

## Proverbs Week #94 (10:26)

*“Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.” Proverbs 10:26*

This will be our third lesson considering “the sluggard.” In our first lesson, the sluggard needed to learn wisdom by observing how ants live their lives (Prov. 6:6). Our second lesson described the sluggard as someone who loves sleep too much. Their love for sleep would cause them to be poor (Prov. 6:9-11). In the verse above, the sluggard’s behavior is going to affect others. What can this one simple statement teach us about being wise?

In this verse, what do vinegar and smoke have in common? Imagine two different scenarios. First, think of a time when you were thirsty and you picked up a juice box. As you take the first sip you realize that the juice has gone sour (or maybe a more vivid picture would be drinking out of a carton of milk that has gone sour). Next, picture yourself curled up with a book on a cool day around a campfire. The wind shifts and then the smoke from the fire blows right in your eyes. Both situations describe events that might otherwise be very pleasing but end up being very irritating. So too is the sluggard to those who give him a job to do.

Before the days of text messages, emails, and cell phones people had to rely on other forms of communication. Couriers were often used to send important messages. Much of what is communicated on Twitter or Facebook might not be so important that it needs to be said in person but what if the message was important? Solomon was the King of Israel and it is very likely that he used others to send messages. If the messenger he sent was not reliable, something the king wanted to tell someone might be lost. How disappointing to the king and possibly to the person who needed to hear something from the king.

**To Learn** – Like most proverbs, there is more than one way to approach this verse. This proverb will teach us one thing if we are a messenger and another thing if we use people as messengers. If we expand the context beyond just sending messages, we can also consider how well we respond to legitimate requests for us to do something for others. If your parents ask you to clean your room, do you put off the task (maybe even forget to do it all together)? If a friend needs help, are you quick to respond? Do you anticipate others needing your help and prepare yourself to lend a hand?

**To Receive and Discern** – How do you know the difference between responding in a timely manner or a sluggard? While it may be obvious to determine when someone is being slow concerning things you want done, how easy is it to realize when you are being slow? So as not to make this lesson only about children being slow, how are we doing as adults? Consider these words from the apostle Paul.

*“So if there is any encouragement in the Messiah, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in the Messiah Yeshua, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” Phil 2:1-7*

**To Impart** - If as adults (and children) we take to heart the example of our Messiah, we will find in Him the greatest motivation to serve others. We will not be slow in responding to Him. This message is first rooted in the reality of our experience with Yeshua. Through the promise of His Spirit, we can live our daily lives as His disciples. That involves both experiencing His love and extending that love to others. Are there any relationships in which you have been slow to demonstrate God’s love? Scripture teaches us to *“owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” (Rom 13:8).*

If you are willing to accept this, I would like you to consider something. Do not be smoke in God’s eyes. If you are aware of things in your life that you know God would have you do and you have left them undone, consider the message of this proverb. If you are failing you need to turn to God, ask Him for forgiveness and wisdom, and seek His power to fulfill what He requires of you. He is a loving and faithful Father who hears the cries of His children.