

The Sluggard

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[0:00] Proverbs chapter 6, and we'll read verses 6 through 11 this morning. And poverty will come on you like a bandit, and scarcity like an armed man.

Now over to Proverbs chapter 24, and we'll pick up our reading in verse 30. 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. I applied my heart to what I 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.

What happens when you don't cut your grass? If there's regular rain. I haven't cut my grass very much at all this summer, and nothing's really happened.

But let's say it's been a summer with more rain than we've had this summer. What happens if you don't cut your grass? Well, your yard gets overgrown. It's growing everywhere. You might even get a warning from the town if you let it go long enough, that you need to cut your grass, and if you don't, you're going to get a fine.

[1:40] It gets overgrown if you don't take care of it. What happens if you don't regularly change the oil in your car, and otherwise maintain it? Well, you're going to reduce the lifespan of your car.

It's going to break down sooner than it would have with regular care, and so it is with many things in life. If you don't take care of them, they won't last or be useful to you any longer.

Just like the vineyard that Solomon talks about in Proverbs 24. Now, a vineyard might not seem like a very big deal to us. Who cares? If it's anything like my little garden at home, it can't be any big deal.

But in Israel, vineyards were a very big deal. They were important. They were part of the very definition of what it meant to be prosperous. They were often the inheritance that people received, and that which they passed on to their children.

It was their property. It was their livelihood. Their well-being. A sign of God's blessing. There were specific directions given regarding their vineyards.

[2:43] God's people are even compared to a vineyard in Isaiah 5. And so if you were in Israel during the time of Solomon, and you came across a vineyard that looked like the one that's described for us here, it would be a surprising, shocking, troubling sight.

And Solomon puts his finger on what the problem is with this particular vineyard. The owner is a foolish, lazy man.

When Proverbs talks about laziness with respect to keeping up one's vineyard, there's some immediate practical help. Don't sleep so much. Don't slumber so much. Get out and take care of the vineyard. Work hard, and you will do well.

So, if you don't take care of the resources God has given you, you live to regret it as those things lose their value and their usefulness. And so, take care of them. But I think Solomon wants us to learn something more than just this.

If we remember that the key to Proverbs is that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, we'll see a lesson not just about the dangers of laziness and being a sluggard.

[3:48] We will see that. But we'll see a lesson about what is honoring to God. Because the damaging results of laziness extend far beyond an overgrown vineyard or yard or a broken down car.

They extend beyond our possessions into every area of our life. And if we live a life of sloth and laziness, it will dishonor God. And if we remember that Jesus is the wisdom of God and the fulfillment of the truth that we find in the Proverbs, we'll see that to be lazy is an affront to our

diligent Savior who was not lazy, who worked hard for us, and whom is our only hope of forgiveness.

I've been lazy. I've been a sluggard and I need to be forgiven. And my only hope for that is Jesus who wasn't lazy, who wasn't a sluggard. I need strength to live diligently.

I can't do it in my own strength. I can only do it through the Spirit that Jesus grants His children, His people. And so we want to consider this morning this vineyard in Proverbs 24.

And then we want to think about some of our vineyards. And then we want to think about Jesus' vineyard. The one that He cares for. So first of all, the vineyard here before us.

[5:08] What's the problem with it? Well, when you walk by, you see that it's overgrown. The stone wall is torn down. It's not how a vineyard should be. It should be well cared for. The first sign of a weed should be removed.

That wall that keeps out all the critters of various sorts that might otherwise eat the vines and eat the fruit on the vines. That wall keeps those things out. That should be watched carefully and repaired whenever a breach is found in the wall.

We have a garden at our house of sorts. And the most important thing for our garden, if we want something to grow, is the chicken wire fence that goes around it. For several years, we didn't have a chicken wire fence.

And we didn't have very much in our garden because it was always eaten before we were able to pick it. We have an infestation of chipmunks in our field behind our yard and rabbits and all sorts of things get in there and eat.

And so if I want something to grow in my garden, I've got to have that fence. Otherwise, it'll be destroyed. This year, we didn't have too much in the garden.

[6:10] And so it was a very low priority, unlike a vineyard would have been in Israel. We went out east for about a week or so and we got home and we found the plants hadn't been eaten.

The fence was still in place. That was good. But the thing was overgrown with weeds. And I mean overgrown. There was ground cover. It looked like my yard. Better than my yard, actually, because it was brown. And there were green weeds all over my garden.

Now, like I say, that's not that terribly important to me. But it could have been the vineyard that Solomon was talking about. That's how many weeds were in our garden. And you know that if you garden, it takes hard work to maintain your garden.

Regular weeding, watering. If you let it go for too long, you get what I had in my garden or what Solomon sees here. Now, we're not going to miss much out of our garden. Aaron did tackle the weed problem.

It was a monumental task. But we got rid of most of the weeds. But in Israel, this vineyard, he's lost his source of income, his prosperity.

[7:08] Vineyard so important that Naboth wouldn't give it up to the wicked king Ahab. Far bigger deal than my little garden at home. And so Solomon's strolling past.

And he's surprised at what he sees. Verse 31 begins with the word, Behold. It's not translated, but it's, Behold, look, pay attention. Hey, whoa, what happened here?

Behold, hey, what went wrong in this garden? Thorns had come up everywhere. The ground was covered with weeds. Obvious signs of neglect. But as you read through the Old Testament, you find that there are also signs of God's judgment.

When a place is conquered and destroyed and abandoned, weeds and nettles grow up in it. And immediately we begin to see that we learn about the results of laziness, but also about the danger of dishonoring God.

Sluggardly behavior incurs God's judgment. And the sluggard is also a fool. He lacks sense.

Proverbs 14.1 The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands, the foolish tears it down.

[8:13] Now this sluggard, he doesn't have enough energy to go out and tear down his vineyard, but by neglect, by ignoring it, that's what he's done. He's torn it down with his own hands.

He hasn't cared for it. And in so doing, he's proved that, as we often find in Proverbs, he is a fool. So as laziness displeases God, so of course does foolishness.

Now before we move on to see something of the source of the problem, we'll talk more about his laziness and his foolishness. I want us to make just an observation. We wouldn't have this section in our Bibles if Solomon hadn't had his eyes open when he was out walking one day.

If he hadn't looked and observed and drawn a lesson from it. You see that in verse 32? I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw.

It's a two-step process he describes there. He looks and he draws a lesson. He sees and he doesn't just receive instruction. He takes instruction. He wants to learn.

[9:19] And so wherever he goes, his eyes are open. And if he sees something, he draws a lesson from it. I wonder how many of us do that. We're in such a hurry that we don't often even have time to look out the window as we drive or ride in the car.

We would have blown right by the vineyard of the sluggard and not even noticed. We've got our minds on work and other things. We don't look around and pay attention. Our kids have their nose in a book or more likely in a...

Is it PSP? The little personal gaming system? The PSP, the personal Sony, whatever. The little... When I was a kid, it was Game Boy. That's how old I am, kids. That's like the equivalent of the old Nintendo.

But anyway, they're so trained on that that they don't even know what streets to take to get to church or to get to wherever they're going. And they don't look out the windows.

Or they've got their eyes closed and their iPod in. And so they don't see. And have you ever thought about the name iPod? iPod? I'm going to call them Meepod so that people get the idea that it's all about me.

[10:19] It's not wrong to have an iPod. But anyway, sometimes these things distract you from something that you could be learning. And even if we had managed to see the sluggard's vineyard when we rolled by, we likely wouldn't have noticed or drawn any valuable lessons from it.

But not the wise man. He looks and he, it says, applies his heart to it. He works to draw a lesson out of it. Now that requires us to think.

It requires us to exercise our minds. It takes work. But it'll make a ride in the car extremely profitable. It'll make a walk in the woods, a time of growth for you and your children.

When the wise man saw an anthill, he took a lesson in diligence. When he saw a strutting rooster, he thought of a proud king. He was always seeing and drawing lessons. What do you see? Do you see it all?

And if you do see, do you ever learn from the things that you see? Take a walk. Take a walk. Next car ride. For a period of time. Have the kids put away the games and the me pods and look out the window for a while.

[11:27] I'm glad that Solomon did that for his son. And that he's done it for us and that it's recorded for us here. Otherwise, we wouldn't have this very clear, vivid lesson. And so let's do it.

That we might be the richer for having observed the world around us. And let's do it for our children. So the problem is, anyway, there's this vineyard and it's overgrown.

He's noticed it. But what's the source of this problem here? Well, it's twofold. The wise man determines that the vineyard is owned by a sluggardly man and a man lacking judgment.

Not surprisingly, those things are found together in the same guy. He's lazy and he doesn't think. A sluggard doesn't have a very good reputation in Proverbs.

He makes excuses so he doesn't even have to go outside. He turns back and forth on his bed. Sometimes he's so tired that he can't even get the food from his plate to his mouth.

[12:25] Just a little sleep, a little slumber, he says. And maybe he has good intentions, we learn when we read this. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little footing on his wrist, and then I'll go out and take care of my vineyard.

He has an intention of working, but he just never gets to it because every time there's something else, some other excuse, another line in the street. A little bit more rest that's needed.

I think the modern day equivalent is the snooze button on our alarm clocks. The electronic version of a little more sleep. A little more sleep.

A little more sleep. And I can't say anything. I use my snooze button and I'm learning not to now that my son is in school. He's got to be at school at a certain time.

That's very helpful for me. I'm not saying it's never okay to use the snooze bar, but if you find your life a wreck, like this vineyard was a wreck because you're always oversleeping and you're starting to look a little too much like the sluggard.

[13:25] His only problem wasn't laziness. He also was short on judgment. He lacked sense. He didn't think clearly. Literally, he's lacking heart. The vineyard of a man who lacked heart.

And this word is used to describe a lack of judgment, a lack of sense, but it's such a contrast with verse 32. The wise man applies his heart. He works and he draws a lesson from it. The foolish man is too lazy to even think. He doesn't apply his heart. He doesn't apply his mind. He lacks sense. You know anyone like that that's too lazy to even think? To use their brains? You've been guilty of it yourself? If you've ever done serious thinking, you know that it takes work. It can be exhausting, physically exhausting, to think really hard, to apply your mind to something. And so many people avoid anything that makes them do that, that makes them think. They won't read something that involves any more than a fast-moving plot. They won't read books on theology or the implications of worldviews for all of life or books on finance or politics because they don't want to work their minds.

[14 : 32] We try to give you here in the preaching not just fluff. We want you to have to work your mind sometimes. In our Sunday school classes, we don't aim just to spoon-feed you.

We want you to work. You've got to apply your mind. But this man, he lacks heart. He doesn't want to do that work. And so when the sluggard says a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands, he's stressed, he's not thinking about the consequences down the road. He's not applying this. He's not going, let's see, if I sleep now, I'm not going to get the work in the vineyard done. It's going to get overgrown. It's not going to produce fruit. And I'm not going to have any income anymore. I'm not going to have anything to pass on to my children.

He doesn't think about that because he lacks sense. And so he doesn't think of that principle of sowing and reaping. He's sowing laziness. He'll reap want.

But he doesn't realize that. He hasn't looked around like the wise man at the lives of his impoverished friends, his sluggardly friends who are now impoverished and made the connection. They're lazy and they don't have anything.

[15 : 35] Huh. I wonder if that's going to happen to me. He doesn't apply his mind. He doesn't think of that because he lacks sense. He doesn't understand Proverbs 12, 11.

He who works his land will have abundant food. But he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.

That's our phrase. Lacks heart. He doesn't see the connection.

And interestingly, I think this phrase is used in Proverbs. This lacking judgment, lacking sense, lacking heart is used to describe several times someone who pursues lust. A harlot, adultery, a woman chaser.

Proverbs 6, 32. A man who commits adultery lacks judgment. Whoever does so destroys himself. Maybe his vineyard's overgrown because he has time to chase women, but not time to work the land.

Often we find that lazy people are lazy about the things that they don't want to do, but they have plenty of energy for the things that they do want to do. You ever found that your kids have plenty of energy to play video games, but when it comes to homework or being in the Word, then all of a sudden they're tired and it's just too much work.

[16 : 46] I think we're selective sluggards. We're lazy about the things that we don't want to do, but not so much about the things that we enjoy. Well, what's the result of this man's lack of sense?

His laziness? Well, it's poverty. It's one. It's verse 34. It's overgrown. The vineyard isn't. So poverty comes like abandoned scarcity, like an armed man.

The man's not going to have any produce from his vineyard. Has no value for generating revenue anymore. That's obvious to us. We see it coming. We see it right when he starts to fold his hands to rest and he's not out working the vineyard.

We say, the vineyard's going to get overgrown. You're going to be a poor man soon, but he doesn't see it. And that's why it comes on him like a bandit. Like an armed man. Who expects a bandit? Well, nobody.

It's a surprise when somebody robs you at gunpoint or breaks into your home. Nobody's looking for that. Nobody's anticipating. That's a surprise. This sluggard, he's not expecting poverty.

[17 : 46] He hasn't applied. He doesn't know it's coming. And so when it comes, he's amazed. He didn't understand Proverbs 28 and 29.

And it's very similar to one we just read, but a little different. He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

Compare sometime. Proverbs 12, 11 and 28, 19. They begin the same. You work your land, you have abundant food. He who chases fantasies and one ends lacks judgment.

The other one ends will have his fill of poverty. They go hand in hand. You lack judgment, you're going to have your fill of poverty if you're out chasing fantasies. Charles Bridges says, not that, and it's about the surprise.

You can't believe that he's poor now. Not that he means to come to beggary, to the state of poverty. He only wants yet a little sleep, a little slumber more, and then he will bestir himself.

[18:46] He'll get himself up and work. But this little insensibly increases. Every hour's indulgence strengthens the habit and change the victim in hopeless bondage.

I think Bridges is wrong at the end. It's not hopeless bondage. And we'll get there in a few moments when we talk about Jesus and his vineyard.

There is hope for someone who has been lazy and who has been so lazy that they suddenly find themselves impoverished. But beware of that. Don't be surprised by it like the fool.

It's that principle of sowing and reaping. Have you ever been surprised by something that turned out to be the obvious direct result of something you did? But you're still surprised at it because you hadn't thought about it.

I think, if you want an example, I think people are this way sometimes with credit cards. They go, it's on sale. It's a good price. So I don't have the money now so I'll just use the credit card to get it.

[19:44] But they haven't applied their mind. They haven't thought about it and looked at the credit card statement that when they don't pay it off every month there's a 20% interest charge. And soon in a couple months of that interest accruing they're going to pay way more for that sale item than they would have.

The regular price even. Because they haven't applied their mind. They haven't thought. And then they get the bill and they're, all of a sudden, I can't afford the minimum payments anymore. And they're shocked by that. They're amazed by that.

What if they just thought about the consequences of their actions? They would understand that that's where it was headed. So they stop paying because they can't and they begin to forget about it. And then the collection agency calls and they're surprised again.

Let's see what's going to happen if you don't pay the bill. Well, they're going to come collecting. It's the obvious result of his actions. But this man didn't see it. I hope that you see there's consequences for the things that you do.

We'd better apply our minds and know just exactly how we're going to pay off that credit card in full every month so that we're never surprised by it. Or to not use it at all if we don't have that sort of self-control.

[20:51] But the combination of lacking judgment and laziness is deadly. So may God help us to avoid it. That's the vineyard here. Let's take a minute now to consider some of our vineyards.

To think about some of the areas where these things might tend to be true of us. Some of them perhaps more obvious than others. Where this dual danger of lacking judgment and sluggardly behavior will come back to haunt us in our lives.

Some of those things that are perhaps obvious to us are our physical possessions and the money that God has given us. Of course, if we're not good stewards of these material things with which God has blessed us, they'll end up like the vineyard.

If you're too... You want a summary for sloth, for sluggardliness, and lacking judgment, it's lazy and crazy. Okay? You're sluggard and so you're lazy and you lack judgment so you're crazy.

The penalty for laziness and craziness is that you'll lose the benefit of those things God has given you. Things like we said at the beginning, your yard, your car. When I was a kid, just a child, it would be an understatement to say that we didn't have very much money in our house.

[22:11] And so it was very important to take care of the things that we had so that we wouldn't have to unnecessarily replace them before they had legitimately worn out.

I remember my dad was... And he probably still is. They have... They're fine now. But anyway, he's probably still this way. He was meticulous about his paintbrushes. I don't know that sounds weird, but he was like, good paintbrush will last forever if you take care of it right.

And they're not cheap if you get a good one. So he took care of his paintbrush. He would wash that thing until you hadn't even known that he had used it in the first place. Now me, I'm a kid.

And I don't really understand how much money we don't have, how tight it is. And I don't see the big deal about having to buy a new one if you ruin the old one.

I was hard on clothes as a kid. We lived in South Carolina and we had red clay. We didn't have brown dirt. And I still, if I go out and play, I get dirty. That's just how I, I can't not do that.
[23 : 14] But my poor mother, I would come home, covered, head to toe in red clay. And she would work so hard to keep my clothes clean.

And I had no appreciation for that then. That hard work that it took because we couldn't just run out and buy another pair of clothes. So she'd pass the holes and she would get those clothes clean. But I'm a kid. And when they said we can't afford it, I would just say, well, can't we just write a check? And I see the problem with that now. But I didn't then. I was lazy and I was crazy. I just didn't, I didn't understand that we didn't have the money to do that.

And so here are my hard working, diligent parents. I'm glad they weren't like the sluggard. And that they taught me to not be like the sluggard. But boy, if you don't take care of those things, you're going to have to replace them sooner if you don't take care of the money God does give you. It'll be gone before you think of it if you're not diligent to do that. Sadly, however, many people have grown up to have about the same amount of wisdom and diligence that I had when I was a kid. And so money is spent foolishly.

[24 : 20] Things aren't cared for. Money is wasted replacing those things. Things are bought that aren't needed. If we're lazy here, we'll suffer with respect to our material things that God has given us.

Think of it in terms of your work, whether it's your job, your livelihood, your housework that you have, your schoolwork, young people. If there's an employee who's constantly late to work and when he is there, he's lazy, he's taking extended breaks, he's unproductive.

When he is working, he's soon going to find himself without a job, isn't he? And surprise! Wow! I never saw this coming. I don't have a job anymore because I was lazy on the job.

One more game of solitaire, one more personal day, a little more fantasy football research on company time and all of a sudden there's no income. And your poverty has snuck up on you. Maybe it's the housework piling up all around. And ladies, I understand that there are children to deal with and food to prepare and errands to run and so on. But don't let legitimate things become excuses like there's a line in the street or wherever it is in your house.

[25 : 35] And for you maybe it could be just a little longer chatting or maybe gossiping on the phone. One more soap opera.

I hope not. But maybe. Just one more. Just a little more time on the computer. And things begin to pile up.

And one day your insensitive husband, he's really a buffoon and he doesn't really know how to say things very well. He says, man, there's a lot of messes around the house.

And that's careful husbands. Don't say something like that. There's much more gentle, careful ways. But maybe and you immediately say, I've got the kids and I've got this and this and this and this.

But make sure that you are diligent. That you're working hard and that these things aren't the fruit of laziness and not thinking before you act. Or what about your schoolwork?

[26 : 34] Young people, just one more level, mom. One more level on this game and then I'll be done. A little more time with the video game.

A few more minutes online chatting with my friends. A little more time to download songs onto my iPod. A little more time going out with my friends. A little more texting and goofing off during class instead of paying attention.

And the shocking report card with C's and D's and gasp. Even an F comes home and it surprises you like a bandit.

Oh, there's some coming. And your college rejection letter comes like an armed man because you were lazy and didn't apply yourself. I think surely Solomon would have us learn these lessons about diligence and wisdom.

But I think there's more here. What about other perhaps less obvious areas of your life? Where else, if you're not diligent, will it have detrimental effects?

[27 : 41] What other vineyards do we need to take a walk through? It might be different for each one of us. But what about your walk with God? Again, I think you're probably not aiming for laziness.

Nobody sets out at the beginning of their Christian life and say, I want to have a really lousy walk with God. I don't want to be very close to Him. I've got good intentions. I want to walk close with God.

I want to be in the Word. I want to pray. I want to keep up my vineyard. But just a little bit at a time, you begin to stray.

And someday, a friend comes along and they say, you don't even look like a Christian anymore. Your Christian life is unrecognizable as Christian.

Just like this vineyard was unrecognizable as being a vineyard. And it's just, man, the snooze button one more time and one more time until you've done it so many times is that by the time you actually get out of bed, there's not time in the Word and prayer that morning.

[28:42] And that's the first thing to go, isn't it? Because you have to take a shower and you have to have a good appearance and you have to be on time to work. All of those things you have to do. And so we know that the first thing that goes if you hit the too many times is your time in the Word and prayer.

A little sleep and all of a sudden you're surprised that your heart is so cold. And when you come on Sundays it's so hard to worship, but you haven't prayed or been in the Word in a week. Or maybe you're just too tired to make it to church today.

And wow, to come back at night, that would be just a monumental expenditure of time and energy. I don't happen to come on Wednesday. Whew! You obviously don't know my life and how busy I am and how hard I work.

And so, that's just for people that they must just have more time on their hands and they're probably just super spiritual. And pretty soon you begin to let these things slide today and the next week and the week after.

And pretty soon you find reasons to skip on Sunday morning too. And all the while you don't have the discernment to see that you're destroying your walk with the Lord. And that it's precisely people who are so busy and under pressure and stress that need to be with God's people as many times as they can during the week and to worship with them and to pray with them.

[30:06] And maybe you do begin to notice, why is my heart so dry? Why don't I even want to be at church anymore? Why do my kids hate church so much and think it's a waste of time?

What are they learning from their parents and their priorities? And you're surprised at the spiritual poverty in your own life and that of your children.

You see it's things that may seem innocent enough at the beginning but they lead down that slippery slope to this unrecognizable overgrown vineyard or your walk with the Lord that is almost non-existent.

If you're lazy in your walk with God, your relationship with Him will suffer and so will that of your children. So ask God, God help me return the priority of the fear of the Lord to the number one place in my life where it should be.

It'll take work, it'll take discipline but isn't that the point? That Solomon's making or one of the points he's making. What about raising your children? We've just mentioned them, let's think on them for another moment.

[31:13] I've talked about my dad in his speech about the paintbrush, let me tell you something else about him. I remember a sermon that he preached on this very passage and he focused in on one area and it was passing the truth on to the next generation.

And he said something like this. He said, I went past the family of the sluggard, past the church of those lacking judgment. Rebellion had come up everywhere.

The church was full of false teaching. I applied my heart to what I observed and I learned a lesson from what I saw, a little neglect, a little failure to instruct, a little slackness and consistent discipline. And losing your children to the world will come on you like a bandit. And the death of the church like an armed man. We have a lot of parents here today. How many of you still have children living at home?

Let me see your hands. That is the vast majority of the people here are parenting. I've got kids at home. I'm a parent. And believe it or not, I wanted to have an encouraging word for parents today.

[32:20] Because in the midst of parenting, I know the challenges that it can pose. And the sermon is obviously much more than just a word for parents. And perhaps it's not been very encouraging.

But by God's grace, I hope we are encouraged by seeing the danger of where slackness in our parenting will lead. I hope we're encouraged then to do the hard work of parenting with all of the frustrations and difficulties it brings.

I hope you don't buy into the mentality that says if I just ignore it, it will eventually go away. I'll just, just one more time, I'll let that bad attitude, that blatant disobedience, that disrespect go.

I'll just pretend like I didn't hear what my child said in the next room. Just, just this one more time. I don't have the energy to deal with it today.

I'll let the disrespect slide. It's easier to sit here on the couch and to yell at my child across the room that it is to go and lovingly discipline them and show them why what they did or said is wrong and how it shows their selfishness and their love of self and how if they truly loved God and their brother they wouldn't have done that particular thing or said those cruel, harsh, unkind words.

[33:39] How if they love God they'll behave in a way that's much different. It's easier to pretend I didn't notice than to do all of those things and then to take the time to pray with them, to be reconciled to them, and to show them that you love them.

It's so much easier to pretend when you have failed and you've flown off the handle and you've let your temper show to your children to pretend like it's just a legitimate show of your authority in the home as a parent than it is to apologize to them when you've wronged them and sinned against them.

But let them see that example of humility from you. It's easier to rush them off to bed than to take a few moments to read God's Word and to sing and to pray with them.

But as we give in to that sort of thinking that says all of those things and so much more, it's just too hard. I don't have that kind of time or energy or wisdom. I don't know how to do those kinds of things. I just need a little more time to myself.

We're just like the sluggard and perhaps we'll be a surprise one day when we wake up to find that we have children that are just totally off the grid spiritually and morally. God's speaking and one day further down the road we'll look back and be surprised that Grace Fellowship Church is no longer here.

[34:58] And we would be able to trace it back to our being lazy, crazy, and the way that we raise our children. God keep us from such a thing. I really do want to encourage you today. I don't think that's the case for most people here.

But let it serve as a warning. That's what could happen if you do let your parenting go the direction we just described. It's letting it all go. And ignoring it.

And so be encouraged today to love your children, to be faithful to their souls, to be diligent in them. I don't have all the answers for parenting. That's obvious. But I do know that I need God's help and I know that I'm going to have to work at it.

Because if I don't, my house is going to look like this vineyard. We could draw lessons from so many of our vineyards. What about your marriages?

You husbands and wives, do you work at your marriage? Or do you just assume that since you're both Christians and you both go to church, your marriage will be fine? Well, if you're constantly saying things like a little more time with my newspaper or my favorite team and just a little more time with the guys after work or just a little more time out with the girls, just a little more time away from my spouse, just a little more neglect of each other, just a little more silence because we don't really have anything to talk about anyway.

[36:09] And pretty soon you're going to wake up to somebody that you don't even know a stranger. And you're going to be surprised at that. What happened? And all along you haven't been working. You haven't been working at that marriage.

Working on communicating clearly with one another. That's good clear communication, wasn't it? But you haven't been working on it. And you haven't struggled in your marriage and you haven't tried to keep that sparkle that chases over.

I've got her. She doesn't need the flowers and the romance and whatever anymore because we're married. And you wake up one day and you're as far apart as two people can be except that you still live in the same house.

And all of a sudden you're surprised. What's happened? You think you've fallen out of love. What's happened to my marriage? Well, maybe we weren't diligent to keep it up in the first place.

So may God guard our marriages. Again, we could just keep going, what about our evangelism, our witnessing, the thing we've been considering on Sunday nights for some weeks now. If we don't

work at that, then man, if I don't force myself to talk to somebody about the gospel, then I just don't do it.

[37 : 23] It doesn't come naturally to me. It takes work. And if I say just one more time, I'll let that person go without saying anything. Just a little more and then it gets easier and easier to not do it. Or your fight against sin and temptation, I'll just give in once more and next time I'll fight against it.

Just a little more indulgence of my sin. A little more indulgence of that pet sin that I'm not quite ready to give up. And man, all of a sudden your heart's overgrown with that sin.

You can't even find the truth anymore about that sin. You read about it in God's Word and you don't even think about yourself. You think about other people because it's so overgrown that you can't see it. Or your physical condition.

God's given you a wonderful body. And boy, a little more sleep. You had to snooze when I'm going to exercise. I'll do it tomorrow. I'll do it tomorrow. And pretty soon the temple of the Holy Spirit is overgrown and it's a mess.

And on and on we could go. What's the vineyard in your life that's overgrown? You look at your life and you go, how did that happen? How did I get to that point? Maybe it's one of the things we talked about.

[38 : 23] Maybe it's something totally different for you in your life. Come back to Proverbs and see that one of the sources of those things is laziness and a lack of judgment.

Not applying your mind and thinking about the consequences of your actions. The point of all these things isn't so you can look at yourself and so other people can look at you and say, wow, what a diligent person that is.

If ever there was somebody that's not a slugger, that's him. Look at what a hardworking person I am. How fantastic my devotional life is. See, my well-raised children and my solid marriage.

Look how I have my finances all in order and look at my overcoming of this sin or that sin. What a great witness. And that is not the point. And if it is your goal, you want to work hard so other people know how great you are, then you've missed the point.

Your hard work isn't pleasing to God. It's idolatry. You're sacrificing the fear of the Lord on the altar of self and the approval of men. You've missed it. The goal is honoring God.

[39 : 29] Remember, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It's bringing glory to him, not to yourself. And so the only way that your efforts will turn out for good in any of these areas is through God's blessing.

And so he gets the glory if he enables you to be diligent and to work hard in these things. And so there's the vineyard here in the passage.

There's our vineyards. And I want just for a few moments now to point us towards Jesus's vineyard. Now, Jesus wasn't a sluggard, was he? When he came to this earth, he worked hard.

He was up early in the morning to pray. He went from town to town, pressing on, pressing on, preaching the gospel, healing people that were sick. It took its toll on his physical body, but he didn't slow down.

He didn't quit. But Jesus isn't just an example for us of what it means to be diligent. He is that. And we can look to him as the one who was never even close to being a sluggard and model our lives after that.

[40 : 39] But he's so much more. It's because of Jesus' faithful life and obedience and his death on the cross that our laziness can be forgiven.

You see, God sent his son into the world, into his vineyard. Do you remember the parable that Jesus told? The owner planted a vineyard and he rented it out to tenants and then he sent someone to collect on the produce of that vineyard.

And they beat him up and they sent him away empty handed a couple of times. And then the owner finally sends his son to go into that vineyard and to collect on the produce. And so Jesus comes into this world knowing, knowing full well that he would be rejected and thrown out of that vineyard and killed.

He came anyway. And he persevered. He could have said, just a little more ease here in heaven. Just a little more worship of the angels. Just a little more time here in glory. And never come to earth at all.

[41 : 45] Never lived a perfect life at all. Died. Never died a death in our place at all. But he did come. And once he was here, he didn't quit. He understood the implications of his actions.

He had applied his mind. He knew what would happen. And so he carried out his task. And you know what? A sluggard in the garden of Gethsemane would have turned tail and run. And a sluggard on the cross would have called for a legion of angels to come and deliver him. But not our Jesus. Not our Savior. He died so that our laziness, our pride, and our diligence, our foolishness might be forgiven.

He gives us strength that we might diligently expend ourselves in his service. And so then how could we who have received so much? Jesus is so faithful to earn these blessings for us. We've received so much. How could we be so lazy with it? With these blessings that God has given us? How could we be such poor stewards with the blessings God has given to us?

[42:45] I think there's an even greater tragedy than a fool losing his vineyard because of his sluggardly ways. I think the greater tragedy is when there's a vineyard and it's well cared for. And time and effort has been invested into it.

And then that vineyard doesn't produce fruit. Read about it in Isaiah 5. It's another parable, another story about a vineyard and God plants his vineyard.

And this one is not overgrown. It's carefully tended. It's carefully worked, but there's no fruit because God's people were unfaithful. What about us? God has invested effort and energy into us. He's blessed us. Are we bearing fruit? Is there the fruit of wisdom? Being willing to apply our minds, is there the fruit of diligence and hard work in our lives?

I don't misunderstand that fruit. Our hard work cannot save us, but if God has saved us, then there will be that fruit. It will show. So may God make us a fruitful people.

[43:45] And remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and so we shouldn't be surprised when we read in Psalm 34, verse 9, Fear the Lord, you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing.

If you fear Him, then you will be diligent. If you're diligent, then you'll lack nothing. You say, well, I'm not rich. I don't have everything that my hard work should be giving to me.

I've been a faithful parent. I still have an unbelieving child. I've preached on that recently. You might not find that all of your diligent efforts pay the dividends you expected.

It helps us to remember that Proverbs are Proverbs. They're general truths, not necessarily promises, guarantees of the physical blessings that are described there. But our efforts won't be in vain.

By God's grace, we will have all that we need and more. Those who fear the Lord will lack nothing. Remember what Pastor John preached a few weeks ago? How are you?

[44:48] I'm fine in the things that count. We have enough. We've been blessed in the things that count, don't we? Our home in heaven is secure, and so we praise Him for it.

Let us fear Him and live for Him every day. And one last note. I find the sluggard's delay. A little more sleep, and then I'll go work in the middle.

I find that delay very similar to the unbeliever's excuses and delays. A little more fun before I come to Jesus.

A little more enjoyment of the world's pleasure. A little more time where I don't have to be always going to church and reading my Bible.

But then your destruction will come suddenly, and you'll be taken away to an eternity in judgment, and you'll be surprised by it. One commentator says, the wise men will learn while there is time.

[45:52] He knows that the sluggard is no freak, but as often as not an ordinary man who has made too many excuses, too many refuses, and too many postponements, it has all been as imperceptible and as pleasant as falling asleep, and I fear that that's the case for some of you here.

You're not an outward, hostile rebel towards the things of God. You still come to church. You still hear the things, but you keep putting them off, and it's very imperceptible, and your heart grows harder and harder, and you get farther and farther from God until, as it were, you've fallen asleep, and falling asleep is pleasant, isn't it?

And you don't feel the danger, you don't realize it. That soon, your judgment will come, and it will be too late.

And here's where I disagree with that quote from Charles Bridges earlier, where he said it ends in hopeless bondage. Humanly speaking, yes, you can never deliver yourself from that, but it's not hopeless bondage.

There is hope in this Jesus who came to set us free from bondage. He can deliver you from your lazy, clueless stupor. He can wake you up and show you, pray, God, come and change my heart today.

[47 : 08] I have just been putting him off and putting him off, and all of a sudden, I see that if I continue down this path, it's going to lead to my destruction. Pray that you would open your eyes. You wake up to him and come to him today before it's too late.

And put your hope and your trust in him and he will receive you. He will save you by his grace. Well, then may God make us a people that fear him, a people that love him, a people that obey him, a people that trust in his Son.

It's our only hope for forgiveness. And then a people that live for him and do it diligently by his grace, by his strength. Amen. Father, we thank you for your love to us in Christ.

We pray that you would help us to love you as we ought. And out of a heart of love and gratitude to you for all that you have done for us, your diligent labor on our behalf, make us to be diligent, faithful servants for your kingdom.

Help us to not be lax and lazy in these areas in our life that we've talked about or others. Lay your finger on our consciences today and show us where our sluggardly behavior is.

[48 : 16] And come and make us to be a people that are hardworking and diligent. And so we pray that you would bless us and guard us and keep us for years to come. We pray that you would bless us, bless our time together this afternoon, make it profitable and a blessing to us.

Give us grace to honor you. We thank you for your word. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.