

## Take Action

By Kevin Morkassel

12/09/07 AM  
Salem

### Proverbs 6:6-11

#### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

- WELCOME!
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#### INTRODUCTION:

[Enter] This morning, I would like for us to closely examine a passage in **Proverbs 6...**

Before we take a look at **Proverbs 6**, [Enter] I think that is important that we consider for a moment what kind of man the writer of this passage was?

- Was Solomon a real estate tycoon? Did he do construction? Was he powerful or wealthy? Was he a farmer of crops? Did he do landscaping or was he more into having livestock?
- Or maybe he spent his time making parks and gardens?
- What kind of things did Solomon do? The answer is... ALL OF THE ABOVE!
- Solomon was a man of great accomplishment. [Enter]

In **Ecclesiastes 2:4-7**, Solomon wrote about some of the things he had done saying, ***"I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem."***

In preparing for this morning's lesson, I learned that some of the structures that Solomon built are still being used in modern days.

- In the passage I just read, Solomon mentions that he made "**ponds of water**," these are what are called "Solomon's Pools." [Enter]
- Solomon's Pools, located about four kilometers south of Bethlehem, have played a significant role in the area's water supply for thousands of years now.
- The three pools are each over 100 meters long and ten meters deep and have a combined capacity of nearly 300,000 cubic meters of water.
- The point in mentioning all of this is that Solomon [Enter] was a man of great accomplishment and he was, therefore, an excellent role model for us when it comes to being productive... to making good use of time.
- There is no better example of any man in scripture being more accomplished... Getting more things done...

With that in mind, as we read **Proverbs 6:6-11**, let us consider some of Solomon's thoughts about those who are lazy...

- 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,**
- 7 Which, having no chief, officer or ruler,**
- 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.**
- 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?**
- 10 "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest"--**
- 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.**

As we begin thinking about these 6 short verses, we start to see the danger of trying to live the easy life.

- There are several things in this passage that express God’s opinion about a person who refuses to live a productive and fruitful life. [Enter]
- This morning, as we look at the advice that Solomon gave, we can notice several things...

**I. First of all, we find that if we want to live a successful life, [Enter] WE MUST TAKE ACTION.**

It is amazing to me how the Bible will often make reference to different parts off God’s creation such as the ants and by observing them, we can become a better person.

- Jesus often used visual illustrations in order to make an important point. [Enter]
- In **Matthew 7:14-17**, Jesus was speaking to shepherds and vineyard owners and He spoke to them about something they could relate to...sheep and grapes.
- Jesus said, *“For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.”*
- Jesus used animals and vegetation (God’s creation) to illustrate His point.
- Even more importantly, He used them to express that it takes effort to go down the narrow path and “*few*” will “*find it*.”
- One cannot find the eternal reward unless they make an effort... unless they take action.
- After Jesus showed the importance of being careful about false teachers, he said that a person’s actions demonstrate what kind of person they are. *“You will know them by their fruits...”*

As we come back to our text in **Proverbs 6**, Solomon looked at God’s creation and spoke about making an effort.

- He spoke about the importance of taking right actions.
- [Enter] His very first word in **verse 6** was the word “*Go*” and it was followed up with another action word to “*observe*.”
- He spoke about how the tiny little ant diligently, *“prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.”*
- Solomon has a name for the person who refuses to take action in life.
- [Enter] He uses the word “*sluggard*” to refer to the person who likes to lay down and sleep all day.
- I have to admit, I like how this word is translated in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible... Instead of “*sluggard*”, it says, “*lazybones*.”
- *“How long will you lie there, O lazybones? When will you rise from your sleep?”*

The actions of a lazy person, demonstrate what kind of person they are.

- Solomon was obviously bothered by the laziness of the people around him.
- The word “*sluggard*” is used in the Bible twelve times and all twelve times are in the book of **Proverbs**, which is primarily written by Solomon.
- Being a very wealthy man, Solomon was familiar with the lifestyles of the rich and famous and I am sure that he knew some who were very, very lazy.

- In **Proverbs 26:14-15**, he makes a funny reference to people like this ... He says, *“As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.”*

I’m just trying to picture this rich man who has servants catering to his every need.

- He has just enough motivation to sit up in bed as he “hinges” at the hips in his bed he calls to his servants to bring him a dish full of fresh grapes for example.
- And as he sits in the lap of luxury, it is a burden even to take a grape out of the bowl and to pop it in his own mouth.
- Solomon probably knew some men who were like this.

Solomon would refer this person to the anthill, where the worker ants never stop to take a break.

- The tiny little worker ant, will keep on task whereas the sluggard is weary to even finish the task of feeding himself. His hand gets to the bowl, but that’s as far as it goes.
- The sluggard avoids work and would rather stay in bed all day than to get up and to do something worth while.

Back to our text again we see that in **verses 9 & 10**, Solomon addresses this... He says, *“How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest”*

- The thing about laziness is that it is addicting. [**Enter**] The more you are lazy, the lazier you become.
- There was a beggar who sat at the gate of the rich man’s home from whose generous hand the beggar received constant gifts.
- One day the rich man wanted to send a message as quick as possible.
- Since his servants were all busy, he found the beggar and asked him to make the delivery for him.
- Lifting himself up with pride, the beggar answered his benefactor with these incredible words, **“I solicit alms, sir, I don’t run errands.”**

Isn’t this the way we are some times?

- God has given us tremendous blessings. Not just food and clothing and homes to live it, but he has offered up His own son to be massacred on our behalf, and yet we can’t even find the time to read His word daily or to brave the cold weather for an evening service.
- If Solomon was in your home at 6:30PM on a cold Wednesday evening, would he have to say to you, *“How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?”*

Notice for a moment that in **verse 6**, he points out that the ant doesn’t have a [**Enter**] *“chief, officer, or ruler.”*

- Solomon is pointing out that the ant is self-motivated and doesn’t need supervision.
- It is the same way with us when it comes to being active in the church.
- Nobody here is going to order you to do what you know is right in God’s eyes.
- We all have to make our own decisions on how much time and money we choose to give to the church.
- We set our priorities and we must be self-motivated.
- Let’s stop for a moment and let’s ask ourselves... What have I done to serve the church in the past 7 days?

Solomon was not the only man of God who expressed the importance of taking action for the Lord.

- [Enter] Let's take a look at some other Bible examples of taking action...
- The Apostle Paul encouraged the Romans in **Romans 12:11** to not be "*lagging behind in diligence.*"
- He then said to be "*fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*"
- Paul warned Timothy about the widows saying that they have learned "*to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies...*" (**1 Timothy 5:13**)
- The writer of Hebrews expressed how inactivity can lead to losing the inheritance... He warned about being "sluggish" and then said to be "*imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*" (**Hebrews 6:11-12**)
- James said, "**But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**" (**James 1:22**)
- Paul encouraged the Colossians to bear fruit and grow in knowledge of God in order to please Him... He said, "*...we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*" (**Colossians 1:9-10**)
- [Enter] It is not possible to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord if we are not taking action.

## II. **There is a second thing that we can learn... [Enter] WE GAIN WISDOM AS A RESULT OF TAKING ACTION...**

In **verse 6**, Solomon said, [Enter] "*Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise...*"

- What I find to be the most ironic about this passage is that a man who has been granted the amazing wisdom of Solomon is advising the observation of a mindless ant in order to gain wisdom. ☺
- **1 Kings 4:29-31** describes the wisdom of Solomon... "*Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men... and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations.*"
- "...*he was wiser than all men...*" yet he recommended to gain wisdom from the ant.
- The brain of an ant can only be examined under a microscope and yet by its actions it is a good example of wisdom.

He was saying it is wise to do as the ants do...

- Perhaps the question of the day is... what did the ants do that was so amazing?
- Did they create some new invention?
- Did they build something (other than tunnels and a pile of dirt)?
- Were they masterminds of strategic battles against other ant mounds?

The thing is, it wasn't the wisdom of the ants that Solomon wanted to be observed. It was the "*ways*" of the ant!

- The ant diligently and unceasingly and unselfishly worked for the colony.
- It prepared food and gathered provisions in the harvest.
- It was through the "going" and through the "observing" of the "*ways*" of the ants that brought the wisdom.
- The wisdom was only gained because of the actions taken to go and observe.

My point is... we cannot gain wisdom unless we are doing something to gain it.

- [Enter] Personal time reading God's word, public or private [Enter] Bible study, [Enter] time with God in prayer, spending time with the children of God, participating in activities with one another.
- These things all require action to be taken and these things lead us into a deeper knowledge about God and give us the wisdom to do what is pleasing to Him.
- We gain wisdom by our actions and once we have attained the knowledge of what Jesus Christ did for us, we take advantage of opportunities to share our wisdom. [Enter]

First of all this morning, we have learned that we are to resist the temptation to be lazy and we are to start taking some action.

- In doing so, we gain wisdom as a result of our actions taken.

### III. **There is a 3<sup>rd</sup> thing we can learn from Solomon's wisdom... If we want to live a successful life, WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR ACTIONS OR LACK THERE OF...**

In **verse 11**, Solomon said, "*Your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.*"

- Now, I don't believe that Solomon was speaking to the working class of people.
- He was probably speaking to those who were not used to have to do any work... the rich and famous.
- And yet he was saying that their poverty would come upon them like a "*bandit*" (NIV) or a "*vagabond.*"

I would like to suggest that Solomon is addressing their laziness NOT because he wanted to encourage people to be more successful in their business ventures or to gain great wealth, but he was thinking of something else.

- Solomon had eternity in mind... He was encouraging them to make investments now for an inheritance to come.
- He was saying that those who are rich and lazy now, will be in poverty for eternity and it will come upon them very suddenly, like an "*armed man.*"
- He was warning them to be prepared because there will be consequences if they fail to take action.

Jesus spoke about laziness in **Matthew 25** and he described the consequences of that lack of preparedness.

- He told the story of ten bridesmaids who were waiting for the bridegroom.
- Five of them planned ahead and brought extra oil for their lamps and five of them were lazy and didn't do what they needed to in order to avoid the consequences.
- Jesus continued on in that same chapter to speak of the parable of the talents.
- Two of the servants used the money they were given to make more money and they were greatly rewarded for their efforts, however the last servant buried his money and didn't even bother to invest it in order to receive interest.
- The servant's master called him a "*wicked and lazy servant*" and he was punished for his laziness.
- Jesus calls him an "*unprofitable servant.*"

He continued on to further expounded upon the importance of these stories by speaking of the Day of Judgment.

- In **Matthew 25:30-34**, He said, "*And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all*

*the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'*

- The “wicked”, “lazy”, “unprofitable” servants will be cast into the “outer darkness.”

In **Proverbs 13:4**, Solomon said, “**The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat**” and **Proverbs 20:4-5** says, “**The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.**”

- If we expect to gain something, we need to do something!
- I recently read about an atheist who died and had willed his house and farm to Satan.
- The courts deliberated on the case for a long time and finally it was determined that the best way to carry out his wishes was to allow the farm to grow up with weeds and to leave the house to decay and ruin.
- The same thing can be said about the salvation of our soul.
- If we want to earn decay and ruin what do we have to do? ... .. The answer is nothing!

Before we close, I would like to read a poem that was written by a poet named Theodore W. Brennan:

I looked upon a farm one day  
That once I used to own;  
The barn had fallen to the ground  
The Fields were overgrown.

The house in which my children grew  
Where we had lived for years—  
I turned to see it broken down  
And brushed aside the tears.

I looked upon my soul one day  
To find it too had grown  
With thorns and nettles everywhere  
The seeds neglect had sown

The years had passed while I had cared  
For things of lesser worth;  
The things of Heaven I let go  
When minding things of Earth

To Christ I turned with bitter tears  
And cried, “O, Lord, forgive!”  
I haven’t much time left for thee  
Not many years to live.”

The wasted years forever gone  
The days I can’t recall;  
If I could live those days again  
I’d make him Lord of all.

### **SUMMARY:**

This morning, we have learned from that we are to take action in our lives to do God’s will.

- We have learned that we gain God’s wisdom as a result of our actions.
- And finally, there are consequences for our actions and consequences if we fail to take action.

### **CONCLUSION & INVITATION:**

[Enter] As a result of the actions that Jesus took in coming to Earth and dying on a cross for our sins, we are to respond by turning our lives over to Him. We do so by believing in Him and by obeying His commands.

- His commands include the command to be buried in the waters of baptism in order to wash away our sins.
- If there is anyone here this morning, who would like to take action and respond to the commands of Jesus, please come to the front as we stand and sing the invitation song.