” There’s no supervisor in the ant world looking over everyone’s shoulder to make sure the workers do their job. There is no one barking orders, or threatening to fire the worker ants if they don’t finish their project on time. It’s automatic.

I dare you to go to your backyard this summer and look for an ant that is hiding in the shade, lounging on a recliner, sipping iced tea, while all the other ants are busy digging tunnels and foraging for food. I don't think you're going to find one, because ants are instinctively busy creatures. It's just how God made them; part of their character.

That's not the case with many other creatures. Solomon does not say "observe the housecat." Why? Because everyone knows that cats are lazy. He doesn't say, "consider the sloth," or "look at the koala bear." Why not? Because when you go to the zoo and watch those animals, they don't really seem to do much but lay around in on the tree branch. Ants, however, have a reputation for hard work.

That's the kind of reputation, God's people should have, in the workplace. The boss should be able to know that you are someone who does your job. He can trust you with an important assignment, because you take your work seriously. He won't have to stand over your shoulder to make sure that you are doing things the right way, because you are dependable. If your foreman steps out of the room for a few minutes, or if your manager leaves the building for a little while, they shouldn't have to wonder if you are goofing off while no one is looking.

*I applied for a job, once, when I was a student at Grace Bible College and when I was interviewing for the position the owner of the business said "Oh, I see on your resume you are attending GBC. I like hiring people from that college." He hired me on the spot.*

As men and women who bear the name of Christ, we ought to be known as people who are faithful and trustworthy. If that's not the case, what kind of testimony are we going to have with our co-workers? If we can't be trusted when it comes to earthly matters, why would anyone listen to what we have to say when it comes to spiritual things?

**2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11–13** tells us "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us...For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.*"

Apparently, some of the believers in that congregation had quit their jobs. Some of the people thought they were living in the end times, and they figured "why should we go to work if the rapture is going to happen any time?" It was causing problems for the church, and it wasn't doing much to help the reputation of believers in the community. Paul rebuked them for having that kind of attitude. Even if Christ does return tomorrow, that doesn't mean we should disregard our responsibilities for today.

Nobody likes to work with a lazy person. Turn to **Proverbs 10:26**. "*Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy one to those who send him.*"

That's a pretty striking picture. If you accidentally pick up a glass of vinegar, thinking that it's a glass of water, and take a sip, how does it taste? It's not pleasant. Or if you are sitting

around the campfire, and the wind suddenly changes, blowing the smoke into your face, how enjoyable is that experience? It's not fun.

- Where's Bob the high lift driver? He's probably parked somewhere in the back of the warehouse taking a nap.
- Where's Cindy, why isn't she answering her phone? Oh, she's probably not in the office yet. She's always late.
- Hey, Bill is behind, why don't you do some of his projects for him?

That's what it is like to work beside someone who does as little as possible. It's frustrating. Everyone else has to pick up the slack. You can probably think of people right now that you work with, or used to work with, who fit that description.

Do you want to work with that person? No, you try your best to stay far away from them as you can. What do your co-workers think about you? Do people enjoy working with you, knowing that you are reliable?

### 3. Finally, we should work hard to bring glory to God.

We started out talking about ants. Why do they tunnel through the ground, and carry heavy loads? They do those things because that's what they were created to do.

God also created us for a reason: to bring Him honor and glory with our lives.

Turn with me **Colossians 3:23-24**. *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."*

The apostle Paul wrote these particular instructions to servants, who probably didn't have the most glamorous jobs in the world, and I'm sure that the people they served didn't always treat them as nicely as they might have liked. They might have found themselves resenting their work, dreading each day. But Paul reminded those believers that even the most menial tasks can become an act of worship.

*"Whatever you do..."* Whether you are washing dishes, or cooking a meal, planting corn standing on the assembly line, grading papers or taking a test. It doesn't matter what it is, every pursuit in our lives can be devoted to God.

*"...do it heartily, as for the Lord, rather than for men..."* Do your best, give it your all, knowing that the Lord is watching. It brings Him pleasure when we carry a joyful attitude into the workplace. Many of our co-workers probably show up with a gloomy cloud hanging over them, grumbling all day long "I can't wait until this day is over, I'm so sick of being in this place." What a difference it would make if we show up with a smile. Maybe your boss isn't the greatest person to work for. That's okay, you're not serving him. You're serving the Lord.

“...Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.” You may never get much recognition on this earth. There are a lot of companies today that don’t treat employees like they used to. It’s hard to do your best when your benefits are cut and you are expected to do twice as much work. But remember, the ultimate reward will come in the life to come when we stand before our Master in heaven and hear those words “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Your boss might not even know your name. Your supervisor might never say a kind word. But the Lord in heaven sees your labor.

We tend to divide our lives into compartments: the secular and the sacred. Reading my Bible, praying, going to church: that’s sacred. The time we spend in the workplace, that’s secular. But that’s not a biblical understanding of our lives. That’s not how God sees things. Everything should be sacred. Every part of our lives can bring glory to our Savior.

*I have a friend who is a great cook, he used to work in a restaurant, now he’s a youth pastor. He calls his kitchen a sanctuary, because the time that he spends there preparing meals for his family becomes an expression of worship. As he is cutting the vegetables, or searing the roast, he thanks God for the ingredients, because God is the Creator who has provided these things for us to enjoy. That kind of attitude changes what some might consider tedious work, into something holy.*

Worship is not just singing songs of praise on Sunday morning, it is what we do all through the week, when we do it for the glory of God.

One Christian author writes, “God ordained work as the normal routine of living. Every legitimate human task, therefore, is of intrinsic worth, however menial it may seem, and is potentially a means of glorifying God.” (Manser, M. H. 2009. Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies. London: Martin Manser.)

Maybe you have never thought about work as being an expression of worship. But if that is the kind of attitude we have, it will change our entire outlook, going to work Monday morning will be a little easier.

So when you are swinging the hammer, do it with spirit of praise. “Thank you Lord for giving me these muscles and hands so I can build.” When you are sitting at your desk, do it with a heart of worship. “Thank you Lord for giving me a mind, so that I can come up with solutions and solve problems.” When you are teaching a lesson, do so with a joyful spirit. “Thank you Lord for giving me a voice, so that I can communicate ideas to others.”

## **Conclusion** –

(1) The passage this morning encourages us to take pride in your work. Don’t just put forth the minimum effort required to skate by. Always do your best. Even when the people around you don’t care, you should. Whether or not the boss is watching... whether or not there is the possibility of a promotion... whether or not your efforts are recognized.

(2) Be the kind of worker who has a reputation for being reliable, faithful, and trustworthy. Remember that the way you conduct yourself at work is just as important for your witness as the words you say. If people don't like to work with you, why would they listen to you when you share the gospel. But if people can trust you to do your job, they may also learn they can trust what you're saying when you talk about spiritual things.

(3) Imagine that the Lord is your supervisor, and that you are doing your work for Him. Let your life resound with praise.