

## Proverbs Week #135 (13:4)

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*"A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor. Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth. **The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.** The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty." (Proverbs 10.4; 12.24, 27; 13.4; 21.5 ESV)*

In today's lesson I have provided for you the five verses in the book of Proverbs that describe the person who is "diligent." Riches, leadership, and being satisfied characterize him/her. In contrast, those who are slack in their work or are lazy live in poverty and subject themselves to some form of slavery. These words of wisdom encourage us to be wise and to be diligent in the work God gives us.

We can learn the value of honest work and service to others (in God's service). Its value is best seen as we live out the truths of these proverbs. Each one of us needs to do our part. Proverbs 1:4 states, *"to impart shrewdness to the morally naïve, and a discerning plan to the young person."* (NET) Is this already a part of your plans in life? Is faithfully working at whatever service God would enable you to do included in what you teach your children?

For those who are looking at these lessons as tools or gems to be treasured, I want to suggest how to classify these verses. As a tool, no toolbox should be without this one. We can build things with this tool. It is a builder's tool. Now, we do not have any guarantees that a hurricane might not wipe out the things we build. Nevertheless, this tool can be used to rebuild even those things that God has allowed to be destroyed. This tool does not have to be the prettiest of tools. Most of the favorite tools are ones that show the signs of the wear and tear of use. The tools in our lives that have repeatedly proven to be useful are treasured. A good work ethic (being diligent) can be just such a tool.

*"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3.23–24 ESV)*

How can we tell the difference in our own lives between being diligent or being a sluggard? It is not always easy to have a healthy view of ourselves. Sometimes we might be too hard on ourselves and other times we are too easy. The focus of these verses causes us to look to God and outside of ourselves. What is the work to be done and can we do it? What God given abilities do you have? No one here is living on a deserted island. Who around you could you help? What can you do to serve your Messiah by serving others? Ask yourself, are you a taker or a giver? Learn to discern the difference between someone who is a taker only (someone who expects others to do everything for them) and someone who is willing to give (serve and consider the needs of others).

If you will receive the wisdom of these verses the LORD will not allow you to hunger (your soul will be fat). You will have riches and honor from God. Do these verses promise too much? "Do your work heartily" and know that any profit or increase you will receive will come from the LORD.

*"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Joshua 1.7–8 ESV)*

These promises and commandments were originally given to Joshua. How do they apply to us? In what ways do we learn that God connects success and prosperity with His teaching and instruction? God's family wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the promised land. God often allows His people to experience leanness in order for them to learn what true riches are all about. His children will never lack. Remember, "In all your ways acknowledge Him." He will keep your path straight (Prov 3:5,6).