

Proverbs: The Danger of Laziness



By: Dr. Nicolas Ellen

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Background Information on the Book of Proverbs

1. What is the main idea of the Book of Proverbs?

The Book of Proverbs is about godly wisdom, how to get it and how to use it. It's about priorities and principles, not get-rich-quick schemes or success formulas. It tells you, not how to make a living, but how to be skillful in the lost art of making a life.¹ Dr. Roy Zuck's definition: "Wisdom means being skillful and successful in one's relationships and responsibilities . . . observing and following the Creator's principles of order in the moral universe."² In that definition you find most of the important elements of biblical wisdom, the kind of wisdom we can learn from the Book of Proverbs.² The Book of Proverbs focuses on human character and conduct. The book's observations and admonitions about life are addressed to individuals, not to the nation Israel as such. As brief maxims, the verses in Proverbs are to-the-point sentences about life. They boil down, crystallize, and condense the experiences and observations of the writers. The brief but concentrated statements cause their readers to reflect on their meanings. They tell what life is like and how life should be lived. Many of the proverbial maxims should be recognized as guidelines, not absolute observations; they are not ironclad promises. What is stated is generally and usually true, but exceptions are occasionally noted.

2. Who wrote the Book of Proverbs?

In Proverbs 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1, we're told that King Solomon is the author of the proverbs in this book. "The men of Hezekiah" (Prov. 25:1) were a group of scholars in King Hezekiah's day (700 B.C.) who compiled the material recorded in chapters 25–29, and in Proverbs 30 and 31, you meet "Agur the son of Jakeh" and "King Lemuel," although many scholars think "Lemuel" was another name for Solomon. Most of the material in this book came from King Solomon, so it's rightly called "the proverbs of Solomon."

3. To whom was this book written?

The frequent occurrence of the address "my son" and "my sons" in this book has raised some question about the relationship between Solomon and his "audience." The words "my son" were written by Solomon 15 times in chapters 1-7 and twice elsewhere (19:27; 27:11). They are used 5 times in the sayings of the wise men (23:15, 19; 23:26; 24:13, 21) and once by Lemuel's mother (31:2). "My sons" occurs 4 times (4:1; 5:7; 7:24; 8:32), all by Solomon. Originally these verses with "my son(s)" were addressed orally either to students of Solomon and to students of others in the royal court, or by Solomon and others to their sons in their homes.

¹Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1995. *Be skillful*. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.
² Roy Zuck, *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 232.

²Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1995. *Be skillful*. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

4. What Kind of Literature am I reading?

- a. The first Six verses you will study are written in a Hebrew Poetry style called Antithetical Parallelism. This means that the first line of the verse has a thought that contrast with the second line of the verse.
1. In Proverbs 10:4 there is a contrast between negligent hands and diligent hands
 2. In Proverbs 12:24 there is a contrast between diligent hands and slack hands
 3. In Proverbs 12:27 there is a contrast between the lazy man and the diligent man
 4. In Proverbs 13:4 there is a contrast between the soul of the sluggard and the soul of the diligent
 5. In Proverbs 14:23 there is a contrast between labor and talk
 6. In Proverbs 15:19 there is a contrast between the lazy and the upright
- b. The last 4 verses you will study are written in a Hebrew Poetry style called Synthetic Parallelism. This means that the second line of the verse may amplify the the thought in the first line of the verse, complement the thought of the first line of the verse, complete the thought of the first line of the verse, describe something in the first line of the verse, give the result of the first line of the verse or give preference over what is referred to in the first line of the verse.
1. In Proverbs 16:26 the second line expands and completes the thought of how a workers appetite will work for him.
 2. In Proverbs 19:15 the second line complements the results of laziness by discussing the results of an idle man.
 3. In Proverbs 21:25 the second line completes the thought of why a sluggard's desire puts him to death
 4. In Proverbs 26:14 the second line is being compared to a door turning on its' hinges

5. What is the major focus of these particular passages of study?

These passages focus on three key points:

- a. The importance of being diligent in life
- b. The danger of being lazy in life
- c. The importance of being action oriented instead of talk oriented

Overall, these passages were organized in such a manner to help you to come to terms with the particular, thoughts, words, actions, and relationship patterns where you have been walking in laziness and need to be diligent to walk in obedience towards God and others. They were also organized in such a way to help you to see the desires you have in life that will never be realized because of laziness and the desires you are realizing because of laziness. Use the questions after each verse to help you work through the particulars mentioned above.

Major Idea of Text	The Text	Food for Thought
Comparing and contrasting the results of the negligent and the diligent	Poor is He who works with a negligent hand <i>But the diligent makes rich</i> Proverbs 10:4	A negligent person should not expect to obtain what he is not willing to work for
Comparing and contrasting the results of the diligent and the slacker	The hand of the diligent will rule <i>But the slack hand will be put to forced labor</i> Proverbs 12:24	A slacker should not expect to be in a position of leadership wherever he works because he is lazy
Exposing the difference in value between a lazy man and a diligent man	A lazy man does not roast his prey <i>But the precious possession of a man is diligence</i> Proverbs 12:27	Laziness will keep you from getting the most out of what you have
Comparing and contrasting the result of the soul of the negligent and the soul of the diligent	The soul of sluggard craves and gets nothing <i>But the soul of the diligent is made fat</i> Proverbs 13:4	A sluggard should not expect to obtain what he is not willing to work for
Comparing and contrasting the results of labor and mere talk	In all labor there is profit <i>But mere talk leads only to poverty</i> Proverbs 14:23	Nothing gets accomplished by just talking about it, it takes labor to get things done
Comparing and contrasting the way of the lazy with the path of the upright	The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns <i>But the path of the upright is a highway</i> Proverbs 15:19	Sometime things are difficult in our lives because we are lazy and we are experiencing the consequences of our laziness
Explains why a worker's appetite works for him	A worker's appetite works for him <i>For his hunger urges him on</i> Proverbs 16:26	Those who work hard are motivated by their desire
Compares the results of laziness and an idle man	Laziness cast into a deep sleep <i>And an idle man will suffer hunger</i> Proverbs 19:15	Laziness and idleness will leave you empty in all aspects of life
Explains why the desire of sluggard will put him to death	The desire of the sluggard puts him to death <i>For his hands refuse to work</i> Proverbs 21:25	To want something and not be willing to work for it will lead to danger
Compares a door turning to sluggard in the bed	As the door turns on its hinges <i>So does the sluggard on his bed</i> Proverbs 26:14	A door is anchored to the hinges and turns like a lazy man is anchored to a bed and turns; Neither one is going to separate from their anchor

Proverbs 10:4

Poor is He who works with a negligent hand, *But the diligent makes rich*

1. What is the definition of poor?

2. What is the definition of negligent?

3. What is the definition of rich?

4. What is the definition of diligent?

5. As you look at your thoughts, words, actions, relational patterns and service to God where are you being negligent and experiencing poverty?

6. What has been result of your negligence in these areas?

7. What will you do to become diligent in these areas?

8. What is the status of your relationship with God and others as a result of you being negligent?
What are you going to do about it?

Proverbs 12:24

The hand of the diligent will rule *But the slack hand will be put to forced labor*

1. What is meant by the term “rule”?

2. What is meant by slack hand?

3. What is meant by forced labor?

4. How has your slackness affected the kind of work you do?

5. If you were not slack in hand what would you be able to accomplish right now?

6. How has your slackness affected your life and those around you?

7. What changes are you willing to make to be diligent?

8. In what ways are you being diligent?

9. How has your diligence influenced and impacted the kind of work you do?

Proverbs 12:27

A lazy man does not roast his prey *But the precious possession of a man is diligence*

1. What do you have that you have not utilized to the fullest because of laziness?

2. Is this a pattern of life for you? Explain

3. As you look back over your life what have you lost the privilege of having or using because of your laziness?

4. Had you utilized that which you had lost to laziness how different would your life be right now?

5. Do you see the value in being diligent? Explain.

6. How does your life reflect you answer in question 5?

7. What will you do as result of studying this passage?

Proverbs 13:4

The soul of sluggard craves and get nothing, *But the soul of the diligent is made fat*

1. Identify some things in life you want but you are unwilling to work for?

2. How are you dealing with wanting what you are not willing to work for?

3. How long have you allowed yourself to want what you have not be willing to for?

4. What has kept you from pursuing what you want?

5. Is it possible that you do not understand how to get it so you have done nothing? Explain.

6. Is it possible that what you want is unrealistic or sinful? Explain.

7. Identify some areas of your life where you have been willing to work for what you wanted.

8. Why were you willing to work for these things but unwilling to work for the other things?

Proverbs 14:23

In all labor there is profit *But mere talk leads only to poverty*

1. Do you talk more about what you are going to do than actually doing it? Explain

2. What are some of the things you have been planning to do that you have not yet done?

3. What has kept you from doing those things? Explain

4. Would you say that your explanation is valid or just an excuse?

5. When do you plan to work on those things?

6. Who will hold you accountable to get started and accomplish those things?

7. What have you started to work on that has lead to some positive results?

8. What will keep you motivated to continue working on it? Explain

Proverbs 15:19

The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns But the path of the upright is a highway

1. What difficulties have you encountered in your relationships as a result of laziness?

2. What difficulties have you encountered on your job as a result of laziness?

3. What difficulties have you encountered in your conversations as a result of laziness?

4. What do you find the most difficult to do as a result of your laziness?

5. What areas of your life are you walking in the path of the upright?

6. How is that impacting your life?

7. Why do you think way of the upright is so much better than the way of the lazy?

8. How does your life reflect you perspective in question 7?

Proverbs 16:26

A worker's appetite works for him For his hunger urges him on

1. What do you have an appetite for?

2. How does that impact your work?

3. In what areas of your life is your appetite greater than your will to work?

4. Have you ever considered why your appetite is greater than your will to work in this area?

5. Should you lower your appetite or move more into working for what you desire? Explain.

6. Does your answer reflect a mindset of laziness or diligence? Explain

7. What steps will you make today according to the answers given in questions 5 and 6?

Proverbs 19:15

Laziness cast into a deep sleep And an idle man will suffer hunger

1. Are you tired all the time? If so why?

2. What areas of your life are you standing still when you should be moving forward?

3. Why are you standing still?

4. What needs to happen in order for you to move forward?

5. What has been the consequences of your idleness?

6. What do you think it would take to energize you?

7. Where will you look to obtain that energy?

Proverbs 21:25

The desire of the sluggard puts him to death For his hands refuse to work

1. What have you wanted so badly yet you have refused to work for it?

2. Why do you refuse to work for it?

3. How long have you been in this condition?

4. What do you believe is going to happen to you as a result of refusing to work for what you want?

5. What are you expecting from other people as it relates to this desire(s)?

6. Who do you blame for your situation? Explain

7. Would God agree with you that this person is responsible for your condition?

Proverbs 26:14

As the door turns on its hinges So does the sluggard on his bed

1. What do you think this means?

2. How do you think this applies to you?

3. What changes need to be made in your life as a result of identifying with this passage?

4. Where will you start?

5. What do you think will happen to discourage you from working on this?

6. How will you handle it?

7. What relationships in your life have been damaged beyond repair because of your laziness?

8. What is the key thing you have learned from studying this passage?

Critical Terms of Biblical Passages Selected for the Study
(Proverbs 10:4,12:24,27,13:4,14:23,15:19,16:26,19:15,21:25,26:14)

Meaning of the Word within the context of the Passage

1. Appetite (Hebrew word- nephesh # 5315 in Strongs Concordance) – a desire for something (Proverbs 16:26)
2. Craves (Hebrew word - avah # 183 in Strongs Concordance) – to want greatly, to yearn for, to have a strong desire for (Proverbs 13:4)
3. Death (Hebrew word - muwth # 4191 in Strongs Concordance) – to cease to exist (Proverbs 21:25)
4. Deep (Hebrew word - tardemah # 8639 in Strongs Concordance) – in a trance; (Proverb 19:15)
5. Desire (Hebrew word - taavah # 8378 in Strongs Concordance) – a longing, a wish, a want (Proverbs 21:25)
6. Diligence (Hebrew word - charuts # 2742 in Strongs Concordance)– persistence, stick-to-itiveness, not quitting, staying on task (Proverbs 12:27)
7. Diligent (Hebrew word - charuts # 2742 in Strongs Concordance)– one who is persistent, one who stays on task, one who does not quit or give up, one who has stick-to-itiveness (Proverbs 10:4,12:24,13:4)
8. Fat (Hebrew word - dashen # 1878 in Strongs Concordance) – prosperous (Proverbs 13:4)
9. Forced (Hebrew word - mac # 4522 in Strongs Concordance) – involuntary, made to do instead of wanting to do (Proverbs 12:24)
10. Highway (Hebrew word - calal # 5549 in Strongs Concordance) – a way up to benefit (Proverbs 15:19)
11. Hunger (Hebrew word - peh # 6310 in Strongs Concordance, Hebrew word – raeb # 7456 in Strongs Concordance) – desire to eat (Pr. 16:26), to have pains from a lack of food due to laziness (Pr.19:15) (Proverbs 16:26, 19:15)
12. Idle (Hebrew word - ramiyah # 7423 in Strongs Concordance) – slack or laxed in doing what is to be done; slothful; doing nothing when something needs to be done (Proverbs 19:15)
13. Labor (Hebrew word - etseb # 6089 in Strongs Concordance) – work or toil (Proverbs 14:23)
14. Laziness (Hebrew word - atslah # 6103 in Strongs Concordance) – sluggish, slothful, not inclined to work, inclined to do nothing when work is to be done (Proverbs 19:15)
15. Lazy (Hebrew word - ramiyah # 7423 in Strongs Concordance, Hebrew word – atsel # 6102 in Strongs Concordance) – slack or laxed in doing what is to be done; slothful; doing nothing when something needs to be done (Pr. 12:27), sluggard, one who is inclined to do nothing when work is to be done (Pr.15:19) (Proverbs 12:27,15:19)
16. Negligent (Hebrew word - ramiyah # 7423 in Strongs Concordance) – slack or laxed in doing what is to be done; slothful; doing nothing when something needs to be done ; a pattern of carelessness, and neglect of responsibilities (Proverbs 10:4)
17. Path (Hebrew word - orach # 734 in Strongs Concordance) – way of life or direction (Proverbs 15:19)
18. Poor (Hebrew word - ruwsh # 7326 in Strongs Concordance) – to be in want or lack in life because of laziness (Proverbs 10:4)
19. Possession (Hebrew word - hown # 1952 in Strongs Concordance) – that which he owns and has control over (Proverbs 12:27)

20. Poverty (Hebrew word - machcor # 4270 in Strongs Concordance) – to be in want, need or lack due talking about what you are going to do instead of doing it (Proverbs 14:23)
21. Precious (Hebrew word - yaqar # 3368 in Strongs Concordance) – that which is highly valued (Proverbs 12:27)
22. Profit (Hebrew word - mowthar # 4195 in Strongs Concordance) – benefit, good results, a valuable return (Proverbs 14:23)
23. Refuse (Hebrew word - maen # 3985 in Strongs Concordance) – unwilling to comply with or to do something (Proverbs 21:25)
24. Rich (Hebrew word - ashar # 6238 in Strongs Concordance) – to have abundance; to be well supplied (Proverb 10:4)
25. Slack (Hebrew word - ramiyah # 7423 in Strongs Concordance) – slack or laxed in doing what is to be done; slothful; doing nothing when something needs to be done (Proverbs 12:24)
26. Sleep (Hebrew word - tardemah # 8639 in Strongs Concordance) – in a trance (Proverbs 19:15)
27. Sluggard (Hebrew word - atsel # 6102 in Strongs Concordance) – person who has mad a habit out of being lazy (Proverbs 13:4,21:25,26:14)
28. Soul (Hebrew word - nephesh # 5315 in Strongs Concordance) – the mind, will and emotions or sometimes called the heart (Proverbs 13:4)
29. Suffer (Hebrew word - raeb # 7456 in Strongs Concordance) – to have pains from a lack of food due to laziness (Proverbs 19:15)
30. Thorns (Hebrew word – chedeq # 2312 in Strongs Concordance) – to sting or prick (Proverbs 15:19)
31. Urges (Hebrew word - akaph # 404 in Strongs Concordance) – to press or motivate (Proverbs 16:26)
32. Way (Hebrew word - derek # 1870 in Strongs Concordance) – direction; manner of life (Proverbs 15:19)
33. Work (Hebrew word - asah # 6213 in Strongs Concordance) – to labor; to produce (Proverbs 21:25)
34. Works (Hebrew word - asah # 6213 in Strongs Concordance, Hebrew word - amal # 5998 in Strongs Concordance) – to labor; to produce (Pr. 10:4) , to labor (Pr. 16:26) (Proverbs 10:4,16:26)

Commentary on Selected Passages of Proverbs

Proverbs 10:4

If a person refuses to work he will be **poor** (a word used often in Prov.), whereas a hard worker eventually is rewarded.³

Proverbs 12:24

Diligence and laziness are contrasted here. The idea that a **diligent** person **will rule** may not mean that he becomes an official, but that he is in charge of whatever his situation may be. **Laziness**, on the other hand, may lead a person into slavery or servanthood in which he has to work harder.⁴

Proverbs 12:27

A **lazy** person (cf. v. 24) refuses to **roast his game**. “Roast” (ḥāarak), used only here in the Old Testament, is difficult to translate precisely. It may mean the lazy man will not even go after food. Or (as in the NIV) it may mean that he hunts some game, but is too lazy to cook it. Diligence, however, leads a hunter to value what he has acquired. This suggests that a lazy person does not value what he owns.⁵

Proverbs 13:4

A lazy person has desires (deep-seated physical drive or appetite), but his desires are not satisfied because he is not willing to work. However, diligence enables a person to be **satisfied** .⁶

Proverbs 14:23

Hard work pays off (cf. 10:4; 12:11, 24) whereas people who merely **talk** about work become poor (cf. 6:10-11). Other causes of poverty mentioned in Proverbs are stinginess (11:24; 28:22), haste (21:5), hedonism (21:17), oppression (22:16), favoritism (22:16).⁷

³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL
cf. *confer*, compare
v. verse

⁵Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

⁶Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL
cf. *confer*, compare

Proverbs 15:19

As hatred and anger bring problems so does laziness. **Thorns in the path** depict problems that keep a person from getting what he wants; his life has obstructions. **The upright**, however, are diligent and therefore have fewer problems; their lives are more like a smooth **highway**.⁸

Proverbs 16:26

Hunger can motivate people, sometimes even lazy people, to work so that with their wages they can buy food. This verse has an interesting wordplay: though a person is working as a laborer for someone else, his **appetite** is “working” for himself.⁹

Proverbs 19:15

The words **deep sleep** refer to a heavy sleep sometimes induced by God (Gen. 2:21; 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12). **Laziness** can cause a person to be so inactive that he easily falls into a deep sleep, totally oblivious to the precious time he is losing (cf. Prov. 20:13). An **idle man** is literally, “a soul (or person) of laxness” (r^emiyyâh is used four times in Prov. and once elsewhere, Jer. 48:10, “lax”)¹⁰

Proverbs 21:25

The verse speaks of a lazy person, a sluggard. He longs for things, but by refusing **to work** he eventually starves.¹¹

Proverbs 26:14

The **sluggard**, though tossing in **bed**, seems anchored to it **as a door** is joined to the jamb. He will not even exert the energy needed to get up.¹²

⁷Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

⁸Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

⁹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

¹⁰Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

¹¹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

¹²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL