

Learn to value hard work

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Date: 09 February 2025

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[0 : 00] We continue in our series in Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 6 verses 6 to 11. And the theme of this morning is learn to value hard work.

Thanks. Next slide please. Charles Kingsley, a man who was well known for a number of things, but mostly the fact that he had the best comb over in history and a stuck on beard.

A great preacher. Have thy tools ready, God will find the work. It's nice that, isn't it?

You be ready, God will provide the work. You be in the position where you are willing to serve and God will show you how to serve.

Okay, so we go on to the next slide. Proverbs 6 is in the wisdom of Scripture just after Proverbs 5 and just previous to Proverbs 7.

[1 : 13] And we heard what I thought was one of the outstanding sermons I've ever heard from John last week about the context of Proverbs 5, 6 and 7 around holiness in marriage.

But Proverbs 6 has a number of themes. And I just thought I'd put that in context. Don't get involved in complex financial situations which tie you into increasingly difficult positions with others.

Isn't that a modern thing? Isn't that something that could have been written in the Sunday newspaper this week? The Proverbs then moves on to talk about the consequences of dishonesty and deceitfulness.

Things that God hates. Pride, dishonesty, murder, unkindness, fondness of evil, troublemakers. I always like these lists in Scripture because you can tick some of them off.

Murder. God doesn't like murder. Got it. Yep, that's alright. Unkindness. In the same list. Isn't it interesting?

[2 : 30] That God hates. We've to find these and wrestle with them.

I don't find myself wrestling with murder. Only on the M62. Unkindness.

It's a struggle, isn't it? And then it moves on then in the end of chapter 6 and into chapter 7. Keep your marriage pure and holy. And sandwiched in these themes is our theme for this morning.

Matthew Henry, in his wonderful way, describes this as slothfulness reprov'd. Okay? So we have a little illustration for the next slide, please.

Oh no, we don't. We have to read first. You can have an illustration in a minute. Let's read problem 6. Go to the ant sluggard. Sluggard is lazy bones. Alright?

[3 : 34] Go to the ant lazy bones. Consider its ways and be wise. It has no commander, no overseer or ruler. Yet it stores its provision in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? I hear that quite often in the morning. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hand to rest.

And poverty will come on you like a thief. And scarcity like an armed man. Isn't it wonderful how clear scripture can be?

You can read some stuff in scripture and think, hmm, I'm not quite sure I get that bit. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? It's pretty easy to understand. And it makes me chortle. It's made me chortle all week as I've been preparing. And I haven't been a sluggard or tried not to be. Next slide, please. Sloth.

[4 : 41] That's a sloth. Next click. This is Sydney, the sloth. Next click. Next click. Don't be like Sydney, the sloth.

Is it sloth or sloth, by the way? Sloth? Sloth? Sloth? It's a sloth. It's a sloth. It's a sloth. It's a sloth.

Oh, no. Carry on. Yes.

Is it Shrewsbury or Shroes? No, no. Don't be like Sydney. We are told in Scripture not to be a lazy bones.

It's just dead straightforward. Don't do it. And that's what we're thinking about today. Next slide. Look at the ants. I like this.

In Leeds, where we lived for many, many years, there's a wonderful place called Canal Gardens Butterfly House. And in there, they have an ant tank, a big thing with lots of ants.

[5 : 49] And you can watch them, and they walk along this stick and go and bite a bit of leaf off and carry it back to wherever they're taking it to.

And then they go back for some more. Ants are very hard workers. They don't muck about. They're there, and they help each other, and they help carry, and all. They do all sorts of clever stuff.

It's ever worth watching. But look at the ant. Study the ant. No boss. No one to get it to work hard. But it works hard anyway.

Because it knows it needs to store up food for harder times. It works hard. Because it knows that it's the right thing to do.

Now, when I looked at this topic to start with, I thought, well, this is a bit sort of without cheer. I thought, yeah, hard work, learn to love hard work.

[6 : 51] but the more I've thought about it the more I've considered it the more I've wrestled with it the more I realise that we do need to look at the hands we do need to study the idea that working hard is a really important part of our faithful service of almighty God and also our membership of this society and there are consequences of slothfulness now not all of these are direct results they're not linear consequences in that sense but we need to watch out for them but what is absolutely sure is that if I go to work and do not there's a pretty reasonable chance I won't get paid because that's how it works you know if I go to work and I work hard I might get paid it was certainly the case when proverbs were being written but it's the case today now people have financial struggles for all sorts of reasons it's important to say that and I don't want to pretend that this is a linear thing but if we're idle if we're lazy bones the chances are we might find ourselves in financial struggle disappointment disappointment about ourselves but also about the fact that we haven't achieved much

I quite like it sometimes I don't do it very often but sometimes I just think I'm just going to do nothing today I'm not very good at doing nothing and after a while I find myself feeling a bit disappointed that a whole day has gone by or a whole half day has gone by and I've done that and I just feel a bit disappointed in my being in my spirit lazy bones or lazy bonesosity the behaviour of being a lazy bones is not good for your emotional well-being shame I was going to do that I've been asked to do that I've been told to do that and I haven't done it a shame and that can damage relationships Jesus told a wonderful parable didn't he two sons go and work in the fields one said yes and didn't the other said no and did that is a study in two things first of all a study in teenagers and their contrariness first on occasions but it's also a study in damaged relationships I asked you to do that and you haven't and that's disappointing that's a disappointment and you've damaged our relationship not fatally not fundamentally but you've damaged it and then most importantly and most seriously a distance from God and this will feed into a theme that I'll be coming back to but God asks us to do stuff everybody in this building today and everybody listening online hello by the way I'm the good looking one thank you everybody who hears God speak is asked to do something by God he charges us with a job now he will charge us with a job that we can do in his strength and some of us are more experienced of birthdays than others that means older and maybe there's things that we can't do but I'm sure I've told you this story before in a church that we were at previously there were five or six ladies who had had lots of experience of birthdays and one of them said to me one day Andy I can't do anything and in the same breath says you know I do pray for you every morning you don't understand do you that's your service and we will come back to that but please don't look at me and say

God never asked me to do anything that's not how it works okay so hard work working hard serving God being diligent all those sorts of things are just part of our normal Christian life we need to be normalising that behaviour and understanding that that's just who we are in God who we need to be in God next slide please so is rest and sleep wrong no no it's not rest and sleep are good and godly things and when I talk about work and when we think about serving God we also need to remember and be mindful of the fact that God calls us to rest and God calls us to sleep come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest says Jesus there are some people here this morning who are weary and burdened there are people here who need the rest of God take it take it please because that's what God asks you to do give your burden give your weariness to God and

allow him to rest because if we don't we're not enjoying the wonderful benefits of relationship with almighty

[13 : 48] God I lie down and sleep I wake again because the Lord sustains me sleep's really good have you tried it I did it last night it was really good fun and sometimes my sleep is broken the other night my sleep was broken by a fox cub playing on the road outside making a right racket it was and I had to go and look and see what it was and it was a fox cub making a right racket playing on the road outside but that's alright broken sleep's not great but sleep is good sleep is good because God created it invented it decided that's how you restore yourself I lie down and sleep I wake up because the Lord sustains me isn't that a wonderful word sustain it's more than just looks after me he keeps me upright he keeps me there he keeps me visible he keeps me being and that's who God is so this is not about never rest this is not about sleep is bad this is not about if you can't do what Mrs.

Thatcher didn't only sleep for four hours a night then you're somehow a slacker sleep is a good thing rest is a good thing but it's all about having a good balance a good balance in our lifestyle in our life when we're working we're diligent when we're resting we're equally diligent move on John Wesley look at that hair though I'm always in haste I am never in a hurry so I never undertake more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit I read that and immediately felt challenged because quite often I'm in a hurry and I wonder whether it's because

I undertake I do undertake more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit I wonder whether I'm taking on too much so it's possible in our desire to work hard to take on too much it's possible in our desire to get the work hard bit right that we don't get the rest bit right and what Wesley is saying there is very important there's a balance I'll be in haste I don't mind hustling around and being busy but I'm never going to hurry I'm never going to rush away from an important conversation I'm never going to rush away from an important piece of work because God will sustain me because I haven't over committed myself and for some of us and I include me in this there's a lesson there there's a lesson about over busyness next slide please hard work is good for you can benefit you physically emotionally and spiritually it can benefit you from coming home at the end of a busy day coming home at the end of a busy week and thinking

I did some good stuff there that was good I was talking to somebody at the beginning of their career and she was explained to me it was just last week last week and she explained to me that she often felt tired on a Friday night and she said that that was a shame because she used to enjoy going out on a Friday night and I said that's a good thing being tired on a Friday night is what you should be it means that you spent the week working it wasn't altogether the most welcomed message but hard work is good hard work is a fine thing and it can benefit us make us feel better spiritually emotionally and physically and it builds our character and hope in Jesus and I've just equated work with suffering here just for a moment but it's not always suffering and we glory in our suffering because we know that in suffering produces perseverance character and character hope many years ago

I went for a walk and it was snowing and I had a beard at the time quite a big bushy beard at the time and there was snow in my beard and there was snow on my face and there was snow all over and it was cold and I in my gentle encouraging way was moaning about it and somebody who was with us said but Andy this is character building I really don't want my character built but hard work builds our character in Christ hard work allows us to know a closeness with almighty God as we fulfil his calling in our lives sometimes we will suffer sometimes we will struggle with the hard work sometimes we will need perseverance in the hard work but that will build character and hope in our lives and that is just again a good thing next slide please whatever you do work at it with your whole being as for the Lord and not for men it's the

[20 : 36] Lord Christ you are serving that's a really important part of this equation the equation of our work our calling many of us in this room most of us in this room will be working in a in inverted commas secular job and that's okay for those of us who are retired or whatever that's also okay by the way but I may well have an employer you may well have an employer or had an employer but you're not fundamentally working for them you're working for them it's the Lord Christ you are serving now my advice as a good trade unionist is that you don't tell your employer that you're not working for them and you're working for

God that probably wouldn't be ideal some might describe that as career limiting but my attitude has to be whatever I'm doing whatever I'm working at is God I'm doing it for and God gives me the

opportunities in that role to speak of him to show him to demonstrate him to point the way in your diligent attitude in your kindness in your willingness and I suppose that this is the equation that we've just got to wrestle with in our work our hard work if hard work is good for us is that when we're working in whatever we're working at we are serving God and God will give us ways of showing him to others and sometimes that's really easy what are you doing this weekend well on Sunday I'm going to church are you that's a funny thing to do isn't it well not so funny as not going to church and sometimes it's much more subtle than that that you demonstrate through attitude through behaviour through language through our response to challenge to our response to difficulties or disappointments but that verse again is a very straightforward series of verses from Colossians 3 whatever you do work at it with your whole being give all of you to your work when you're there it's the Lord Christ you're serving not man okay next slide please Elizabeth

Elliot wife of Mr Elliot Jim Elliot missionaries Jim was killed in missionary work work is a blessing says Elizabeth Elliot God has so arranged the world that work is necessary and he gives us hands and strength to do it the enjoyment of leisure would be nothing if we only had leisure it's the joy of work well done that enables us to enjoy rest just as it is the experience of hunger and thirst that make food and drink such pleasures that good isn't that good work is a blessing so at six o'clock tomorrow morning as your alarm goes off jump up and praise God that it's a work day really because work is a blessing but what Elizabeth Elliot is saying here is just a very helpful comment without work we wouldn't have rest without work we'd just be and we wouldn't be fulfilling our calling slide please really well known verses from Romans 12 offer your bodies as a living sacrifice just as each of us has one body with many members and these members do not all have the same function so in

Christ though many form one body and each member belongs to all the others we have different gifts according to grace given to each of us now this is where it really gets into something very important for us as Whitby Christian Fellowship if you're visiting us for you in your home fellowship we each have a really important role to play in this church fellowship and one of the wonderful things about that is none of you are here today by accident that's not God's style you're here because without you this morning is diminished as long as each of us fulfil the calling at the risk of embarrassing

[26 : 29] Stella and Veronica what would a Sunday morning be without them faithfully serving us drink well it would be thirsty it would be thirsty and maybe even hungry there's a service for you there's a service for you but each of us each of us here today have a purposeful role in God and we know this so well we know these verses so well we know the verses about one body many parts whatever foot wanted to be an eye and all that sort of stuff we know it but you stub your toe on the foot of the bed and tell me your whole body doesn't hurt I want us to know the delight and the pleasure of each of us working hard in our calling within

Whitby Christian Fellowship we are in a serious place as a fellowship we have a building we have a reputation we have people who come because they know this is a safe place to be a place where they'll be greeted with a welcome where they'll be greeted with kindness and it's for us to fulfil that calling not so long ago we all many of us stood and said the covenant promised together about our willingness to serve God and this is the stuff that we were talking about when we said that promise we each of us have a gift and the place to serve so next slide please this requires wisdom because some of you I know will be standing

I'm standing you're sitting some of us will be sitting saying I haven't got anything to do I'm too old I'm too young I'm too tired I'm too this I'm too that I can't do this I can't do that identify through prayer and counsel what your calling is ask God cry out to him and say God I want to know what you want me to do dangerous prayer by the way because he'll tell you what is it that God wants you to do for him normally in the context of local church not always but normally and if you can't wrestle that through please ask for someone to pray that through with you please talk it through please ask we haven't got a list by the way at the back saying oh thank goodness for that we've got we can tick all these things off no no we wait for God to give you the job but if you don't know what your calling is please do find out please do ask God and he will tell you and then identify once you've identified it work really hard in that calling work really work really hard in what God has asked you to do and just do that don't look over the hedge at somebody else's job and say wish I got that one I think I might do that instead you do your bit and they'll do their bit I was reading this week the parable of the talents one got five one got two one got one I sometimes know I quite often will read

that and think that's not fair is that alright and then the one that gets five gets five more and then when the naughty one he gets another one and all that's up to God God gives us gifts according to our ability our energy and the wisdom that he knows that some people can do that bit and some people can do that bit the minute we look over somebody's shoulder with jealousy is the minute that we walk away from our calling because we're not focusing on what God's asked us to do my DIY skills are legendary which is why I don't come and help do whatever they're doing because I'd break it don't do

I don't by the way feel jealous about that one little bit don't try and do my job don't try and be me I'm me try and be you to the best of your God given ability with the strength and the grace that comes from the Holy Spirit and your relationship with God don't be jealous be delighted be delighted that God has given each of us a different gift work hard with your whole being don't look over the fence get work and rest in balance God is not calling you to work yourself to a standstill he's calling you to work hard and rest hard he's calling you to be the person the man the woman that God has made you and wants you to be in this particular place in this particular time in your life on earth because when we do

[33 : 12] God looks at us and says well done good and faithful servant introduce the concept of Sabbath John has helpfully talked about this before it's a struggle for some of us it's a struggle for me but it's the right thing to do and if you're struggling with it join in the struggle I'm struggling with it but I'm trying I'm trying I've discovered that the Sabbath is much easier to take when the Six Nations International Rugby is on but that's only for a few weeks each year I need to get better if we do that what we can do is we can delight in this injunction that we are to work hard this injunction that we are to value hard work this injunction that we are to do what we do with everything we've got for the glory of

God but it also allows us to be the people who can be happy in the knowledge that God is pleased with our efforts and pleased with our rest and that's a good thing learn to value hard work Amen Amen through