

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 21 – Laziness

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Introduction

Americans are hard workers. Many even pride themselves on being hard working, or at least being (or looking) busy. However, Americans are not the hardest working people in the world. According to the article “Top 10 Nations That Work The Hardest” by Jessica Rose Purchon on therichest.com, the US does not even make the top ten. Note that there are an average 2087 hours in a work year with no vacation or holidays. As a comparison, a federal employee with greater than 15 years tenure using all their vacation every year works 1775 hrs. These are the average number of hours employed people work: 12. United States (1778 hrs); 10. Slovak republic (1786 hrs); 9. Mexico (1866 hrs); 8. Turkey (1877 hrs); 7. Estonia (1879 hrs); 6. Poland (1939 hrs); 5. Czech Republic (1947 hrs); 4. Hungary (1961 hrs); 3. Russia (1976 hrs); 2. Chile (2068 hrs); 1. South Korea (2193 hrs). Does this mean that South Korean’s are not lazy and everyone else is?

❖ **Is the number of hours one works in a day/week/month/year a good indication of laziness?**

Today, let’s look at what it means to be lazy.

Laziness

Webster says that laziness is “not liking to work hard or to be active”, “not having much activity”, “moving slowly”, “disinclined to activity or exertion”, or “not energetic or vigorous”. Laziness is often used in connection with work of some kind like physical labor, a job, school work, etc. People think that when we work hard, we are not lazy and when we do not work hard, we are lazy.

❖ **Is this how you define laziness?**

Let’s look at a passage that describes laziness from Proverbs.

³⁰I passed by the field of the sluggard And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, ³¹And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. ³²When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. ³³“A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest,” ³⁴Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man. Prov 24:30-34

1. Laziness is seen in the neglect of responsibilities (v30-32). The plot of land to be used for farming is in dire neglect. It is “completely overgrown with thistles”. Its surface is “covered with nettles”, a kind of weed. Its stone wall protection is “broken down”. The responsibility of the farmer is to clear the land, prepare the soil, plant the vineyard, keep the vineyard, and keep the protecting wall maintained. Each of these events has a timeframe when they have to be completed. The lazy person does not do what is required in a timely manner; they neglect their responsibilities.
2. Laziness is seen in procrastination (v33). Responsibilities are put off until a “little” later – “a little sleep”, “little slumber”, or “a little folding of the hands to rest”. The problem is that “later” never comes and responsibilities get neglected.
3. Laziness is seen in surprised loss and want (v34). There are consequences for neglecting and procrastinating responsibilities.

❖ **Does this description of laziness (the sluggard) inform your thinking?**

Two Greek words are translated “lazy” in the NT. “Okneros” means being afraid to act, hesitating, shrinking, or lazy and is used three times. This is the Greek word for “sluggard” in the Septuagint.

¹¹not **lagging behind** in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; Rom 12:11

“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, **lazy** slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no *seed*. Matt 25:26

¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no **trouble** to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Phil 3:1

The other word is “argos” which is a compound word meaning “without work” or doing nothing. It always describes something inoperative or unserviceable. It is translated seven times in the NT as: “careless” (1), “idle” (4), “lazy” (1), or “useless” (2).

³⁶But I tell you that every **careless** word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. Matt 12:36

³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing **idle** in the market place; Matthew 20:3

⁶And about the eleventh *hour* he went out and found others standing *around*; and he *said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here **idle** all day long?’ Matt 20:6

¹³At the same time they also learn *to be idle*, as they go around from house to house; and not merely **idle**, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*. 1 Tim 5:13

¹²One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, **lazy** gluttons.” Titus 1:12

²⁰But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is **useless**? James 2:20

⁸For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither **useless** nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ 2 Pet 1:8

So the description of laziness is neglect and procrastination (from Prov 24:30-34), “idle” or not moving toward accomplishing our responsibilities, “useless”, and “lagging behind in diligence”.

❖ **Does this describe you? In what areas do you neglect your responsibilities?**

The Real Issue

Suppose, me and another person each have a contract to make 100 widgets a day at a specified quality. I can get mine done in 4 hours at the acceptable quality, but it takes the other person 8 hours. If I go surfing for the remaining 4 hours, am I lazy?

We can look over many passages that directly state or indirectly infer that laziness is a sin. The problem is that at some point working hard and laziness are relative qualities. One person may...

- work a more physically demanding job than another
- work longer hours than another
- be involved in more ministry than another
- commute a longer distance than another
- due to long hours of work get much less hours of sleep than another
- appear to have much more time to play than another
- work a part-time job instead of a full-time job

Is one really more or less lazy than another?

❖ **Do you judge people by these kinds of standards?**

The problem is that we can work very hard and/or be very busy and still be lazy because we neglect and procrastinate our responsibilities. Since laziness is a neglect of responsibilities, a better way to evaluate ourselves is: “Am I faithful?” Believers are described as faithful or unfaithful.

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are faithful* in Christ Jesus: Eph 1:1

¹³If we are **faithless**, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. 2 Tim 2:13

Faithfulness is defined as trustworthiness, loyalty, reliability, adherence, constancy, dependability, devotedness. Another synonym is the word fidelity which means strict, careful, continuing and exact observance of duty, or performance of obligations.

What are some responsibilities that a believer might neglect?

- All people are to work heartily as unto the Lord (Col 3:23) – are we faithful?
- Husbands and wives have responsibilities in marriage (1 Cor 11:2-16; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:8-19; 1 Pet 3:1-7; 1 Cor 7:3) – are we faithful?
- Fathers have a responsibility to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4) – are we faithful?
- All believers have a responsibility to study the Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15) – are we faithful?
- All believers have a responsibility to use our spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ (1 Pet 4:10) – are we faithful?
- All believers have a responsibility to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20) – are we faithful?

❖ **Can you think of other responsibilities that you neglect?**

God Honoring Change

If we find ourselves neglecting and procrastinating our responsibilities then we are being lazy or unfaithful. What should be do?

²⁰But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²²that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, ²⁴and **put on the new self**, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Eph 4:20-34

❖ **Are you consistently practicing putting off sin and putting on righteousness?**

1. Put off unfaithfulness/laziness.

You have bowed before the master of unfaithfulness/laziness.

❖ **What masters are you bowing to?**

You are walking below the line, in the flesh, and must turn from that other master. Confess this sin to God, agreeing with God that you have chosen to sin. Repent, turn from the sin.

¹Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, Heb 6:1

❖ **Are you asking God to search your heart (Psa 139:23-24) and reveal areas in which you have yielded to another master?**

2. Ensure you are walking in the Spirit.

As you repent and once again bow before the Lord as the master, you will be filled with the Spirit and have the power to live a God-glorifying life.

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,
¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 5:18-20

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Col 3:16

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**,
²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Gal 5:22-25

❖ **Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?**

3. Renew your mind with the Word of God

God's Word is the tool that God's Spirit uses to produce God honoring change in God's child.

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:1-2

❖ **Are you spending time in God's Word?**

There are many places to go in the Word to have our minds and heart impacted by God in regard to laziness/unfaithfulness.

- We could look at God's character of faithfulness (Gen 28:15; Deut 7:9; 32:4; Psa 33:4; 36:5; 40:10; 89:1, 2, 5, 8, 33; 92:1-2; 111:7-8; 119:75; 119:89-90; 132:11; 143:1; 146:6; Isa 25:1; Jer 23:20; 51:29; Lam 3:22-23; Rom 1:20; 4:19-21; 1 Cor 1:7-9; 10:13; 1 Thess 5:24; 2 Tim 2:13; Heb 10:23; 1 Pet 4:19; 1 John 1:9).
- We could look at what God says about laziness in Proverbs (Prov 3:5-6; 6:6; 10:4, 5, 26; 12:24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15; 20:4, 13; 21:25; 22:29; 24:30-34; 26:13-16; 31:10-31; Eccl 9:10; 10:18).
- We could look at what God says about diligence (see below).

4. Pray for wisdom in applying God's Word in regard to laziness/unfaithfulness.

⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

❖ **What do you most often pray for?**

5. Put on faithfulness

The believer is freed from the power of sin in their life (Rom 6). Now choose to be faithful. Make choices that honor God. As you go through the day, ask yourself:

- Does this use of time and energy honor God?
- Am I neglecting or procrastinating my responsibilities?
- Am I idle toward my responsibilities, not moving toward them?
- Am I useless in regard to my responsibilities?
- Am I lagging behind in diligence?

❖ Are you making choices that honor God?

There are many tools people can use to help with laziness or unfaithfulness (like lists, time management tools, guilt, etc). But it is only putting the sin off, bowing to God as master (being filled with the Spirit), being renewed in your mind by God's word, and putting on righteousness that results in God honoring change.

Diligence

Faithfulness seems to be a good opposite for laziness (with respect to the put-off/put-on concept of change). However, many identify diligence as the put-on of the put-off of laziness. It is instructive to look at diligence also.

“Diligence” [spoude] means in a hurry or intense effort and motivation.

²⁵Immediately she came in a **hurry** to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” Mark 6:25

³⁹Now at this time Mary arose and went in a **hurry** to the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. Luke 1:39-40

⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with **diligence**; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Rom 12:8

¹¹not lagging behind in **diligence**, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; Rom 12:11

¹¹For behold what **earnestness** this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. ¹²So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your **earnestness** on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. 2 Cor 7:11-12

⁷But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all **earnestness** and in the love we inspired in you, *see* that you abound in this gracious work also. ⁸I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the **earnestness** of others the sincerity of your love also. 2 Corinthians 8:7-8

¹⁶But thanks be to God who puts the same **earnestness** on your behalf in the heart of Titus. 2 Cor 8:16

¹¹And we desire that each one of you show the same **diligence** so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, Heb 6:11

⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all **diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, 2 Pet 1:5

³Beloved, while I was making **every effort** to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. Jude 1:3

The verb form “be diligent” conveys the idea of hurrying to do something with the implication of associated energy or with intense effort and motivation. It speaks of intensity of purpose followed by intensity of effort toward the realization of that purpose. It means to be conscientious, zealous, and earnest in discharging a duty or obligation (i.e. a responsibility).

¹⁰*They only asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also **was eager** to do. Gal 2:10

¹Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³**being diligent** to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:1-3

¹⁷But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the **more eager** with great desire to see your face. 1 Thess 2:17

¹⁵**Be diligent** to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15

⁹**Make every effort** to come to me soon; 2 Tim 4:9

²¹**Make every effort** to come before winter. ... 2 Tim 4:21

¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, **make every effort** to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Titus 3:12

¹¹Therefore let us **be diligent** to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. Heb 4:11

¹⁰Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent** to make certain about His calling and choosing you; 2 Pet 1:10

¹⁵And I will also **be diligent** that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. 2 Pet 1:15

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, **be diligent** to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 2 Pet 3:14

We see this word used with respect to physical movement and associated attitude of exertion, the execution of a duty (or spiritual gift), service to the Lord, repentance, the exercise of godly character, love and concern for other believers, the pursuit of sanctification, the demonstration of faith, a desire to make contact with those separated by distance, eagerness to remember those suffering, unity in the body, the study of God’s Word, and ministry to others so they bring God’s Word to mind.

Diligence is not just a spiritual attribute applied to our relationship with God. It is the character of a believer. A believer is diligent. The character of diligence is a demonstration of a heart changed by God. It is a changed heart that conscientiously, zealously, and earnestly accomplishes responsibilities.

❖ **Is diligence seen in your life? If not, what would have to change so that diligence is present?**

Concluding Thoughts

A believer’s highest goal is to glorify God. As we walk through life, the choices we make are a test to demonstrate our faith. When we get to the end of our life we want to be able to say like Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). And we want God to say, “Well done, good and faithful slave” (Matt 25: 21, 23).

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: Your employer's official policy requires you to be at work during the core hours of 8am-3pm (minus your lunch period). Yet, often you arrive at work after 8am. First, does this honor God? Second, what is the first thing you need to do? Next what do you do?

Yourself #2: Your employer's official policy requires you to be at work during the core hours of 8am-3pm (minus your lunch period). Yet, your boss needs you available for a 7am meeting every morning. What might faithfulness and diligence move you to do?

Yourself #3: You read the bulletin at church and see that the elders highly desire for you and your family to be involved in appropriate spiritual growth focused groups. What might faithfulness and diligence move you to do?

Yourself #4: To begin your day, you need to get up at 6am and to get enough hours of sleep for you, you need to go to bed at 10pm. However, your time in God's Word is sporadic at best. What might faithfulness and diligence move you to do?

Yourself #5: You work long hours and when you get home you just want to veg. Your children are struggling with obedience and honoring God with their choices and words, but after a long day you just don't want to deal with it. What might faithfulness and diligence move you to do?

Someone Else #1: At your child's soccer practice, one of the parents confides in you that they are at risk of being fired for poor performance. You start to explain how the Bible talks about that very thing. Before you proceed, what is the most important thing for you to know about this person at this time? After that, where would you begin as you seek to bring Biblical care to this person?

Someone Else #2: At church this morning you strike up a conversation with someone you have known for a long time. You know that their work schedule affords them a lot of free time, yet their involvement within the body is limited to Sunday morning. How might you bring Biblical encouragement to this person?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 21 – Laziness – Additional Study

Pray through Psalm 139:23-24 specifically regarding neglecting and procrastinating responsibilities.

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; ²⁴And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way. Psa 139:23-24

Write down the areas of neglect in your life that God shows you.

Work through the process in each of these areas to put off sin and put on righteousness.

Put off sin	Renew passage	Put on righteousness

As you move through the day and transition to different activity choices, pray for wisdom to make choices that display faithfulness and diligence. Ask yourself questions like:

- Does this use of time and energy honor God?
- Am I neglecting or procrastinating my responsibilities?
- Am I idle toward my responsibilities, not moving toward them?
- Am I useless in regard to my responsibilities?
- Am I lagging behind in diligence?

What were some of the time/energy choice opportunities?

What choice did you make?

Did you honor God in the choice?