

“In The Beginning...”

**“Having a Good
Work Ethic”
Gen. 6-9**

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I. Introduction – An Example of Diligence

- A. Noah may have worked up to 120 years constructing the ark!
1. God waited patiently, hoping for mankind to repent while Noah was building the ark (**I Peter 3:20**)
 2. God specifically worked with mankind for 120 years before sending the flood (**Genesis 6:3**)
- B. *Question:* What do we mean by the terms, “diligence”, “work ethic”, and “hard worker”?
1. “Diligence” refers to attentive, earnest, careful, zealous, persistent effort and application toward a given goal.
 2. A “work ethic” is a set of moral values or principles for determining what is right and wrong in our work. Such moral values drive our goals, efforts, and means of work.
 3. Our American culture’s “strong sense of work ethic” can be traced to our country’s religious roots (Tocqueville, Franklin, Adam Smith, Max Weber), which was previously supported by education and the arts.
 4. This dying cultural work ethic emphasizes:
 - a) Thrift and Prudence
 - b) Integrity and Honesty
 - c) Self-reliance
 - d) Self-discipline and Temperance
 - e) Modesty
 - f) Respectability of the worker
 5. Although “work ethic” and some of these words are foreign to our English translations of the Bible, most of the underlying concepts and virtues are taught by Scripture, which is our text and standard for Christians.
- C. *Question:* Getting back to Noah, why did the ark’s construction require 120 years?

1. Noah may not have been working on the ark for the entire span of 120 years. We do not know for sure. But, even if he did take 120 years to build the ark, please also consider that...
2. Noah would have been reduced to using much simpler technology (no power tools – maybe no metal tools).
3. Noah still would have worked a “day job” to provide for himself and his family (**Genesis 3:17-19; 5:28-29**). Nobody was paying Noah to build the ark.
4. Three sons were born to Noah, approximately 100 years before the flood began (**Genesis 5:32; 7:6; 11:10**). They would require time-consuming nurturing, training, etc. (**Ephesians 6:4**).
5. Noah’s father died 5 years before the flood (**Genesis 5:28-30; 7:6**). Did Noah honor his aging father by caring for him (**Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-3**)?
6. Noah would have been busy preaching, trying to persuade the lost.
 - a) God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were actively working through some preacher during these years of “Divine longsuffering” (**I Peter 3:18-20**).
 - b) Only Noah and his family were saved after this time period (**I Peter 3:20**).
 - c) Therefore, unless other preachers worked during this period and died before the flood, Noah and his family would have been the only shining light, which is corroborated by God’s approval of Noah (**Genesis 6:5-13**).
 - d) We are told that Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” (**I Peter 2:5**).

D. *Question:* What kind of hindrances would Noah have faced? What kind of difficulties would Noah have overcome? Let us answer that by asking, “What kind of obstacles must *all* good people hurdle, if they are to live a life of diligence?”

1. Endure ridicule and scorn.
2. Maintain focus.

3. Persist in doing good.
4. Maintain an indomitable spirit, a “can-do, will-do” attitude.
5. Many more...

E. *Question:* How does one overcome such difficulties? Answers given below...

II. Motivation – A Reason to Work

A. Obligation and Survival

1. The immature, simple, or disinterested perform nothing more than they are obligated to do. Like brute beasts that understand nothing more than pain and satisfaction, such people work only because they must work to survive. Sadly, such analogies often insult the beast (**Psalm 32:9; Proverbs 6:6-8; Proverbs 26:3; Isaiah 1:3**). ;-)
2. The gospel is for all – even simple people, and for such people, God issues this simple edict: *“For even when we were with you, we **commanded** you this: If anyone **will not** work, **neither shall he eat.**” (II **Thessalonians 3:10**).*
3. Therefore, those who choose not to work (“*will not*”) should not be **enabled**. They should not be given even the most basic of necessities. We should not even give them food!
 - a) This verse would **not** apply to those who **can not** work.
 - b) A simple amount of judgment must be exercised by benefactors to determine if a person **can not** or **will not** work.
 - c) Like long ago, those who must exact this unpleasant judgment must employ the same attitude commended to the Israelites: *“You shall not consent to him or listen to him, **nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him**” (Deuteronomy **13:8**).* The harshness of God’s condemnation dictates our limited leniency (II **Thessalonians 3:10**).
 - d) A “*sharp rebuke*” can be fitting for such people (**Titus 1:12-13**).
 - e) Failure to work may ultimately lead to loss of fellowship with other saints, although such a one is to be admonished with love

consistent for a brother, not an enemy (**II Thessalonians 3:10-15**).

4. Workers are commanded to be submissive to their masters, obliged not to men – but to God!
 - a) *“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever **you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men**, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; **for you serve the Lord Christ.**” (Colossians 3:22-24)*
 - b) *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, **in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men**, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.” (Ephesians 6:5-9)*
 - c) Man may not always observe how we work, but God is always watching, and He is our ultimate Master. Therefore, Christian diligence gives its best all the time, even when no man is looking.
 - d) Furthermore, since we are serving God, our passion for work should flow from our heart and passion for God. We should have a thankful and helpful disposition for our labor and during it, described as “goodwill” in the above passage (see also, **II Corinthians 9:6-7**).
5. These simple commands elevate one’s work to the status of moral obligation to our fellow man and the Lord. Whether one works and how one works are matters of right and wrong before God!

B. Love

1. A weak or vacillating soul may fall back on the fear of punishment or need to survive as a pivotal motivation for diligent labor; however, the mature Christian will ultimately be driven by sober love (**II Timothy 1:7; I John 4:18**).
2. The loving Christian will work – not just for himself – but for others:
*“...let him labor, working with his hands what is good, **that** he may have something to **give him who has need**” (Ephesians 4:28).* This version indicates the reason or motivation (“*that*”) for our diligent labor – to help others who have true need!
3. Noah built the ark, which saved him, but it also saved his family (**Hebrews 11:7; I Peter 3:20**).
4. This type of love is so obvious, so basic that to be void of such love is comparable to complete unbelief and apostasy: *“But if **anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever**” (I Timothy 5:8).* And, it is worthy of eternal condemnation, categorized with many sins, possibly more heinous in our judgment (**Romans 1:28-32**; *“unloving,” or “without natural, familial affection,” Greek: astorgos*).

C. Hope and Faith

1. Frequently, while the diligent are working late into the night or rising early in the morning, they will ask themselves, “Why am I doing this?” Others may taunt them, “Why are you working **so** hard?”
2. For people to persist in pursuing a difficult goal – and work is difficult (**Genesis 3:16-19**) – they must have some hope and confidence in achieving that goal, and they must believe that goal is valuable and worthwhile. Therefore, one must **believe** that there is a purpose and a reward for his labor; otherwise, he will not work with conviction.
3. Faith is essential to our hope, because we hope for what we cannot see (**Hebrews 11:1, 6**).

4. Noah demonstrated his great faith by his diligent obedience in building an ark for a flood he had never seen (**Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:14-16, 22; 7:5, 16**).
5. Therefore, we must understand and believe that God requires our diligent labor. We must believe and hope, as God has promised, that such efforts can accomplish worthwhile, even eternal good (**Galatians 6:9; Colossians 3:22-24; Ephesians 6:5-9**).
6. The Christian's reward, hope, and faith in his work is two fold:
 - a) First, there is a personal reward that comes from the Lord in obeying and glorifying Him (**Colossians 3:24; Ephesians 6:8; I Corinthians 15:58**).
 - b) Secondly, his work is not for himself, but for others, and that faith and hope that others will benefit drives him on.
7. **Work by Faith!** Be careful in doubting the usefulness of your work! (Self-examination and wise application is good. Faithlessness is bad.) Although the Christian may not see the return on his investment – maybe never in this life, he still works in faith.

D. Reputation

1. Besides our spouse and children, few things in our lives publicize our character and establish our reputation more than our work.
2. However, not only is our reputation evidenced by our diligence in labor, so is our God's reputation! Our public behavior, among those who "*observe your works*," may be the catalyst for unbelievers to be open to the gospel message (**I Peter 2:12**).
3. Certainly, unbelievers will use whatever sins or perceived inconsistencies we exhibit as a means to speak evil of our Lord and dismiss us, Him, and the gospel (**Romans 2:17-24; II Samuel 12:13-14; compare Romans 2:21, 24 with Ephesians 4:28a**).
4. May our observable work ethic open doors unto Bible study and conversion rather than close them.

III. Applications, Pitfalls, and Advice

- A. Observe the Miserable, Wretched, Cowardly, Pitiful Plight of the Sluggard
1. It can be worse than you think, and it can get worse than that!
 2. Consider: *“As a door turns on its hinges, **so does the lazy man on his bed**. The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; **it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.**” (Proverbs 26:14-15; 19:24).*
 - a) Lazy people never do anything, but yet they always complain about being tired! Like a door that easily revolves and yet groans, so does the lazy man, easily rolling over in his bed, complaining of being tired, and easily returning to his slumber.
 - b) Lazy people can be so slothful that they do not even have the energy to pick up their hand, even after it drops into a bowl of food provided for them, even if it is for their own survival and nourishment.
 - c) Do not be deceived! Lazy people genuinely feel tired! However, all work **is** hard, difficult, and tiring. If we cease working whenever we feel tired, then we will slowly do less and less, losing strength, vitality, and endurance, until we are as weak and contemptible as the sluggard described above – unable to even feed ourselves the nourishment given right in front of our mouth!
 - d) Being tired is no excuse for bypassing the opportunity to work, and no one appreciates the murmuring, because such complaining belittles the toil that others produce.
 3. Consider: *“As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is **the lazy man to those who send him.**” (Proverbs 10:26).*
 - a) Few things are more frustrating than a forced dependency upon a lazy man, because once that dependency is established there is nothing you can do but regret the relationship.
 - b) Young Women: DO NOT – under any circumstances – whatever you do, DO NOT marry a lazy man! A husband and father must work extremely hard. Even when he comes home from his “day

job," he will have the job of nurturing his children, maintaining a home, and serving his brethren. If your boyfriend or fiancé is slow to help his parents, ambivalent towards his schooling, sluggish in his work, always complaining, or slothful in spiritual labors, DO NOT marry that man, because he is no man. He is still an immature boy! If he has not proven himself by working hard for his parents in the past, his training at present, or his preparations for the future, then he will not work hard for you or your children!

- c) Young Men: DO NOT – under any circumstances – whatever you do, DO NOT marry a lazy woman! A wife and mother must work extremely hard. Even after the "day is done," children do not go away. There is no leaving that task "back at the office." Motherhood is one of the true "full-time" jobs. If your girlfriend or fiancé is slow to help her parents, ambivalent towards her schooling, sluggish in her work, always complaining, or slothful in spiritual labors, DO NOT marry that woman, because she is no woman. She is still an immature girl! If she has not proven her interest and determination through hard work in serving her parents in the past, her training at present, or her preparations for the future, then she will not work hard for you or your children!
- d) If you find yourself dating or even engaged to such a person, then like those who stumble upon a Plutonium-239 core, disengage carefully, raise your shields, and head for the hills, because you don't want to be anywhere nearby when that bomb self-destructs!
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B. "Confront the Lions" – No Excuses

1. Consider: *"The lazy man says, **There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!**" (Proverbs 22:13; 26:13).*
 - a) Lazy people always have excuses. There is always some reason why they could not work or succeed, and it is never their fault.

- b) The excuse may be far-fetched, but they will have an excuse. Furthermore, the extreme shakiness of that excuse indicates their desperation to avoid their due labor.
- 2. Consider: *"The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly."* (**Proverbs 26:16**)
 - a) Again, the lazy man will have his reason to justify his laziness.
 - b) He may have to repudiate every respectable challenge presented by every learned, trained, and experienced sage, but their collective wisdom will have to be sacrificed to maintain his excuse.
 - c) If you fail to persuade someone of their laziness, then recognize the signs, back away carefully, and move on (**Matthew 7:6**).
- 3. Consider: *"The lazy man will not plow **because of winter**; He will **beg during harvest and have nothing**."* (**Proverbs 20:4**)
 - a. Some of the lazy man's excuses may be legitimate, in that they represent true or probable difficulties. (Plowing in winter would be neither fun nor easy.)
 - b. However, difficulties do not excuse the need or erase the consequences. These hardships must be overcome, or the lazy man, and those who depend upon him, will suffer mightily.
- 4. Everyone has difficulties in life and work. Yes, some have more than others, and no, my experiences do not enable me to exactly or completely sympathize with your own. However, "hard work" is a universal and general burden, which we all must bear and overcome (**I Corinthians 10:13; Genesis 3:16-19**). If your life is "hard", and you are not getting any "work" done, check your determination to follow through and finish.
- 5. Again: *"The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but **the way of the upright is a highway**."* (**Proverbs 15:19**)
 - a) The true difficulties of this life are more often rooted in our desire to overcome, or lack thereof.

- b) We all walk the same general road (**I Corinthians 10:13**), but the lazy man sees nothing but barriers, while the wise and upright sees nothing but possibilities!
 - c) Attitude and diligence makes the difference. The rest is excuses.
6. And, again: **“He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.** As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything. **In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good.**” (**Ecclesiastes 11:4-6**).
- a) There is always the possibility that tomorrow may offer a better opportunity than today. We do not know.
 - b) However, the answer is not always to play life completely safe. Do not let risk inhibit you from investing your labor.
 - c) Invest early and invest often. Rise up early and work until late. The only thing certain is that failure to try will always fail!

C. Work Harder – Sleep Less, Play Less

1. One of the first lessons of the Bible work ethic is that industriousness requires that you sacrifice any addictive pursuit of luxurious sleep and play (**I Corinthians 13:11**).
2. These things have their limited place in the life of the mature, hard working adult; however, they are quickly outgrown, and they must often be sacrificed even completely when the need arises.
3. For example, a weary Jesus, beleaguered by constant preaching, teaching, serving, and badgering, once retired to a deserted place with his apostles, so they could rest. We are told there was so much demanding activity, they did not even have time to eat (**Mark 6:30-32**)! However, the multitudes ran ahead of them, ready to welcome them to their quiet retreat. Yet, Jesus did not send them away, demanding His “quiet time” or His “me time.” Instead, we see this selfless reaction:

*“And Jesus, when He came out, **saw a great multitude** and was **moved with compassion for them**, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. **So He began to teach them many things**” (Mark 6:34).*

4. Rest for the hard-working is deserved and needed, but the diligent know how to “dig a little deeper” to accomplish needed tasks or help those in need. Notice, it was **mercy** that **moved** Jesus. Love was His motivation!
5. Again, Jesus suffering from thirst and hunger used His thirst as an occasion to reach a lost Samaritan (**John 4:6-8**). Such discipline, focus, and self-control arises from one’s intense desire to accomplish a given task. In this case, it was Jesus desire to “*seek and save the lost*” (**Luke 19:9**). Progress in that task is more fulfilling than satisfying any physical want or desire, as it was for Jesus at this occasion (**John 4:28-43**).
6. How does our work ethic compare to that of Jesus?
7. Paul also exemplified work ethic: *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; **nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.”** (II Thessalonians 3:7-9)*
8. Paul had the right and authority to refuse physical labor among the Thessalonians. This is the right of all preachers and laborers in the gospel (**I Corinthians 9:3-11**). However, Paul did not exercise this right among the Thessalonians, **just so** he could demonstrate a living work ethic for them to follow; laboring night **and** day, Paul “burned the midnight oil”!
9. Elsewhere and again, Paul declined his right to accept pay from the Corinthians for his preaching to them. Why, because he was not worth it? Certainly not! But, because he simply wanted to eliminate any occasion for false teachers and sectarians to accuse him of using the

brethren, he worked night and day, as a preacher and a tent maker
(Acts 18:1-4; I Corinthians 9:12-18; II Corinthians 11:7-12).

Occasionally, this strategy required outside assistance, but only to support his own personal work as a tentmaker – not replace it. All this he suffered just to provide the gospel a “freer course.”

10. Would you work an extra shift for 18 months, just so people could not say something bad about you, possibly injuring your credibility as a Christian, just so you could be more effective in reaching the lost?
11. The wise woman, whom every man seeks and hopes to marry, is depicted as industrious, like so: *“She seeks wool and flax, and **willingly works with her hands**. ... She **also rises while it is yet night**, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. ... And **her lamp does not go out by night**. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle.” (Proverbs 31:13-15, 18-19).* Women have you prepared yourselves for this task? Men are you looking for this woman? Are you ready to reciprocate in your own work habits?
12. Love does whatever it takes to succeed (within obvious reason). It does not fail (**I Corinthians 13:4-8**). If it must stay up all night, and if it must put away childish toys, then so be it! The sacrifice is worth the reward and the good of others.

D. Self-Initiative – Do Not Wait to be Coerced

1. Consider: *“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, **having no captain, overseer or ruler**, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.” (Proverbs 6:6-8).*
2. Do not wait for someone to tell you that you need to get busy and work. If you must be driven to work, then something is seriously wrong.
3. **Exercise self-initiative**. Be like the ant! Look around, determine the needs, devise a plan, and get it done! When something goes wrong, figure a way around the problem. Do not wait for some parent, guardian, school teacher, manager, government official, or *parole officer*

to tell you what you must do. Exercise self-initiative before someone exercises it for you!

E. Prepare Early – Do Not Procrastinate

1. Again consider: *“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, **provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.** How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? **A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep -- So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man.**” (Proverbs 6:6-11).*
2. And: *“I went by **the field of the lazy man**, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; 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: 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.**” (Proverbs 24:30-34)*
3. Again: *“**Because of laziness** the building decays, and **through idleness of hands** the house leaks.” (Ecclesiastes 10:18)*
4. There is a great seduction in the question, “What will a little sleep hurt?”
5. Little naps are followed by little distractions, which are followed by little hindrances, which are followed by more little rests, which are followed by little emergencies, which are followed by little breaks – and suddenly, one’s life is in shambles! His life is spent. A great need comes upon him, which required time to prepare – precious time that he has twiddled away – and so, his life falls into ruin.
6. Things invariably go wrong in ways that we cannot anticipate, because of our limited experience. Therefore, we must prepare early, so we will have time to handle unforeseen events.
7. It is so easy to just stay in bed, sleep a little longer, watch a few more minutes of TV, facebook just 5 more minutes, play one more level of a

video game, etc. Next time you tell yourself this lie and waste your valuable time, look in the mirror and decide who you are going to be. That is your moment of truth, when you cast off laziness and embrace diligence!

8. Consider: *"Laziness casts one into a **deep sleep**, and an idle person will suffer hunger."* (**Proverbs 19:15**)
 - a) The more you sleep, the harder it will be to wake up from this way of life.
 - b) Like drunkenness, laziness destroys the very thing required to curb it. In this case, laziness detaches us from the world and the consequences of our unmet obligations. Laziness leads to depressing solitude and isolation, which leads to more laziness, and so it spirals out of control.
 - c) If you can put a task off for five more minutes, why not ten? Why not fifteen, thirty, forty-five, an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year, a lifetime?
9. Consider: *"The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but **diligence is man's precious possession**."* (**Proverbs 12:27**)
 - a) The lazy man always puts off for tomorrow. Even on the brink of success, while he holds it in his hands, procrastination seduces him to stumble at the threshold of victory.
 - b) Diligence is the key to avoiding such destructive thoughts, choices, and habits.
 - c) A man who is empty-handed, but diligent, possesses more than a lazy man with both hands full. For soon, the roles will be reversed.
10. Beware the great lie of procrastination. Be like the ant! Arise early! Prepare in spring, summer, and fall for winter's great need! Otherwise, desperate poverty, want, and need will come upon you as suddenly as a prowling thief or an armed robber!

F. Full Diligence – No Creeping Sluggishness

1. Consider: *“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that **you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.** And we desire that **each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those **who through faith and patience inherit the promises**” (Hebrews 6:10-12).***
2. We may be very diligent in some aspects or applications of our religion and yet be sluggish in other points. (For example, we may be diligent in service to needy saints but fail to stand for God’s truth and resist spiritual compromise – **Hebrews 6:11.**) We must apply diligence toward all points of our belief (i.e., *“the full assurance of hope”*).
3. Such diligence will be in vain if we give up and quit before we finish. We must not only press on all points, but we must endure *“until the end.”*
4. **Faith** and **patience** (endurance or longsuffering) are required to resist this temptation and to persevere until the inheritance is received (**Hebrews 6:12**). If our diligence begins to wane or retract, then we must examine our own faith and willingness to endure.

G. Prioritize, Prioritize, Prioritize – No Dissipation

1. Consider: *“Whatever your hand finds to do, **do it with your might;** for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave **where you are going.**” (Ecclesiastes 9:10)*
2. Man’s life is of limited earthly span and resources. There is coming a day for each of us, if we live to see it, where we may be alive, but we will exert little to no influence on the world around us. Our work for others will be done, even though our toil will not be quite yet complete (**Ecclesiastes 12:1-7**).
3. Therefore, whatever we choose to accomplish in this life, we must strive to complete diligently, because our window of opportunity is relatively

small (**James 4:14**). We must exert our best efforts, because there will be no second chance.

4. Any diligent effort is **necessarily time-consuming**, possibly demanding of extra resource or complicated skills.
5. Therefore, we must be careful in choosing where and how to spend our precious time and energies.
6. Youth offers a time of relative freedom from many adult cares and responsibilities, even if unperceived. Once your abilities begin to more fully develop and gain exposure, and once you develop a reputation for a diligent work ethic, there will be no end to the people lining up, who will be seeking your time, resources, and abilities (**Proverbs 30:15**).
7. Therefore, use wisdom, look ahead, exercise forethought, and choose tasks as objects of your work that are of the highest priority.
8. Enjoy life, play hard, and have fun (**Ecclesiastes 11:9-10**). Learn commitment to a team, teamwork, and other valuable lessons from sports. However, do not allow your life, even your youth, to be dominated and dissipated on things, like bodily exercise, that *“profit only a little”* (**Ecclesiastes 12:1; I Timothy 4:8-10**).

H. Develop Wisdom – Do Not Waste Your Precious Efforts

1. A key component of the godly work ethic is wisdom. Wisdom advises where and how to invest one’s work energies. Prudent direction and management of these resources increases our likelihood for success.
2. Consider: *“Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house.”* (**Proverbs 24:27**)
 - a) Certain tasks must be accomplished first.
 - b) Do not get mired down in less important tasks, putting off the more immediately critical ones. (For example, as above, focus first on the long process of sustaining food before enhancing shelter, which you can do while you are waiting on the harvest.)
3. Consider: *“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and*

pleasant riches. A wise man is strong, Yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” (Proverbs 24:3-6)

4. For example, consider your choice of “major” in school, or sought position in employment:
 - a) Many people advocate a job that makes you happy.
 - b) Such shortsighted advice has led many a student or young worker down a dead-end path, where they have zero chance of obtaining a job that is profitable, sustainable, or related to their choice of major.
 - c) Happiness in labor comes less from the work that comes to you, but it comes more from the attitude you bring to your work!
 - d) I knew a brother who thrived in the work place, because he happily accepted all the inglorious positions that everyone else disdained, but yet through his zeal, determination, and optimism, he reinvented and refashioned the positions into those that were the most “cool” and sought after by those that followed him.
- I. Be Patient, Work Humbly – Do Not Expect Overnight Success, or to “Get Rich Quick”
 1. Too often, people are willing to work hard, but they expect the “world” or their employer to reward them “equally”. Young people may feel like they have given their **all** and have accomplished something **special** for their employer. They may be disappointed, when they are not immediately promoted or recognized as they feel they deserve.
 2. Other times, people feel they are working “boring” jobs that “anybody” can do. They become discouraged, when they do not feel like they are being used to their “full potential”.
 3. Remember, servants and slaves had little to no hope of promotion, and they always performed the jobs that nobody wanted to do, yet they were expected to work diligently and “heartily” for their whole lives, even for

unkind or unfair masters (**I Peter 2:18-20; Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:23-25**).

4. Remember Joseph: He was unfairly sent to jail, but because of his integrity, honesty, dependability, work ethic - and because the Lord blessed him, he was remarkably promoted to "chief of the prison". After over two years of being overlooked, toiling unduly, and suffering unjustly, he was "promoted" to second in the kingdom (**Genesis 39-41**)!
5. Even if you must labor in the "prison" (i.e., a lowly, boring job), work with diligence, zeal, and faithfulness, so that you exemplify the integrity of Christians. Be the best "prisoner" you can be! Eventually, you **may** be promoted too. Demonstrate the character that the Lord can approve and commend through His blessing.

J. Build Up a Defense – Do Not Trust in Riches

1. There is a middle ground between "greed" and "laziness." Good, wise, saintly people may be industrious and wealthy without being greedy lovers of money.
2. Consider: *"The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich."* (**Proverbs 13:4**)
 - a) Lazy people have dreams too.
 - b) But, only the diligent will succeed. ... Notice the use of "soul" to describe the diligent man. The greatest success and wealth pertains to riches not of this life. The most critical realm to exercise our work ethic is that of the spiritual.
3. Consider: *"For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it."* (**Ecclesiastes 7:12**)
 - a) Money is not inherently evil. In fact, it acts as a shield or defense in this life, averting, or at least easing, many of the trials and difficulties that this life brings. Compare your life to those who live in the "bad part of town," and compare that life to that lived by those on the "other" side of the world.

- b) Obtaining money to help others is a noble goal and ideal (**Ephesians 4:28**).
- c) However, wisdom is superior to money, as are most spiritual pursuits (**I Timothy 6:6-8, 11-12**).
- d) Make sure you do not use your ambition to “build a defense” and “help others” as a cloak to pursue a “love of money,” thereby “piercing yourself through with many a sorrow” (**I Timothy 6:9-10**).
- e) Ultimately, you must trust in the Lord, not riches (**I Timothy 6:17**).
- f) Pilot this strait by avoiding both extremes.

K. Self-Denial and Thrift – Do Not Enslave Yourself to Debt, Bond Servitude

1. Consider: “*The hand of the diligent will rule, but **the lazy man will be put to forced labor.***” (**Proverbs 12:24; 22:7**)
 - a) Laziness leaves one helpless to meet unexpected needs.
 - b) Inevitably, the lazy man will have to borrow to provide what he needs or wants.
 - c) However, if the lazy were not willing to do the work required to stay out of debt, they will not be willing to do the work to get out of debt.
 - d) Bankruptcy, debtors’ prison, law suits, and a lifetime of forced labor await such people.
2. The undoing of a nation:
 - a) Consider: “Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and **your princes feast at the proper time -- For strength and not for drunkenness!**” (**Ecclesiastes 10:16-17**)
 - b) Again, consider that God foretold a figurative army of locust, who were stinging, devouring, resistant, entitled, and yet they were of mankind. They came not from the north, south, east, or west, but from a bottomless pit in the very ground underneath the nation being punished and destroyed (**Revelation 9:1-11**). Could these

be a generation that arises who is hateful, mooching, insolent, arrogant, narcissistic, and entitled? How else would a generation raised in luxury, schooled in ease, and trained in laziness, well skilled in manipulation, and arising from between our very feet be figuratively pictured for us?

c) **Proverbs 30:11-14** also foretells and warns of that destructive generation.

3. Beware the arrogant, consuming, entitled, lazy, leech-like attitude, which can infect an entire generation, and which has helped destroy many nations before our own.

L. Avoid Oppression – Help Liberally

1. Consider: *“The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. **He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare.**” (Proverbs 21:25-26)*

2. Again: *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. **Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**” (I Timothy 6:17-19)*

3. Part of the reason and joy of work is the ability to help others. Dedicate part of your profit and increase to helping others, and thereby avoid the cruel descent into oppression and destructive desire for wealth at all costs.

IV. Conclusion

A. Noah provides an example of work ethic by laboring to complete the construction of a massive ark (**Genesis 6-7**).

B. Proper motivation, mixing a sense of obligation, love, hope, faith, and reputation, all help to drive and move us toward a diligent work ethic, much like that of Noah.

- C. Although seductive pitfalls abound, which lure us into a denial of the consequences of laziness, the wise will grow in the knowledge of God's Word, overcome, and diligently lead a life of commitment.
- D. Our application has focused primarily on physical labor. This is the most "apparent" lesson, because it is the most tangible. However, those who learn to work their way through the "thorns and briars" of this life will be better trained and prepared by their heavenly Father to overcome the difficulties of developing a spiritual life and growing into a mature Christian (**Romans 8:18-20**).

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