

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

(OT Survey Lesson 288—Wisdom about Work)

Introduction: The proverbs often address and contrast the diligent worker with the sluggard. Solomon shows the consequences of each lifestyle and offers valuable advice about work life.

Lesson aim: To show the value of diligence in work as opposed to laziness.

The sluggard

The sluggard's laziness described

19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, *And* will not even bring it back to his mouth.

26:15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.

26:14 *As* the door turns on its hinges, *So does* the sluggard on his bed

Makes excuses

22:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!"

26:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!"

Ignores wisdom of others

26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

The consequences of laziness

19:15 Laziness casts into a deep sleep, And an idle man will suffer hunger.

20:4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

21:25-26 The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work; 26 All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back.

18:9 He also who is slack in his work Is brother to him who destroys.

10:26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy one to those who send him.

Warnings to the sluggard

6:6-11 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer, *And* gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest"— 11 And your poverty will come in like a vagabond, And your need like an armed man.

24:30-34 I passed by the field of the sluggard, And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; 31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. 32 When 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," 34 Then your poverty will come *as* a robber, And your want like an armed man.

The working man

The wisdom of working

10:5 He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, *But* he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

12:27 A slothful man does not roast his prey, *But* the precious possession of a man *is* diligence.

15:19 The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns, *But* the path of the upright is a highway.

Increased wealth

16:26 A worker's appetite works for him, For his hunger urges him *on*.

10:4 Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, *But* the hand of the diligent makes rich.

13:4 The soul of the sluggard craves and *gets* nothing, *But* the soul of the diligent is made fat.

28:19 He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty *pursuits* will have poverty in plenty.

12:11 He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who pursues vain *things* lacks sense.

20:13 Do not love sleep, lest you become poor; Open your eyes, *and* you will be satisfied with food.

Protection of wealth

10:15 The rich man's wealth is his fortress, The ruin of the poor is their poverty.

Power over others that wealth may bring

12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, But the slack *hand* will be put to forced labor.

22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.

Advice about working

The need for deliberate planning and decisive action

21:5 The plans of the diligent *lead* surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty *comes* surely to poverty.

14:23 In all labor there is profit, But mere talk *leads* only to poverty.

Importance of good management of one's resources

27:23-27 Know well the condition of your flocks, *And* pay attention to your herds; 24 For riches are not forever, Nor does a crown *endure* to all generations. 25 *When* the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, 26 The lambs *will be* for your clothing, And the goats *will bring* the price of a field, 27 *And there will be* goats' milk enough for your food, For the food of your household, And sustenance for your maidens.

21:17 He who loves pleasure *will become* a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.

Using animals

14:4 Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, But much increase *comes* by the strength of the ox.

Dealing with workers

29:19 A slave will not be instructed by words *alone*; For though he understands, there will be no response.

29:21 He who pampers his slave from childhood Will in the end find him to be a son.

27:18 He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit; And he who cares for his master will be honored.

Getting priorities in order

24:27 Prepare your work outside, And make it ready for yourself in the field; Afterwards, then, build your house.

Dangers of putting too much emphasis on earthly gain to the neglect of the spiritual

23:4 Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration *of* it.

27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.

23:5 When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings, Like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens.

16:3 Commit your works to the LORD, And your plans will be established.