Heavenly Wisdom About Hard Work and Laziness
Message 6 in Proverbs Sermon Series
Proverbs 6:6-11 (NKJV)

Tonight as we continue with our series of messages from the Book of Proverbs we are going to be considering the subject of **Hard Work versus Laziness**.

Please turn with me in your Bibles to **Proverbs the sixth chapter**.

Proverbs 6:6-11 (NKJV)

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard!
   Consider her ways and be wise,

7 Which, having no captain,
   Overseer or ruler,

8 Provides her supplies in the summer,
   And gathers her food in the harvest.

9 How long will you slumber, O sluggard?
   When will you rise from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
   A little folding of the hands to sleep—

11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,
   And your need like an armed man.

P R A Y E R

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of hard work is stressed throughout the Bible.

-In the opening verse of the Bible we find God at work.

**Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)**  
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

-The very first thing God did with the man He created was to put him to work.

**Genesis 2:8, 15 (NKJV)**  
“The LORD God planted a garden eastward of Eden and there He put the man whom He had formed. Then the LORD GOD took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”

The Bible teaches us that there is a direct correlation between our attitude about WORK and our attitude about GOD.

**Colossians 3:23,24 (NKJV)**  
And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

If you were like me, your parents taught you by example and word about the importance of hard work.

Many of you grew up priming tobacco and working in the fields from sun up ‘til sundown. And I’m sure you would testify it was some of the hardest work you ever did.

We didn’t grow tobacco in central Indiana where I grew up, but from the time I was ten years old on I started working in the hay fields of area farmers. Some days it might be 95-100 degrees out in the field while we were loading the hay wagons, then when we unloaded the hay and stacked it in the barn it might be 110-120 degrees and dust so thick you would cough and sneeze the whole time you were stacking the hay. And I felt like a millionaire if I got paid a $1.00 or $1.50 an hour.

One has to wonder if the same work ethic that was instilled in us by our parents and grandparents a generation or two ago is being instilled in today’s young people. While many young people work part-time or full-time jobs, many young people have the attitude that their parents and the rest of the world owes them something for nothing. Well as we turn our thoughts back to the Book of Proverbs God teaches
us some valuable truths about hard working people and lazy people.

For the remainder of the message I would like for you to look at three portraits.

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First of all, let’s look at……..

I. A Portrait of The World’s Smallest Workers

1. To teach us the danger of laziness in our lives God points us to an unlikely source, the lowly ant.

   v.6 “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise.”

2. You notice God issues this command to “the sluggard.”

   Throughout Proverbs there are a couple of terms used to describe lazy people. One of those terms is “sluggard.” The other is “slothfulfulness.”

   What is “a sluggard?” Think of “a slug” crawling across your deck or porch after a rain. He moves very slowly. A slug has no motivation to do anything or go anywhere in a hurry. He just “slugs” along.

   What is “slothfulness?” Well just think of “a sloth.” A sloth sleeps on average of 15-20 hours every day in the tops of trees. Even when they are awake the sloth remains motionless. In fact a sloth is so sedentary that green algae grows on their fur giving them a greenish hue. They eat leaves and berries that are within arms reach of wherever they are perched. It is only when they have picked the nearest branches clean that the sloth will move, and then only a few feet. Now that’s lazy.

3. Lazy people are the human equivalent of “a slug” or “a sloth.” And notice this command in verse 6 is specifically addressed to lazy people. “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise.”

4. Now in contrast to the “slug” and the “sloth” consider the ant. In verses 6-8 there are three valuable lessons
ants teach us.

(A) Ants teach us to **WORK HARD**. (v. 6)

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,

Whereas “slugs” and “sloths” are known for their laziness, ants are known for their hard work.

As a matter of fact the only way you can get an ant to stop working is to kill it. Every time you see an ant they are either gathering or building.

Every time you see an ant hill you are seeing the result of a lot of hard work.

Through these smallest of creatures, God is teaching all of us the importance of HARD WORK.

(B) Ants teach us to be **SELF-MOTIVATED** (vs. 6, 7)

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,

7 Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler,

Ants don’t need a boss or a parent or a strict teacher to stand over them and constantly say, “Get to work!” Ants are self-motivated.

ILLUSTRATION: After I graduated from High School I worked during the summer at Berg Vault Company in Lebanon, Indiana before going off to Johnson Bible College. I did the same the following summer between my freshman and sophomore years of college.

My first summer there the boss hired a man who had recently moved from Kentucky to Lebanon. His name was Charlie. There are two things I remember about Charlie. One, he smoked like a chimney. And two, he was probably the laziest person I have ever met.

While the rest of us were pouring concrete in the vault molds or preparing to go out on a funeral, ‘ol Charlie just sat around huffing and puffing on a cigarette. The only time Charlie would “work” (and I use that term loosely) was when the boss
was around. And even then about all ‘ol Charlie would do would be to grab a hammer and bang on something to make it sound like he was working. Needless to say, Charlie didn’t last long at Berg Vault Company.

The Lord would say, “Go to the ant Charlie, you sluggard! Look how hard they work......look how self-motivated they are.

Ants teach us to WORK HARD.
Ants teach us to PLAN AHEAD.

And...........

(C) Ants teach us to PLAN AHEAD. (vs. 6-8)

Proverbs 6:6-11 (NKJV)

6  Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,
7 Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler,
8 Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.

Ants are always planning ahead. They work hard to store food while the food is plentiful to prepare for those long cold winter months when food is very scarce.

The “sluggard” doesn’t do that. The sluggard doesn’t prepare for the future, they just live for the moment. The sluggard doesn’t “store up” for hard times. They just live from one meal to another and one paycheck to the next.

The ant teaches us to WORK HARD.
The ant teaches us to be SELF-MOTIVATED.
The ant teaches us to PLAN AHEAD.

Well now that we have looked at A PORTRAIT OF THE WORLD’S SMALLEST WORKERS, let’s look at..........

II. A Portrait of A Lazy Man

ILLUSTRATION: Several years ago an ad ran in the San Francisco Chronicle
under HELP WANTED, which read:

Wanted: Executive age 22-60. Job entails sitting with feet propped on desk from 10 AM to 4:30 PM while watching others work. Must be willing to play golf every other afternoon. Salary starts at $2,000 a week.

Then in small print beneath the ad were these words: We don’t really have this job opening. We just thought you would like to see in print the job everybody is applying for.

1. Throughout Proverbs we see a number of characteristics of the lazy man. Let’s look at some of them.

   (A) A lazy man NEGLECTS to CARE for what he has.

   Proverbs 24:30,31 (NKJV) I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles (prickly weeds); its stone wall was broken down.

   To put it simply, a lazy man doesn’t take care of his stuff. His house is in constant need of repair, his yard and garage are littered with broken things and rusted things.

   (B) A lazy man desires lots of THINGS but doesn’t want to have to WORK for them.

   Proverbs 13:4 (NKJV) The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.

   Proverbs 21:25 (NKJV) The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.

   A lazy man is always wanting something for nothing. His wants and wishes far exceed his or her willingness to work hard to attain them.

   (C) A lazy man is not RELIABLE.

   Proverbs 10:26 (NKJV) As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy man to those who send him.
My High School history teacher used to say, “If you want to get a job done don’t go to the man with time on his hands, go to the busy man.” Lazy people are unreliable and undependable. You can’t count on a lazy man to follow through on his work.

This next characteristic goes hand in hand with this one......

(D) A lazy man is full of EXCUSES.
Proverbs 20:4 (NKJV) The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing.

Proverbs 22:13 (NKJV) The lazy man says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!”

For the lazy person no time is ever a good time when it comes to work. Its either too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, or it might rain, and the excuses just go on and on.

(E) A lazy man is WASTEFUL.

Proverbs 12:27 (NKJV) The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, But diligence is man’s precious possession.

A lazy man loves to shoot ‘em, but he doesn’t want to dress ‘em. A lazy man loves to catch fish, but he doesn’t want to clean ‘em. A lazy man doesn’t mind planting a garden, but he doesn’t want to hoe the weeds and take care of it.

A lazy man is wasteful!

(F) A lazy man loves SLEEP.

Proverbs 6:9 (NKJV) How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?

Proverbs 26:14 (NKJV) As a door turns on its hinges, So does the lazy man on his bed.

The lazy man’s day, like that of everyone else, begins in bed. But unlike the hard working person who gets up whether he or she wants to or not, the lazy person stays in bed. In fact, Proverbs 26:14 that we just read says that a lazy man is fastened to his bed like hinges on a door. He will turn this way and that, but he doesn’t get up. He sets up on the side of the bed looking like he’s about to get up and do something productive and the next thing you know his head
crashes back on his pillow.

The lazy man lacks the ambition, drive and self-discipline necessary to drag himself out of bed and start moving toward work.

Well we have looked at A PORTRAIT OF THE WORLD’S SMALLEST WORKERS. And we have looked at A PORTRAIT OF A LAZY MAN.

Now let’s briefly look at.........

III. A Portrait of A Hard Working Man

1. Remember that portrait of the ants we looked at earlier? In that portrait we also see the portrait of a hard working man.

   (A) Like ants, the hard working man WORKS HARD.
Proverbs 10:4 (NKJV) He who has a slack hand becomes poor,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.

One of the most noble qualities a man can have is to be known as a hard worker. A godly man realizes that hard work is the price one must pay to provide for his family’s immediate and future needs.

(B) Like ants, the hard working man is SELF-MOTIVATED.

A hard working man doesn’t need someone standing over him all the time telling him to “get to work.”

A hard working man doesn’t try to come up with clever ways to make it look like he’s working when he’s not.

A hard working man has a lot to show for his labor at the end of each day.

(C) Like ants, the hard working man PLANS AHEAD.

Proverbs 21:5 (NKJV) The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.

A wise man is always planning ahead in his work. He doesn’t pinch every penny and hoard every dime he makes to the point his family suffers. But he in his wisdom he stores some of his earnings to prepare for hard times or lean times.

CONCLUSION

As we close, let me give you some food for thought.

Hard work is a Christian virtue.
Hard work is a mark of godliness.
Hard work is a reflection of our attitude toward God.

God didn’t put us here to waste our lives or to lie around being lazy “couch potatoes.” He put us here for the purpose of exalting Him in all that we do, including our work. We must learn
to think of our work as a form of worship rather than simply as a job.

God has blessed each of us with talents and abilities and skills to be useful and productive. So as the scripture says, “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might as unto the LORD.”

Rest and relaxation are good and they too are ordained by God. But they are meant to be a reward for hard work, not a substitute for it.

_O land of rest, for thee I sigh,_
_When will the moment come,_
_When I can lay my burden down_
_And dwell in peace at home?_

_We’ll work ‘til Jesus comes,_
_We’ll work ‘til Jesus comes,_
_We’ll work ‘til Jesus comes_
_Then we’ll be gathered home._