

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

Filling in the Gaps Lesson 40
Lessons we can learn from a sluggard

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This Bible Lesson teaches us what we can learn from a sluggard. If you're a lazy person, you will not like this lesson. If you are a high achiever, a hard worker, a motivated person, you will love it. It will be music to your ears.

Arguably the most successful college football coach of all time was Nick Saban. When asked about why he was so hard on his talented players, he explained that he must weed out the lazy ones because, "We want a team of high-achievers, and mediocre people don't like high-achievers, and high achievers don't like mediocre people." He was saying that if they're going to win games, they cannot have mediocre players.

Let's discuss what Solomon observed when he saw one of God's people neglecting his farm. Solomon, in all his wisdom, was able to learn something from this bad example, and we can do the same.

Proverbs 24:30-32 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

- The Method of Wisdom: Learning by Observation

Wisdom sees instruction everywhere, Solomon looked, considered, and received instruction. The difference between seeing and understanding is that some see only surfaces and others perceive truth beneath appearances. The artist's eye sees the beauty of the landscape because he has beauty on his mind. Unpleasant things can teach us valuable lessons. Thorns and nettles instruct the wise observer as much as anything. Trials, disappointments, and failures become our teacher when our heart is right.

- Solomon's Description of the Sluggard

Proverbs 7:7 And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

a. Laziness is a sin to be repented of. The sluggard may appear confident, cultured, or prosperous; but possessions do not equal wisdom, and knowledge without action is misunderstanding of truth.

b. Lazy believers are especially dangerous, because they misuse doctrine to justify inactivity. They treat grace as an excuse for idleness. They use religion as an excuse for being irresponsible. Note: It would likely be better for

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the kingdom of God if they never tell anyone that they are a believer while they carry around the testimony of being lazy.

c. The mark of being “Void of Understanding” begins with unused opportunities, time wasted, moments squandered. If you are single and in your twenties, quit wasting precious time sitting around and playing games or pursuing “hobbies”. You need to get to work while you can, before you have the care and responsibility of a family! Work two or three jobs while no one is waiting for you to come home each night. Save up so you can buy a decent car and maybe even a house! You must see the urgency. You don’t have as much time as you think.

If you want to be used by God, put yourself in a position (practically as well as spiritually) to be used by God. Choose a good paying career and pursue it, so you can eventually provide for your family. Learn how to budget your money and save so that you have the flexibility to go on a mission trip if you want to, or move to a mission field if that’s what you’re called to. Do what you can while you can to put yourself in that position.

Many have ambition to become a preacher, thinking it is an easy way to become successful in life. They think that the pastor stays home preparing sermons while others give him money for the support of himself and his family. Being a pastor is an admirable goal; however, it involves a whole lot of work before you will get to the place mentioned above. My pastor worked as a postman for many years while he was preaching 3 times a week. He was still visiting those in the hospital and evangelizing his neighborhoods in spite of his busy schedule.

Life will throw at you the unexpected, so be prepared for the crisis that will come. (Job 14:1) Set aside money so that when your world falls apart, you won’t be in despair because you have no money.

Nothing is worse than sitting around when you’re 50 thinking about what you could have done if you would have just stuck to it. Thoughts of unfulfilled responsibilities, roles neglected as a parent, worker, teacher, or Christian are unsettling and regretful. Unexercised capacities, abilities buried rather than employed are also indicators that one is lazy. As a rule, we may measure a man’s understanding by his useful activities. Technology is nice and a great blessing in a lot of ways, but having an “active” social media presence is not a useful activity. Staying up late is fun, but it’s not a useful activity. Spending your days off sitting around and relaxing is nice, but it is not useful, especially when you are not retired but like to pretend to be. If you are known for regularly sleeping in late, not working on Saturdays, and not working overtime, and then something happens and all the sudden you are in financial straits asking others for money, no one will feel sorry for you. You are lazy. You are void of understanding.

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d. Application

Christlikeness will always express itself in action. If your knowledge, culture, or education does not lead you practically to serve God in your day and generation, you haven't learned what Solomon calls "wisdom." True wisdom is practical. Wisdom plows its field, hoes its vineyard, looks to its crops, and tries to make the best of everything.

When God put Adam in the garden, it was not so he could stroll around and admire the beauty as a spectator. He was put there to work the soil, dress, and keep it. When God allotted each Jew his piece of land, He meant that they were to work it and make it fruitful. Psalm 128:2 *For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.* This is the high calling of each Christian. We all have talents, God gave them to us, some are hospitality, teaching, preaching, musically inclined, speaking, building, serving others, etc. Whichever field you fall into, you nonetheless have a field that must be cultivated so that it yields the greatest possible harvest for the glory of God. If you fail to use your talents properly, then you are void of understanding because you neglect the task the Lord has designed you to do. (review Matthew 25:15-28)

God will not ask you to do work that is beyond your ability. It is expected though that we would labor "according to what we have, and not according to what we have not."

Have you cultivated your heart? Has the plow ever broken up the clods of your soul? Has the seed of God's word been sown within you? Has it taken root? Have you watered the plants of God's desire for you? Have you endeavored to pull the weeds of sin that grow among the rows of fruit? Or are you still a piece of bare, wild ground? (Review Luke 8:5-8)

What a shame that most Christians spend more time in the shower, more time in the mirror, more time adoring their flesh than they do their soul. Remember what is most important to God *for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

What does He see when He looks at you? A well-tended field bearing fruit in neatly planted rows, or does He see what Solomon saw in Proverbs 24? Is there such a thing as a Christian sluggard? Christians who work half-time, what a shame. Time waits for no one, death comes every minute, the devil is not sitting around waiting for the right moment. All the powers of darkness are busy. How is it that we can be so sluggish if the Master has put us into His vineyard? Surely we must be void of understanding, having been saved by infinite love, then refusing to be spent in His service.

What does the world think of Christ when it sees sluggard church-goers? What do their co-workers think when they find out they attend church? Always remember that you and I represent the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

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We must serve Him with all our might and never bring reproach on His name by being identified as a sluggard.

What is the condition of a Sluggard's Land?

Proverbs 24:30-31 *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*

Raw land cannot just be neutral and not produce anything. Either it will produce a beautiful crop of food or an ugly batch of weeds and stickers. If you are idle in Christ's work, then you are active in the devil's work. The sluggard, by sleeping, has done much for the cultivation of thorns and nettles. If your life is not cultivated for good, it will yield evil.

Having lived in Florida for 70 plus years, I remember the days when anywhere you would go there would be fields of orange trees. Unfortunately for Florida, when Anita Bryant took a stand against allowing sodomites to march in the Orange Bowl Parade in 1970, the leaders of the parade fired her. Curiously shortly after that, Florida had an unexpected freeze that destroyed most of the orange grove population. Now you must drive miles to see orange groves in Florida. Now mostly all you see are wild oranges on someone's land. Have you ever tasted wild oranges? They are sour and some very bitter. Why? Lack of cultivation.

The Christian that has not been cultivating for God will produce what comes natural to himself, thorns and nettles and some useless weeds. What is the natural inclination of all men? (1 Corinthians 2:14; Genesis 6:5) What happens to a child when left alone to himself? Proverbs 29:15 ***The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.***

The result of slothfulness can become a source of discomfort and regret. Have you ever noticed how unhappy and depressed lazy people are? Do you know why that is? Because they're filled with regret over their life choices. Something bad happened, something didn't go the way they expected or hoped. They haven't ended their life altogether, but they've given up. The Rescue Mission is filled with people like this. Thorns and nettles of regret are very painful to the owner of the land, but they're also sad to behold to the spectator. Don't be a sluggish Christian. Repent. You can always repent and get up and get to work. You would be surprised how good that field can look if it is just worked by someone who cares. God cares, and He is willing to make you able to care also. Satan sows while the sluggard sleeps. It's not going to get any easier the longer you wait. The older you get, the less motivation you will have to do something about yourself; and as time passes, the adversary of your soul will be busy sowing tares among the wheat. Wake up! If you don't, poverty and needs will come before you know what happened. Repent and pray!

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Greater potential means greater ruin when ignored. Just as Judas had so much potential being an apostle. He was hand-picked by the Son of God. He was given power over unclean spirits and power to heal the sick. He had authority as one of Christ's inner circle, and was the trusted treasurer of the Lord's offerings. He had the greatest potential, but he chose to neglect the vineyard of his heart, and no one has had a greater ruin than him. He is the most tragic figure in history. Do not neglect the gift of God. Privilege increases responsibility.

Hebrews 2:3 *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

Let's look at the Christian life. Idleness weakens faith. Often I find myself praying for the Lord to give me strength. One way to surely weaken your spiritual frame is by sitting around idle for hours on end. Idleness is a cancer that will eventually consume your whole body. Don't let it grow. Kill it while you can. Inactivity breeds complaining and censoriousness. "censoriousness" – *A habit of being overly critical, fault-finding, or harsh in judging others—especially regarding their morals, actions, or motives.* Be careful of believing you have divine insight into the motives or reasons others behave the way they do. You do not know, and it is painful listening to people go on and on about how they know the real reason why so-and-so did whatever they did. That's dangerous thinking that needs to be repented of.

Fruitfulness crowds out sin; slothfulness gives it space. Fruitful Christians are too busy to think these thoughts. They are too busy toiling in the field from sun-up to sun-down. There's so much fruit being produced in their vineyard, that they even have others helping them as they labor in the field. If you are not busy, then get busy. There is plenty of work to be done. Ask your pastor how you can help.

Churches that neglect mission opportunities will decline spiritually. No church flourishes long without outward labor. Idleness outside leads to worldliness inside. We do not need to look far to find churches that are worldly or just plain dead because they have become idle. Potluck and fellowship have replaced outreach. Prayer meetings have replaced visitation. All you have to do to see what happens as a result is just go visit another church. Any church, anywhere. Most fit that description to the shame of our faith.

The world is a vast, neglected field. Weeds flourish where the gospel is absent. What a tangled mass of weeds the whole earth is! Every city is smothered with the thistles of infidelity and idolatry. The world will hardly miss a college football playoff game or a March-madness sale at the local store, but they'll miss a church service at the first opportunity. Who is to blame for

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the state of the world? The devil? Maybe. How about a neglectful church? There are plenty of those, and I think it would be just as fair to attribute the sad state of our world to the neglect of the church as a whole.

Two thousand years are gone, and the sluggard's vineyard is but little improved! America has been touched with the spade of the people like Billy Sunday, Charles Finney, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lester Roloff, Billy Graham, and James W. Knox, but we can't say that this land has been thoroughly weeded or plowed in our lifetime. DeLand and Volusia County have been plowed a hundred times over, while millions of acres abroad are left to the thorns and nettles. Worse yet, the devil has his agents (JWs, Mormons, Catholics, Protestants, etc.) sowing tares among the wheat at a far greater rate than true Christians can pull those weeds.

God wake us up from our sluggishness, so that the holy watcher does not give our report saying, Proverbs 24:30-34 *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.*

Let's review:

Lessons we can learn from a sluggard

1. Nature alone produces only thorns. In the life of a true Christian any good fruit is the work of grace.
2. Good intentions without action are worthless. "A little sleep" becomes lifelong delay. Procrastination is a subtle path to ruin.
3. Delay is dangerous. Death and judgment do not wait, Tomorrow belongs to fools; today belongs to the wise.

Final Call to Action

1. Wake before judgment awakens you.
2. Cultivate the field God has given you. - your heart, your home, your church, your neighborhood.
3. Begin now! "Now is the accepted time."

Notes

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Name _____

Note: (*) An asterisk indicates you must include scripture with your answers.

1. What defines a sluggard? *
2. What is the main reason why churches today have become so lazy?
3. What is the best advice for young people today?
4. Explain Luke 14:28 using this Bible lesson's examples. *
5. What happened in Florida shortly after Anita Bryant spoke against sodomites marching in the Orange Bowl parade?
6. What will you learn when visiting a rescue mission?
7. What is the worst thing to be thinking about when you are over 50?
8. What does God promise if you work the land entrusted to you? *
9. What do people think when they meet a Christian man who is a sluggard?
10. Why is it so very important for a Christian to never be identified as a sluggard?
11. What do you see when you visit a church that has potluck meals but no outreach ministries?

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12. What eventually happens to a Christian who becomes idle for hours on end? *
13. What happens to a piece of land that is not cultivated? How does that relate to a Christian? *
14. Why is it important not to delay in serving the Lord? *
15. When you walk into a new church, what is a good indicator that God is using them?
16. What is the warning God gives to us in Hebrews 2? *
17. How do we know we will have problems in our life? *
18. Nature alone produces what in the life of a true Christian?

True/false

- Being a pastor means you can sleep in, preach 3 messages, and sit around and wait for someone to give you money.
- God cares more about our shoes shining and our hair being cut and combed, than he does about our heart. *
- You could be a spade in your own life, breaking up the fallow ground while repenting of all your secret sins.
- God gave us all talents. He will want to see what we have done with them at the Judgement Seat of Christ. *



Scripture memorization

1 Timothy 5:13; Proverbs 24:30-34

Write out these verses on a separate piece of paper: (must be in KJV)

any questions?