

Consider the ant, thou sluggard!

by Leon King



We hear lots about "workaholics" these days. Especially do we hear about them from the sloths and sluggards of the world. The psychologists have coined this word to pin on people of industry. I will pitch my tent with the folks who believe that "idleness is the devil's workshop."

It was Wednesday at 1:00 PM and time for chapel. The Lord brought this Scripture to mind.

Proverbs 6:6-11 *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.*

Most of our Academy and Home School students are like the ant. We have a couple of sluggards in the learning center, so my intent was to provide the Scripture and illustrations praying the Holy Spirit cause the sluggards to "consider the ant." It was a good time. The students were leaning forward in a good, attentive attitude. It's great to speak to kids when they do that. We pray the Lord helped some of them.

Since this passage is addressed to the sluggard, it would be wise to define the word. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the sluggard as "one who is naturally or habitually slow, lazy, or idle; one who is disinclined for work or exertion of any kind; a slothful or indolent person." The book of Proverbs

has quite a lot to say about the character of sluggards. Why would a child of God want to take notice of the book of Proverbs? It is God's book of practical wisdom. It is the place where we can gain insight and understanding to handle any interpersonal relationship we will face. Of this particular subject, the Proverbs has much to say. As a child of God, we ought to give earnest heed to these wise sayings. They are intended to make us wise in life. We would choose to set wise men to doing things about us, but we should beware of sending a sluggard, an untrustworthy person, on a mission.

Proverbs 10:26 *As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.*

Sluggards always desire better things but do not have them because of their laziness.

Proverbs 13:4 *The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

Everything has to be just right for the sluggard to work. The weather is a real barrier to the lazy person. This is the precise reason so many people end up nursing the welfare system in our land.

Proverbs 20:4 *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.*

Not only is the sluggard lazy, but he is also conceited. He believes he has good reasons for doing (or not doing) what he does. His wicked heart deceives him. Unlike men who have genuine reasons for things, he has excuses.

Proverbs 26:16 *The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.*

In the Proverbs, the sloth is brother to the sluggard. They are cut from the same cloth. The *Britannica CD Dictionary* gives this definition of the sloth: "[Middle English slouthe, from slow slow] 1 a: disinclination to action or labor: indolence b: spiritual apathy and inactivity <the deadly sin of ~ sloth>

What are the characteristics of the slothful? They are much like the sluggard. The attitude is the same, and the outcome is identical. The slothful shall be in bondage - or under tribute.

Proverbs 12:24 *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.*

When I was a boy, my father gave me the job of cleaning out the fence row sometimes. In the place where we put the fences on the farm, we could not plow, so in time the fence row grew up with thorns, thistles, and briars. This is the way of the slothful man - it is like a grown-up fence row. I would not choose that as a place to walk.

Proverbs 15:19 *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.*

We are told in Scripture to do our work as unto the Lord. I've often told our people that we should give our employers 100% plus in our daily work. Not only is it a great testimony to the employer and our peers, but it is also the right thing to do. We need to do our jobs diligently and with expertise. Less than that makes us slothful. I believe a Christian should be the very best employee, in his particular area of expertise and responsibility. Don't be a sloth on the job!!

Proverbs 18:9 *He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.*

The more one sleeps, the more he wants to sleep. Laziness breeds drowsiness, and drowsiness will clothe a man in rags. "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, and wealthy, and wise," is an old tale with a good ring of truth in it for it is founded on a bible principle. Some people never get out of bed early and are not at all aware that the sun comes up gradually.

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

The slothful person hates to move. Like his name's sake, the sloth, if he moves, he does so very sloooooooooooooooooowly!

Proverbs 19:24 *A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.*

The sloth's desires drive him to despair. Like all men, the sloth is filled with different lusts and desires. He wants, wants, wants, but will never labor to get the desires of his heart. This kind of person is always talking about what he is "going to do," but never gets up and at it! Ninety percent of doing a job is getting started at it!

Proverbs 21:25 *The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.*

Parents need to train their children to work - and to know what it means to do so even when they are tired. We do them no service to indulge their natural tendency to laziness. As a child, my parents saw to it that I wasn't bored with "nothing to do." I admit that it is far more difficult to keep children occupied in our present generation than in the days when we lived on the farm. It is not impossible though! A wise parent will look for ways to keep up the house and grounds by using youngsters in preventive maintenance. Look about you, you can see the field of the slothful. An untidy house, an un-mown lawn, an un-weeded garden, a fence broken down

in need of repair, strewn debris and garbage, and such like are all mute testimonials to the slothfulness of the owner of the place. Although they do not verbally articulate the words, the picture of those things shouts volumes about the laziness of the sloth who lives there.

Proverbs 24:30-34 *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; **31** And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. **32** Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. **33** Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: **34** So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.*

So, be wise - consider the ant. Ants busy themselves with providing food in the summer for the winter which is sure to come. When winter comes, they open the store and enjoy! As laborers, our summer is now while we have the strength of our youth. The winters of advanced age will soon come. What will we have in store when that happens?

