

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: RICH MAN, POOR MAN, BEGGAR MAN, THIEF" Pt. 2 Proverbs 1:10-19

Thief:

**God demands that we be honest in all our business dealings.** Dishonesty is robbery. "Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight" (11:1, NKJV; see 16:11; 20:10,23). Moses commanded in the Law that the people use honest weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13-16); since Israel didn't have an official Department of Standards to check on these things, the law wasn't always obeyed. Amos accused the merchants in his day of "skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales" (Amos 8:5, NIV); Micah asked "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" (Micah 6:11)

Another dishonest way to get wealth is to use your resources selfishly and disregard the needs of others. "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell" (Proverbs 11:25-26, NIV). In times of drought and famine, a prosperous farmer could corner the grain market and become rich at the expense of his needy neighbors (Nehemiah 5). We need to realize that everything we have comes from God (1 Corinthians 4.7; John 3:27) and that we are but stewards of His wealth. While everyone expects that a businessman will make a profit, nobody wants him to "make a killing" and hurt others.

The biggest thieves of all are the lazy people who could work but won't, the people who consume what others produce but produce nothing for others to use. The "sluggard" and the "slothful man" are mentioned at least seventeen times in Proverbs, and nothing good is said about them.

## Each proverb is a Seed Thought in itself

Go to the ant, thou sluggard: Proverbs 6:6-8

Communities of ants are made up of winged males, females winged till after pairing, and wingless neuters (workers), showing remarkable intelligence.

No insect is more laborious and none is more fondly attached to or more careful of their young. It is a remarkable creature for foresight and economy. This little creature is a miracle to observe, and can teach a lazy, as well as an industrious person many lessons.

- a) Not all who serve God have to be big and great
- b) They are industrious
- c) They work together
- d) They are not selfish
- e) They observe law and order

*Call it laziness, sloth, ineptitude, idleness, or whatever you like but the idea of doing nothing when things need to be done is often considered to be a sign of weakness or shirking. Sometimes laziness happens when you don't want to face something, like a boring chore or a difficult confrontation with someone. Other times, it might be*

*because you feel overwhelmed and think the task needs a whole team rather than just you. And then there are those times where you really just can't be bothered. In any case, it's simply not a desirable trait.*

- Tired?
- Overwhelmed?
- Afraid?
- Uninspired?
- Stuck?

**Figure out the real issue.** *Every time you start being lazy, stand back and do a little assessment of what's been really happening. Laziness is generally a symptom and not the problem itself. What's the cause of your lack of motivation? Are you tired, overwhelmed, afraid, hurting, or just plain uninspired and stuck? Most likely, the sticking issue is smaller than you think, and you can get past it more easily than you realize.*

- *Whatever it is that is holding you back, do your best to unearth it. In most cases, it'll be one single specific problem or detail. Finding the cause is the only way you can actually address it. Address it like you want it to happen. Once you address it, you can deal with it effectively.*

We need to recognize the fact that work is not a curse. God gave Adam work to do in the Garden even before sin entered the scene (Genesis 2:15). Before He began His public ministry, Jesus worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3); the apostle Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3). In that day, rabbis had vocations and supported themselves but didn't accept payment from their students. When we engage in honorable employment we're cooperating with God in caring for and using His creation, we're helping to provide for others, and we're growing in character. The work God has called us to do ought to nourish us (John 4:34), not tear us down; "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18).

What are some of the marks of sluggards? For one thing, they love to sleep. "How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?" (Proverbs 6:9, NIV) "As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed" (26:14). Lots of motion — but no progress!

Sleep is a necessary element for a healthy life, but too much sleep is destructive. Wise people enjoy sleep that's "sweet" (3:24) because they know they're in God's will, and the laborer's sleep is "sweet" because he or she has worked hard (Ecclesiastes 5:12), but the sleep of the sluggard is a mark of selfishness and laziness. "Laziness could run a competitive race for the most underrated sin," write Ronald Sailer and David Wyrzten in *The Practice of Wisdom* (Chicago: Moody, 1992). "Quietly it anesthetizes its victim into a lifeless stupor that ends in hunger, bondage and death" (p. 82).

Put the sluggard to work and he's more of a nuisance than a help. "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Proverbs 10:26). Vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes aren't necessarily lethal, but they do irritate you; so does a sluggard who won't get the job done. All he does is dream about the things he wants to enjoy, but he won't work hard enough to earn them. "The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work" (21:25, NIV). Dreams become nightmares if you don't discipline yourself to work.

Another mark of the sluggard is a know-it-all attitude. "The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly" (26:16, NKJV). He lives in a fantasy world that prevents him from being a useful part of the real world (13:4; 21:25-26), but he can tell everybody else what to do. He's never succeeded at any-thing in his own life, but he can tell others how to succeed.

Proverbs 7:21-27

Sluggards are good at making excuses. Either the weather is too cold for plowing (20:4), or it's too dangerous to go out of the house (22:13; 26:13). "The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway" (15:19, NIV). The diligent man or woman can always find a reason to work, but the sluggard always has an excuse for not working. Evangelist Billy Sunday defined an excuse as, "the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie," and he was right. People who are good at making excuses are rarely good at doing anything else.

What finally happens to the sluggard? For one thing, unless others care for them, sluggards live in poverty and hunger. "Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger" (19:15, NKJV; see 10:4; 13:4). "If any would not work, neither should he eat" was the standard for the New Testament church (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). The saints were happy to care for those who needed help and couldn't care for themselves, but they had no time for freeloaders who lived by the sacrifices of others (Acts 2:44-47; 1 Timothy 5:3-16). The sluggard gets so lazy, he won't feed himself even when the food is brought right to him (Proverbs 19:24; 26:15)!

The sluggard loses his freedom and is enslaved to others. "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor" (12:24, NKJV). His debts accumulate to the point where he has to become a slave and work off what he owes (see Leviticus 25:39-55; Deuteronomy 15:12-18). The "easy life" of leisure turns out to be very costly as the sluggard exchanges his pillow for a plow and has to work off his debts the hard way.

The sluggard wastes God-given resources. "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (Proverbs 18:9). The lazy person may be "working" but not doing a very good job. Consequently, what's done will either have to be thrown out or done over; this means it will cost twice as much.

The sluggard also wastes God-given opportunities. "He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame" (10:5, NKJV). When the fields are ready for harvest, the reapers have to go to work, because the opportunity won't be there forever (John 4:27-38). Diligent people are alert to their God-given opportunities and seek to make the most of them.