

Proverbs Pt. 5

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, August 29, 2021

SUMMATIONS

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or watching via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

FYI – We are in the midst of an extended summer series on the Book of Proverbs. In fact, today is the fifth of approximately eight total lessons. Please feel free to review previous installments online, as I am not going to have time this morning to reaffirm the broad foundation we have laid in recent weeks. I will simply note that...

NOTE 1 – The Book of Proverbs offers wisdom (i.e., instruction) on an array of topics related to daily life and living. Those who desire insight into how to live well before the Lord and amongst men, properly discerning good from evil, do well to consider this ancient work of biblical literature.

NOTE 2 – It would be accurate to say that the Book of Proverbs serves as a compilation of individual proverbs that address nearly every facet of life (e.g., pride v. humility, anger v. self-control, hatred v. compassion, poverty v. wealth, generosity v. greed, hard work v. laziness, reputation and legacy, marriage and parenthood, friendship, submission to gov. authority, our words, etc.).

NOTE 3 – Thus said, we are taking several weeks to analyze the inspired wisdom the Book of Proverbs offers concerning a selection of these areas. This morning we will continue by addressing what it reveals concerning hard work v. laziness. Let us delve in...

BACK TO THE BEGINNING PT. 1

NOTE 1 – Genesis 1 provides a chronological overview of the creation week...

Day 1 – Light

Day 2 – Sky and Waters

Day 3 – Dry Ground and Vegetation

Day 4 – Luminary Bodies (Sun, Moon & Stars)

Day 5 – Fish of the Sea & Birds of the Air

Day 6 – Land Animals and Humanity

Day 7 – God Rested (Cessation)

NOTE 2 – Genesis 2 provides particular insight into the activities of Day 6...

KEY – Herein Moses, inspired of the Lord, spotlights the creation of our progenitors, Adam and (i.e., later) Eve. I would like to hone in on one facet of this chapter—one facet that is particularly connected to our overarching theme this morning...

Genesis 2:15 (NIV, Emp. Mine) [Upon the Creation of Adam and Prior to the Forming of Eve]

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING PT. 2

KEY – Please note that the first thing God did upon the creation of Adam was to give Adam a labor to perform. Before Adam had a wife, children, a role in society, a hobby or an interest, etc., the Lord entrusted him with a work to accomplish and placed responsibility into his hands. We can learn much from this...

NOTE 1 – Man was not made to simply function as a being of worship or spiritual function. Rather, he was also made to work, bearing a sense of earthly, practical stewardship and functionality. Work and industry have always been a critical aspect of who and what we are in the Lord.

NOTE 2 – Though the fall of man (cf. Gen. 3). resulted in the amplification of the pain and difficulty associated with work, this does not diminish the prior establishment of labor as a critical facet of our existence. Thus, work is a reality we cannot, should not, and must not change!

NOTE 3 – Since work is to have its place in our lives—a “God-given” place—it is not surprising to consider that Scripture has much to say on the subject. This is particularly evident in the Book of Proverbs! As followers of Christ, let us consider and apply the following precepts...

A MATTER OF BALANCE PT. 1

To begin, believers must navigate the delicate balance between too much and too little work...

Q. Isn't it amazing how often the Bible calls us to live in tension between two extremes?

1) We are Called to Reject Laziness (Idleness)

2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

14 Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

1 Timothy 5:8

8 Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

2) We are Called to Reject Working too Much

NOTE 1 – The modern term “workaholic” is not found in the pages of Scripture. However, when our devotion to our career or company reaches the point of obsessiveness, it can easily idolatrous. Any fixation, other than God, is an idol.

1 John 5:21

21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

NOTE 2 – One good test to know whether we are too focused on our jobs is to ask ourselves how much time we spend thinking about our jobs when we are not actually at work. If our thoughts center more on our jobs than on God, our family and/or other beneficial subjects, we may be in danger...

A MATTER OF BALANCE PT. 2

ILL – Consider the “Rules for the Coronary & Ulcer Club”...

1. Your job comes first. Forget everything and everyone else.
2. Weekends and holidays are perfect times to be working at the office. There will be nobody else there to bother you.
3. Always have your laptop, iPad or iPhone with you when not at your desk. This provides an opportunity to review completely all the troubles and worries of the day.
4. Never say "no" to a request. Always say "yes."
5. Accept all invitations to meetings, banquets, committees, etc.
6. All forms of recreation are a waste of time.
7. Never delegate responsibility to others; carry the entire load yourself.
8. If your work calls for traveling, work all day and travel at night to keep that appointment you made for eight the next morning.

A MATTER OF BALANCE PT. 3

KEY – Working too much can open the door for sinful elements (e.g., self-reliance, discontent, greed, etc.)...

Proverbs 23:4 (NIV, 1984)

4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
have the wisdom to show restraint.

Proverbs 23:4 (ESV)

4 Do not toil to acquire wealth;
be discerning enough to desist.

1 Timothy 6:6–10 (NIV)

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Proverbs 11:4, 28

4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
but righteousness delivers from death.

28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

Mark 8:36

36 . . . what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

LAZINESS PT. 1

KEY – Shifting gears dramatically...

The Book of Proverbs has much to say on the topic of laziness. In fact, a figure who appears often in the Book of Proverbs is the “ sluggard.” The sluggard is the embodiment and personification of laziness (i.e., much like “lady wisdom” and “mistress folly”).

Q. What does the Bible teach re: laziness through the example of the sluggard?

A1. The Sluggard Loves Sleep to a Detrimental Degree**Proverbs 6:9–11**

9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard?
When will you get up from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest—
11 and poverty will come on you like a thief
and scarcity like an armed man.

Proverbs 20:13

13 Do not love sleep or you will grow poor;
stay awake and you will have food to spare.

Proverbs 19:15

15 Laziness brings on deep sleep,
and the shiftless go hungry.

A2. The Sluggard Cannot Seem to Start a Task

Proverbs 10:4–5

- 4 Lazy hands make for poverty,
but diligent hands bring wealth.
5 He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son,
but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

A3. The Sluggard Cannot Seem to Complete a Task

Proverbs 26:15

- 15 A sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

A4. The Sluggard Excuses His Laziness (i.e., Going to Bizarre Measures of Justification)

Proverbs 26:13

- 13 A sluggard says, “There’s a lion in the road,
a fierce lion roaming the streets!”

QUOTE 1 – “Some people will do anything to be able to do nothing.”

QUOTE 2 – “Some stop looking for work the moment they find a job!”

A5. The Sluggard is a Know-It-All (Expert Extraordinaire)

Proverbs 26:16

- 16 A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
than seven people who answer discreetly.

LAZINESS PT. 2

KEY – There are dire consequences for laziness (per the Book of Proverbs)...

1) Poverty or Ruin

Proverbs 24:30–34

- 30 I went past the field of a sluggard,
past the vineyard of someone who has no sense;
31 thorns had come up everywhere,
the ground was covered with weeds,
and the stone wall was in ruins.
32 I applied my heart to what I observed
and learned a lesson from what I saw:
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest—
34 and poverty will come on you like a thief
and scarcity like an armed man.

Proverbs 6:9–11

9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard?
 When will you get up from your sleep?
 10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
 a little folding of the hands to rest—
 11 and poverty will come on you like a thief
 and scarcity like an armed man.

2) Loss of Independence**Proverbs 12:24**

24 Diligent hands will rule,
 but laziness ends in forced labor.

FYI – The ancients would sell themselves into servitude to pay off accumulated debts. This is particularly interesting in light of modern times, as those who do not want to work will happily put their lives on credit (i.e., becoming the proverbial “servant” and/or “slave” to the lender).

3) The Frustration of Unsatisfied Craving (Going Nowhere in Life)**Proverbs 13:4 (ESV)**

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

Proverbs 21:25–26 (NIV)

25 The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him,
 because his hands refuse to work.
 26 All day long he craves for more,
 but the righteous give without sparing.

RE: INDUSTRY

Clearly, we are to reject idleness in order to embrace industry (i.e., a godly work ethic)...

1) The Industrious are Self-Motivated and Disciplined**Proverbs 6:6–8**

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard;
 consider its ways and be wise!
 7 It has no commander,
 no overseer or ruler,
 8 yet it stores its provisions in summer
 and gathers its food at harvest.

NOTE – Like the ant, the industrious man or woman does not need someone to command them to work. They have an internal compulsion to work as unto the Lord, based upon an inward principle and sense of self-motivation. This is something that the sluggard is told to consider and embrace! Thus, laziness and industry are both the result of choice! Choose well...

2) The Industrious Know the Security Hard Work Brings

Proverbs 6:9–11

9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard?

When will you get up from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little slumber,

a little folding of the hands to rest—

11 and poverty will come on you like a thief

and scarcity like an armed man.

NOTE – Scarcity holds no threat over the industrious, as they have prepared in abundance for lean times.

3) The Industrious Know the Reward and Satisfaction of Hard Work

Proverbs 10:4

4 Lazy hands make for poverty,

but diligent hands bring wealth.

Proverbs 13:4

4 A sluggard's appetite is never filled,

but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

4) The Industrious Know the Elevation Hard Work Brings

Proverbs 22:29

29 Do you see someone skilled in their work?

They will serve before kings;

they will not serve before officials of low rank.

PRACTICAL CONCERNS (EMPLOYEES)

Many in the sound of my voice work for others. You are not an employer but an employee and a subordinate...

Q. Do you know how much Scripture speaks to you in the Book of Proverbs?

KEY – Consider the wisdom of the Lord in your situation...

1) Avoid Idleness – It Only Bugs the Boss

Proverbs 10:26

26 As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,

so are sluggards to those who send them.

2) Avoid Idleness – It Only Brings Ruination

Proverbs 18:9

9 One who is slack in his work

is brother to one who destroys.

NOTE – A person who performs his or her duty lazily is comparable to one who destroys (i.e., “is brother to”). A poor or unfinished job differs little from a project that someone has demolished in that both are of no value! You want to destroy your reputation and/or harm the reputation of your company and coworkers? Be lazy and perform terribly!

3) Be Diligent in Your Work

Proverbs 12:24

24 Diligent hands will rule,
but laziness ends in forced labor.

4) Cultivate Your Craft (Pursue Excellence)

Proverbs 22:29

29 Do you see someone skilled in their work?
They will serve before kings;
they will not serve before officials of low rank.

5) Impress w/ the Quality of Your Work v. the Quantity of Words

Proverbs 14:23

23 All hard work brings a profit,
but mere talk leads only to poverty.

PRACTICAL CONCERNS (EMPLOYERS)

Many in the sound of my voice work are supervisors (i.e., with people working under your authority)...

Q. Do you know how much Scripture speaks to you in the Book of Proverbs?

1) Be a Diligent v. A Hasty Manager

Proverbs 21:5

5 The plans of the diligent lead to profit
as surely as haste leads to poverty.

2) Listen to Wise Counsel (Above, Below & Outside)

Proverbs 15:22

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they succeed.

3) Do Not Be Oppressive – It is Counterproductive

Proverbs 28:16

16 A tyrannical ruler practices extortion,
but one who hates ill-gotten gain will enjoy a long reign.

4) Be Diligent in Discipline

Proverbs 29:21

21 A servant pampered from youth
will turn out to be insolent.

SETTING FORTH AN EXAMPLE

There are many reasons why a good work ethic and sense of industry is vital. There are also many reasons why a sense of laziness and sloth should be utterly shunned and rejected. However, can I close with one great reason to work hard as unto the Lord (i.e., regardless of your profession, etc.)?

KEY – It is a vital aspect of your Christian witness to those who do not know Christ.

You see, I am operating from the perspective that the Lord has commanded each of us to reach the lost in our spheres of influence (cf. Matt. 28 and Mark 16). Let us remember that the way in which we live and serve among our coworkers, supervisors, subordinates, etc., communicates much about Him...

QUOTE – You may be the only “Jesus” some people ever meet...

Q. What do your work-peers see when they see you?

Q. What are you showing them about the Lord and His ways?

Matthew 5:14–16

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

1 Peter 2:12

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Q. What kind of a workplace witness are we when we are known to be slothful, apathetic “no-shows”?

Q. What kind of a workplace witness are we when we are known to be industrious, diligent and dutiful?

CONCLUSIONS

Thank you for joining us today! Allow me to close with the following...

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 2 – Sunday School each week at 9:15am; Thursday Bible Study at 6:30pm; WM 2nd Tuesday; MM & CYC...

NOTE 3 – Nicole R. (T. Overseer of the Nursery) is looking for volunteers to participate in the ministry! See her!

NOTE 4 – The annual Church Picnic is taking place today...

Flyers with the address and printed directions are available on the front foyer table. Bring sides and desserts as you have prepared them, along with lawn chairs for you and your family. It is still not too late to invite friends and family! We hope that you and yours will join us for this time of fun, food and fellowship. See you there!

NOTE 5 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need(s).

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you

and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you

and give you peace.