

Other verses from Proverbs about the lazy include:

"As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him." (Proverbs 10:26)

"The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions." (Proverbs 12:27)

"The labourer's appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on." (Proverbs 16:26)

"Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry." (Proverbs 19:15)

"The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth." (Proverbs 19:24)



DEPENDENCY AND THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF WORK

It is not easy to talk about people being lazy. However the Bible does. In particular Proverbs has much to say about lazy people, who are referred to as *sluggards*.

Lack of work is associated with poverty, while hard work leads to prosperity.

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man" (Proverbs 6:6-11)

"Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth." (Proverbs 10:4)

"From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him." (Proverbs 12:14)

"All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty." (Proverbs 14:23)

"Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare." (Proverbs 20:13)

"The sluggard's cravings will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing." (Proverbs 21:25-26)

"If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; if his hands are idle, the house leaks." (Ecclesiastes 10:18)

The Wife of Noble character is put forward as an example that Godly people should want to follow. One of her characteristics is her hard work and organisation:

"She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness." (Proverbs 31:27)

There are many verses in Proverbs particularly relating to the importance of hard work in an agricultural society. Hard work is recognised as a necessity for getting a good harvest and food for the family. It is not seen as something negative or what we do if nothing else is there to help us. It is the way God gave for us to feed ourselves and our families

"He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son." (Proverbs 10:5)

"He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgement." (Proverbs 12:11)

"A hard-working farmer has plenty to eat, but it is stupid to waste time on useless projects." (Proverbs 12:11 GNB)

Remember however that we are also commanded to rest from work!

"And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." (Genesis 2:3)

Jesus reminded us that we must get work in balance:

"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." (John 6:27)

However, this verse should not be used as an excuse not to work.

Balance in our thinking is probably most clearly seen in these verses from Proverbs:

"Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God." (Proverbs 30:8-9)

"Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone." (I Thessalonians 5:12-14)

Paul goes even further to condemn those who do not work in a number of hard hitting verses:

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you." (II Thessalonians 3:6-8)

"For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (II Thessalonians 3:10)

"We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busy-bodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat." (II Thessalonians 3:11-12)

"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." (Hebrews 6:12)

"A sluggard does not plough in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing." (Proverbs 20:4)

"I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgement; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man." (Proverbs 24:30-34)

"He who works the land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty." (Proverbs 28:19)

Dependency frequently results from receiving free hand-outs and letting this undermine the will to work. It becomes something like slavery, as you no longer have control over your own life:

"Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labour." (Proverbs 12:24)

"The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied." (Proverbs 13:4)

Work should not be seen as something negative, but positive. If we have a positive attitude and see it is God's plan for us, work becomes something to enjoy, and bring satisfaction.

"So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?" (Ecclesiastes 3:22)

The Bible does also preach compassion for those who are in need, but even then encourages work when possible. The basis of the gleaning laws is for those who have to give, but to enable those who have not to work for what they get.

"When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow." (Deuteronomy 24:19-20)

It is easy to find excuses for not working, or to make yourself believe that the obstacles are too great.

"The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway." (Proverbs 15:19)

"The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets." As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly." (Proverbs 26:13-16)

"The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets." (Proverbs 22:13)

In the New Testament Paul sets an example in relation to work. There are many passages that show that he sees work as an important Christian principle:

"...and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them." (Acts 18:3)

"You yourselves know that these hands have supplied my own needs and the need of my companions." (Acts 20:34)

"We work hard with our own hands." (I Corinthians 4:12)

"Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." (I Thessalonians 2:9)

Paul sees work as an antidote for crime:

"He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his hands, that he may have something to share with those in need." (Ephesians 4:28)

Paul gave advice to Christian slaves in Colossians, which is applicable to all of us:

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." (Colossians 3:23)

Work is seen as something that will contrast us with others and enable us to be a good witness in our lives:

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." (I Thessalonians 4:11-12)