

What's Wrong with Laziness?

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Introduction.

In life, there are a few universal temptations, and one of them is the temptation to sloth. At various times in our lives, all of us are tempted to kick back and take it easy instead of gearing up to do what needs to be done. For me, my temptation to sloth shows up just about every morning at 6:30. That's the time I have my alarm clock set to almost every morning, because I know that unless I get at least a somewhat early start to the day, I'm not going to be productive. However, that doesn't mean that I'm happy to hear from the alarm clock, either, especially during the winter, when it's still dark outside, and the room is cold, and my bed is warm and inviting. There's always that little voice in my head that says getting up hurts too much, and nothing bad will happen if I just go back to bed. The problem is that I know that if I listen to the little voice, I'll end up being less useful to God than I want to be, so I get up anyway.

We've all been down that road before. Some of us are tempted only to small acts of sloth; others of us would be just as happy if we never did anything useful in our lives again. The problem with that is that we weren't designed to do nothing. Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 2 that there is nothing better for us than to find enjoyment in toil. If we don't, our laziness will begin to warp our character in all sorts of disastrous ways. Notice also that the temptation to laziness doesn't just affect our working lives. Just as it is possible to be a lazy employee, it's possible to be a lazy spouse, a lazy student, or a lazy Christian, and all of the above are problems. Let's ask this evening, then, "What's wrong with laziness?"

Laziness and Purpose.

One of the most obvious and important answers to that question is that laziness is **DESTRUCTIVE**. That's the point of Proverbs 18:9. When we first see this Scripture, it seems a little harsh. It's saying that if we do nothing, we're in the same boat as a guy who goes around actively wrecking things, that not being willing to do something is just the same as having the intent of destroying it. However, if we think about it, that's exactly right. Laziness is destructive.

All we have to do to destroy anything, whether it's our property, our standing at work, or our marriages, is nothing. There's a great example of this down at my family's family farm. The farm started out with an old-style two-story farmhouse, the one my dad grew up in. However, sometime in the 1960's, my grandfather built a new house, with modern conveniences like indoor plumbing, about a hundred yards down the road. They moved out of the old house, into the new house, and left the old one sitting there. What do you think has happened to that old house? It's a wreck. All the windows are gone, the roof is caved in, the floors aren't safe to walk on. That didn't happen because somebody went after the old farmhouse with a sledgehammer. It happened simply because my grandfather and uncle didn't take care of it anymore like they used to, and it fell apart on its own. Likewise, all the things in our lives that matter to us will be destroyed if we're lazy about keeping them up. If we want them to continue, we have to work to maintain them.

Only slightly less globally, another problem with laziness is that **IT MAKES LIFE HARD**. Along these lines, consider Proverbs 15:19. This too is counter-intuitive. When we think of a lazy man, we don't think of him having a hard life. We think of him lounging around all day, doing whatever he wants to, while the hard-working man is off fighting through another work day. It looks like the diligent is the one with the hard life, not the lazy. That might be true in the short term, but it is certainly not true in the long term. Just like all other kinds of sin, laziness bites you in the end. Back when I was in sixth grade or so, I decided that I wasn't going to do my spelling homework. I thought it was ridiculous. I knew how to spell everything anyway, so going through copying down all those lists was a waste of time. That worked out well for me until I came slinking home with a C in spelling on my report card and had one of those long, agonizing talks with my parents. At that point, I would have happily done ten times the amount of spelling homework just to not hear—again—how disappointed they were with me. Laziness is short-term fun, but it's long-term dumb.

Laziness is also problematic because **IT FRUSTRATES PLANS**. Let's look at the story laid out in Proverbs 12:27. Here we see a lazy man who's hungry, so he decides to go out hunting. However, when he gets back, having shot his quail or his deer or his whatever, he's too tired to follow through. He doesn't cook the meat until it spoils, so at the end of the story, he has wasted all that time hunting, doesn't have anything to show for it, and is still hungry. That's so often the case with us when we are lazy with the ideas we come up with. We get it in our heads to do some project. It could be anything from a kitchen remodel to writing the great American novel. We do all this planning, we start the project, but then, when we're 50 pages into the novel or we've torn out the cabinets, we get distracted, we lose interest, and we move on to something else. Because of our laziness, we're out all the time and money we've invested in beginning to work, but we don't have any good results from our work, because we gave up before we reached that point. It's good to have goals and plans and dreams. However, none of those will go anywhere if we are lazy.

However, laziness is even worse than that. It doesn't just sabotage the things that we start on our own. It also **WASTES OPPORTUNITIES**. We see an extreme example of this in Proverbs 19:24. The lazy man has got it made. He's got food in front of him, and all he has to do is eat it. However, he's so lazy that he just plops his hand down in it and doesn't even bring it up to his mouth to eat. We laugh at that, but the truth is that there are plenty of people who are just as foolish at wasting the opportunities in front of them. A buddy gets them a job, but they sleep in all the time instead of showing up for work, and soon they get fired. Their parents buy them a house, but they're so terrible at keeping steady employment that they don't pay the mortgage, and they get foreclosed on. Their grandpa dies and leaves them a car, but they don't bother changing the oil, the engine throws a rod, and the car's worthless. Every one of us knows somebody who wastes opportunity after opportunity like that, and it's all because they're lazy.

Laziness and Relationships.

However, just as laziness damages our financial standing, it damages our relationships with others too. First on the list, we see that **IT SHAMES PARENTS**. Solomon covers this in Proverbs 10:5. For most people, it's important for them to do something that their parents consider honorable. It matters to me a lot that I can get on the phone and tell my parents what I've been doing for the Lord over the past week, that my mother can take the workbooks I've written and use them in her Tuesday ladies' Bible class and have all her friends exclaim over what a good preacher I am. I owe everything to my parents, and if I can bring them joy by being diligent, that's the least I can do. What would happen, though, if I were one of those thirty-year-olds who still lives in his parents' basement, isn't going to school, doesn't have a job, and stays up till 2 in the morning every night playing World of Warcraft? Assuming that my parents even let me get away with it, I guarantee you that my mother wouldn't be bragging about my Level 50 Paladin to the members of her social circle. She would be ashamed of me, and I would be ashamed to be the kind of man she would be ashamed of.

In similar fashion, laziness **ANNOYS EMPLOYERS**. Solomon captures this quite well in Proverbs 10:26. From all of my camping days as a kid, I know very well what it is to sit downwind of a campfire. The smoke blows into your face, your eyes start burning, it's hard to breathe, and before too long, you have to move. Life is every bit as annoying for employers who are stuck with lazy employees. Back when my dad was still with the FAA, he had one employee, named Jerry. As per my dad, this guy was utterly worthless. He snored during meetings, he never completed a single project, and he spent every work day talking on the phone with his bridge buddies about playing bridge. My dad dearly wanted to fire him, but because of the rules of the federal bureaucracy, he couldn't, and so he was just stuck with him, I think until he retired. It's been 20 years since my dad's last day of work, but he still talks about this guy and the intense frustration he produced. To say the least, it's unwise for us to put our bosses through that level of misery. Most employers have the Jerrys of the world out the door before they can blink. Let's be diligent and avoid the problem.

Perhaps as a direct consequence of the above point, laziness **LEADS TO POVERTY**. This is a fairly obvious point, but it's well captured in Proverbs 10:4. Back in the time of Proverbs, the man who wasn't willing to work starved to death. Today, because our government is perhaps overly generous, the lazy aren't going to starve to death, but they aren't going to live lives that any of us would want, either. The way that the free market works is very simple. Even if we aren't the brightest folks out there, even if we don't have the best education, if we work hard, we'll do all right financially. That doesn't mean we'll be driving Rolls-Royces, but it does mean that we'll manage. On the other hand, though, if we don't apply ourselves to whatever is set before us, if we don't work, we're not going to have anything. Somebody can be the smartest guy on the planet, but if he isn't willing to put in the time and effort, he'll end up back in his parents' basement playing World of Warcraft. Let's remember that. Laziness only leads one place, and it's not a good one.

Finally, laziness is a problem because **IT BRINGS DISHONOR**. Notice what Proverbs 12:24 says about the eventual social standing of the diligent and the lazy. The hard worker is going to be exalted because of his hard work, but the lazy man is going to fall to the bottom rung of the social ladder because of his laziness. Nor is the dishonor that comes to the lazy man only in the economic world. Nobody loves a sluggard. In every sphere of his life, those he encounters hold him in contempt. In particular, I can't help but think of the plight of the woman who is married to the lazy man. I've seen situations where Christian men "retire" at 45 so they can stay at home with their guns and their hobbies, while they send their wives out to work every day. Instead of the man supporting the woman, as is the Scriptural pattern, the woman ends up supporting the man, not because he can't find a job, but because he won't find a job. I sympathize with the plight of the husband who wants to work and can't, but I have nothing but contempt for the husband who refuses to work. In such a situation, it must be terribly difficult for the wife to comply with the command in Ephesians 5 to respect her husband. Let's be people who can be honored, and never let ourselves become lazy.