

Work—The Second Divine Institution

Written and compiled by Gary Kukis

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). **If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Much of this doctrine was taken out of **Proverbs 6** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) (primarily from vv. 6–9).

Preface: One pastor (I forget who) brilliantly added the institution of work to the divine institutions. Before there was the woman, before there was sin, there was Adam, with the job of naming all the animals. Even when God brought the woman to him, Adam continued to work in the garden; and, even after the fall, Adam continued to work. The first dissertation in Prov. 6 is all about working and about how we should examine the life of the ant and how poverty comes to the lazy man.

This is one of the most important doctrines found in the Word of God for this generation, and yet has been so often ignored by our churches. Work is the second divine institution; Adam worked in the Garden when he was without sin; and Adam worked on the earth after the Fall. The Bible many times affirms the importance of hard work; the Bible never presents sloth as a viable alternative. As a divine institution, this is true for believers and unbelievers alike. In client nation United States year of our Lord 2015, it is clear that we as a nation are on the decline, and one of those tell-tale signs is the massive number of people who are no longer working. So many are on welfare, section 8 housing, unemployment, disability and retirement (the Bible never speaks of the glories of retirement). As I write this, 94 million Americans, out of a population of 220 million or so, are not working and are not looking for a job--and yet one political party calls out for more welfare and food stamps! Whereas the Bible clearly urges charity toward the poor, it does not advocate that nearly half of a nation's population ought to be supported by the other half. This is an outstanding study, primarily pulled from the exegesis of Proverbs 6 (but more will be added to this doctrine as time passes).

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The Work of the Little Ant, by Alan Carr	Gary North’s Concluding Remarks on the Industrious Ant	Stuart Wolf’s Summary of Proverbs 6:6–11

Quotations on Sloth:

R. Walker (from The Bible Illustrator): *the sluggard...spends his time in fruitless wishes. He is discouraged by the least opposition.*¹

John Ortberg: *Sloth is the failure to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done - like the kamikaze pilot who flew seventeen missions.*²

Jon Foreman: *Greed, envy, sloth, pride and gluttony: these are not vices anymore. No, these are marketing tools. Lust is our way of life. Envy is just a nudge towards another sale. Even in our relationships we consume each other, each of us looking for what we can get out of the other. Our*

¹ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tbi/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015.

² From <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/sloth.html> accessed September 29, 2015.

appetites are often satisfied at the expense of those around us. In a dog-eat-dog world we lose part of our humanity.³

Proverbs 6:6–8 Preface Graphic; from **Studies of the Grapher**; accessed October 3, 2015.

Kajol (expressing human viewpoint): *I'd love sloth. I wish sloth would come home and visit me once in a while. I don't consider laziness a sin at all.*⁴

Ella James: *"You know, sloth is a sin," he says softly. "I prefer to think of it as an adorable animal."*⁵

Gary Taubes: *obesity as the penalty for gluttony and sloth - is what makes it so alluring.*⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Idleness and vice are allied.*⁷

My cousin Richard: *If you're not working for the state, you are working too hard.*

Quotations on Work:

Ann Landers Quote is from **rff99.com**; accessed October 8, 2015.

Charles J. Sykes, (from *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why American Children Feel Good about Themselves but Can't Read, Write or Add*): *Be nice to nerds. You may end up working for them. We all could.*⁸

Anonymous: *Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.*⁹



**OPPORTUNITIES
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- Ann Landers

³ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/sloth> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁴ From <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/sloth.html> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁵ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/sloth> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁶ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/sloth> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Prov. 6:12.

⁸ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/work> accessed October 8, 2015.

⁹ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/work> accessed October 8, 2015.

Joseph Barbara: *Happiness is the real sense of fulfillment that comes from hard work.*¹⁰

Frederick Lewis Donaldson (from a sermon given in Westminster Abbey, London, on March 20, 1925):

The Seven Social Sins are:

Wealth without work.

Pleasure without conscience.

Knowledge without character.

Commerce without morality.

Science without humanity.

Worship without sacrifice.

*Politics without principle.*¹¹

Mohammed Ali Quotation from **positive inspiring quotes**; accessed October 8, 2015.

Thomas Jefferson: *I'm a greater believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.*¹²

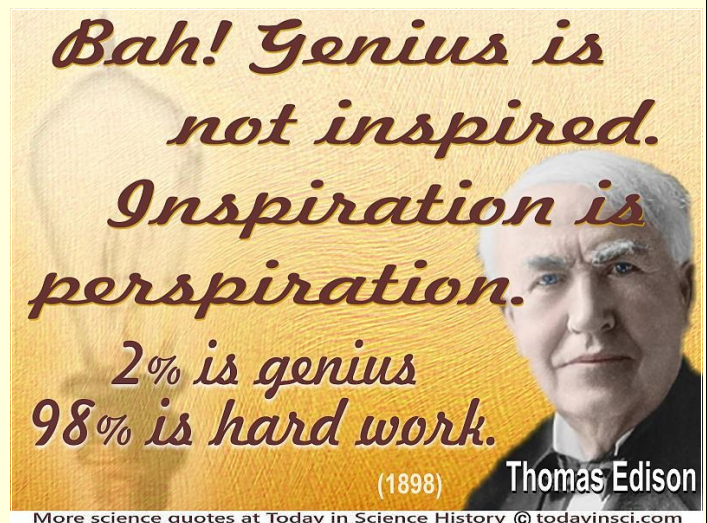
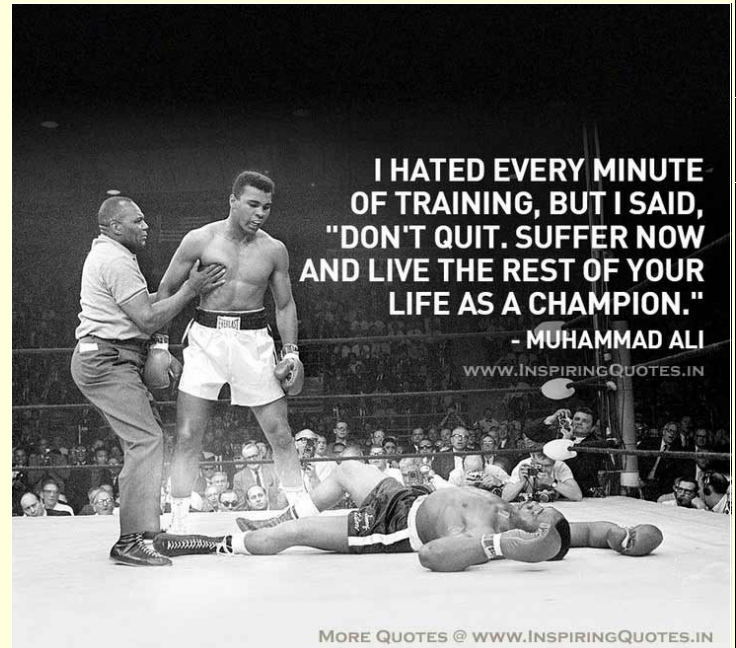
Colin Powell: *A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.*¹³

John Ruskin: *The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.*¹⁴

Jim Rohn: *Don't wish it were easier. Wish you were better.*¹⁵

Thomas Edison quotation; from **todayinsci.com**; accessed October 8, 2015.

Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Without ambition one starts nothing. Without work one finishes nothing. The prize will not be sent to you. You have to win it.*¹⁶



¹⁰ From <http://www.keepinspiring.me/motivational-quotes-for-work/> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹¹ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/work> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹² From <http://www.keepinspiring.me/motivational-quotes-for-work/> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹³ From <http://www.keepinspiring.me/motivational-quotes-for-work/> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹⁴ From <http://www.keepinspiring.me/motivational-quotes-for-work/> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹⁵ From <http://www.keepinspiring.me/motivational-quotes-for-work/> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹⁶ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/work> accessed October 8, 2015.

Jerome K. Jerome: *I like work: it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours.*¹⁷

Ronald Reagan (I think this was in response to his taking naps during his presidency): *I've heard that hard work never killed anyone, but I say why take the chance?*¹⁸

Translation of Proverbs 6:6a: *Go to the ant, [you] slacker,...* Now David tells Solomon to observe the ant. Here, he uses 'âtsêl (אַצֵּל) [pronounced *gaw-TSEHL*] as a vocative. It means, *slothful, sluggish, lazy; sluggard*. Strong's #6102 BDB #782. So he is setting up a contrast between the industrious ant and the slothful man.

Chuck Smith: *"Go to the ant."* Now, we are told that Solomon was a very prolific writer. That he wrote 3,000 proverbs, several songs, and he wrote books on biology and botany. And so he was a man who was very familiar with nature. And we will pick this up as we get to some other proverbs as he talks about the characteristics of other animals and insects.¹⁹

Peter Pett: *Instead of addressing this man as 'my son', he addresses him as 'you sluggard', and calls on him to consider the ant. (Note 'my son -- my son' (Proverbs 6:1; Proverbs 6:3) as compared with 'you sluggard' -- you sluggard' (Proverbs 6:6; Proverbs 6:9)). This is an admonition rather than an entreaty.*²⁰

I went with the vocative *lazy bum*, although there must be a better, more contemporary word than this to use (perhaps, *slacker*). Perhaps the problem is, in our contemporary society, we do not have a surfeit of good descriptors for a slothful person. There are a few that I got **online**: *layabout, idler, shirker, malingerer, sluggard, laggard*; informal: *lazybones, bum, goof-off*. Apart from *slacker*, none of these words is very contemporary (maybe, *goof-off* or *shirker*). I don't believe in this era that we, as a society, really look down upon the person who does not work. The Bible does, however.

By the way, this is something which has been lost to our society. In the United States, there are now 94million adults of working age who are not working. In the United States, in 2015, there are 204 million people between the ages of 15 and 64 (the time during which people work). Hard work is a great thing; hard work built America and hard work made America great.²¹ But now, nearly half the people in the United States are in the wagon, and the other half are pulling them. This is very bad for America. This is why so many people in the United States think that we are going in **the wrong direction**.

This is quite an important topic, both in Proverbs and in Scripture overall. Work is the 2nd divine institution. Even before Adam sinned, he had a job.

Characteristics of the Sluggard, from James Rickard

1. This type of person always fails because of laziness that becomes moral failure, Prov 6:6, 9.
2. They are an irritant to others, Prov 10:26; 15:19.
3. Their souls want nothing, and they get nothing, Prov 13:4.

¹⁷ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/work> accessed October 8, 2015.

¹⁸ From <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/sloth> accessed September 29, 2015.

¹⁹ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/csc/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015

²⁰ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 27, 2015.

²¹ Among other things.

Characteristics of the Sluggard, from James Rickard

4. They take no initiative. Prov 19:24 [The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, but will not even bring it back to his mouth.](#)
5. They do not do their tasks on time, Prov 20:4.
6. They will not work, Prov 21:25.
7. They create imaginary excuses, Prov 22:13.
8. Their wealth and health deteriorate, Prov 24:30.
9. Yet, they consider themselves to be wise, Prov 26:13-16.

D. Phillip Roberts notes: "The lazy are generally not those who have few desires. Rather, their daydreaming leads to exaggerated desires, and exaggerated desires to a despair of realization." (D. Phillip Roberts, "The Sluggard in Proverbs", unpublished term paper, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1994.)

From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015 (slightly edited).

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Glad to see that someone else came up with the same translation.

Slacker? By Cindy Hess Kasper

While studying the book of Proverbs in my small-group Bible study, our leader suggested that we change the description of a lazy person from a sluggard to a slacker (6:6,9). Ah, now he was speaking my lingo. I immediately started thinking of all the people I consider to be slackers.

Like the men and women who fail to teach and discipline their children. Or that guy who refuses to help around the house. Or those teenagers who neglect their studies and play Internet games day and night.

If we're honest, we're all susceptible to this. What about being a "prayer slacker" (1 Thess. 5:17-18), or a "Bible-reading slacker" (Ps. 119:103; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), or a "non-exercising-of-our-spiritual-gift slacker" (Rom. 12:4-8), or a "non-witnessing slacker"? (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

If we are not doing what we know God wants us to do, we are certainly spiritual slackers. In fact, when we refuse to obey God, we are sinning.

Listen to these challenging and convicting words from the book of James: "It is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it" (4:17 NLT). Let's not be spiritual slackers.

From <http://www.philstar.com/daily-bread/2014/02/21/1292799/slacker> accessed October 4, 2015.

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Peter Pett: Sarcastically he indicates that as he will not listen to Solomon, he should listen to the ant. He wants him to watch ants scurrying this way and that, and learn a lesson from them. The ant is one of the 'creeping things' of which Solomon spoke (1 Kings 4:33). It was

*probably the harvester ant, which stores grain within its nest, and is found in large quantities throughout Palestine.*²²

Go to the ant, [you] slacker,... Consider this a field trip—the lazy person needs to go out and watch ants for awhile—and perhaps he may learn a few things.

Go out and watch the ants

The Geneva Bible: *If the word of God cannot instruct you, learn from the little ant to labour for yourself and not to burden others.*²³

The Bible Illustrator (the Homilist): *The allusion in the text shows that the Bible encourages the study of nature. 1. It sends us to nature in order to attest its first principles. 2. It refers us to nature for illustrations of its great truths. 3. It refers us to nature in order to reprove the sins it denounces. To reprove us for our spiritual indolence it directs us to the ants. The sluggard we now deal with is the spiritual sluggard, not the secularly indolent man, but the man who is neglecting the culture of his own spiritual nature and the salvation of his own soul. The ants teach these important lessons.*²⁴

The Pulpit Commentary: *Scripture sends us to nature. Even the smallest works of nature are full of Divine lessons to him who has eyes to read them. Sometimes we are bidden to consider the heavens, but now we are invited to consider the ant. The telescope has its lessons; so also has the microscope.*²⁵

Chuck Smith: *I love to watch ants. I sometimes used to sit out in the backyard with bread and I'd just break off pieces of bread and throw it down and watch them as the little ant would get hold of it and try and pull it and pull it, and pretty soon another would get on and they'd hold the thing and just to watch them in their labor as they are laying up their food. So industrious. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; learn of her ways, and be wise. Which having no guide, or overseer, or ruler." And you wonder how they communicate. Yet, they evidently do communicate because you get a couple of them in your house and they discover something sweet, man, they communicate it to all their cousins and relatives and everybody else. And soon the whole tribe is in there.*²⁶

Clarke: *No insect is more laborious, not even the bee itself; and none is more fondly attached to or more careful of its young, than the ant. When the young are in their aurelia state, in which they appear like a small grain of rice, they will bring them out of their nests, and lay them near their holes, for the benefit of the sun; and on the approach of rain, carefully remove them, and deposit them in the nest, the hole or entrance to which they will cover with a piece of thin stone or tile, to prevent the wet from getting in.*²⁷

²² From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 27, 2015.

²³ From <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/geneva-study-bible/proverbs/proverbs-6.html> accessed September 9, 2015.

²⁴ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tbi/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015.

²⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:6.

²⁶ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/csc/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015

²⁷ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6.

Go out and watch the ants

Robert Dean: *One thing we should note here is that throughout the Scriptures we find there are cases where there is an appeal to something in the creation. This is known as natural revelation. Natural revelation is non-verbal; it has to do with "The heaven as the earth declare the glory of God." That is non-verbal; it is not specific. The only way we understand creation specifically and what traits and images from the animal world that we should follow is by what the Word of God says. There are many different things about ants that we would not want to emulate. Ants live in a colony ruled by a queen. It is a matriarchal society where the males exist only to serve the women. Now that is not a biblical pattern for marriage. We don't go to the ants to figure out how to live in marriage, but the ant is a picture of how we should be diligent in planning and saving for the future.*²⁸

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Translation of Proverbs 6:6b: ...and observe her ways and become wise... David tells Solomon, and this is passed along to others, that simply observing the ant will teach one about work and about the importance of work.

Gill: *[Regarding] consider her ways; what diligence and industry it uses in providing its food; which, though a small, weak, feeble creature, yet will travel over flints and stones, climb trees, enter into towers, barns, cellars, places high and low, in search of food; never hinder, but help one another in carrying their burdens; prepare little cells to put their provisions in, and are so built as to secure them from rain; and if at any time their corn is wet, they bring out and dry it, and bite off the ends of it, that it may not grow.*²⁹

One of the great divine institutions is *work*; so let's examine what divine institutions actually are:

This is taken from the **Doctrine of the Divine Institutions** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

The Divine Institutions, Definition and Description

- 1) A divine institution is that which is created or designed by God in order to preserve and protect the human race, as well as preserve and protect man's volition.
- 2) A divine institution can be a custom, practice, concept or organization.
- 3) Divine institutions are virtually universal and they are designed by God for the people of all nations and for believers and unbelievers alike.
- 4) Divine institutions provide freedom and stability for the human race.
- 5) Divine institutions provide orderliness and organization for the human race.
- 6) Divine institutions are related to the Angelic Conflict, insofar as, our free will decisions are an integral part of the Angelic Conflict. Therefore, it is important for these institutions to be related to a system of authorities as well as vehicles by which human volition is preserved.
- 7) Not every single person is intimately involved with every single divine institution (for instance, a person may be raised by an unmarried mother and choose not to marry, and so does not directly experience marriage or the ideal family). However, the organizations of marriage and family are

²⁸ From [Dean Bible.org](#); accessed September 25, 2015.

²⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6.

The Divine Institutions, Definition and Description

designed for the stability of the society in which he lives. In this way, marriage and family impact his day to day life, even though his personal experience is not ideal. Therefore, every person is affected by and involved with all 5 divine institutions.

- 8) If divine institutions are compromised, contaminated or corrupted, a society or nation may collapse because of this.
- 9) Man has free will and man has an old sin nature; therefore, men will constantly try to corrupt, compromise or destroy these institutions.
- 10) It is very common for those who want to corrupt, compromise and destroy these institutions to go after the youth of a country in order to do so.
- 11) All divine institutions are associated with free will and a system of authority (or, authorities).
- 12) Robert Dean: *These divine institutions each carry and authority structure within them, and that authority relates to the fact that within that sphere of operation there is one primary person or entity in the place of responsibility. So that when another authority or entity comes in and supplants that authority that is when there is a conflict. For example, it is not the role of the government to come in and supplant the role of parents when it comes to what goes on inside of the home.*¹
- 13) Although one may argue that there are many additional divine institutions (e.g., the military, a local police force, etc.), the 5 below are the most fundamental with the most widespread application.

¹ From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed March 1, 2015.

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[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

This is taken from the [Doctrine of the Divine Institutions \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

The 5 Divine Institutions

- 1) The function of the human soul—every believer and unbeliever is given a human soul with volition, mentality, norms and standards, a conscience, and self-consciousness. We need to respect the human freedom of those around us. Our volition ends when it begins to infringe on the volition of others.
- 2) Work is designed for the believer and unbeliever alike. Not only is it necessary in order to live (apart from those who depend upon others), but it is important to a person's mental health. Everyone has come home from a hard day at work, where effort was expended and things were done, and there is some personal satisfaction in having done a good job. Those who live off of others (e.g., welfare recipients) rarely have the same personal satisfaction with their own lives. God's first commandment to mankind included the phrase "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." (Gen. 1:28b). In the next chapter, we read: *And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden. And there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. The tree of life also was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden. And from there it was divided and became four heads. And Jehovah God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and protect it* (Gen. 2:8–10, 15). Subduing the earth is work. After Adam and the woman sinned, God levied punishment upon them both, including: "Because you listened to your wife's voice and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it **by means of difficult labor** all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust." (Gen. 3:17b–19). Difficult work becomes a part of our judgment. Work is a necessity in the believer's life, Paul tells

The 5 Divine Institutions

- Timothy, **If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat** (1Tim. 3:10b).
- 3) Marriage between one man and one woman is designed for the human race. Men and women are dramatically different in makeup, and they are designed to be in balance with one another—yin and yang, if you will. Just as work was fundamental to Adam's life, before he sinned and after he sinned, so is the institution of marriage. Adam had the woman before the fall and Adam had the woman after the fall. You will note that the first 3 divine institutions existed in perfect environment and in a fallen world. That is how fundamental they are to human existence.
 - 4) Closely related to marriage is family; and children have been shown to be far better off when raised by 2 parents as opposed to one. Children from a nuclear family (1 husband and 1 wife) are shown to be better adjusted, less likely to become criminals, drug users, alcohol abusers, or pregnant at an early age. This is a matter of statistics. You have heard over and over again, how there is an inordinate number of Blacks in prison. If you took the number of whites and Blacks in prison and chose from a similar sample with respect to the divine institution of marriage, there is virtually no difference between Blacks and whites. The strongest determining factor in criminal behavior is not race but parentage. A Black from a home with a mother and father is no more likely to enter into a life of crime than a Caucasian from a home with a mother and a father. The reason there is a disproportionate number of Blacks in prison, is because there are a disproportionate number of Black single parent families.
 - 5) The institution of separate national entities preserves freedom, isolates depravity, and best allows for evangelization and spiritual growth. The Declaration of Independence got this point exactly right: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. - That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men.*

The maintenance of these institutions is fundamental in the preservation of any group of people.

Bibliography (for both doctrines above)

About 30 years under the ministry of R. B. Thieme, Jr.

Jim Brettell <http://www.jimbrettell.org/zzzzzz/Divine%20Establishment.doc.doc> (This is a Word document which will open up in Word or WP).

<http://www.spokanebiblechurch.com/study/Bible%20Doctrines/Divine%20Institutions%20and%20Establishment.html> (which is Tod Kennedy's work from 1999).

Some points are taken directly, word-for-word, from these 2 documents.

I also used the following:

<http://www.phrasearch.com/Trans/DBM/setup/Genesis/Gen026.htm>

<http://www.egracebiblechurch.org/capunish.htm>

There will be some overlap with my own **Doctrine of the Client Nation (HTML)** (**PDF**) The bibliography there is also pertinent here.

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

V. 6: **Go to the ant, you slacker, and observe her ways, and, as a result, become wise.** The lazy man needs to learn; he needs to observe the industriousness of the ant. By watching her, he may potentially increase his own wisdom. After all, he is called a sluggard, a lazy bum; any change away from sloth would indicate some measure of wisdom.

“Go and watch the smallest, simplest of creatures—the common ant—and learn from the ant!” is what is being said here.

King David is teaching his son Solomon the work ethic, the importance of work in life. He is also teaching that there is a time and place. When it is the harvest, the farmer does not sleep in every morning, work

till noon, and then knock off. During the harvest season, the farmer is going to work dawn till dusk. And then he and his family will work for many weeks after in order to preserve the harvest.

Application: There is a time to work—particularly when you are young. When you are in your 20's and 30's and 40's, you can work 16 hour days when necessary (I would not suggest that a married or family man work 16 hour days all of the time); but you have the strength, the vim and vigor. There will come a time when you are older. If I put in a 16 hour work day today, I might spend 2 days recovering from that. But, when I was much younger, I was able to do that, sometimes several days in a row (for some men, that is their work schedule).

Translation of Proverbs 6:7: ...—the ant [lit., *who*] does not have a captain or an official or a ruler—... The ant does have a queen, but she is not standing over him telling him what to do (it is not as if he is married to her). There is no official, no ruler, no captain instructing the ant on how to behave. The ant knows what is important; the ant knows what has to be taken care of. The ant gets after it. “Watch the ant; examine the ant, learn from the ant and be wise,” David admonishes the reader.

Vv. 6–7: Go to the ant, you slacker, and observe her ways, and, as a result, become wise. The ant does not have a captain, a foreman, or a ruler over her,... Even without an overseer, the ant performs its tasks.

Commentators on How the Ant Works Without Supervision

Commentator	Commentary
<p>Arno Gaebelein</p>	<p>His commentary was one of the most interesting. <i>The sluggard is commanded to go to the ant for a lesson. (See also Proverbs 30:25.) The ant is a marvellous little creature. That which modern science has found out by close observation of the life of this little insect is here tersely stated by the words of the Lord, the Creator. They swarm in the woods and in the fields; they work day and night; they capture, train and nourish aphides, which they use as a kind of slave. They build vast and symmetrical mounds, which they use as homes and barns, and which are, relatively to the size of the tiny builders, three times larger than the Egyptian pyramids. They march and labor in unison, have their own wars, nourish their sick, and all is done without a chief, an overseer or a ruler. Yet man with a higher intelligence and a higher work to do can be a sluggard.</i>³⁰</p>
<p>Gill</p>	<p><i>[The ant has] None to guide and direct her what to do; nor any to overlook her, to see that she does aright, or to oblige her to work, and keep her to it; nor any to call her to an account, and correct her for doing amiss; and nevertheless diligent and industrious, doing everything of herself, by the instinct of nature, readily and willingly: and yet how slothful are men; who, besides the dictates of nature, reason, and conscience, have parents, masters, ministers, and magistrates, to guide, direct, exhort, instruct, and enforce.</i>³¹</p>

³⁰ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/gab/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 28, 2015.

³¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:7.

Commentators on How the Ant Works Without Supervision

Commentator	Commentary
Matthew Henry	<i>[Consider the ant]; She has no guides, overseers, and rulers, but does it of herself, following the instinct of nature; the more shame for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, to direct us in it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.</i> ³²
The Homilist (from The Bible Illustrator)	<i>The ants are feeble, but see how they work. Naturalists have shown their ingenuity as architects, their industry as miners and builders...In the ant-world you will see millions of inhabitants, but not one idler; all are in action. One does not depend upon another, or expect another to do his work...the want of a helper is no just excuse for your indolence. Each ant is thrown upon his own resources and powers. Self-reliantly each labours on, not waiting for the instruction or guidance of another. Trust your own instincts; act out your own powers; use the light you have; look to God for help.</i>
The Pulpit Commentary	<i>The industry of the ant has all the appearance of a virtue. For it seems unforced; there is no judge, superintendent, or onlooker, or taskmaster, to superintend its work. Contrast with the representations on various monuments of the taskmasters with whips superintending gangs of labourers.</i> ³³
The Pulpit Commentary	<i>The three terms used here, katsa, shoter, moshel, all refer to government, and correspond respectively with the modern, Arabic terms, kadi, wall, and emir (Zockler). The first refers to the judicial office, and should rather be rendered "judge," the root katsah being "to decide". (see Isa. 1:10 Isa. 3:6, 7 Mic. 3:9) The word, however, is used of a military commander in Joshua 10:24 Jud 2:6–11, and in this sense it is understood by the Vulgate, which has dux. Shoter, rendered "overseer," is literally "a scribe," and appears as the general designation for any official In Ex. 5:6, 19 the shoter is the person employed by the Egyptian taskmasters to urge on the Israelites in their forced labour; in Num. 11:16 the shoter is one of the seventy elders; and in 1Chron. 23:4 he is a municipal magistrate. The meaning assigned to the word in the Authorized Version seems to be the correct one. The ant has no overseer; there is none to regulate or see that the work is done. Each ant apparently works independently of the rest, though guided by a common instinct to add to the common store. In moshel we have the highest title of dignity and power, the word signifying a lord, prince, or ruler, from mashal, "to rule."</i> ³⁴

³² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6–11.

³³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:6.

³⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:7.

Commentators on How the Ant Works Without Supervision

Commentator	Commentary
Chuck Smith	<p><i>I've often thought about miniaturization, you know. Everything is, the whole concept is that of miniaturizing everything. Have you ever wondered how big an ant's brain must be? Talk about something that's miniature. And yet, there is no doubt the capacity to communicate and surely the capacity of working together. And I think that this is the lesson to learn. Without a foreman out there yelling instructions and everything else, somehow they get this bread, chunk of bread together and pretty soon, they're carting the thing off. You can see this chunk of bread just moving across the ground. It may take them a little while, a little struggling and all. But ultimately, they get things coordinated without a guide, an overseer, or a ruler. Yet, learning to just work together.³⁵</i></p>
Stuart Wolf	<p><i>The first detail of the lesson is that a leader/chief does not exist, an exemplary characteristic also noted in the locust (30:27); modern science has confirmed a "perfect social organization" (Waltke) among ants, which does not imply any hierarchy, but recognizes that God created ants to be an illustration of the benefits of industry. Put another way, an ant is programmed, immediately upon animation, to begin laboring for the benefit of the community, and thus ensures its own well-being and success in the process; by fulfilling its own purpose, each individual contributes to the whole.³⁶</i></p>
James Rickard	<p><i>So the ant has no one who decides for them, no one overseeing them on a day by day basis, and no one ruling over them giving them continually instructions as what to do, yet they work diligently and effectively to provide not only for themselves but the entire colony.</i></p> <p><i>The slug needs to learn from this because the slug usually needs someone to tell him what to do, when to do it and how to do it.</i></p> <p><i>For the young man or woman this is a valuable lesson. Stop waiting for mommy and daddy to tell you what to do, how to do it and when to do it, and take your own initiative to prepare for life and live your life supporting and providing for yourself.</i></p> <p><i>If leaderless ants preserve their lives by doing what needs to be done (gather food) at the right time (during harvest), how much more diligently should human beings pursue their tasks at the appropriate time?</i></p> <p><i>Rather than having external leaders who both organize the work with regard to its nature and its timing and see it through to completion, the ant possesses a God-given wisdom to work and, just as significantly, to order it wisely. By admonishing the sluggard to learn from this example, Solomon hopes that his son will internalize its wisdom and have self-initiative in life.³⁷</i></p>

³⁵ From <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/csc/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015

³⁶ From www.hbcpinellas.org/proverbs/prov6.doc accessed September 25, 2015.

³⁷ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

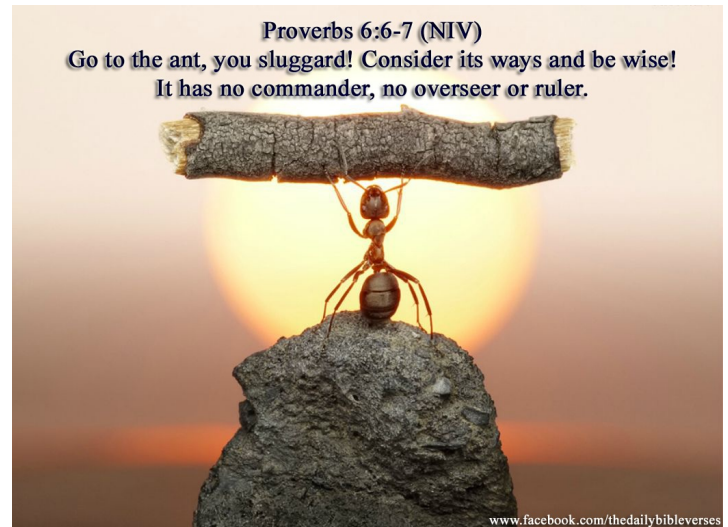
Rickard nails the concept here.

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Proverbs 6:6–7 (a graphic); from **The Daily Bible Verses**; accessed October 2, 2015.

The NEV Commentary: *We can learn from meditating upon the natural creation. Human beings tend to work best when overseen by a human leader; but in spiritual life, we are to work for God from self motivation, regardless of whether or not we have good leadership within the family of God.*³⁸



Translation of Proverbs 6:8a: ...[yet] she prepared her food in the summer... Without guidance and without instruction, the ant prepares food in the summer.

There are times when the ant is able to find food and gather it and store it. That is what the ant does.

Barnes: *The point of comparison with the ant is not so much the foresight of the insect as its unwearied activity during the appointed season, rebuking man's inaction at a special crisis* Prov. 6:4.³⁹

Clarke: *He simply says that they provide their food in summer, and gather it in harvest; these are the most proper times for a stock to be laid in for their consumption; not in winter; for no such thing appears in any of their nests, nor do they need it, as they sleep during that season; but for autumn, during which they wake and work. Spring, summer, and autumn, they are incessant in their labor; and their conduct affords a bright example to men.*⁴⁰

Translation Proverbs 6:8b: ...and she gathers produce during the harvest. The ant gathers food when it is available. The ants seem to realize that, at some point in the winter, they will lack food, and so they gather it when it can be gathered, so that they may partake of it when food cannot be gathered.

vv. 6–8: **Go to the ant, you slacker, and observe her ways, and, as a result, become wise. The ant does not have a captain, a foreman, or a ruler over her, yet she prepares her food in the summer and she gathers up produce during the harvest-time.**

I may have gone overboard here; I may need to cut back on the number of commentators below.

³⁸ From <http://www.n-e-v.info/commprov.html> accessed October 2, 2015.

³⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6.

⁴⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6.

Commentators on the Example of the Ant

Commentator	Commentary
Joe Guglielmo	<i>Now in this comparison the ant is far wiser than the lazy person. Why? Because he goes out and gathers food during the times that are good, preparing for the times he can't go out and gather food. He uses his time wisely, while the lazy person doesn't. No one has to order him around, and yet the ant does the work that is needed.</i> ⁴¹
F. B. Meyers	<i>The ants swarm in the woods and fields, and rebuke our laziness and thriftlessness. They work day and night, storing their galleries with food, building mounds which relatively to the size of the builders are three or four times larger than the Pyramids. In sickness they nurse one another; in the winter they feed on their supplies. Learn from the ceaseless industry of Nature.</i> ⁴²
Dr. Macmillan (from The Bible Illustrator)	<i>Examining the seeds collected in the nests of the ants on the top of the hill at Nice more particularly with my magnifying glass, I found to my astonishment that each seed had its end carefully bitten off. And the reason of this was perfectly plain. You know each seed contains two parts--the young plant or germ lying in its cradle, as it were, and the supply of food for its nourishment, when it begins to grow, wrapped round it. Now the ants had bitten off the young plant germ, and they left only the part which was full of nourishment. And they did this to prevent the seeds from growing and exhausting all the nourishment contained in them. If they did not do this the seed stored under the ground, when the rains came, would shoot, and so they would lose all their trouble and be left to starve. I could not find in the heap a single seed that had not been treated in this way. Of course, none of the seeds that had their ends bitten off would grow; and you might as well sow grains of sand as the seed found in ants' nests.</i> ⁴³
The Evidence Bible	<i>The ant is an example of the Christian who knows the will of God—to seek and save that which is lost. He understands that God isn't willing that any should perish, so he sets about the task of reaching the lost with the gospel. The ant doesn't need anyone telling him what to do. He just does it. See 1 Corinthians 15:58.</i> ⁴⁴
J. Vernon McGee	<i>The little ant is quite a teacher. Aunt Ant can reveal great truths to us. One truth is that she is as diligent in business as anyone possibly can be. This is something that the child of God can learn from the little ant. The ant is busy doing what is the most important thing in her life — she is getting food for the winter, caring for the future, and she is busy about it.</i>

⁴¹ From [Calvary Chapel](#); accessed October 1, 2015.

⁴² From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/fbm/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed October 1, 2015.

⁴³ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tbi/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁴⁴ From http://www.evidencebible.com/pdf/29_Proverbs_1_to_15.pdf (footnote Prov. 6:6–8); accessed September 9, 2015.

Commentators on the Example of the Ant

Commentator	Commentary
J. Vernon McGee (con't)	<p><i>I think one of the great sins among Christians today is laziness, and many of the lazy ones can be found in full-time Christian service. All of us need to ask ourselves what we do with our spare time. Do we read the Word of God? Do we study the Word of God? I think that laziness is one of the curses of the ministry today. A young man came to me and said, "I feel like I'm through as a preacher. I've been a pastor here at this place for three years, and I have run out of sermons. I feel like a dried-up well." Of course, then he became very pious, "I've spent a lot of time in prayer and meditation." Well, I asked him, "How much time do you spend in the Word of God? How much time do you spend studying it?" I couldn't get a very definite answer from him, but he inferred that he spent less than an hour a week in the study of the Bible! He was a great promoter, always out doing something while the important business remained undone. I told him, "Unless you change your ways, you ought to get out of the ministry. It is a disgrace to go to the pulpit on a Sunday morning unprepared. You should have something to say from the Word of God." The ant has a lesson for that boy. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."⁴⁵</i></p>
Daniel Whedon (mostly quoting Dr. Lincecum)	<p><i>The most wonderful ant in the world is one, so far as known, found only in the United States. Its scientific name is <i>atta malefaciens</i>, popularly called the stinging ant, on account of the pungency of its venom. Its habits have been thoroughly studied for twelve years by Dr. Lincecum, of Texas, and the results communicated to the Linnean Society by Charles Darwin, Esq. The following is an abstract of Dr. Lincecum's communication: — "It is a large brownish ant. He names it the agricultural ant. It dwells in what may be called paved cities, and, like a thrifty farmer, makes suitable arrangements for the changing seasons. When it has selected a situation for its habitation, if on dry ground, it bores a hole, around which it raises the surface three, and sometimes six, inches, forming a low circular mound, having a very gentle inclination from the centre to the outer border, which, on an average, is three or four feet from the entrance. But if the location is on low, flat, wet land, liable to inundation, though perfectly dry at the time the ant sets to work, it nevertheless elevates the mound in the form of a pretty sharp cone, to the height of fifteen to twenty inches or more, and makes the entrance near the summit. Around the mound, in either case, the ant clears the ground of all obstructions, levels and smooths the surface to the distance of three or four feet from the gate of the city, giving the space the appearance of a handsome pavement, as it really is. Within this paved area not a blade of any green thing is allowed to grow, except a single species of grain-bearing grass. Having planted this crop in a circle around, two or three feet from the centre of the mound, the insect tends and cultivates it with constant care, cutting away all other grasses and weeds that may spring up amongst it and around it outside of the farm-circle to the extent of one or two feet more.</i></p>

⁴⁵ From https://archive.org/stream/20-Proverbs/20-PROVERBS_djvu.txt (Prov. 6); accessed September 26, 2015.

Commentators on the Example of the Ant

Commentator	Commentary
Whedon (con't)	<i>“The cultivated grass grows luxuriantly, and produces a heavy crop of small, white, flinty seeds, which, under the microscope, very closely resemble ordinary rice. When ripe it is carefully harvested, and carried by the workers, chaff and all, into the granary cells, where it is divested of the chaff and packed away. The chaff is taken out and thrown beyond the limits of the paved area.</i>
Whedon (con't)	<i>“During protracted wet weather it sometimes happens that the provision stores become damp, and are liable to sprout and spoil. In this case, on the first fine day, the ants bring out the damp and moistened grain, and expose it to the sun till it is dry, when they carry it back again, and pack away all the sound seeds, leaving those that had sprouted to waste.</i>
Whedon (con't)	<i>“There can be no doubt of the fact that the particular species of grain-bearing grass is intentionally planted. In farmer-like manner the ground is carefully divested of all other grasses and weeds during the time it is growing. When it is ripe the grain is taken care of, the dry stubbs cut away and carried off, the paved area being left unencumbered till the ensuing autumn, when the same ant-rice reappears within the same circle, and receives the same agricultural attention as the previous crop; and so on from year to year, as I know to be the case in all situations where the ant settlements are protected from graminivorous animals.”</i>
Whedon (con't)	<i>In a second letter, in answer to inquiries from Mr. Darwin, whether he supposed the ants planted the seeds for the ensuing crop, Dr. L. says: “I have not the least doubt of it. My conclusions are not from hasty or careless observation, nor from seeing the ants do something that looked like it, and then guessing at the results. I have at all seasons watched the same ant-cities during the last twelve years, and I know what I stated in my former letter is true. I visited the same cities yesterday, and found the crop of ant-rice growing finely, and exhibiting also the signs of high cultivation, and not a blade of any other kind of grass or weed was seen within twelve inches of the circular row of ant-rice.”</i>
Whedon (con't)	<i>The author of the book remarks, that “the economical habits of this wonderful insect far surpass any thing that Solomon has written of the ant, and it is not too much to say, that if any of the scriptural writers had ventured to speak of an ant that not only laid up stores of grain, but actually prepared the soil for the crop, planted the seed, kept the ground free from weeds, and finally reaped the harvest, the statement would have been utterly disbelieved, and the credibility, not only of that particular writer, but of the rest of Scripture, severely damaged. Solomon’s statement concerning the ant has afforded one of the stock arguments against the truth of Scripture, and yet we have his statements not only corroborated to the very letter by those who have visited Palestine for the express purpose of investigating its zoology, but far surpassed by the observations of a scientific man [of the United States] who had watched the insects for a series of years.”⁴⁶</i>

⁴⁶ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/whe/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed October 1, 2015.

Commentators on the Example of the Ant

Commentator	Commentary
Expositor's Bible Commentary	<i>We are told that in Sierra Leone the white ants will sometimes occupy a house, and eat their way into all the woodwork, until every article in the house is hollow, so that it will collapse into dust directly it is touched. It is so with this deceitful character, so honeycombed, and eaten through, that though for years it may maintain its plausible appearance in the world, few people even suspecting the extent of the inward decay on a sudden the end will come; there will be one touch of the finger of God, and the whole ill-compacted, worm-devoured thing will crumble into matchwood.⁴⁷</i>
Stuart Wolf	<i>The term ant is probably generic, since there are over 100 species of ants in Palestine alone (> 8,000 worldwide), but the most likely example is probably the harvester ant, found everywhere in Palestine, which stores grain within its nest, and is therefore used as an illustration of industry...Here and in 30:25 the ant's ways essentially teach self-discipline, foresight, and industry, and more specifically prudent industry; the Midrash added to these the qualities of honesty and communal solidarity. Since the command is to study carefully with moral discernment, the imperative and become wise necessarily follows; the admonitions aim to generate enough energy to begin the process of restructuring his life, if he so desires.⁴⁸</i>
R. Newton (from The Bible Illustrator)	<i>An ant could tell us strange things. She could tell about the houses they live in, some of which are forty stories high, twenty stories being dug out, one beneath another, under the earth, and twenty stories being built up over them, above ground; she could tell about the different kinds of trades they follow, how some are miners, and dig down into the ground; some are masons, and build very curious houses, with long walls, supported by pillars, and covered over with arched ceilings. She could tell how some are carpenters, who build houses out of wood, having many chambers which communicate with each other by entries and galleries; how some are nurses, and spend their whole time taking care of the young ones; some are labourers, and are made, like the negro slaves, to work for their masters; while some are soldiers, whose only business it is to mount guard, and stand ready to defend their friends and fellow-citizens.⁴⁹</i>
Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge	<i>The ant has been famous in all ages for its social habits, foresight, economy and industry. Collecting their food at the proper seasons, they bite off the ends of the grain to prevent it from germinating, and lay it up in cells till needed.⁵⁰</i>
Adam Clarke	<i>At the proper seasons they collect their food - not in the summer to lay up for the winter; for they sleep during the winter, and eat not; and therefore such hoards would be to them useless; but when the food necessary for them is most plentiful, then they collect it for their consumption in the proper seasons.⁵¹</i>

⁴⁷ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/teb/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 30, 2015.

⁴⁸ From www.hbcpinellas.org/proverbs/prov6.doc accessed September 25, 2015.

⁴⁹ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tbi/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁵⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Prov. 6:6.

⁵¹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6.

Commentators on the Example of the Ant

Commentator	Commentary
R. Newton (from The Bible Illustrator) (con't)	<p><i>The ants teach:</i></p> <p><i>I. A lesson of industry. The ant is a better example of industry than even the bee.</i></p> <p><i>II. A lesson of perseverance. They never get discouraged by any difficulties they may meet with. Perseverance conquers all things.</i></p> <p><i>III. A lesson of union. The benefits of being united, and working together. The union of the ants both preserves them safely and enables them to do great good.</i></p> <p><i>IV. A lesson of kindness. Ants are a very happy set of creatures. There seems to be nothing like selfishness among them.</i></p> <p><i>V. A lesson of prudence, or looking ahead. The power to think about the future, and to prepare for it.⁵²</i></p>
Henry Ironside	<p><i>Some critics sneer at “Solomon’s grain-eating ant” who stores her food in the harvest for future use. Solomon is supposed to have mistaken the eggs of the ant for grain. But it is now fully demonstrated that he was wiser than his critics. In Palestine there is a species of ant that is not carnivorous. It feeds on grain and does indeed store its food in harvest-time as Solomon declared. Scripture here, as always, is correct and exact. Short-sighted man should accept his limitations and at least take for granted that the Bible is right until proven otherwise!⁵³</i></p>
Peter Pett	<p><i>And it taught a salutary lesson, for this ant, without any admonition or overlordship, works away busily all through the summer in order to provision its nest. It never stops. It makes use of both summertime and harvest time. The busyness of the ant is proverbial. Arguments as to whether ants are under leadership are irrelevant. Insects do not give instructions to each other in order to be obeyed. They simply respond to their natural conditioning.⁵⁴</i></p>
The Pulpit Commentary	<p><i>The ant works from instinct, and we must admire the wisdom of the great Maker, who has taught it unconscious habits of providence. But we are endowed with powers of looking before and after, and therefore are left to our own will to be deliberately provident. It is strange that many people have no prudence in temporal things. In prosperous times they are recklessly self-indulgent. In harder times they are in destitution. These people abuse Christian charity; and unwise Christian charity is guilty of indirectly encouraging their improvidence. Thus they lose independence, self reliance, and the wholesome discipline of present restraints for the sake of future needs.⁵⁵</i></p>

⁵² From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tbi/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 29, 2015.

⁵³ Dr. Henry Allen Ironside, *Studies on Book One of Psalms*; from e-Sword, originally taken from http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/byauthor/44/henry_allen_ironside; Prov. 6:6–8.

⁵⁴ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 27, 2015.

⁵⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:6.

Commentators on the Example of the Ant

Commentator	Commentary
The Pulpit Commentary	<i>The teacher, as it were, argues: If the ant, so insignificant a creature in the order of the animal kingdom, is so provident, how much more should you be you, a man endued with superior intelligence, and with so many more resources at hand, and with greater advantages! If the ant, with none to urge, direct, or control her work, is so industrious, surely she provides an example at which you, the sluggard, should blush, since there is every external incentive to rouse you to action your duty to the community, the urgent advice of your friends, and your dignity as a man. If she provides for the future, much more should you do so, and threw off your sloth.⁵⁶</i>

[Topics](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Proverbs 6:6–8 (a graphic); from [Pinimg.com](#); accessed October 2, 2015.

This reveals the sad state of affairs in the United States, and one of the reason we are going awry. Not sure who wrote this, but Steve Van Nattan is the editor of this webpage.

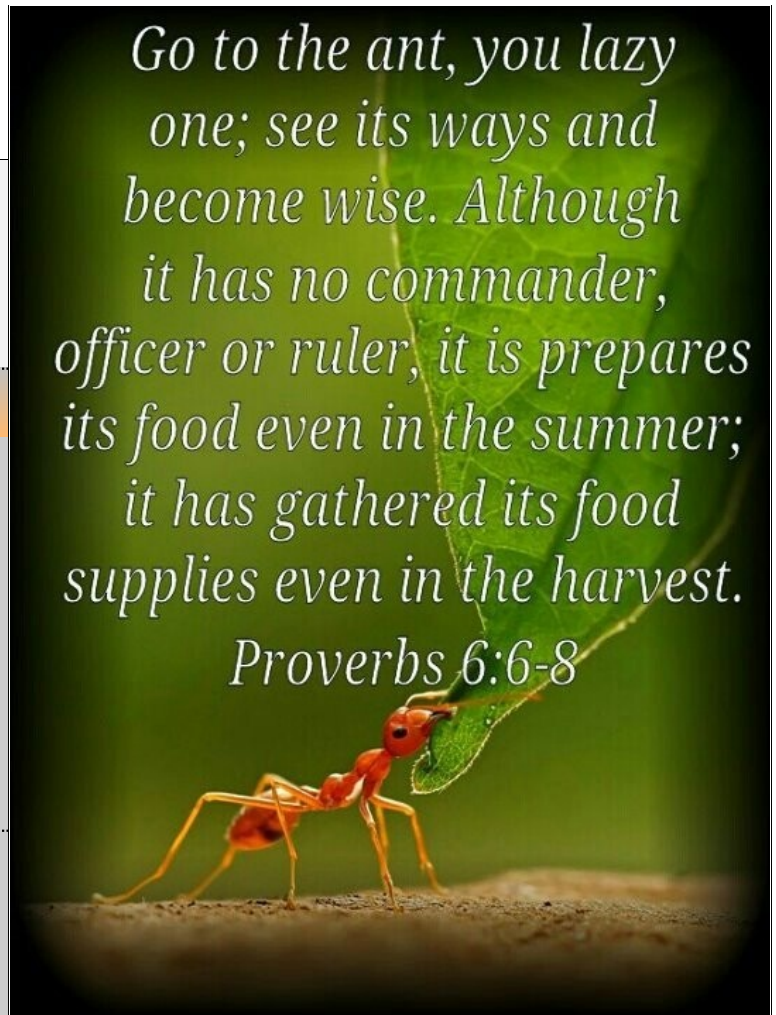
The Western Work Ethic

Original Version

The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and laying up supplies for the winter. The grasshopper thinks he's a fool and laughs and dances and plays the summer away. Come winter, the ant is warm and well fed. The grasshopper has no food or shelter so he dies out in the cold.

Modern American Version

The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and laying up supplies for the winter. The grasshopper thinks he's a fool and laughs and dances and plays the summer away.



⁵⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:8.

The Western Work Ethic

Come winter, the shivering grasshopper calls a press conference and demands to know why the ant should be allowed to be warm and well fed while others are cold and starving. CBS, NBC and ABC show up to provide pictures of the shivering grasshopper next to video of the ant in his comfortable home with a table filled with food.

America is stunned by the sharp contrast. How can it be that, in a country of such wealth, this poor grasshopper is allowed to suffer so?

Then a representative of the NAGB (The national association of green bugs) shows up on Nightline and charges the ant with green bias, and makes the case that the grasshopper is the victim of 30 million years of greenism.

Kermit the Frog appears on Oprah with the grasshopper, and everybody cries when he sings "It's not easy being green." Michelle Obama makes a special guest appearance on the CBS Evening News to tell a concerned host that she will do everything she can for the grasshopper who has been denied the prosperity he deserves by those who benefited unfairly during the Bush administration. Van Jones exclaims, in an interview with Stephen Colbert, that the ant has gotten rich off the back of the grasshopper, and calls for an immediate tax hike on the ant to make him pay his "fair share."

Finally, the EEOC drafts the "Economic Equity and Anti-Greenism Act," retroactive to the beginning of the summer. The ant is fined for failing to hire a proportionate number of green bugs and, having nothing left to pay his retroactive taxes, his home is confiscated by the government. Hillary gets her old law firm to represent the grasshopper in a defamation suit against the ant, and the case is tried before a panel of federal hearing officers that Bill appointed from a list of single-parent welfare moms who can only hear cases on Thursday's between 1:30 and 3 PM.

The ant loses the case.

The story ends as we see the grasshopper finishing up the last bits of the ant's food while the government house he's in, which just happens to be the ant's old house, crumbles around him since he doesn't know how to maintain it. The ant has disappeared in the snow.

And on the TV, which the grasshopper bought by selling most of the ant's food, they are showing Barak Obama standing before a wildly applauding group of Democrats announcing that a new era of "fairness" has dawned in America.

On this same page is the guy from *Dirty Jobs* talking about the importance of work. It is excellent; you may want to start at 10 minutes in, if you are short on time.

From <http://www.blessedquietness.com/journal/theworld/work.htm> accessed October 1, 2015.

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Application: The timing factor here is important. That is, there is a right time to work as well. For many of us, there are busier times than others. For some seasons, we might work 16 hour days; and in others, we may cut back to 10 hour days. If you work for an AC company, when it is hot, you are going to be working long, hot days under very difficult conditions. You cannot tell the foreman (or you cannot tell

yourself) “I’m too tired to work; or I’ll put in 8 hours and then it is *my* time.” Just like the ant is smart enough to recognize when he needs to work, so it should be for the AC repairman.

We get some mixed messages from our faith: on the one hand, we are told to depend upon Jesus Christ; but, on the other hand, we are told to work and to be industrious. Dependence upon Jesus Christ does not mean that you park your butt on a park bench all day long, and wait for people to feed you. God has given us a mind, He has given us a body, and we are to use what God has given us. So, when God provides a job (which may involve you going out and looking for a job), then we are to do that job, and we are to do it to the best of our ability.

James Rickard: *Remember that God provides food, Psalm 104:14-15 136:25 146:7 147:9, but the ant, like us, must diligently harvest it in the right way at the right time.*⁵⁷

Application: Depending upon Jesus Christ does not mean that we do not plan for old age; it does not mean that we do not set aside funds for retirement; it does not mean that we do not invest and save. Now, there are some Christian workers who do not necessarily have that opportunity—the Christian missionary. In those circumstances, the church needs to consider the missionaries needs, and setting up a retirement fund for missionaries is a wise thing for a church to do.

Application: Now, things do happen. The stock market crashes, gold prices tank, the housing market plummets. Not every investment pays off. There are some good and wise believers who find themselves at age 65 or 70 or 75 without the proper funds to continue. God will deal with that as well and God will provide for them.

Application: As an aside, there is nothing in the Bible about retirement. No doubt, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob got older, they did less of their work themselves; they delegated more work. There is nothing wrong with slowing down your pace as you get older. However, there is no passage in the Bible which recommends that you retire at age 65 or 70 or 75. When it is time to retire, your body will tell you. It is reasonable to plan for your old age and to plan less strenuous work at age 65 than at age 40. When I was in my 30's, 40's and 50's, I worked as many as 4 jobs at a time. I took very little time off; and a 10 hour day was almost the minimum. I put in a few 16 hour days. Now that I am 65, I work a lot less. I work for 3, 4 or 5 hours, and then decide, “You know, I can do this tomorrow.” And so I do. But I continue to work; and at this point, I don’t see any reason to retire.

And so that there is no misunderstanding, along with the work that I do to support myself, I also study and write 3–5 hours per day (no idea how R. B. Thieme, Jr. could study and teach 8 and 10 and more hours a day).

Working is good for your mental attitude. Working is good for you emotionally. I have had tenants who receive money from the government not to work, and they often turn out to be my very worst tenants (I can think of one exception to this). Such tenants are often angry, complaining, entitled, and financially irresponsible. And they are not happy. The government sends them a check, and they are not happy people.

⁵⁷ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

I believe that Ron Adema, the pastor of Doctrinal Bible Studies Church of Alabama first came up with the idea that the 2nd divine institution is work. However, I was not able to verify this with a quick search of his church's site. In fact, I am unable to find anyone else who teaches this; however, I believe I did get this from someone else. Whoever realized this was certainly inspired by God.

The Second Divine Institution: Work

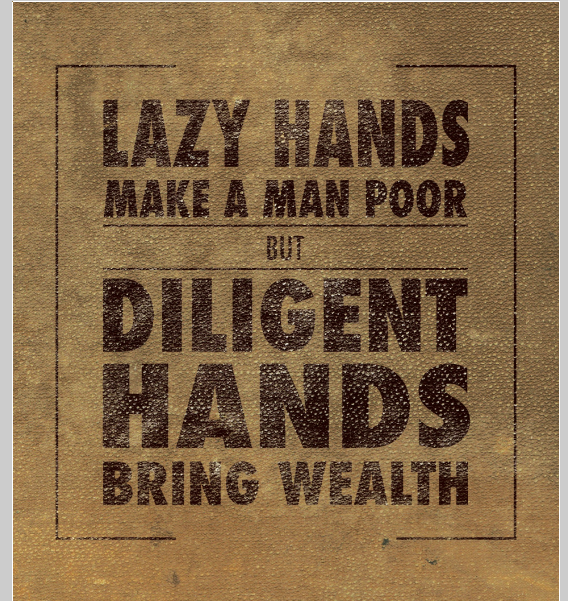
- 1) Before and after the fall, man was designed to work.
- 2) Before the fall, God made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work. **And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden. And there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. The tree of life also was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden. And from there it was divided and became four heads. And Jehovah God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and keep it** (Gen. 2:8–10, 15).
- 3) After man sinned, God gave Adam ground that was more difficult to work and He warned man that he would work hard in order to eat. **“The ground is cursed for your sake. In pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life. It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken.”** (Gen. 3:17b–19a).
- 4) Although the earliest professions were farmer and rancher (Cain and Abel), early man quickly developed a number of vocations: builder (Gen. 4:17), musician (Gen. 4:21) and metal-worker (Gen. 4:22). Early man also engaged in criminal activity, even before this activity was clearly defined (Gen. 4:23–24). At the very beginning, as far back as Gen. 4, man is closely associated with his vocation.
- 5) Work is an integral part of man's existence. Even though man works hard, he will also receive personal satisfaction from his work. Eccles. 9:9 speaks of two things which are to bring enjoyment in life: a man's right woman and his labor. Since this passage refers to him as *under the sun*, this refers to believers and unbelievers alike.
- 6) God expected even the poor to work. God told the farmers in early Israel not to harvest everything in the field, but to leave portions of the field unharvested. This was so that the poor of the land and immigrants could come through and harvest this themselves. Lev. 19:9–10 23:22 Deut. 24:19–21
- 7) One of the great stories in the Bible is about Ruth, a Moabite, who moved to Israel, but was quite poor. Therefore, she worked the fields of Boaz for that which he had not harvested. Ruth 2:2, 15
- 8) Nowhere in the Bible is there some sort of welfare system recommended where a man or a woman sits at home and receives a check. Instead, hard work is presented as honorable. Prov. 6:6–12 10:5
- 9) Poverty comes from laziness; hard work is the cure for poverty. **He becomes poor who works with a lazy hand, but the hand of the diligent brings wealth.** (Prov. 10:4; HNV)
- 10) Planning and the exercise of forethought are also a part of those who are successful. **The plans of the diligent surely lead to profit; and everyone who is hasty surely rushes to poverty.** (Prov. 21:5; HNV)
- 11) However, the poor were not to be ignored or abandoned. **“If there is among you a poor man of one of your brothers inside any of your gates in your land which Jehovah your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother. But you shall open your hand wide to him, and shall surely lend him enough for his need, that which he lacks. For the poor shall never cease out of the land. Therefore, I command you saying, You shall open**

The Second Divine Institution: Work

your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in your land.” (Deut. 15:7–8, 11).

Proverbs 10:4 Graphic from **Cody Chase Creative**; accessed September 16, 2015.

- 12) There was a national fund for the poor, which amounted to 10% every third year, which averages out to 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ % per year. “When you have finished paying all the tenth of your produce in the third year, the year of the tenth, you are to give it to the Levite, the foreign resident, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.” (Deut. 26:12).
- 13) This takes into consideration that there is a small segment of society that is unable to work or limited in their ability to work. In most cases, family members take up the slack. We are left with perhaps less than 1% of the population that is unable to work and therefore needs some assistance.
 - (1) The idea that the United States provides food stamps to 1 out of 6 people is absolutely ridiculous. There are not that many people who require assistance.
- 14) Hard work is always presented as admirable; and laziness is spoken of as a personal failing. Prov. 24:30–34 Eccles. 5:18–20 Eph. 4:28
- 15) Ideally speaking, if you work hard at your job, there are going to be times that you gain some satisfaction from this; and you tend to appreciate your time of rest even more. Eccles. 9:9
- 16) When a person pursues a vocation which is his passion, that person often receives a great deal of satisfaction from their work.
- 17) I personally have known people who do not work, who collect a check from the government even though they are perfectly capable of working. These people tend to be unhappy, unfocused, angry and even a little nutty. Work is so fundamental to man’s existence that, apart from it, man’s soul goes awry.
- 18) Even Paul writes to the Thessalonians and tells them, if they don’t work, then they should not eat. 2Thess. 3:10
- 19) When it comes to work, there are systems of authority. Sometimes, this system of authority is within the human soul. You know what you must produce, you understand the seasons, and you recognize what you must do in order to preserve your food in order to eat when food is not growing.
- 20) Most of us go to a job where we work for someone else. The owner, manager, boss, department head, shift manager is the authority over us; and the larger the organization, the greater the organization and the more layers of authority there are. These authorities are for believers and unbelievers alike.
- 21) A few of us go to work as the owner, manager, boss, department head; so we often arrive at work earlier than anyone else in order to organize those under our authority.
- 22) Satan has attacked the concept of work with the welfare state, section 8 housing, and food assistance programs. One of the things which has stuck in my mind, over the years, is a mother and daughter who rented a house from me, and section 8 paid the rent for them. Every morning, their job was to get up, sit on the couch, break open the smokes, and watch tv. Now, you might



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think that, having no job, their house would be clean and their kids well taken care of. Not a chance. The kids ran around unsupervised and the house was one of the filthiest houses I had ever been in. Furthermore, these were unhappy people. I found huge piles of beer cans all over after they moved out.

- 23) Satan also attacks the divine institution of work with unfair business owners and with unions. Although the owner of a business gets to call the shots because he owns the business and has made all of the investments, his choices are important. If he exploits his workforce, there can be a backlash of union activity, which completely distorts the system of authority (however, the owner of the company chose to distort his own authority first). There have been a number of companies which have been successful and part of their strategy has been to treat their workforce with dignity and respect (Coors, HEB, Whole Foods, Starbuck's, and Wal-Mart quickly come to mind).
- (1) Union leaders have figured out that, they can organize public employees—even when these employees are well remunerated—and demand pretty much anything, as there is very little personal integrity when it comes to the management of public works (that is, they do not care what costs they incur; they simply ask the taxpayers to pay more money).
 - (2) So you see how these institutions are distorted. Bad employers caused unions to spring up, which, in turn, moved into the public sector, where salary and benefits were almost unlimited, even though there was no indication that the problems the unions originally fought to correct even existed in any form in the public sector.
- 24) There is this weird approach to heaven, where some people seem to think that we will float about on clouds playing harps. There is every indication that we will have responsibilities (i.e., *work*) in heaven.

The Pulpit Commentary: *It is with no small labour that the agricultural ant of Syria clears its field, keeps it well weeded, gathers in the corn, and stores this in subterranean granaries. Nature is a great factory. All life involves work. Even the silent forest apparently sleeping in the hush of noon is busy, and if only we had ears to hear, we might detect the elaboration of the sap and the growth of the leaf, showing that every tree is hard at work on its appointed task.*⁵⁸

Passages on sloth from Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Prov. 6:9 10:26 13:4 15:19 18:9 19:15, 24 20:4 21:25 22:13 24:30–34 26:13–16 Matt. 25:26 Rom. 12:11 Heb. 6:12.⁵⁹

This is taken from the **Doctrine of the Divine Institutions** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). I am unsure as to how much of this was taken from another teacher. In glancing through the points, it looks like my writing for the most part.

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I have been questioned by at least one evangelical about including Gary North's work. I personally do not know North, nor have I read all of his works. I have attempted to include material which appears to be accurate and related to the passage at hand.

This which is found in the darker table below, I inserted.

⁵⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:6.

⁵⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Prov. 6:6.

“Ants and Sluggards” by Gary North

In Western folklore, the story of the grasshopper and the ant has been a familiar one for millennia. Aesop’s Fables includes it. The diligent ant works through the summer, gathering food for the winter, while the carefree and careless grasshopper ignores the threat of winter. The grasshopper takes advantage of the summer weather to dance and sing, as if the good weather would last forever. He assumes that there are no future crises to prepare for by sacrificing today. When winter comes, he faces starvation. He then comes to the ant and begs for food. The ant refuses; there is insufficient food for both of them.

This passage in Proverbs forces us to consider the requirements of survival and success. The New English Bible translates the passage as follows: “. . . but in the summer she prepares her store of food and lays in her supplies at harvest.” To imitate the ant, we must become future-oriented. We must begin to count the costs of our activities (Luke 14:28–30).¹ If we are unwilling to work hard today, we will come to poverty. “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth [as a robber, NEB], and thy want as an armed man” (vv. 9–11).

Sluggards resent the lifestyle of ants. The activities of ants testify to a world-and-life view different from that held by sluggards. The sluggard is content to sleep. He allows the events of life to pass him by. He assumes that the peacefulness of sleep and the enjoyment of leisure can be purchased at zero cost or minimal cost. There is no crisis ahead, or if there is, nothing can be done to prepare for it successfully. There is no need to prepare for the future.

Edward Banfield, the Harvard political scientist, describes this outlook as lower class. He says that class divisions in society are not based on the size of individual bank accounts or occupational status; they are based on a person’s time perspective. Upper-class people are future-oriented. Lower-class people are present-oriented.² What characterizes the upper-class person is his diligence in sacrificing present pleasures for future productivity and achievement.³ Ludwig von Mises would say that upper-class people, as described by Banfield, have very low time-preference; they save for the future in response to very low interest rates. The upper-class society therefore enjoys relatively low rates of interest. Upper-class investors respond to low rates of interest, whereas the lower-class investor demands very high rates of interest in order to persuade him to forfeit the present use of his economic resources.⁴

Upper-class societies – future-oriented, high-thrift societies – tend to experience higher rates of economic growth. People buy what they want: future consumption rather than present consumption. In contrast, lower-class societies put a high premium on present consumption. They sacrifice future consumption in order to achieve this goal. Ants and sluggards have different goals and different time perspectives.

Pietism (e.g., certain types of fundamentalism and monasticism) and quietism (e.g., mysticism) focus their interest on “spiritual” goals, which are contrasted with material or “earthly” goals. Members of both groups believe that the proper perspective of New Testament believers is passivity toward the earthly future. They misinterpret Paul’s words, “Be careful for nothing” (Phil. 4:6a), which can also be translated “be full of care for nothing,” or better yet, “have no anxiety” (NEB). They argue that Paul meant that we should not devote lots of resources to planning for the future and investing in terms of our plans. Christ’s warning in the Sermon on the Mount, “Take therefore no thought for tomorrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt.

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6:34), is interpreted to mean that all planning is unwise. Yet what Christ taught was the illegitimacy of a paralyzing worry about the future – a paralysis that leads to little planning, or planning to meet crises that never come. Such worry is wasteful. “But Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).⁵ The material blessings will follow when men concern themselves with establishing God’s kingdom.

The pietist interprets “kingdom of God” to mean the kingdom of the internal. He insists: “When men concern themselves with the details of prayer, church worship, and personal piety, then God will take care of them.” This belief is basic to the faith of the pietist. He believes that the practical, down-to-earth future-orientation represented by the behavior of the ant is a now-superseded Old Testament standard. With respect to material things, the pietist claims to be as unconcerned as the sluggard is. The pietist folds his hands for hours in prayer; the sluggard folds his hands for hours in slumber. In both cases, the approach is outwardly the same: folded hands. So is the outward result: poverty.

The biblical view is expressed by the actions of the ant: diligence concerning that which sustains life. “He becometh poor that dalet with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich” (10:4).⁶ Slack hands, folded hands: the result is poverty. “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (13:4).⁷ A fat soul and wealth can be compatible, although they can sometimes be incompatible (Ps. 106:15). Hard work, future orientation, thrift, attention to details, high income, and contentment under God: here is the Bible’s “wealth formula.”

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3b; Matt. 4:4⁸). Yet man does not live by the word of God alone, either, if by “word of God,” we mean an “internalized” word – reading only, prayer only, handing out tracts only, or preaching only. What is forbidden is the concept of separation of word and bread. We see this in 40 years of manna in the wilderness (Deut. 8:3a), and in Christ’s resumption of eating after the completion of His 40-day wilderness experience (Matt. 4:2). We also see it in the celebration of the Passover and the Lord’s Supper. What produced bread in the promised land of Canaan, when the manna ceased (Josh. 5:12), was not a program of strictly internal religious exercises, but attention to the whole of God’s word, including biblical law, and also including a thoughtful consideration of the ant, not to mention the sluggard.

Let me insert here that, there are principles for the believer to follow, which include hard work, the 2nd divine institution. However, in life, there is a balance. You cannot pursue a high salary when this includes the neglect of your wife and children, or the neglect of your own spiritual life (which must be more than a Sunday and a midweek service).

In other words, you may find yourself in a great business, where there is nothing holding you back, where the sky is the limit—and you may have to reduce your hours or find another, less-demanding job, if your family is suffering as a result. By *suffering*, I mean, your children need spiritual guidance from you, and you, as the father, must take responsibility to guide them in their walk with Jesus Christ.

Some American fundamentalists react in self-righteous outrage to Christians who spend money on dehydrated food storage programs, gold and silver coins – the economic equivalent of the construction of a tornado shelter. They say that such preparations for the future are a sign of a lack of faith in God, a humanistic concern with earthly cares of the world. Their shibboleth of shibboleths: “God will take care of me!” This really means that when a crisis comes, they will wind up on the doorsteps of those

“Ants and Sluggards” by Gary North

who did prepare, calling on them to show charity to them, which supposedly is their Christian duty. “God will take care of me” really boils down to “You ants will take care of me.” This is also the sluggard’s cry.

Jesus’ answer to these hand-folding critics is found in the parable of the 10 virgins, who awaited the return of the bridegroom. Five were wise and took oil in their lamps. Five were foolish and took no oil. “And all the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves” (Matt. 25:8–9). The result: “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (v. 10). Such is the fate of foolish virgins, sluggards, and pietists. God takes care of them, for sure, but not in the way they had hoped for.

Conclusion

The ant is pictured here as future-oriented. She stores up food in summer. She sacrifices present consumption for the sake of future consumption.

The ant takes steps in summer to solve the problem of winter, when nature will produce no crops. The annual cycle of feast and famine is overcome by the actions of ants in laying up food in advance for the winter season.

No one tells the ant what to do. The ant does it naturally. Solomon tells the lazy person to imitate the ant, i.e., to become self-motivated. This is a feature of the free market. No government agency issues orders concerning what should be produced, yet self-motivated producers systematically provide goods and services that consumers desire. This requires future-orientation and careful planning by producers.

When filled with the Spirit and with doctrine circulating in our souls, we learn, as believers, to make the most of our time here on earth. We use the function of our soul (volition) to balance out our work (the 2nd divine institution) with our spouse and family (the 3rd and 4th divine institutions). All of this comes second to our spiritual development and growth. We should never allow any one of these things to overshadow any of the others. We do not spend so much time in Bible study, as to neglect our work; we do not spend so much time with our children, as to neglect our wives; etc. God, in His grace, has given us the proper amount of time to devote to all of our responsibilities. In that is the full life promised by God. John 10:10b [Jesus is speaking] **“I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].”** (Amplified Bible)

² Edward C. Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 53–54.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–53.

⁴ Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1949), ch. 18.

⁵ Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd electronic edition (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Dominion Educational Ministries, Inc., [2000] 2003), ch. 15.

⁶ Chapter 21.

⁷ Chapter 38.

⁸ North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 1.

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The Pulpit Commentary: *Sloth militates against prosperity; it is the prolific parent of want, and, even more surely than suretyship, leads to misfortune and ruin, The certainty with which ruin steals upon the sluggard may be the reason why the teacher closes the discourse in the way he does. In the case of suretyship such an issue is uncertain; there is the possibility of escape, the surety may prevail upon his friend to release him from his obligation, and so he may escape ruin; but with sloth no such contingency is possible, its invariable end is disaster.*⁶⁰

Application: Notice that the ant puts away this food for a future season. This should also be a part of our routine. Every persons, from the youngest age, needs to set aside an emergency fund. When you are working, you need to have two piles of money that you set aside for the future: (1) one is your investment in your retirement. You start that with your first job. Whatever you can put away in a retirement fund, you do. (2) Secondly, you set up an emergency or a rainy day fund—money that you put aside regularly and without fail, into an account or into an investment that you do not touch, unless your flat broke, the landlord is knocking at the door asking for rent; and you have just finished that last can of ranch style beans from your cupboard.

Application: Now, as you get older, perhaps your mid-30's or early 40's, you may want to think about various investment vehicles for this emergency money. Don't fall for get rich quick schemes, but for good, solid normal investments (mutual funds, metals, real estate). And you don't put all of your eggs into one basket (that is, you do not invest everything into a can't fail, once-in-a-lifetime stock deal).

Application: The ant is not going to starve, even when food is scarce. He has planned for the future, even though there is no one driving him or guiding him to do what he does. We ought to be at least half as smart as these ants, and plan for our futures as well.

Application: You do not depend on social security to get you by in the future; and you do not slough off your strongest years, piously claiming, "I know God will take care of me." If you are strong enough to work and yet you refuse to; if you know that you ought to set money aside, and yet you don't; God may still take care of your sorry butt when you're old, but do not expect that it is going to be great. I have known so many people who cannot even remain living in their own hometown (or where they were raised or decided to settle) because they did not make preparations for their future, and rents/housing prices/taxes priced them out of the market (which is why so many older Californians had to leave California and spend their final years in Arizona or some other less expensive state).

From Gary North: *In Western folklore, the story of the grasshopper and the ant has been a familiar one for millennia. Aesop's Fables includes it. The diligent ant works through the summer, gathering food for the winter, while the carefree and careless grasshopper ignores the threat of winter. The grasshopper takes advantage of the summer weather to dance and sing, as if the good weather would last forever. He assumes that there are no future crises to prepare for by sacrificing today. When winter comes, he faces starvation. He then comes to the ant and begs for food. The ant refuses; there is insufficient food for both of them.*⁶¹

⁶⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:6.

⁶¹ From <http://www.garynorth.com/WisdomAndDominion.pdf> accessed September 26, 2015.

Finally, John Piper offers a unique perspective on the ant's diligence: *I believe that the Bible teaches us to memorize scripture the way an ant gathers food in summer: because it is so valuable and will be needed in the winter months.*⁶²

Translation of Proverbs 6:9a: *How long will you lie [there], [you] slacker?* The Bible is clearly anti-sloth. We all need rest; we all need time to recuperate, but you do not get to lie in bed all day.

Gill: *[How long will you lie] in bed, indulging in sloth and ease; while the industrious ant is busy in getting in its provisions, even by moonlight, as naturalists observe.*⁶³

This is a rhetorical question. David is not asking this for information, but to say to the lazy bum that he is not to sleep in like this.

James Rickard: *This rhetorical question implicitly admonishes the slug to repent of his foolish laziness and to get up quickly and redeem the time before it is too late. The question is asked trying to wake him up out of his lethargic malaise and hold him accountable.*⁶⁴

So there is no misunderstanding, this does not mean that a person can never sleep in. God also provided the Sabbath for the era of David and Solomon, which was their day of rest, and a day to enjoy taking in spiritual information. And then maybe a nap afterwards.

Translation of Proverbs 6:9b: *How long until you rise from your sleep?* Again, a rhetorical question, which does not appear to be markedly different from the previous question. David is shaming Solomon

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⁶² From http://preceptaustin.org/proverbs_620-35_commentary.htm accessed October 2, 2015.

⁶³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:9 (additional references there).

⁶⁴ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

(or, whomever) into getting out of bed.

Peanuts–Proverbs (a graphic); from Rochester.edu; accessed October 2, 2015.

The Pulpit Commentary: *"What infatuation is this which makes you lie and sleep as if you had nothing else to do?" The double question stigmatizes the sluggard's utter indolence, and suggests the picture of his prolonging his stay in bed long after every one else is abroad and about his business.*⁶⁵

Translation of Proverbs 6:10a: [But you say, "Just] a little sleep, [just] a little slumber." I think it is reasonable for this to be spoken by the lazy butt who is in bed. "Just let me sleep a little more; just let me have a little more rest."

The Geneva Bible: *He expresses the nature of the sluggards, who though they sleep long, yet never have enough, but always seek opportunity for more.*⁶⁶

The Pulpit Commentary: *"Yet a little" is the phrase on the lips of every one who makes but a feeble resistance, and yields supinely to his darling vice. Habits, as Aristotle in his "Ethics" has shown, are the resultant of repeated acts, and habits entail consequences.*⁶⁷

James Rickard: *"Sleep", refers to a state of rest that occurs naturally and regularly during which there is little or no conscious thought. That is the way of the slug, there is little or no conscious thought on his part even when he is awake! Laziness is rarely blatant, where the slug usually has the attitude of "not right now." This is the case because fools, including slugs, do not consider the implications of their decisions. They lack prudence and so are unable to examine their ways. They think that many responsibilities, even those that are vital, can be put off or delayed, often with little short-term consequences, yet eventually the bill comes due, and when it does the slug has no resources with which to pay it.*⁶⁸

And the more such a person sleeps, the more that they want to sleep. It is not that, just give them another 15 or 20 minutes, and then they will get up and go after it—they want more time, and a little more time after that.

This is also a psychological condition—when a person has a hard time rousing himself out of bed. That is depression. That is a person who is not motivated in life; who is disorganized in life; who cannot set goals and achieve them. The best solution is to actually get up and do what needs to be done; not to spend the day in sleep.

Translation of Proverbs 6:10b: ...—[the folding of your two hands to rest](#). When the hands are folded, no work can be done. You cannot pick up a telephone, a shovel, a hammer, your car keys, as long as your hands are folded together. I think we are to understand this as, the person is still sleeping, laying on their back, there hands folded together in front of them. It is a position of rest and relaxation, as well as a position to indicate that you are not getting up and going to work.

⁶⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:9.

⁶⁶ From [Bible Study Tools](http://BibleStudyTools.com); accessed September 9, 2015.

⁶⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:10.

⁶⁸ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

Vv. 9–10: How long will you lie [there], [you] slacker? How long until you rise from your sleep? [But you say, “Just] a little sleep, [just] a little slumber.” —the folding of your two hands to rest.

Commentators on the Sluggard (the Slacker)

Commentator

Commentary

<p>Henry Ironside</p>	<p>Several commentators connected temporal work with the spiritual life. Ironside writes: <i>Sleeping when one should be working is inconsistent with the command to eat bread by the sweat of one’s face (Genesis 3:19). No one has a right to count on God to provide for his daily needs when he has not been characterized by diligence. Poverty follows laziness; likewise in a spiritual sense, endless misery follows the one who refuses to be awakened to the things of God in this age of grace. Judson said, “A little more sleep, a little more slumber and thou shalt wake in hell to sleep no more forever!”</i>⁶⁹</p>
<p>Robert Dean</p>	<p><i>Notice how God mocks people. What we see here is that there is divinely sanctioned sarcasm throughout the Scripture. God ridicules those who reject Him. He ridicules those who say there is no God. God calls them a fool. That means that is the divine righteous standard. So the mocking goes like this: Proverb 6:10–11 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest— Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.” Poverty is represented here like a thief, someone who walks about, going around the neighborhood looking for an opportunity to get into your house and take whatever they can. It is going to rob you and steal from you the valuable things that you have and the quality of life that you have, and you never know when it will come upon you if you are not diligent, if you don’t have a good work ethic. Suddenly you are impoverished. This is the idea of not having enough, the idea of losing the means of supporting life.</i>⁷⁰</p>
<p>Peter Pett</p>	<p><i>The sluggard sleeps and slumbers (compare Proverbs 24:33), just as the surety was warned not to do (Proverbs 6:4). He sees it as ‘a little sleep’ no matter how long it lasts. He deceives himself. And paradoxically he dreams of wealth and plenty (Proverbs 13:4). But the consequence will be that poverty creeps up on him like a robber, and want like an armed man (compare Proverbs 24:34). This armed man could be an armed robber, or a soldier seeking spoils. Thus poverty and want both creep up on a man, and can equally be violent. They wrest his goods from him. They take his goods by stealth or force (as indeed would the creditor in the first illustration).</i>⁷¹</p>

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Translation of Proverbs 6:11a: But your poverty will come [to you] like a vagabond... Certainly, you have heard mom or dad say, “Kid, you’re going to sleep your life away.” (I did) If this is your past time, if this is what you live for, suddenly, poverty will be upon you. You cannot spend your life in bed.

⁶⁹ Dr. Henry Allen Ironside, *Studies on Book One of Psalms*; from e-Sword, originally taken from http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/byauthor/44/henry_allen_ironside; Prov. 6:9–11.

⁷⁰ From [Dean Bible.org](http://www.DeanBible.org); accessed September 25, 2015.

⁷¹ From <http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=19&ch=6> accessed September 27, 2015.

Matthew Henry: *Poverty and want will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business. If men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward.*⁷²

A robber, particularly in the ancient world, functioned on the principle of surprise. They had to catch you off-guard in order to best rob you. Just as hard work puts you often into a position of reasonable success; so slackery puts you in a position of poverty. Perhaps at age 35 or 40, you look around and say, “I don’t have a blessed thing.”

Now, it is not our job as believers to collect a lot of stuff, and a nice car and a big house to put it all into. But, an accumulation of wealth over a period of time of concerted work is common. It is not your goal; but, on the other hand, you are to provide for your own. This should be on your mind as you work.

If you have been sleeping in, day after day, and suddenly, you look around you, and you have nothing; that is what happens to the slacker.

Translation of Proverbs 6:11b: ...and your need [will come to you] like an armed man [an attacker]. This appears to be parallel to the previous phrase. You realize that you are aimless and lacking in all goods, after a life of being a lazy bum.

Everyone has financial needs, which, in the ancient world, impacted people directly when it came to their physical needs (food, clothing and shelter). When one spends a life in laziness, suddenly, it will be as if an armed attacker has come to you, to take all that you have. Such a lifestyle will leave will leave you in need, just as an attacker would.

Barnes: *The similitude is drawn from the two sources of Eastern terror: the “traveler,” i. e., “the thief in the night,” coming suddenly to plunder; the “armed man,” literally “the man of the shield,” the armed robber. The habit of indolence is more fatally destructive than these marauders.*⁷³

James Rickard: *Just as the vagabond / robber, and soldier, poverty too comes unexpectedly to take a person’s substance, not merely by stealth but also by force. To the notions of poverty as disreputable, homeless, and feeding off others, the armed man connotes a surprise attack against which you cannot defend yourself. In addition, the easiest victim for a robber or enemy soldier is the sleeping sluggard, who lacks both the vigilance and the diligence to retain any wealth he may have. So poverty for him is an ever-present danger.*⁷⁴

Work is good for the psyche. I have known many people who were subsidized by the government, and they were unhappy people. They were often angry people. They were directionless people. This is not the kind of life you want to lead.

Now, it is normal, as life goes on, that you purchase a few (sometimes, a lot) personal items. There are exceptions to this, but that is what most people do. Furthermore, they plan for the future. They set something aside; they make some wise investments.

⁷² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:6–11.

⁷³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Prov. 6:11.

⁷⁴ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015.

The spiritual life is just the same. We build up spiritual goods for the future, which increase as we grow spiritually and engage our spiritual gift. Just as it is on earth, there is no equality in heaven. Some have more; some have a lot less. We are all in perfect happiness; but in perfect happiness, there are levels, commensurate with our lives on earth. Some people sleep spiritually; and after they die, they have eternal life and eternity with God, but little else. Others, like Paul, exploit the great assets which God provides us with here on earth. As a result, not only do we have perfect happiness, but we have great rewards, even though it may not be clear as to what those things are. No doubt you have heard the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), and God gives so many talents (so many dollars) to each of three men. One man carefully invests these dollars, and has great material increase, and he is greatly praised. But the third man hides the money, so that no one can see it; and returns exactly to his master what his master gave him (“You gave me eternal life; and I’ve still got it” is his testimony). That is the believer who accomplishes nothing in this world. He lived life, he believed in Jesus Christ, but he never grew spiritually, he never used the spiritual assets given to him by God. He may have been indifferent to the spiritual life; he may have become very legalistic in the spiritual life; or he may have gone on an emotional jag and joined the tongues movement. Whatever this situation, he produced no divine good; he did not grow spiritually; he never used his spiritual gift.

Interestingly enough, vv. 10–11 are repeated in Prov. 24:33–34.

The Pulpit Commentary: It is observable, in comparing this section with the preceding, that the teacher pursues the subject of the sluggard to its close, while he leaves the end of the surety undetermined. The explanation may be in the difference in character of the two. The surety may escape the consequences of his act, but there is no such relief for the sluggard. His slothfulness becomes a habit, which increases the more it is indulged in, and leads to consequences which are as irremediable as they are inevitable.⁷⁵

Much of this chapter is given over to a variety of warnings.

Warning the Sluggard, from James Rickard

1. Prov 24:33 is a warning for the sluggard that this is not merely a matter of convenience, but one of life and death. While they think they are preserving their life with a little sleep and slumber they are actually losing it.
2. Prov 20:13 exhorts, “Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food.” Our own passage warns about the same thing—that their laziness will lead to poverty. Prov. 6:10–11 *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.* Prov. 24:34 appears to be almost an exact quote of this passage.
3. The positive side is presented in contrast, for the wise and diligent worker in Eccl 5:12a *The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much.*
4. Scripture also warns the man who pursues other things which are not productive. So he may not sleep all the time, but he does not take care of the necessities of life. Prov. 28:19 *Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.*

⁷⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:11.

D. Phillip Roberts notes: “The lazy are generally not those who have few desires. Rather, their daydreaming leads to exaggerated desires, and exaggerated desires to a despair of realization.” (D. Phillip Roberts, “The Sluggard in Proverbs”, unpublished term paper, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1994.)

From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-6/> accessed September 21, 2015 (edited and appended).

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Gary North: *This passage in Proverbs forces us to consider the requirements of survival and success. The New English Bible translates the passage as follows: . . . but in the summer she prepares her store of food and lays in her supplies at harvest. To imitate the ant, we must become future oriented. We must begin to count the costs of our activities (Luke 14:28–30). If we are unwilling to work hard today, we will come to poverty. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so will your poverty come as one that travails [as a robber, NEB], and your want as an armed man (vv. 9–11). Sluggards resent the lifestyle of ants. The activities of ants testify to a world-and-life view different from that held by sluggards. The sluggard is content to sleep. He allows the events of life to pass him by. He assumes that the peacefulness of sleep and the enjoyment of leisure can be purchased at zero cost or minimal cost. There is no crisis ahead, or if there is, nothing can be done to prepare for it successfully. There is no need to prepare for the future.*⁷⁶

Let me add to North’s remarks: this very much describes the lack of motivation of the typical pot smoker. One of the worst things for America is states which have legalized marijuana, either honestly or (wink-wink) as medical marijuana.

North continues: *Edward Banfield, the Harvard political scientist, described this outlook as lower class. He said that class divisions in society are not based on the size of individual bank accounts or occupational status; they are based on a person’s time perspective. Upper-class people are future-oriented. Lower-class people are present-oriented.² What characterizes the upper-class person is his diligence in sacrificing present pleasures for future productivity and achievement.³ Ludwig von Mises would say that upper-class people, as described by Banfield, have very low time-preference; they save for the future in response to very low interest rates. The upper-class society therefore enjoys relatively low rates of interest. Upper-class investors respond to low rates of interest, whereas the lower-class investor demands very high rates of interest in order to persuade him to forfeit the present use of his economic resources.⁴ Upper-class societies—future-oriented, high-thrift societies—tend to experience higher rates of economic growth. People buy what they want: future consumption rather than present consumption. In contrast, lower-class societies put a high premium on present consumption. They sacrifice future consumption in order to achieve this goal. Ants and sluggards have different goals and different time perspectives.*⁷⁷

The NASB is used below.

⁷⁶ rom <http://www.garynorth.com/WisdomAndDominion.pdf> accessed September 26, 2015 (slightly edited).

⁷⁷ rom <http://www.garynorth.com/WisdomAndDominion.pdf> accessed September 26, 2015. See that page for his references.

Here's what the Bible says about poverty (from Robert Dean)

Proverbs 6:9–11 **How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest"— Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.**

Proverbs 13:18 **Poverty and shame {will come} to him who neglects discipline [disdains correction]** ... Today we live in such a proud society where nobody wants to take correction from anybody. And so they work for someone who tries to teach them how to work, and they quit the job and say, 'I'm too proud to work for someone like that.' The contrast is, "But he who regards reproof will be honored." They are going to improve their life, they are going to go forward, they are going to learn how to do better and be engaged in their work responsibilities.

Proverbs 14:23 **In all labor there is profit, But mere talk {leads} only to poverty.** There is no labor that is dishonorable.

Proverbs 21:5 **The plans of the diligent {lead} surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty {comes} surely to poverty.** The diligent is the hard worker. The hasty are not going anywhere, they are running around in circles and that is another form of being lazy.

Proverbs 22:16 **He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself Or who gives to the rich, {will} only {come to} poverty.**

There is nothing wrong in Scripture with someone who has a lot; there is nothing wrong in Scripture with someone who works hard. That doesn't mean just physically. You can use your brain and invest your money wisely. Wealth is not wrong in Scripture and people shouldn't be penalized by a tax system or an economic system that takes away from them. They are the productive ones; they are the ones who provide for others.

Proverbs 28:19 **He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty {pursuits} will have poverty in plenty.** Remember that in 2 Thessalonians chapter three Paul says that if you don't work you don't eat. That is the biblical principle. It is not if you don't work we'll give you a handout. A handout is no good for somebody who won't work. We have to balance compassion with reality and responsibility.

Verses and commentary from **Robert Dean**; accessed September 25, 2015.

[Topics](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We have a very similar set of verses in Prov. 24.

The Parallel Passage of Proverbs 24:30–34 (NKJV)

The Text

**I went by the field of the lazy man,
And by the vineyard of the man devoid of
understanding;**

Commentary

The author gives an illustration of the lazy man, what he sees regarding this man's property and life. The lazy man is said here to be lacking in understanding.

The Parallel Passage of Proverbs 24:30–34 (NKJV)

The Text	Commentary
<p>And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction:</p>	<p>Where the lazy man lives is a mess. There are thorns and nettles all over, which should have been weeded out. He has a wall, and that wall has been broken down.</p> <p>David learned simply by making these simple observations.</p>
<p>A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.</p>	<p>Then David repeats what he had taught earlier—words that may have become a refrain in his teaching—something which he may have repeated often when waking his children up.</p>

The Bible clearly favors the man who works hard in life.

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Gary North: *Hard work, future orientation, thrift, attention to details, high income, and contentment under God: this is the Bible’s “wealth formula.”*⁷⁸

North continues: *Some American fundamentalists react in self-righteous outrage to Christians who spend money on dehydrated food storage programs, gold and silver coins—the economic equivalent of the construction of a tornado shelter. They say that such preparations for the future are a sign of a lack of faith in God, a humanistic concern with earthly cares of the world. Their shibboleth of shibboleths: “God will take care of me!” This really means that when a crisis comes, they will wind up on the doorsteps of those who did prepare, calling on them to show charity to them, which supposedly is their Christian duty. “God will take care of me” really boils down to “You ants will take care of me.” This is also the sluggard’s cry.*⁷⁹

I am not saying that all believers need to become preppers, but we should be able to read historical trends; we should be able to apply Bible doctrine to current history, and there is no harm in having a dry food supply, guns, ammunition and/or silver coins. One thing is certain, we have observed in America, in my lifetime, just how easy it is to plunge into liberal insanity (like gay marriage) in a very short period of time.

Again, and this cannot be overemphasized, what is first and foremost in your life is your spiritual life. Your relationship to God through Jesus Christ; your understanding of life through the Word of God—these things need to be your primary focus.

There is a careful balance found within the Word of God. This is certainly *not* our kingdom and the accumulation of goods and wealth is not to be our life’s focus. Our focus is upon the Lord Who saved us and Bible doctrine which guides us through life.

⁷⁸ From <http://www.garynorth.com/WisdomAndDominion.pdf> accessed September 26, 2015 (slightly edited).

⁷⁹ From <http://www.garynorth.com/WisdomAndDominion.pdf> accessed September 26, 2015.

Living the Spiritual Life in a Material World

1. We are not of this world; we are simply passing through this world.
2. However, the Bible goes into great detail about human relationships, human interaction, marriage, family, work, and honest business relations. Therefore, these things will be a part of our lives.
3. Much of the book of Proverbs deals with those topics; so much so, that Gary North based one of his **books** on it.
4. The believer is not called to become celibate or to join a monastery or to reject ownership of all earthly goods. There are periods of time in our life where we put such things aside in order to pursue spiritual goals (such as the husband and wife who set sex aside in order to pray or to get some Bible doctrine); but God does not call us to a life of constant poverty and introspection.
5. There are some situations where this is the case. Missionaries often forgo a normal life and normal personal possessions in order to be missionaries. This is why not everyone is called to the mission field.
6. The pastor-teacher spends much of his life in studying and teaching—an abnormal amount of time, in fact—and rarely is a pastor-teacher remunerated well for this dedication. For every famous pastor who is well off (I hesitate to name names, as I do not want to imply that they are wrong to be paid high amounts), there are a thousand *preachers* who make \$15,000 a year or \$25,000; and sometimes, a small home on church grounds or near the church is provided for them. You may not realize it, but that takes a tremendous amount of self-sacrifice and lack of ego to be willing to work so hard for so little remuneration. I have been in several doctrinal churches, with very small but dedicated congregations, and it takes a personal faithfulness like you cannot believe for the pastor to so dedicate his life.
7. The spiritual gifts of pastor-teacher, missionary and evangelist are not given out to too many people. Most of us have jobs, families, and, to the casual observer, a normal life.
8. A job, a marriage and a family are good things—in fact, they are blessings from God (yes, the job is a blessing from God).
9. We are not called upon to deprive our families of material blessings. We are called upon to raise up our children in the admonition of the Lord, and some of that involves the teaching of the book of Proverbs. This includes the teaching of divine establishment.
10. Because of your profession or what has happened in your life, you might have a lot of money and you might be scraping by. In either case, you train your own children up to know and understand the gospel, to live the Christian life, and to live the spiritual life.
11. This includes knowledge of and adherence to the laws of divine establishment.
12. It only stands to reason that, if you teach your children to study hard, to work hard, and to abstain from pre-marital sex and from intoxicants, they are going to be successful. So part of your training has to be, how does the spiritual life impact a life which is materially successful?
13. Therefore, your children, who hopefully believe in Jesus Christ, learn that their focus is the spiritual life. First in their life is Jesus Christ and the spiritual life. Everything else comes second to that.
14. Furthermore, if you have money, this is a *responsibility* as much as it is a *blessing*. What you do with your money is part of your Christian life (that is, you need to recognize that your financial blessing ultimately came from God, and you should regularly be giving to your church or other spiritual causes).
15. Therefore, you may or may not be successful in whatever endeavor you engage in. That is immaterial. If you have learned Bible doctrine and if you have spent most of your life filled with the Holy Spirit, then you will be wholly satisfied with your life.
16. In most cases, God did not call upon us to grit our teeth and endure life until blessed death

Living the Spiritual Life in a Material World

comes upon us. There are some people who live that sort of a life. But God has a plan for our life, and His plan always includes blessing. Even the believer with a very difficult life—God has made provision for that believer and for blessing the life of that believer.

I will use myself as an example here. I could retire tomorrow and be better off than 95% of my contemporaries in retirement. But God did not call me to retirement; God promotes work in the believer's life. Therefore, I continue to work. My mother worked into her 80's; her father worked into his 90's. Quite obviously (I at least hope this is obvious), we reduced our work hours as we aged.

Your relationship to material things is an issue in life. Although this does not happen to most Christians, you may suddenly find that your savings, your plans for the future, all your preparedness is lost or was inappropriate for the future—this is okay. We always know that [The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.](#) (Deut. 33:27a; ESV)

Topics

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

I probably need to edit this.

The Work of the Little Ant, by Alan Carr

- I. The Work of the Little Ant,
 - A. The Ant's Work Is A Partnership
 1. They Work In Love - No fights, Ill. Step on. Brethren should love - Heb. 13:1; 1 John 4:7; John 13:35.
 2. They Are Helpful - Help carry burdens; injured neighbors; rescue those buried or those who fall into a pit. (Gal. 6:2; Rom.15:1)
 3. They Operate In Harmony - 1 weak, many strong. Ill. each has a job, but none are more important. (Illustration, We are all members of one body - 1 Cor. 12:12-27. This thing isn't about you or about me. It is all about Him!) (Illustration, There is power in unity!)
 - a. When the driver ant is on the move, lions, elephants and poisonous snakes all flee! Entire villages of people move out of their path. Some of these colonies are so large that they form a front up to a mile wide, and they destroy everything in their path. Humans and animals stand not chance against these feared little ants!
 - b. The power of the early church arose out of their unity! If the church united, put away out petty differences and disagreements, stand together in the power of the Holy Ghost, Hell would tremble in our presence! - Mark 3:25; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph 4:3)
 4. They Work Toward A Common Goal - Provide for the colony and especially the queen. 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Thes. 4:1; Heb. 13:16
 - B. The Ant's Work Is Productive
 1. Ant's Have An All Volunteer Service - No guide, yet each ant works. Thousands of ants may dwell in one ant colony, but every one of them pulls his own weight! They work! (Illustration, Soldier ants, they kill all the ants who refuse to work. What an incentive to stay active!) James 2:17-18; 4:17. Ill. We have guides - Pastor's, evangelists, teachers, Bible, Holy Spirit, etc. We have everything necessary to get the job done for Jesus, but sadly, some refuse to labor!)

The Work of the Little Ant, by Alan Carr

2. Ant's Labor According To Their Own Ability - (Storekeepers, engineers, nurses, farmers,
 - a. One of the more interesting of the ants is the Honey Pot Ant. He eats himself full of nectar and then feeds the rest of the nest. He is a blessing to all!
 - b. Jobs by size. a. Large - soldiers, b. Medium - Laborers, c. Small - Tend the young.
 - c. Each job in the church is important! You are important too.
 - d. God's work and to the work of this church. He will use you according to your ability, as you grow, your responsibility will grow, 2 Pet. 3:18. God has especially gifted and equipped you for some type of work in the body of Christ, 1 Cor. 12:12-27)
 - e. These little fellows can't build a cathedral, but they can build anthills! And that, after all, is what the Lord designed them to do!) All God asks is that we use our abilities. (Illustration, Talents - Mt. 25) (Illustration, The greatest ability is availability!)
 - f. (Note: The majority of the workers in an anthill are female! The same is true in the church! Take away our women and we would be in deep trouble! We need some men to step up to the plate and take swing for Jesus!)
 - g. (Illustration, Ecc. 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.")
 3. Ant's Work Continually - All Day! No pay, promotion, thanks, pats on back, reward yet they work! Ants never get mad and quit and they never go on strike! They just work! Believers ought to work in spite of... Gal. 6:9. (Illustration, Of you destroy an anthill with your foot; they immediately set about rebuilding it!)
 4. Application – One of the lessons we can take from this is the fact that there is plenty to do, but no workers.
 - a. Old farmer – He was sitting on a stump at the edge of his field and a tourist saw him and stopped to speak to him. "How are things going?", asked the tourist. "Oh, tolerable ", answered the farmer. "I had some trees to cut down, but a cyclone came along and saved me the trouble." "That's amazing!" said the tourist. "Yes, the lightening set fire to the pile of trees and saved me the trouble of burning them up." "Wonderful", exclaimed the tourist. And then he asked the farmer, "And now what are you going to do?" The farmer stretched, spit a stream of tobacco juice and said, "Oh nothing much, I'm just waiting for an earthquake to come along and shake my taters out of the ground!")
 - b. Indifference and ease are the cause, some people just don't care that there is a great work to be done! (Illustration, Our apathy is killing us!)
 - c. Many who do not work, criticize those who do.
 - d. Many are shirkers and not workers. Heb.6:12
 - e. One day I saw a single ant dragging along a dead grasshopper many times his own size. He was struggling to move the giant meal. It was amazing what that little fellow could do! Upon a closer examination, I could see two more ants getting a free ride at the expense of their fellow ant. There is a lot of that going on in the church!)
- C. The Ant's Work Is Persistent – The ant's motto might be – Phil 3:13
1. Impossible to stop when food is found – (Illustration, You don't believe me? Just spill

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a little sugar on the countertop and leave it there. When one finds it, he will return to the colony and bring hundreds with him! (Illustration, When the driver ant comes to a stream, he simply tunnels under it and keeps going. When he comes to a river, the entire colony rolls itself into a giant ball and floats over to the other side. They let nothing stand in their way!)

2. (Note: What a lesson! We who have tasted and found that the Lord is good need to go back into the colony of the world and tell the others about Him. After all, believers are merely one beggar telling other beggars where to find bread!)
3. Keep going in times of danger - (Illustration, average Christian says - "We can't"; that attitude cost Israel 40 years in the wilderness. What could it cost you? We must move from "I can't" to "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!", Phil. 4:13.
4. We are moving under the power of the Spirit, Rom. 8:31. The ant is motivated by hunger! III. Caleb and Joshua - Num. 14:9 - Nothing should ever be able to stop us if we are in God's will. (No critic, no trial, no obstacle - March Christian March!)
 - a. There is a kind of ant known as The Shining Slavemaker. These ants steal pupae from other colonies; bring them back to their own colony. When these pupae hatch, they think the colony is their own and embark on a life of service to their new masters. The slave makers themselves can fight well, but they have become accustomed to a life of ease. They have degenerated to a point where they cannot even feed themselves. If you put them in a jar with food, they will starve to death. But, if you put in a single black ant, he will feed them all!
 - b. We must beware lest we too become accustomed to a life of leisure. After all, this is no game we are in, this is warfare!

D. The Ant's Work Has Purpose - III. Purpose put in by God – Some raise dairy cows, (Numerous species of ants collect a sweet substance called honeydew that is excreted by various tiny insects, including aphids, mealy bugs, and scale insects. The insects most commonly used for this purpose are aphids, which pierce plant tissues to suck up juices from a plant. Among some of these ants, workers leave their nests regularly to watch over groups of aphids and protect them from predators. In some instances, these ants construct shelters out of soil or carton to shield the aphids from the environment. Worker ants stroke the aphids with their antennae to induce them to release drops of honeydew. The ants then transfer this honeydew through trophallaxis to another group of workers, who carry it back to the nest and share it with nest workers. Individual workers may spend days or weeks among the same group of aphids.), some clear ground so certain kinds of grasses can grow (farm); some gather grain and bite the end of the kernels to prevent it from germinating! Nothing can change the ant's priorities.

E. (Note: Believers need this same resolve - 1 Cor. 15:58. In everything we do, we need to walk with resolve! We need to purpose in our hearts that nothing short of death or the rapture will turn us away from working for Him! (Illustration, We need resolve in: 1. Our praying 2. Our giving (Illustration, The Ants have a storehouse, we do too!) 3. Our separation (Ants practice personal and community cleanliness!) 4. Our witnessing (This sets us apart, but it is essential!), etc.)

II. THE WISDOM OF THE LITTLE ANT

A. They Make Provisions For This Life - (Illustration, Organized, with food and shelter. Many anthills are organized like a modern city. There are streets, supply rooms, hatcheries, and barracks.) People should be wise also and prepare for today.

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- B. (Note: Ill. Walking without Jesus. (Illustration, Psa. 23:1). (Illustration, We don't need many of the things we think we need! Our greatest need is for a close, Spirit-filled walk with God! We need Him and what He can give us more than anything this world might offer us! We need what we can only get from the Word of God, from prayer and from communion with the Spirit of God!)
- C. They Make Preparations For The Future
1. Ill. Store all they can while they can. (Ill Grasshoppers – They make no preparations and when winter comes, they all die!) Ants, on the other hand, believe in winter and by instinct they prepare for it.
 2. People prepare for this life - savings, insurance, retirement. What about death? Men believe in life after death, but do nothing about it. People need to be ready and God has made a way! His name is Jesus - John 3:16.
 3. Lost person are you ready? Not to be means eternal separation and Hell. Many scoff, delay and neglect: judgment does neither! John 3:18; 36
 4. Christian are you ready to stand before God, Rom.14:12? Time is running out friends! Jesus said that we were to work while it was day, John 9:4. If you are going to do anything for Jesus, the time to do it is now! If you are going to pray, preach, witness, shout, visit, make thing right with another brother, anything at all, the time to do it is right now!

From http://www.sermonnotebook.org/old%20testament/Pro%206_11.htm accessed October 2, 2015.

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Gary North brings an interesting perspective to the book of Proverbs.

Gary North's Concluding Remarks on the Industrious Ant

The ant is pictured here as future-oriented. She stores up food in summer. She sacrifices present consumption for the sake of future consumption.

The ant takes steps in summer to solve the problem of winter, when nature will produce no crops. The annual cycle of feast and famine is overcome by the actions of ants in laying up food in advance for the winter season.

No one tells the ant what to do. The ant does it naturally. Solomon tells the lazy person to imitate the ant, i.e., to become self-motivated. This is a feature of the free market. No government agency issues orders concerning what should be produced, yet self-motivated producers systematically provide goods and services that customers desire. This requires future-orientation and careful planning by producers

From <http://www.garynorth.com/WisdomAndDominion.pdf> accessed September 26, 2015.

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Access to Stuart's work on Proverbs is incorrectly linked on his website. The correct link is given below.

Stuart Wolf's Summary of Proverbs 6:6–11

1. The theme of self-inflicted economic impoverishment continues as the father advises that the created order itself will not be defied; a sluggard challenges this order, which returns rich harvests in return for honest work but takes away produce from those who defy it.

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2. The reverse side of the warning against laziness is an admonition toward diligence; for example, the two lifestyles are contrasted in 10:4-5, 13:4, 15:19 – we repeat that there is no term or concept for a “workaholic” in Proverbs.
3. The section is divided into two equal parts (vss 6-8, 9-11), both introduced with the address “you sluggard”; the first presents the sluggard as more in need of rebuke than a mere animal, the second sarcastically points out recovery should have been effected long ago.
4. The explicit audience is the sluggard, but the implicit audiences are the son and the gullible, to whom the book was written (1:4-5); they are being warned against laziness through the sluggard’s chastisement. cp 19:25
5. The initial command to Go figuratively rouses the sluggard from his lethargic inactivity, and calls him to take active steps toward an education that will lead to a successful lifestyle, if he can develop a diligent mindset like the example.
6. The term ant is probably generic, since there are over 100 species of ants in Palestine alone (> 8,000 worldwide), but the most likely example is probably the harvester ant, found everywhere in Palestine, which stores grain within its nest, and is therefore used as an illustration of industry.
7. The adjective sluggard introduces an important type of folly, and the thirteen uses of the term עָצֵל 'ahTSēL all appear in Proverbs (6:9, 10:26, 13:4, 15:19, 19:24, 20:4, 21:25, 22:13, 24:30, 26:13, 14, 26); the opposite is חָרִיץ CHahRUTS “diligent”, of which three of the four uses in Proverbs are in antithetical parallelism with 'ahTSēL.
8. The sluggard’s unreliable and procrastinating nature makes him a constant source of irritation to all those who do business with him (10:26 cp 26:6), and is a shame to his parents (10:5) as he destroys the family inheritance (24:31).
9. The sluggard has to look on hard workers as fools, otherwise he stands self-condemned; his self-imagined wisdom (22:13) “can be equated to the English equivalent ‘I can’t go to work today, I might get run over by a truck!’” (Waltke)
10. The reality is that laziness is more than a character flaw, it is a moral issue, since it leads to a loss of freedom (12:24), fiscal disaster (24:34), and a loss of life (21:25-26); additionally, any dependents of the sluggard suffer both lack of provision and by learning to imitate his indolence (inactivity resulting from a dislike of work).
11. The sluggard is contrasted with the upright (15:19) and the righteous (21:25-26), but never with the poor, i.e. the legitimate poor who are so due to circumstances beyond their control (13:23).
12. Thus, Proverbs does not instruct the disciple to feed him (13:4 cp 19:17), the sluggard is left begging in harvest and has “plenty of poverty” (28:19), a rather apropos oxymoron, since he brings about the abundance of lack in his life. cp 2Th 3:10
13. The command observe glosses the common verb רָאָה Rah'aH, which here has the particular nuance “to look at by direct volition” (BDB), with a certain nuance of volitional determination; the sluggard should exercise intellect in considering the success of a simple insect in relation to his own life.
14. Here and in 30:25 the ant’s ways essentially teach self-discipline, foresight, and industry, and more specifically prudent industry; the Midrash added to these the qualities of honesty and communal solidarity.
15. Since the command is to study carefully with moral discernment, the imperative and become wise necessarily follows; the admonitions aim to generate enough energy to begin the process of restructuring his life, if he so desires.
16. The first detail of the lesson is that a leader/chief does not exist, an exemplary characteristic also noted in the locust (30:27); modern science has confirmed a “perfect social organization” (Waltke) among ants, which does not imply any hierarchy, but recognizes that God created ants to be an illustration of the benefits of industry.
17. Put another way, an ant is programmed, immediately upon animation, to begin laboring for the benefit of the community, and thus ensures its own well-being and success in the process; by fulfilling its own purpose, each individual contributes to the whole.
18. The שׂוֹטֵר SHōTēR officer is an Akkadian loanword “to list personnel”, and refers to the district administrator, the person who decided what type of labor any individual was to conduct, and who was responsible and

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- able to coerce them to do so. cp Ex 5:6
19. The ruler is principally the one who governs the conduct of a subordinate, as in 22:7, referring to the fact that no external leaders are necessary, the ant possesses a God-given “wisdom” to work and to order that work wisely.
 20. In the Hiphil, the term כּוּן KUN essentially means “to put in proper order and readiness”, or “to fix so as to be ready” (BDB), and often used of preparing implements and food (cp Ex 16:5), in order that it will be available in lean times.
 21. During the Palestinian summer there was an ample supply of agricultural produce, and the abundance could be taken for granted, with the sluggard determining that there was “plenty of time later”; the ant, however, takes advantage of this time of plenty, and wastes no time gathering while the supply is available.
 22. The divine viewpoint teaches that one should take advantage of any time of prosperity, not to buy “stuff” but to put into reserve that which can be used in the inevitable times of lack that will come, sooner or later. Ecc 11:2
 23. The ant’s food glosses the term לֶחֶם LeChEM, normally translated “bread”, and specifically the grain used to make that bread; as a metonymy for the necessities of life, it expresses the fact that there are needs for which we must provide ahead of time.
 24. A rare word אָגַר ‘ahGaR (3x) is used to specify the collection of food, as she gathers what she will need later; the industrious efforts to accumulate future needs is in view.
 25. The harvest in view began in April, depending on the area of Palestine in view, with barley coming first, then wheat some two weeks later; God provides the food, but the ant (as a symbol for the adjusted son/student) must gather it in at the right time.
 26. An all-encompassing term that refers to any manner of food from meat to wine, oil to figs (1Chr 12:40), מֵאֲכָל Ma’əKahL pictures the various necessities that may be foreseen, in whatever category they may fall.
 27. The implicit lesson is one of proper budgeting, a financial necessity usually overlooked in current society; using the ant as an example, the Divine viewpoint teaches taking the initiative in one’s finances, gathering as much as possible in the present, and preserving it for future use when it will inevitably be needed in times of lack.
 28. The second section (vss 9-11) consists of an accusation along with a dire warning, contrasting the prudent activity of the ant with the inopportune sleeping of the foolish and indolent human.
 29. The accusatory question How long? presumes that the harvest has been in progress for some time, and implies that there is a certain recognition of failure to apply; the sluggard must repent of his foolish laziness and redeem the time before it is too late.
 30. Like the initial address in vs 6, the vocative you sluggard aims to wake the subject out of his lethargy, demanding an answer, and holding him accountable for that answer, whether he responds or ignores the question.
 31. The verb שָׁכַב SHahKaBh is usually translated lie down, but the Imperfect (incomplete action) has the nuance of “keep lying down”; this particular verb has only negative connotations, also used of positioning oneself horizontally for the purpose of illicit sex. cp Gen 19:32
 32. Antithetical parallelism occurs in verset b, with the question now presented in terms of hoped-for recovery; the sage realizes there is potential for repentance, the rhetorical questions are designed to stir the sluggard to reanimation.
 33. Obviously, the question does not merely revolve around a change from unconsciousness to an awakened state, the inference is one of waking from indolent slumber and moving into active labor, from wasting time to productive use of one’s time.
 34. Vs 10 moves from the outward, observed behavior of the sluggard to a perceptive insight into his mental attitude, and sets up the unseen consequences of such behavior, as the teacher again gives the inevitable results of a lifestyle outside of the Divine viewpoint.
 35. The threefold repetition of מֵאַתָּה Mə’aT a little probably mimics the sluggard’s response to the question of vs 9, which would most likely be a vague “sometime”, since he is incapable of making and keeping a firm commitment.

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36. The plural of שְׁנָהּ SHĒNaH sleeps looks to the regular pattern of the sluggard, consistently escaping reality, refusing to face the world, and using laziness to cover for his failure to achieve success (or even mediocrity).
37. In fact, the sluggard's narcotic sleep can be contrasted to the sweet sleep of the laborer (4:16; Ecc 5:12) as ever craving more; one must pity an individual whose existence is so miserable that they prefer unconsciousness to life.
38. The term slumber refers to the semi-conscious state between consciousness and sleep, the interim condition that cries for a "cat-nap"; the inactivity that brings disaster is not necessarily prolonged, it is the frequency that causes the disaster.
39. The noun חִבּוּק CHiBuQ folding is found only here and in the parallel 24:33, and is derived from the verb "to embrace"; the term יָדָא YaDh refers to the section of the arm from the elbow to the tip of the finger, the arms.
40. The picture is of the foolish sluggard folding his arms across his midsection in a gesture that symbolizes his foolish refusal to work; just a little break, and then he'll get right to the job at hand, first he needs to relax.
41. The manner in which this wretchedness will come is personified as a shiftless, disreputable wanderer who goes about with no visible means of support, like a parasite, hustles, cons, and swindles whatever he can get.
42. Also, it implies unpredictable visits and the danger of theft, giving the sluggard's poverty sinister connotations that condemn his lifestyle; the term suggest a disparaging sense, but no support can be found for the idea of "a highwayman" (BDB) or "bandit" (NIV).
43. Personified poverty has no home, no security, and no support, and so wanders aimlessly trying to steal them wherever they can be found; this picture of the end of the sluggard's life is anything but pretty.
44. The term poverty (רֵשָׁע Rĕ'SH) occurs only in the book of Proverbs, and denotes destitution, not merely the state of being financially limited (cp 25:21); at least 14 proverbs relate idleness to poverty, the bitter end of the sluggard. cp 20:13
45. The lazy person winds up lacking not merely riches but food, the necessity of life (cp 19:15); his efforts to deny the natural order of diligent labor bringing reward have led to predictable results, now there is nothing to do but suffer through them.
46. Ironically, the lazy man also suffers an unrequited craving (13:4); as Roberts notes, "The lazy are generally not those who have few desires. Rather their daydreaming leads to exaggerated desires, and exaggerated desires to a despair of realization."
47. The escalation your lack/need defines poverty as the absence of the necessity of life, presumably food (cp 12:9), a situation of certain death; the inescapable result of failure to accumulate these necessities when they were available is their inavailability when desperately needed.
48. The personification of poverty now escalates to like an armed man, who also comes unexpectedly, but by force, not merely by stealth; the new simile connotes a surprise attack against which one cannot defend oneself.
49. Additionally, the implication is that the plunderer defends the substance and life he carried off by theft and force, so that the victim is helpless to retrieve it; the easiest victim for both the vagabond and the bandit is the sleeping sluggard, who lacks either the diligence or the diligence to retain and protect his wealth.
50. While Job speaks of calamities outside the power of man to resist (Job 30:24), Proverbs is silent on the subject, since that would not serve its purpose; the point that the son/student must absorb is that, just like a natural disaster, self-induced poverty will decimate his life, and is therefore to be avoided at all costs.
51. In a society in which there were no government social programs, and few charitable organizations, poverty was an ever-present danger; the frequent references to the possibility of fiscal devastation serve as a dire warning of the possibility thereof.

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