

Intro:

The last few weeks, we discussed the topic of Wisdom and Wealth.

We touched on laziness as one of the ways in which wealth can be squandered or lost. Today I want to take a closer look at the sluggard by looking at the major “sluggard” passage, Pr 6.6-11. There are three other major passages and several “one-liners” throughout proverbs.

The Major “Sluggard” Passages

- Prov 6.6-11 (Contrasts: The ant and the sluggard)
- Prov 24.30-34 (Observed: The King and the sluggard)
- Prov 26.13-16 (Described: The mockery of the sluggard)

I. The ant and the sluggard (6.6-11)**A. The ant as object lesson (6-8)**

What should the sluggard learn from the ant?

Observe her ways and **be wise**

What wisdom or qualities does Solomon record in each description?

No chief, officer or ruler: **self-starter**

Prepares her food in summer: **forward looking**

Gathers in harvest: **hard work at the right time, punctual**

How does the ant’s qualities teach the sluggard? (**various answers**)

B. Compare the characteristics of the sluggard (9-10)

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” —

How long...: **procrastination**

A little sleep: **rationalization**

Sleep, slumber (mental state): **no thinking**

Others?

C. Consequences (11)

1. Simile: poverty comes in like a vagabond (traveler)

Unexpected, unannounced

“Personified poverty has no home, no security, and no support and so wanders aimlessly trying to steal them wherever can be found.”
(Waltke, 1:340)

2. Need like an armed man

Takes wealth by force, power, overwhelms

“The easiest victim for a vagabond or a bandit is the sleeping sluggard, who lacks both the vigilance and the diligence to retain his wealth.”
(Waltke 1:341)

II. The King and the sluggard (24.30-34)

A. Location: where is the king as he observes the sluggard? (30)

in the street, looking in at the sluggard’s yard

B. What did the king see? (31)

the sluggard’s field: overgrown, broken wall

C. What did the king not see? (31)

the sluggard himself

D. What did the king conclude? (32-34 [note the quotation from 6.10-11])

that the way of the sluggard was the way to poverty

E. Who is the “robber and ... armed man” in this passage?

wasted time

III. The mockery of the sluggard (26.13-16)

This section is more a collection of “one-liners” than a unified discussion, although there is a progression of thought in each description. Each verse uses the term “sluggard.”

A. The sluggard makes an assertion in v. 13. Is he telling the truth? How would we know?

if there were a literal lion in the street, no one would be abroad

B. What kind of activity does the sluggard engage in? (14)

turning on his own bed, he can't be bothered to go to work

C. When it comes to feeding himself, how lazy is the sluggard? (15)

he can't even be bothered to lift his hand out of the bowl

D. What progression can we observe in these verses? Where is the real problem?

public spaces, inside house, at the table: the real problem is in the man

E. What is the sluggard compared with in v. 16?

seven wise men: "seven" symbolizes perfection

F. Where does the sluggard find wisdom? (16)

within himself

IV. Wisdom to turn from 'sluggardry' (30.7-9)

A. What does v. 7 communicate about the intensity of this request?

It is like a last request before he dies

B. What is the request in the first line of v.8?

essentially a request for wisdom: keep deception and lies far from me

C. What is the request of the second line? (8)

balanced wealth

D. And then the third line? (8)

sufficiency

E. Verse 9 is a kind of chiasm, my paraphrase follows:

That I not deny the Lord
That I not be in want
That I not profane God's name

How does the central purpose relate to the earlier prayers? (“that I not be in want”)

The sage does not want lack or abundance to tempt him to unfaithfulness in any way

What is the main focus of the life that leads to a right perspective on possessions, work, wealth?

The life devoted to serving God

Conclusion:

“If there is one thing the sluggard lacks it is self-control. If there is any food in the house, he eats it, with no thought for the consequences. If he has the choice of work or play, he will always choose to play. Whatever is easy and enjoyable will always be his choice.

“The wise man knows that short-term sacrifices are required for future benefits. The wise child decides to do without candy bars and ice cream cones in order to save for a bike. The disciplined athlete knows that he must not eat too much of certain foods and must not stay up too late if he wishes to win the contest. The sluggard is not willing to make any sacrifices or to do without any pleasure that is within his reach.”¹

¹ Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *The Way of the Wise: Studies in the Book of Proverbs* (Biblical Studies Press, 1996), 42, www.bible.org.