

## **Slothfulness and Diligence in Proverbs**

One of the most colorful characters in all of Proverbs is the Sluggard. He is a caricature of laziness and short-term thinking that neglects the work, effort, and self-denial for a lifetime of flourishing and health.

Maybe we can meet some of the “Sluggards” we might encounter in the mirror as we consider diligence in Proverbs.

**The Health...The Spiritual Disciplines Sluggard ...The Priorities Sluggard...The Financial Management Sluggard...The Parenting Sluggard...The Relational Sluggard...The Social Media Sluggard**

## **When am I like the Sluggard? I am more like the Sluggard than the Diligent when...**

**1. I require motivation by authority to get things done.** The Sluggard requires motivation by authority. The diligent person works on what is good without being told.

**Proverbs 6:6-11.** 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. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

**2. I cannot be counted on to follow through.** The Sluggard cannot be counted on to follow through. The diligent person has the confidence of those he represents.

**Proverbs 10:26.** Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.

**Proverbs 12:27.** Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth.

**3. I expect success rather than working to achieve it.** The Sluggard expects success. The diligent person works/prepares for it.

**Proverbs 20:4.** The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.

**Proverbs 15:19.** The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.

**4. I am dominated by immediate cravings rather than focused on the long-term good.** The Sluggard is dominated by immediate cravings and left unsatisfied. The diligent denies immediate cravings to focus on the long term and is satisfied.

**Proverbs 19:24.** The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

**Proverbs 13:4.** The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.

**Proverbs 21:25-26.** The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back.

**5. I am quick to reach for excuses. The Sluggard can always find an excuse. The diligent can always find a reason.** I definitely saved my favorite for last.

**Proverbs 22:13.** The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!”

**Proverbs 26:13-14.** The sluggard says, “There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!” As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed.

### **So what do we do?**

1. **Face the Lion.** Take away the excuses that keep you from diligence. “In our own case we accept excuses too easily; in other people’s we do not accept them easily enough.” C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*
2. **Roast the Game.** Finish the tasks of your important priorities instead of giving up and looking for a distraction.
3. **Clear the path.** Take the first step in what God has called you to regardless of how large the task may seem.
4. **Curb the cravings by practicing self-denial.** Occasionally, certain cravings get ahold of our lives. We need to look at areas of our lives where we need to strengthen the muscle of self-denial.

**Look to Christ:** As we close let’s consider the image that Proverbs 24 gives us and how it prepares us to rejoice in the gospel of Jesus for our slothful hearts.

**Proverbs 24:30-34.** I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction; A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

If we are honest with ourselves. Our lives have often looked more like the sluggard’s field than a garden of virtue. We have craved our own desires and left our responsibilities before God to become like a broken down wall. We have put off faithfulness for another day, to do the things that we have wanted to do.

Not only has Jesus been faithful and diligent in all that the Father gave him to do. He also bore the curse of thorns upon his head from the unkept garden of our lives. He took the thorns and sins of our lives and came into the midst of them. He was crushed by our failures and over run by our sin on the cross. He died not only for the evil we have done but also for the good that we chose not to do while pursuing our own way. And because he finished His work, we can be united with him through faith and be counted righteous with God through His death, burial, resurrection on our behalf.