

“How to Identify a Lazy Soul”

09/07/09

Tomorrow our country will be celebrating Labor Day. This day tends to mark the end of the summer, the beginning of the football season and a time of great barbeque. The history of the holiday is interesting. It had its origin in Canada during the 1870 labor disputes between the government and the unions. They would celebrate the labor reforms by having a day of parades and speakers, recognizing that the harsh conditions would finally be dealt with. That spirit of the common laborer was carried to the US and celebrated on September 5, 1882 in NYC without government recognition. Two years later during the Pullman Strike of 1894, the military clashed with the union and the result was many deaths of union workers. President Grover Cleveland moved to make it a national holiday as a gesture of appeasement, hence Labor Day. Throughout the course of time, Labor Day has become a national day of rest for the workers of America. It is called Labor Day because it recognizes the hard labor that workers have experienced through the year.

In light of this, I desire to enter into the conversation the fact that there are many that will not be able to take that meaning into tomorrow because they are sluggards. What is a sluggard? Definition of a *Sluggard*: a habitually lazy person.

The sluggard cannot celebrate a “day of rest” from their labors for they have no labor to rest from. If someone has chosen to live the life of a sluggard, Labor Day is just another day to be lazy. Technically the sluggard can only celebrate Labor Day by going to work.

Now the world is expected to have sluggards among them, for where the world is, there shall the sins follow. In the church it is to be a different situation, for God has called us to a higher calling. We are to be a people of action, not in-action. It is important to be able to identify those that are lazy sluggards in the church family and to teach them not to be so. This was a problem in the first century church.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.
- Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,
- 1 Timothy 5:8 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.

We in the church are to always teach others to be hard workers, for it affects every area of our lives. If you are lazy in your job, then the odds are that you will be lazy in your service to God, the church, to worship and to each other.

Five Signs of the Lazy Soul

1) A Cycle of Poverty

- Proverbs 6:6-11 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer And

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gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest” 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.

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

I cannot count the number of times that lazy people have contacted the church family in search of funds. Now there is nothing wrong with being benevolent, for the Bible actually teaches this. I am also not saying that everyone that needs assistance is lazy, for that simply is not true. What I am saying is that the lazy soul has an extended cycle of poverty in their life. This is because lazy people do not live a fruitful life. They have a history of nothing because they do nothing. It is an endless cycle of poverty that curses not only themselves, but also their descendants.

We are more than happy to aid a soul in need, especially those of the church family. Our record more than confirms this. We will not aid someone in the way of laziness. We have a benevolence form in our office that is designed to weed out the sluggards. On that form it asks of their work record along with contact information. Sometimes we will have strangers come that have not worked for years. It was not that they could not work, but would not work. I once met a man my age that had been traveling around for more than five years, mooching off the budget of churches. The only help I offered him was a job to make a few dollars, but he refused. We cannot aid the sluggard in their cycle of endless poverty.

2) Lack of a Life Plan

- Proverbs 20:4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.
- Proverbs 26:14 As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed.
- Proverbs 26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

Often a sluggard fails to have a life plan because it requires effort. He or she will not listen to the instruction of those that can aid them in escaping that way of life. There is a saying, *“If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for life.”* The sluggard does not want the skill of fishing, but only a fish. They lack a worthy life plan. Just like a door that moves on the hinges, back and forth, the sluggard is content to drift through life with no plans beyond the immediate.

3) Endless Excuses

- Proverbs 22:13 The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!”
- Proverbs 26:13-14 The sluggard says, “There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!”

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- Proverbs 15:19 The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.

The sluggard will think of any excuse to get out of work. This particular sluggard was using the ancient excuse that it was too dangerous to go outside and work. In fact their whole life is a hedge of thorns that boxes them in from meaningful opportunities.

Growing up in a rural area provided a large amount of farm work for me. I often would organize crews for picking rock, walking beans, bailing hay or detasseling corn. Every now and then we would accidentally bring in a sluggard, causing us a lot of unnecessary grief. They would only last a couple of days and quit because we would not tolerate it, for they cause the others to have to pick up the slack. The excuses would fly. It was too hot or too heavy or too long or they were allergic to bees or my shoes hurt or my alarm did not go off or I have blisters. Farm work was tough work and not for the lazy. If you did not get it done, you did not get paid. Sluggards will always offer endless excuses.

4) Demands on the Righteous

- Proverbs 10:26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy one to those who send him.
- Proverbs 21:25-26 The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work; 26 All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back.

A number of years ago, there was a woman whom called the church requesting assistance to make a house payment. When I told her that we have a policy not to extend that amount of assistance outside of the immediate church family, she demanded, “If you do not make my house payment then I will kill myself.” I was not going to cave into that kind of pressure. She yelled at me, “You are a minister and are supposed to help me!” She was making demands on the righteous, something that is quite common among the sluggards. Anyone that has ever worked with outside benevolence would know that there is a mindset of the sluggard to take advantage of the righteous.

5) Personal Neglect

- Proverbs 24:30-34 I passed by the field of the sluggard And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, 31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. 33 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest,” 34 Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man.
- Proverbs 26:15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.

This sluggard allowed his home to fall into a dilapidated condition through his neglect. The other sluggard thinks it too much to even feed himself. Personal neglect is the sign of an advanced sluggard. Have you ever met a person so lazy that they do not bathe or groom themselves? My wife and I knew a person so lazy that she refused to ever clean her home or children. Her poor children would have lice three or four times a year, her

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home was filled with three foot of trash and roaches roamed unhindered. She even had a couple of pets that had died in the home and could not be found for weeks. She was the laziest person I ever had the privilege to meet. A true sluggard will personally neglect themselves and their environment.

So there you have five ways to identify a true sluggard according to the Bible. We have to be careful not to encourage this way of life for it is damaging to society. Most importantly a sluggard has to understand that there is no room for laziness in the kingdom of God. This Labor Day should be a reminder to all in the church that we will work harder and smarter in the next year than we ever have.

Closing Story

The following is an actual letter written in the mid 1980s from a Midwestern man to the Secretary of Agriculture. It captures the danger of having policies that promote laziness.

From the Desk of: Don Genereaux

Honorable Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir,

My friend, Dan Hansen, over at Honey Creek, Iowa, received a check for \$1,000.00 from the government for not raising hogs. So I want to go into the "NOT RAISING HOGS" business next year. What I want to know is, in your opinion, what is the best kind of farm not to raise hogs on? And what is the best breed of hogs not to raise? I want to be sure that I approach this endeavor in keeping with all government policies.

As I see it, the hardest part of the "NOT RAISING HOGS" program is keeping an accurate inventory of how many hogs I haven't raised. My friend Hansen is very joyful about the future of the business. He has been raising hogs for twenty years or so, and the best he has ever made on them was \$422.90 in 1968, until this year when he got your check for the \$1000.00 for not raising 50 hogs. If I get \$1000.00 for not raising 50 hogs, then would I get \$2000.00 for not raising 100 hogs? I plan to operate on a small scale at first, holding myself to about 4,000 hogs not raised the first year, which would bring in about \$80,000.00; then I can afford an airplane.

Now another thing - these hogs I will not raise will not eat 100,000 bushels of corn. I understand that the government also pays people not to raise corn and wheat. Would I qualify for payments for not raising these crops not to feed my hogs I will not be raising?

I want to get started as soon as possible as this seems to be a good time of the year for the "NOT RAISING HOGS" and "NOT PLANTING CROPS" business. Also I am giving serious consideration to the "NOT MILKING COWS" business and any information you would have on the endeavor would be greatly appreciated. In view of the fact that I will be totally unemployed, I will be filing for unemployment and food stamps, and was wondering how long that process takes.

Be assured, Mr. Secretary, you will have my vote in the upcoming election.

Patriotically yours, Don Genereaux

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P.S. Would you please notify me when you plan to give out the free cheese again?