

How can we get motivated when we don't feel like doing anything?

First, I think what we need to do is continually commit the area of work to the Lord Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to change us. Then we should begin to associate more and more with those who are industrious, and less and less with our sluggish friends. 1 Cor. 15:33—*"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"*

We should follow the guidelines outlined in Proverbs.

**Stay out of unproductive areas—get rich quick schemes, diligently work with what you have.**

*"He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment" (12:11).*

Don't chase after get rich fantasies—11b. Work at what you have—work your fields! Some don't know what their field is, so search until you find out where you have been gifted—the place you can make the most significant contribution in life, and get on with it.

**Work hard and talk only when it's appropriate.**

*"All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty" (14:23).*

.I'm convinced a lot of talk time is wasted time on the job. How do you know if it's wasted or inappropriate? When a boss or supervisor comes into your work area and you quit talking.

Be careful, however, when you see poor people that you don't accuse them all of being lazy. Proverbs has much to say about the poor:

- **The destitute or lonely poor**—Prov. 13:23—*"A poor man's field may produce abundant*

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*food, but injustice sweeps it away."*

- **The oppressed poor**—Prov. 22:22—"*Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, 22:23] for the LORD will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them."*

- **The lazy poor**— Prov. 20:4—"*A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing."*

### **Don't sleep more than is helpful.**

*"Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare" (20:13).*

### **Don't indulge yourself in things you don't need.**

*"He who loves pleasure will become poor. Whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich" (21:17).*

### **Don't spend your time daydreaming about what you'd like to have; that may kill you. Give generously instead.**

*"The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. 26] All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing" (21:25-26).* The sluggard's refusal to work is motivated by cravings—cravings that he cannot/will not satisfy. The righteous, on the other hand, not only work, but they give without sparing.

That brings up a number of questions:

- Is it possible that the antidote to laziness and the improper cravings of a sluggard is working to give to others? (see Eph. 4:28)
- Is the measuring stick of our laziness our lack of giving without sparing?
- Is one of the key measuring sticks of our righteousness our generous giving without sparing?

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### **Don't waste time on the job.**

Prov. 28:19—*"He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty."*

Prov. 28:19 (Good News Bible)—*"A hard working farmer has plenty to eat. People who waste time will always be poor."*

Chasing fantasies, according to the Good News Bible, is wasting time. I would agree! We have to fight this tendency because we all have plenty of ways in which we can waste time. Alan Lakein mentions several in his book, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*. Here are a few of the big ones:

1. Indulging—e.g., running often to the refrigerator at work to avoid getting to work, taking an extra coffee break, etc.
2. Socializing—e.g., talking when work should come first.
3. Reading—e.g., grabbing old mail or a magazine rather than doing the project you know you should do.
4. Daydreaming

Lakein's list sounds like Proverbs!

### **Prepare Wisely by Planning Ahead**

*"Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready; after that, build your house" (24:27).*

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In other words, do first things first. Decide what must come first, second, third, etc., and then do them in order of priority. Other verses echo this concept:

- Proverbs 21:29—*"A wicked man puts up a bold front, but an upright man gives thought to his ways."*
- Proverbs 14:15—*". . . a prudent man gives thought to his steps."*
- Proverbs 14:8—*"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception."*
- Proverbs 20:18—*"Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance."*

### Utilize Your Resources to the Maximum

Prov. 27:23-27—*"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; 24] for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. 25] When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, 26] the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. 27] You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family and to nourish your servant girls."*

Prov. 14:4—*"Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest."*

Have you given much thought to these verses? When you add them together, certain excellent principles emerge:

- Consider your resources carefully and take advantage of what you have.
- Obtain additional resources that will enable you to get the job done most efficiently.
- Plan ahead so you can accomplish tasks while you wait for other tasks to be completed—plant the hay so you can feed the lambs and goats, which in turn provide wool (v. 26), milk (v. 27), and money (v. 26), which can purchase more land.

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- Use what you have in as many ways as possible.

These are excellent business principles, even if they are 2,500 years old.

### **The Results of Hard Work**

Proverbs lists at least three

#### **You will have more power and freedom.**

"Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor" (12:24).

#### **You will be more effective in achieving your goals n life.**

"The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions" (12:27).

**You will be able to overcome difficulties in life easier than the lazy person.**

"The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied" (13:4).

### The Clarification Needed

It is true that many Hebrews looked upon riches as a blessing from God and upon poverty as a curse. The concept of being a good steward is stressed throughout the New Testament.

It would be easy to read about the sluggard and apply the teachings to the poor, but God wants us to look at slothfulness personally. The verses are not to make anyone feel smug; we have much to learn ourselves. True, God established the Sabbath for rest/reflection; and Christ took a day off now and then in addition to the Sabbath. He hiked up into the mountains to refresh Himself. We should do the same. But when we work, we should work smarter and harder than the average person, and Proverbs explains how and why.

### Conclusion

So when the blahs hit, don't let them take over permanently. That may require some teeth-gritting determination, but sometimes we need the discipline of doing things we don't want to. *"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control."* (Prov. 25:28).

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1. Among the traits of a sluggard is the tendency to rationalize. Read Prov. 22:13. How convincing are rationalizations to people who make them? How do they come across to those who hear them?

2. What rationalizations do you use to avoid unpleasant work? How convincing are they?

3. Read Prov. 10:4-5. What principles do you see about "a time and a place" for rest and work?

4. Look at Prov. 12:11. What is the result of mere effort alone? What else is needed?

5. What level of intensity should Christians bring to their work? Is it wrong to give anything less than 110 percent? Are Christians to "burn out for Jesus?" Explain.

Silently consider the following questions, and write down your thoughts. What is God saying to you about your work?

6. How can the work I do be used by God to honor Himself?

7. How can God use me at work to minister to others?

8. What can I do to make that more likely to happen?

### Additional Scriptures

Proverbs 15:6—The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings them trouble.

Proverbs 11:28—Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Proverbs 18:10—The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Proverbs 18:11— The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall.

Proverbs 18:12— Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.

Proverbs 13:11 —Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.

Proverbs 20:21— An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end.

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Proverbs 28:20— A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 11:24— One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

Proverbs 11:25— A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

Proverbs 11:26— People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell.

Proverbs 22:9— A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Proverbs 28:25— A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.

Proverbs 28:27— He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.

Proverbs 12:11— He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.

Proverbs 14:23— All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 20:13— Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.

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Proverbs 21:17— He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.

Proverbs 21:25— The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.

Proverbs 21:26— All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.

Proverbs 21:27— The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable— how much more so when brought with evil intent!

Proverbs 28:19— He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

Proverbs 24:27— Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready; after that, build your house.

Proverbs 27:23— Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds;

Proverbs 27:24— for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.

Proverbs 27:25— When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in,

Proverbs 27:26— the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field.

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Proverbs 27:27— You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family and to nourish your servant girls.

Proverbs 14:4— Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest.

Proverbs 26:14— As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.

Proverbs 13:4— The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Proverbs 20:4— A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.

Proverbs 19:15— Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.