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The Responsible Christian at Work

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Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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One of man's greatest needs is to become wise. For generations, man has expended much of his time and much of his energy on the task of obtaining that often elusive, yet unbelievably desirable quality we know as wisdom. Yet, perhaps one of life's greatest revelations is the awareness that wisdom comes in stages!

And stage one seems to always center on the issue of knowing yourself, knowing who you are... "self-image", as it's called in today's overcrowded marketplace of psychological terminology. The world wants you to know yourself. The world wants you to recognize how great you are and how valuable you are, because to the world the "wise man" is someone who has succeeded, because he has recognized his self-worth and achieved accordingly.

Godly wisdom, though 180 degrees from the world's philosophy, still begins by knowing yourself. But Godly wisdom is not realizing how great we are and how valuable we are. Godly wisdom comes when we begin to realize how great God IS, and yet still how valuable WE are to Him. When we realize how great God is, we have no basis for self-exaltation; yet when we realize how valuable we are to this great God (so valuable HE died for us), we have no basis for self-condemnation, either. Hence, only the Christian can have a balanced perspective of self. We call it humility.

Yet, even as this flower of humility begins to bloom in the garden of a Christian's life, another plant begins to bud, the seed of the towering tree of self-control, for even knowing who you are is not enough! If you do not learn to choose, according to God's Word, to let Him rule your life, but instead yield to your appetites, you will become a carnal Christian. If you yield to your emotions, you become an unstable Christian. BUT if you learn to respond by choice to His WORD, you become a mature Christian because you have taken the first two steps to wisdom. You know who you are and the Mind of Christ is beginning to control

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your life! Your gluttony comes under the Spirit's control. Your anger ceases to boil or to simmer. Your impulsiveness gives way to WISE decision-making. Your immoral impulses are rejected in favor of the mind of a Holy God, and your tongue begins to speak words of praise. Under God's control, it learns to speak the truth...in love!

And now, even the world about you is beginning to be in awe! For a kind of wisdom the world is unaccustomed to, is beginning to rule your appetites, your attitudes and your actions.

Then come the third and fourth levels of wisdom. You are out in the marketplace of life, living the Christian life. You have seen who you are and are starting to see your appetites and your emotions come under God's control. Satan has two possible citadels left to attack. If he can cause you to live irresponsibly, then the fruitfulness of your newfound wisdom will not be effective in reaching a seeking world. He can allow you to live insensitively, and the life you live will once again turn inward, a self-centered selflessness (which is in reality known as hypocrisy; we'll deal with that later).

But for now, we are aiming the rifle of God's Word directly at the target of the reality of responsibility, and we will appropriate most of our ammunition from the storehouse of Proverbs so that we might come to understand this third level of wisdom. The responsible Christian is the many-faceted mirror that reflects in the marketplace of life (where it counts) the very heart and soul of a responsible God. We are going to look at:

- the responsible worker
- the responsible parent
- the responsible child
- the responsible merchant
- the responsible wife and
- the responsible friend.

Our goal is to become, by God's grace, responsible Christians so that we might, by God's grace, become more usable Christians in the process. Our first stop on the road to responsibility is at the entrance to the place in life where God has commissioned us to work:

- for the laborer it's at the plant;

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for the salesman, it's on his route or in the store;

for the housewife, it's in her home;

for the student, it's in the classroom;

for the pastor, it's at the church.

For all of us, it's somewhere...somewhere where we spend a lot of time, most of our time, in fact. Our lesson here is... "The Responsible Christian At Work". Our pilgrimage through Proverbs has uncovered a number of spiritual realities unique to this somewhat unique book. Being primarily a book of principles, Proverbs paints word pictures that demonstrate what does and does not happen when believers follow God's guidelines for success.

One of those interesting facets is the way in which God so often contrasts the man or woman who is in the process of obeying, to the man or woman who is not. In many cases, both are believers, but in all cases there is a demonstrable difference in their behavior. Nearly always the man or woman who is allowing God to control them is referred to as a "wise man" or a "wise woman", and with some variations, the man or woman who is in rebellion is nearly always called a "fool".

In this study, we find the same marked contrast once again. The responsible Christian is referred to as "the wise man" and his nickname, so to speak, is "Mr. Diligent." The irresponsible man is referred to as a "fool" and his or her nicknames include such undesirable subtitles as "slothful", "sluggard", and "lazy". So the question is, where work is concerned, are you a wise man? Or a fool?

To answer that question, we must follow ourselves to the arena wherein we spend the bulk of our time, and measure our degree of diligence alongside this measuring stick we call "Proverbs." But we will begin, as always, by first defining the terms that will dominate our study. We will begin with a look at the terms Proverbs uses to describe the fool or the wise man at work.

First, let's see what the dictionary says this fool looks like. The dictionary defines "slothful" this way: slothful: having an aversion to work or exertion (he has an allergy); lazy, indolent, or sluggish. Let's break those words down.

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Lazy: resistant to work; disposed to idleness, slow-moving.

Indolent: disinclined to work; comes from a pathological term meaning: that which causes little or no pain (e.g. an indolent tumor) (Latin=painless)

Sluggish: displaying little movement, lacking in vigor, alertness, or energy; slow to perform, slow to respond to motivation.

So the slothful man, the sluggard, is one who has an aversion to work, that is, he is lazy. His laziness is characterized by idleness, by a slow-moving lifestyle, or by avoiding that which would inflict pain or inconvenience. The slothful man is difficult, if not impossible, to motivate. He is characterized by a sluggish response, the absence of alertness. He will seemingly go to greater pains to avoid work than he will to perform it.

The slothful man is a caricature of the kind of man Satan wants to create. Thus so many of the drugs he has injected into the bloodstream of modern society simply are geared to make young people sluggards, slow of response, bent on idleness, not alert, avoiding responsibility by avoiding work. Satan is producing a generation of sluggards. But sluggards are not God's kind of men!

God's kind of men are diligent men, thus, definition #2:

Diligence: long, steady application to one's occupation or studies (the dictionary says) persistent effort (it goes on); assiduous (which it further describes as devoted, unceasing, constant, unflagging attentive care, heedfulness, or the paying of close attention.)

So the diligent man (the wise man) is the opposite of the sluggard. He is persistent. He hangs tough; the tougher the job, the more dedicated he becomes. The diligent man is devoted; his motives are bathed in loyalty. He is attentive. He pays close attention to details.

He is not sleepily unaware as the sluggard, but rather painfully attentive and aware. What a contrast!

God's man is incredibly industrious, unceasingly loyal, and uncompromisingly persistent. Satan's man is groggy, slow, unconcerned, and avoiding all contact with challenge, if challenge involves any form of pain or exertion.

Those are the dictionary's portraits of the diligent man and the sluggard. Now let's journey through Scripture and see

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just how God views each of them. But before we beat a path to Proverbs, let's remind ourselves that the vantage point from which we will examine ourselves in the context of diligence is on the stage of our own workaday world. We must remember, that work has always been a vital part of the plan of God, even though the purposes and problems that surround work changed dramatically at the Fall. In Genesis we read this:

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to 'dress' it and 'keep' it. (Genesis 2:15)

So Adam was the world's first employee. His responsibilities were varied, but the two main ones were listed in this verse. He was to "dress" the garden and to "keep" it.

A look at these Hebrew words and their use in the rest of Scripture indicates that Adam had really a very simple but very responsible job. He was to "dress" the garden that is he was to labor in it. He was to tend to what needed to be done... planting, reaping, arranging. This Hebrew word is used 145 times in the Old Testament to describe all kinds of labor. It seems to have to do with the execution of assigned tasks.

But Adam had a second job. Not only was he to work the garden (to care for it and tend it), he was also to "keep" the garden. This was more of an administrative job. This required more than hard work, it involved attentiveness. The Hebrew word used here for "keep" is found 420 times in the Old Testament, and in many cases was used, as it was here, to denote responsibility, often implying the task of guarding or protecting. It was used in Genesis 3:24 of the cherubim who were "keeping" or guarding the Way to the tree of life. It was used by Cain who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper? Is he my responsibility?"

So Adam's task was twofold...to work the garden (or labor as he was instructed), and to "keep" the garden or guard it against intrusion, being responsible for it's well-being. The first involved obedience; the second involved attentiveness. Both involved responsibility.

Now we do not know how well Adam did tending the garden. There is no mention in Scripture that he was negligent in his duties as a gardener. We do have reason to believe, however, that he failed in his task of "keeping" the garden, for into the garden came an intruder, one whose sole objective was to destroy it's holiness and to defy its Master. Adam was responsible to see that

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no intruders made their way into God's garden, into Eve's life or into his. He compromised somehow and was not responsible. The results speak for themselves.

Then came the fall. Eve sinned. Adam sinned, and Satan's tentacles of evil wrapped themselves around all of life, and a curse broke through on mankind that declared war on all of God's plans and all of God's purposes.

God did not lose control. But God had given man freedom to choose his own master, and man had made a horrible choice. Now a loving God went about the task of drawing back to Himself scarred and fallen man. And part of God's plan for man still included work. But now work had a new connotation. Now work was a tool of God both to remind man of the curse and to remind man of the character of Jehovah, who still had a beautiful plan for his life. In Genesis 3 we read this:

Cursed is the ground because of you, through PAINFUL toil you will eat of it ALL the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food, until you return to the ground; since from it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you will return. (Genesis 3:17-19)

Work was more than ever a crucial part of the plan of God. But now, because of man's choice to rebel against the authority of God, God chose to take the vehicle of work and use it to demonstrate His authority and to intensify man's awareness of the spiritual struggle that now had moved to earth between God and Satan.

A curse now existed on the source of man's income. It was now a battlefield between the Master and the Intruder. No longer was work likely to be a source of great satisfaction; now it would often be a The Responsible Christian at Work source of great conflict and struggle, a battlefield. Man was to toil through PAINFUL labor. Remember the word "painful" is a term Satan's slothful man avoids when it comes to work. The sluggard wants life's easy way out. God said your toil will be PAINFUL. How long? ALL the days of your life.

Furthermore, God went on, you chose to serve Satan; so your labors will produce his kind of harvest. Thorns and thistles will be a part of the fruit you produce. Along with meeting your

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needs, in your job there will be times of testing and trials. Your hands will sometimes bleed from handling the sharp objects you must separate from the fruits of your labors. You will eat; God will see to that, but your eating will be marked by the presence of perspiration. As long as you live, until you return to the ground and your spirit soars into the presence of God, you will live by the sweat of your brow.

Now somewhere through the years, Satan has won some tremendous battles against the concept of work. Throughout history, when men have possessed a work ethic and a sense of responsibility to toil for their wages, societies have been characterized by moral and spiritual awareness; but whenever men have discarded the scriptural concept of work and sought for systems to replace sweat, programs to replace productivity, welfare to replace work; their generation has seen a marked decline in spiritual values and moral judgment. We live in such an age.

Today, men and women do not seek employment using God's Genesis resume. Today men and women are seeking maximum benefits with minimum exertion. We want maximum recreation, and minimum toil. We want more laborsaving devices because we think labor is a sin. On the contrary, labor may well be the last hope we have to return to God's kind of currency and restore God's kind of society to a world in which Satan has sold another lie: slothfulness is success; that the most you can get for the least you perform means you have succeeded. God help us.

We belong to a God who works. He labored six days at creation before He rested. Then in Exodus 20:9 and 34:21, He told the Jews to do the same.

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working." (John 5:17 NIV)

Then Jesus left principles for His young church to follow, so that they could demonstrate to a world bathed in slothfulness the difference Christianity could make in the world. Christians work! Paul said,

Stop stealing; go to work, use your hands. This is God's plan to give you something to share with others.

(Ephesians 4:28 paraphrase)

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your business, and to work with your hands, just as you are told

(I Thessalonians 4:11-12 NIV)

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Now listen to His reasons:

So your daily life will win the respect of outsiders, and you won't be dependent on or be an unnecessary load for others to carry.

Paul revealed another motive for hard work:

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (I Timothy 5:8 NIV)

And in II Thessalonians 3 Paul feeds us some strong meat where the issue of hard work and responsibility are concerned. Listen to what he says,

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you brothers, to keep away from any brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you.

Nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling, so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule, "if a man WILL not work; he SHALL not eat."

We hear that some among you are idle; they are not busy; they are busybodies.

Such people we command and urge in the LORD Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. (II Thessalonians 3:6-15 NIV)

Here we have Christ's position on work. Let's look at the facts:

Fact #1 - Paul said that to work is a command (given in Jesus' name). This is the straight scoop...God's mind on this subject of work.

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Fact #2 - You must separate yourselves from those who choose idleness as a way of life. Your fellowship with them gives credence to their philosophy, which God does not accept.

Fact #3 - Paul said to enforce this principle (because it is so important), I have stretched myself beyond my rights to demonstrate to you by example how God feels about work. I was here to preach the Gospel, Paul said, and with a clear conscience, I could have done nothing in the marketplace of life to generate income. But instead, I chose to work night and day, continuously laboring and toiling, as a model for you to follow (not only to feed myself, he went on, but my companions as well.)

Fact #4 - The model is to amplify one principle: “If a man WILL not work (that is, if he CHOOSES not to labor diligently), he SHALL not eat.” It’s a divine corollary. If a man can’t work, feed him. If a man can work and won’t, stay away from him to shame him into going to work; and don’t give him a free ride. Make him go to work. I believe it also means that the man who does not have a job, has a job: to find a job. And until he has invested forty hours a week looking, he is being slothful.

Fact #5 - Then Paul addresses these “busybodies” as he calls them and lovingly says to them, “Settle down and go to work and earn what you eat; and the rest of you,” he adds, “don’t be weary in well-doing, don’t get tired of the grind.”

Fact #6 - Then as a postscript Paul adds, “As you separate yourselves from these idle ones in the flock, remember it’s not to condescend or regard them as enemies, it’s to lovingly put pressure on them to go to work.”

So we have a clear word from God “PC-AC” and “AC-AC” about work. The term “PC” means pre-curse. Even pre-curse man was supposed to work. Then “AC” means after the curse. Man was to not only work, but to work by the sweat of his brow as a reminder of his choice to rebel, and to implement into his life the character of God. And “AC-AC” means after the curse and after Christ, when grace did nothing to destroy God’s philosophy of work; it only amplified it. God’s grace enables man now to work as UNTO God. Now there is purpose; now there is meaning;

Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the LORD and not unto men;
(Colossians 3:23)

Employees, obey your employers not only because they are watching, but because you love JESUS and want to please

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HIM. Work hard, and work cheerfully, as though Jesus had hired you. (Colossians 3:22 & Ephesians 6:5-7 paraphrased)

He is the one who hired you, and He is the one who will pay you in Heavenly currency. So work hard; Jesus is your real boss and that's what He expects. Here's another: Christians work hard and respect your bosses. Never let it be said that Christ's people are poor workers. Don't let the name of God or his teaching be laughed at because of slothful saints.

And if your boss is a Christian, that's no reason to slack off. YOU should work all the harder because a brother in the faith is being helped by your efforts. These are the sound, wholesome teachings of the LORD JESUS CHRIST and are the foundations for a Godly life. (1 Timothy 6:1,2 paraphrase)

So now the Christian has a new motive for work. His employer is not really his employer; His employer is a foreman God has set over him to accomplish His purposes. His real employer is Jesus Christ, and His motivations for work now are to please Him and magnify His Name.

And as a footnote, Paul adds, don't go hiding under the umbrella of wanting to work for a Christian so life will be easier. You add a whole new dimension to your work. A brother in the faith is being helped, so now you don't give 100% you give 130%! Working for a believer is not an escape from the world, it ought to be a calling for special people to work even harder. And just imagine how hard you need to work if you are in the ministry. Paul said you're God's example to others.

So that's how God feels about work. Now let's look at some principles from Proverbs that demonstrate what God's man or woman ought to look like out there in the workaday world. They apply to the housewife as well as the pipe fitter. They apply to the supervisor as well as the carpenter; to the salesman as well as the advertising manager, the secretary as well as the receptionist, the plumber as well as the electrician. God's standards have nothing to do with rank or role. They are standards for all Christians in all work situations... and they spell one primary word from start to finish... DILIGENCE!!! Let's look at some principles from Proverbs on work.

Principle 1 - Hard work is a healthy alternative to starving.

It is better to get your hands dirty and eat; than to be too proud to work and starve. (Proverbs 12:9 TLB)

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The principle is that if you need to lower your station in life to feed your family, then that lower station is where your train comes in. God gives no antibodies at conversion that make us immune to hard work. If you've done better in the past, it's because God is a God of Grace. If He wants you to labor again in the sweatshops of life to remind you of the curse and remind you of His love, do it willingly, as unto Him. No guarantees... hard work is God's antidote for hunger. Listen to Proverbs,

Being hungry can be an advantage if it motivates you to go to work. (Proverbs 16:26 paraphrase)

Principle 2 - God's man or woman ought to work just as hard with no immediate supervision.

Go to the ant thou sluggard, and consider her ways. She has no immediate supervisor, yet she plans her work and she works her plan. (Proverbs 6:6)

That's God's seal of responsibility on the Christian. You can tell him what to do, walk away and leave him, and he ought to work as hard in your absence as he does when you're watching, because he isn't working for you, he's working for God.

Principle 3 - Don't concoct silly excuses for not going to work.

God's heard them all, and He's not impressed. Just because you have sick leave coming is no reason to feel sick. If Jesus were standing by your bedside would you say, "LORD, I can't help you today, I'm too sick"? Only then ought you to stay home from work.

Listen to some of the sluggard's reasons for staying home. The weather's too bad:

The slothful will not plow by reason of winter (it's too cold to go outside); therefore he shall beg in harvest and have nothing. (Proverbs 20:4)

Another reason is personal danger:

The lazy man is full of excuses, I can't go to work he says, if I go outside I might meet a lion in the street and be killed. (Proverbs 22:13 TLB)

Now I haven't heard that exact one, but I've heard some just about as ludicrous. I've had them say to me, "The freeway is too crowded at that time of day; I don't work downtown because I hate the traffic; I can't work on Saturdays because that's when football is on TV; I can't work outside because my eyes water,"

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etc. The lion in the streets routine would almost be a welcome change.

Proverbs 26 whips out the lion story again and then describes the kind of man he is.

The lazy man won't go out and work. "There might be a lion in outside!" he says.

He sticks to his bed like a door to its hinges.

He is too tired even to lift his food from his dish to his mouth.

Yet in his own opinion, he is smarter than seven wise men.
(Proverbs 26:13-16 TLB)

God is saying the guy with all the excuses for staying home or not taking that job is just plain lazy. He won't feed himself, and his bed is his throne; he needs his rest, and he thinks the rest of us need to feed him. Trouble is, he thinks he's wise...he thinks it's smart to get others to do your work while you stay in bed and think up new excuses to stay home. But God doesn't see any humor in it. His basic principles of honesty and hard work are being violated, and He sees that as a violation of His character.

Principle 4 - How you care for your possessions is an indicator of whether or not you are slothful.

I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment.

Thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. (Look like your yard?)

I applied my heart to what I had observed, and learned a lesson from what I saw.

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-

And poverty will come on you like a bandit, and scarcity like an armed man.
(Proverbs 24:30-34 NIV)

The lesson here is twofold: 1) The trademark of the slothful man is the rundown unkept condition of his belongings. His lawn is unmowed; his house needs painting; his car needs washing; his fence needs mending; his desk needs cleaning (ouch); his projects are never completed. He's always going to do that tomorrow. The Christian's lawn ought to be manicured;

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his house painted; his car clean. It needn't be a fancy house, an extravagant lawn, or a new car. It just needs to be kept in a manner that speaks of an orderly God who keeps His universe bathed in beauty and structured to perfection.

2) Poverty comes in the back door and creeps up on the slothful man. It's a slow, downhill slide that comes from neglecting details and allowing things to gradually fade into unproductiveness.

The sluggard, remember, is inattentive to details, slow to respond, easily discouraged. The diligent man pays attention, remains alert, and deals with issues as they come up. Poverty does not come upon him unawares, because he has kept the checkbook up to date, and he knows where he's going.

Principle 5 - Daydreaming instead of working leads to failure.

He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

(Proverbs 28:19 NIV)

The principle is this: the time you spend daydreaming robs you of productive labor. Many a potential good housewife or good salesman runs out of time to complete their task because they are chasing rainbows in their minds, and chasing rainbows is a time-consuming, energy-consuming task. Why not discipline your mind to pay attention to what you're doing, even if it is mundane, until your task is complete.

God's man or woman concentrates on each and every job, no matter how, seemingly, insignificant. such as as washing dishes, dusting, filing, or filling out reports. These are divine assignments. They are not to be done with only half the brain in gear.

Principle 6 - A key characteristic of a slothful man is how much time he spends asleep.

How long wilt thou sleep, Oh sluggard? Sleep is the enemy of diligence; and sleep is the cause of poverty.

(Proverbs 6:9-11 paraphrase)

A wise youth makes hay while the sun shines, but what a shame to see a lad who sleeps away his hour of opportunity.

(Proverbs 10:5 TLB)

Sloth brings the sleep that has no awaking; idle hands, empty belly.

(Proverbs 19:15 Knox)

Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

(Proverbs 20:13)

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There is a danger today that we are raising a generation of sleepers. The early rising farmer of the thirties and forties has given way to the too-sound sleeper of the eighties. Fed by late television and mind-anesthetizing drugs, late to bed and late to rise makes Johnny a poor worker. The Bible is clear. Sleep is important and has a purpose. But sleep is also (in too large a quantity) an antidote for reality, and a substitute for hard work and long hours. We used to work six days a week, sunup to sundown and consider it a privilege.

Now today's job interviews begin with the candidate asking the employer how many benefits he can be assured of; when does he get his first vacation, does he have to work any nights, and can he be assured of having every Saturday off.

And now the four day work week threatens to turn loose a generation of people who have reduced God's 6:1 work ratio down to 4:3 and free on society a whole new set of problems brought on by idleness.

Principle 7 - The absence of hard work is usually accompanied by idleness; and idleness leads to abundance of problems.

Hard work means prosperity; only a fool idles away his time.
(Proverbs 12:11 TLB)

Being hungry can be an advantage if it motivates you to work. But idle hands are the devil's workshop, idle lips are his mouthpiece.
(Proverbs 16:26-27 TLB)

The idler's desires are the death of him, since his hands will not do work. He is greedy to get rather than to give.
(Proverbs 21:25 paraphrase)

The problem is that time is either an ally or an enemy. Time invested in hard work is productive time. Time with no clear objectives leads to compromise. The least it can produce is nothing; but usually idleness leads to freedoms the soul cannot handle, and often to temptations we need never have had to face. We learned two weeks ago, that hard work is a cure for gossip; it is also a cure for many of the other temptations that idleness invites.

Principle 8 - A lazy employee destroys his testimony.

A lazy fellow is a pain to his employers; like smoke in their eyes or vinegar that sets their teeth on edge.
(Proverbs 10:26 TLB)

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In contrast:

Like coolness of snow in the heat of harvest is a faithful messenger for one who sends him. (Proverbs 25:13 NAS)

In other words, to an employer, an employee can either be a refreshing cool wind on a warm summer day, or he can be likened to the most irritating experiences in a man's life, someone blowing smoke in their eyes, or the smell of vinegar that literally causes you to run from the room.

And the vinegar-vender would be far better off not to hand his boss a tract and say "I'm a Christian, how about you?" You have earned the right to witness to those you work for and with. And your entrance fee is diligence. If you're the only Christian in your office, you had just better be the most industrious, the most attentive, the most loyal in that office, or how can you say to them "Jesus makes a difference in me." You may not work as many hours because your priorities are different, but you'd best work the hours you agreed to when you took the job, and you'd best work those hours with more honor and more intensity than all the rest.

A word of practical caution at this point: Be sure that, as a Christian, you have calculated your AP* and are grateful to God for that job based on what you are really making. AP means actual pay...to begin with your actual pay is what you are making based on the fact that you are being paid for 100% effort on the job. This chart will show you what I mean.

Per Hour	Actual Pay	Actual Pay
	75%	50%
\$7.00	\$10.50	\$14.00
\$6.00	\$ 9.00	\$12.00
\$5.00	\$ 7.50	\$10.00
\$4.00	\$6.00	\$8.00
\$3.00	\$4.50	\$6.00

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If you are being paid \$7/hr but (by God's standards) are only contributing 75% of your effort to the job, God is really paying you \$10.50 an hour. If you like to talk on the phone, or gossip, or stop for coffee on the boss's time, and out of an eight hour day, you really only have four productive hours, that seven dollar/hr job has an AP (actual pay) of \$14.00/hr.

The chart takes it down to \$3.00 an hour and shows you what you are really making. Remember, you are not being paid to hear what Mary said to Bill. You are being paid by the hour to work a full hour...no less. So whatever less you are working, you are being in effect paid a higher salary for the time you do manage to work.

To complete computing your AP, make a list of the value of your benefits, hospitalization, retirement benefits, vacation time, uniforms, transportation, etc., and add up their cost to your employer and divide that by your pay period. That's real pay... you just never see it.

Then stop and thank God and thank your employer for the privilege of working, and begin working all eight of the eight hours for which you are being paid. Isn't it strange, how we expect time and a half for everything over forty hours, but never think of offering to take three-quarters time because that's all we are really producing?

And if you work for a Christian, you are to work that much harder, so that means you haven't even earned your 8 hours pay till you've done maybe 10 hours worth of work. And one last principle (can you handle one more?)

Principle 9 - You can't do it; but God can!

Commit your work to the LORD, and then it will succeed.
(Proverbs 16:3 TLB)

Roll your work onto the LORD, and your plans will be achieved.
(Berkeley)

Every morning, load up your inabilities, your weaknesses, and your weariness, and roll it over onto Jesus. He'll take the load; he'll carry it for you. Then in HIS strength, you can produce all God wants you to that day. What that means, once again, is that responsibility is nothing more than your response to God's ability. He has the strength. You and I are simply asked to respond to His strength with obedience. It means we don't ever leave for work in the morning without praying specifically

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for that day's work. Not that it will be easy...not that it will be without irritations.

But our prayer must be, Lord, make me the kind of worker that will glorify a God who works, a God whose children WORK, a God of responsibility. Lord, I can't; but Lord, you can. Make me usable, and use me. Make me available, and then meet needs through me. Lord, make me responsible. You are able, may my response free Your ability.

Housewives, pray over the day's chores. That load of washing is important to God. That floor that has to be waxed is a testimony waiting to happen; that trip to the grocery store is not wasted time; ask God to sharpen your mind. (And see to it that you look presentable as His representative to that store - mercy, the way some people go out in the name of Jesus to the grocery store.)

Everything you do is important to God. How you keep your desk, Mr. Businessman, says a lot about the structure of your mind. Are you diligent? Then why is your desk slothful? Are you a wise man? Then why does your schedule look like the schedule of a sluggard?

God ordained hard work as the lot of his children. At the fall, it took on a whole new meaning. We are to toil, often painfully, but always joyfully, for we, unlike those around us who know HIM not, are toiling for Jesus. How can we do less than our best if we are working for Him?

God is looking for men and women of diligence to shine like stars in an age of slothfulness. He is looking for men and women who know the meaning of hard work, at a time when Satan is injecting the bloodstream of life with the sedatives of rest, relaxation, and recreation; when he is injecting the bodies of our children with narcotics that deaden their alertness, dull their senses, and destroy their drive to work.

God is looking for men and women to go to work wherever he places them, starting tomorrow. The pay is incredible. God pays us more than we're worth here and puts aside eternal currency in a heavenly vault for future bonuses in the life to come. We can't lose. The benefits are terrific; but first, you and I have got to learn that to earn those benefits and honor our employer, the LORD JESUS.

You and I have got to become RESPONSIBLE CHRISTIANS ON THE JOB... and RESPONSIBLE CHRISTIANS WORK!

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By God's grace may there be a difference in the way we work from this day forward. Let's close with this little challenge in rhyme:

CHRISTIAN, GO TO WORK!

Christian, go to work
There's a wealth for you to do
When you arrive at work, my friend,
All eyes descend on you

You represent the Master
You're there by HIS own call.
What 'ere the task it's yours to be
The hardest worker of all.

You ought to sweep and scrub the floor
If that's to be your sod
With dignity and thoroughness
You're cleaning them for God!

The way you keep your house or car
The way you keep your yard
The way you dress or keep your desk
Becomes God's calling card.

Christian, go to work, at once
There's just no time to waste
We earn much more than we deserve
We serve a God of grace

But you and I, beloved,
Are called by grace to be
Men and women whose lives declare
Responsibility.

Christian, go to work with joy
Your labors His story tell
Your God in turn will pay you
And He will pay you well!

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