

Women of Grace

Lesson 17 | Diligence and Laziness

Laziness in Proverbs is more than a character flaw; it is a significant moral issue. In Proverbs, the sluggard is contrasted with the righteous, highlighting the connection between laziness and vice. He is never equated with the “poor” because they are such by virtue of circumstances beyond their control, whereas he is poor by virtue of his moral degeneracy.

— Adapted from Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, chs. 1-15, pp. 115

Memorization Verse
James 1:20

...for the anger of man
does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Outline

I. Diligence Defined: A Divine Mandate
II. Diligence Denied: The Sluggard’s Sinful Traits
III. Diligence Displayed: Lady Wisdom

DAY 1 | Understanding Diligence and Laziness

Read selected Scriptures

1. Use a dictionary to define “laziness” and “sluggard,” terms used extensively in the book of Proverbs.

2. According to Proverbs 22:13 and 26:13, what excuse does the sluggard give for his refusal to work?

- a. What might that look like today?
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3. How is the sluggard described in Proverbs 21:25, 24:30–34, and 26:13–16?
 - a. Moving from the Bible’s description of the sluggard to today’s cultural context, how would you recognize this person now? Be specific.
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4. The diligent man stands in stark contrast to the lazy man in Proverbs. Using a dictionary, define “diligence.”
 - a. According to Proverbs 31:10–31, how does this woman of excellence manifest diligence in her life? How does that motivate you personally this week?

DAY 2 | Diligence and Laziness: A Reflection of Character

Read selected Scriptures from Proverbs 10, 15, and 21

1. In Proverbs 10:1–5, what contrasts do you note?
 - a. How does diligence relate to wisdom and righteousness?

- b. How does laziness/negligence relate to foolishness and wickedness?
2. What two things are contrasted in Proverbs 15:19 and 21:25–26? Why is this significant?
 3. According to Proverbs 10:1–5, 15:19, and 21:25–26, what place does laziness have in the life of the righteous?
 - a. Do you regard laziness as a serious matter or do you make excuses for it in your own life?
 - b. How do these verses convict and motivate you towards obedience?

DAY 3 | Diligence and Laziness: Contrast in Results

Read selected Scriptures

1. From the following passages, list the result of laziness and the result of diligence.

Passage	Result of Laziness	Result of Diligence
a. 10:4–5		
b. 12:11		
c. 12:24		

d. 12:27–28		
e. 13:4		

2. In what ways do you practically esteem diligence in your own life and promote the value of diligence to those around you?

DAY 4 | Diligence Illustrated: Observe the Ant

Read Proverbs 6

1. In Proverbs 6:6, what does the father instruct the sluggard to do, and why?

2. From Proverbs 6:7–8 and 30:24–25, what characteristics of the ant makes it a helpful model for those who would be wise?
 - a. Remembering that the context is a rebuke of the sluggard, why does Solomon make the point that the ant has no “chief, officer or ruler” in verse 7?

 - b. What do verses 8–11 teach about planning, preparation, and procrastination?

 - c. In what areas of your life do you procrastinate in fulfilling your God-given work? What steps can you take to change?

3. Does this passage teach that it is wrong to enjoy sleep or rest? How should Christians regard sleep and rest? Use Scripture to support your answer.
 - a. Are you tempted either to love sleep or rest too much or to neglect it in your own life? What steps can you take to change?

4. How does reflecting on the diligence of one of God's smallest creatures challenge and encourage you towards greater diligence this week?

DAY 5 | Diligence in the Christian Life

Read selected Scriptures

1. Diligence is a virtue that can and should be applied to all areas of the Christian life. According to Proverbs 4:23, how does diligence relate to one's spiritual growth and health?

2. According to Proverbs 13:24, how is diligence manifest in parenting?
 - a. How can you encourage (not berate) parents around you to be diligent in the discipline of their children?

3. What does Proverbs 8:12–17 teach about the connection between wisdom and diligence?
 - a. In your study of Proverbs this year, have you been diligent in seeking wisdom?
How has God helped you to grow in the diligent study of Scripture this year?

4. What other verses in Scripture speak of diligence in the Christian life? Share with your group one way that you have been encouraged or challenged in the study of diligence this week.