

CHAPTER 3

THE SLUGGARD

Do you desire to do better in school? Do you wish you could earn a higher grade in some of your courses (or in all of your courses)? Do you wish you could say something more intelligent when called upon in class? Do you desire to get more done and accomplish more things during the day? Do you want to be successful in life or do you want to be a failure? Do you want to make better use of your time? Are you a person who usually waits until the last minute to write a paper or study for a test?

Do you ever have a problem with laziness? Do you ever find yourself unwilling to act or work because you just don't feel like it? God has a special message for THE SLUGGARD (Proverbs 6:6). Since we all have this problem to some degree, we all need to pay attention to this message. A *sluggard* is a lazy person--one who likes to take it easy and would rather do anything but work. The opposite of a sluggard would be a diligent, industrious, hard-working person. Another word that describes a SLUGGARD is the word "slothful." Have you ever seen the animal known as the SLOTH? It appears that this animal loves to take it easy. It is a slow moving animal that hangs from branches (with his back downward). The word "slothful" is used to describe a slow moving person who loves to take it easy.

There is another animal that God wants the SLUGGARD to go to and learn a lesson from. What is this animal (Proverbs 6:6)? _____ The next time you see this tiny creature, study it for awhile. Have you ever seen this creature sleeping? _____ Have you ever seen this creature taking it easy? _____ Have you ever seen this animal sitting idly on a piece of grass just relaxing? _____ Ants always seem busy. They always seem to be working. And even though they are very tiny (Proverbs 30:25), they accomplish much.

What do ants spend much of their time doing (Proverbs 6:8)?

There is one group of ants that is called "Harvester Ants." They actually gather up crops! When the seeds of many plants grow ripe and plump, these ants gather them up and bring them into the nest. The ants eat some of the seeds right away. But they also store seeds in the nest. This way they always have food when they can't find fresh seeds. They work hard, but it pays off.

What does the SLUGGARD love to do (Prov. 6:9-10)? _____ Does he intend to sleep a long time or just a little bit longer (Prov. 6:10; 24:33)?

_____ Have you ever seen those alarm clocks which have a "snooze button"? The alarm rings and then you can press the snooze button and the alarm sound will stop, but ten minutes later the alarm will sound again. It allows you to sleep just a little bit longer! The problem is that many people hit the snooze button again and again and the little "ten minute" snooze period adds up to much lost time!

Little minutes add up. Suppose you set aside only ten minutes each day to read the Bible. In just one week, these 10 minute periods would add up to how much time? _____ Think of your study hall period in school. Suppose you were given an hour to be in study hall. Many students waste this study time by talking or doing other things, but suppose you took 30 minutes

of each study hall period and used it in diligent study. In just five days (one school week) how much time of study would this add up to? _____

Is sleep wrong? _____ Do we need sleep? _____ The problem comes when a person sleeps when he really should be doing something else. In Proverbs 10:5 what should the sleeper have been doing? _____ There's a time to sleep and there's a time to work. The SLUGGARD sleeps during work time! Does a hard-working person enjoy sleep (Eccl. 5:12)? _____

Did the Lord Jesus Christ love sleep in the wrong way or was He diligent to make the most of every day (Mark 1:35)?

_____ George Whitefield, the great preacher of the 18th century, always got up at 4:00 a.m. (he tried to be in bed no later than 10:00 p.m.). The secret of getting up early is getting to bed early. Benjamin Franklin, a good friend of Whitefield, was known to say, "Early to bed, early to rise, will make a man healthy, wealthy and wise." Do you go to bed early, especially on Saturday nights? Are you always sleepy on the Lord's Day? Are you sleepy in class at school? Late to bed, late to rise-- this is the general rule of the sluggard.

Consider Proverbs 10:26. Do you enjoy getting smoke in your eyes? _____ Are you pleased at what vinegar does to your teeth? _____ Do these things annoy you? _____ Do these things disturb you? _____ People react the same way when they send a sluggard on an errand or give a lazy person an assignment. Why do you suppose they are annoyed and disturbed and displeased?

_____ Do you annoy people by your laziness?

The slothful man is described in Proverbs 12:27. Did this man have enough energy to hunt? _____ Did he have enough energy to cook and prepare the animal that he caught? _____ This is like people who catch fish but are too lazy to clean the fish and prepare them for eating! This verse tells us that lazy people start things, but they do not *FOLLOW THROUGH* and finish what they start. How many projects and activities do you start and not finish? Often we get enough energy to start something but we do not *FOLLOW THROUGH* and *FINISH*. Does God *FOLLOW THROUGH* and *FINISH* what He starts (Phil. 1:6)? _____

Consider Proverbs 14:23. What brings profit--talking about doing something or actually doing it? _____ Don't just talk about it, *DO IT!* It is hard work that brings rewards and profit. Another problem that most of us have is *PROCRASTINATION* (putting off until later something that should be done *NOW*, postponing a present duty). Why do we wait until the night before to start working on a paper for school? Why do we wait until the last minute to study for a test, when we could have started looking over the material weeks before?

All of us are basically lazy, and we are tempted to leave the difficult things for later and tackle the easy things first. For example, suppose you had three assignments: some reading for English (easy), several math problems (not so easy), a chemistry assignment (very difficult). As you sit down at your desk, which one would you probably do first? _____ Which one **should** you do first? _____ It is better to tackle the more difficult assignments first and leave the easier things for later. Sometimes we eat this way. If there is something on our plate that we do not enjoy, we might eat that first so we can enjoy the rest of the meal!

If diligence and hard work are virtues and pleasing to God, then why do we often tell others: "Take it easy!" "Don't work too hard!?" Do we really want our friends to be slothful? Can you think of something that would be better to say?

Laziness pays terrible wages. According to Proverbs 20:4, why does the sluggard not harvest anything? _____ If a man does not sow, should he expect to reap? _____ (see also 2 Corinthians 9:6). It is usually true in life that whatever we put into something, that's how much we will get out of it! If you put little effort and work into something, you'll get little in return! If you work hard, you will reap the benefits!

Does the lazy person desire many things (Proverbs 13:4)? _____ Does he get the things that he desires (Prov. 13:4)? _____ What kind of person does God want you to be (Prov. 13:4)?

Desire alone is not enough. You might desire good grades in school. You might desire to go to a good college. You might desire to earn a certain amount of money. Is desire all that you need? _____ Desires are fine, but we need to put some muscle and sweat and toil and effort into living to make those desires come true. What if a man spends all Saturday afternoon wishing that his grass could be cut? He desires, but due to his slothfulness, not one blade is being cut!

God works in the heart of the believer (see Philippians 2:13), not only to DESIRE ("to will") but also to _____ of His good pleasure! Desire is important, but desire is not enough. DESIRE and DEEDS are both needed.

Consider the second son described in Matthew 21:28-30. Did he desire (verse 30)? _____ Did he have good intentions? _____ Are good intentions all we need? _____

Can you think of ways you can be more diligent in the home?

Can you think of ways you can be more diligent in school?

Can you think of ways you can be more diligent in church?

Suppose you are asked to do something which requires a certain amount of effort, work and diligence. Put a check (✓) before the things that should make you decide whether you should do it, and put an "X" before the things that should not govern your decision:

- _____ Do I enjoy doing it?
- _____ Do I feel like doing it?
- _____ Am I responsible to do it?
- _____ Are there other things I would rather do?
- _____ Is it my duty to do it?
- _____ Would it benefit myself and others if I do this?
- _____ Will I be sorry if I don't do it?

_____ Would it be pleasing to God?

May the Lord help us to work hard and to accomplish much for God's glory and for the good of others. True happiness comes to the person who is diligently serving God and others. In what ways do you serve God? In what ways do you serve others?

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ"

(Colossians 3:23-24).