

# Uprooting Laziness

## Colossians 1:29 (BSB)

*<sup>29</sup>To this end I also labour, striving with all His energy working powerfully within me.*

NLT - *That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.*

NIV - *To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.*

That's the goal. God has called us to be active, energetic, industrious and diligent people. This is part of our Christian character. It is important that we do so with Christ's strength at work in us. This is not a message about striving in the flesh or being busy in the wrong direction. I remember coaching a guy who feared that he would be perceived as being lazy so he would stay on late at work pretending to be busy. He couldn't leave before others. I am not talking about working hard due to guilt and obligation. I am talking about true godward diligence. The opposite of this is the spirit of laziness. In this message we will unpack what laziness is, the consequences and benefits of laziness and steps to overcoming laziness.

## Defining Laziness:

### **Disinclined to activity or exertion. Not energetic or vigorous. (Meriam-Webster)**

In the Hebrew lexicon some of the words used are slothful, sluggard, idle. Laziness is a vice and diligence is a virtue. Laziness is not about your personality. Being diligent is not a nice to have; it's a Christian virtue. People used to be stepped down from church leadership because of laziness. I am not talking about hurry sickness. I know that some of you have been on the other extreme of workaholicism etc so anything to do with working hard is viewed negatively by you. The reality is that in a lot of nations poverty is a real issue that is sadly linked to people's own laziness. We see two people from the same community, one develops themselves and works hard whilst the other one gets into crime because they are impatient, envious and lazy. I have seen that laziness is something that is passed on to the next generation. We can create a culture of laziness in our kids or a culture of diligence and industry. I have also seen that laziness is a habit. This is why you can look back and see that there were periods in your life when you were very productive. You look back and wonder how you accomplished so much in that season. What happens when you have had a long holiday and now need to go back to work? You can feel lazy. Why? You were not in work mode for some time. So diligence is both a virtue and a mindset. It is a mode you get yourself into.

The Early church was ruthless with regards to how to treat lazy people.

## **2 Thess 3:6-10**

*<sup>6</sup>In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup>nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. <sup>9</sup>We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. <sup>10</sup>For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."*

It is important to note that Paul uses the words "rule" and "command". They were not mere suggestions.

We live in a society that has vilified work. Many people are criminals today because of laziness. I spoke to a former gangster who explained this to me.

## **Gen 2:15**

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

In this scripture we see that work came before the fall of man. Find out what your garden of Eden is and begin to work and tend it. Having said that, laziness manifests beyond work. You can be too lazy to exercise. Someone once said, *“Whenever I feel the need to exercise, I lie down until it goes away.” Paul Terry.* You can be too lazy to eat physical food and spiritual food. You can be too lazy to develop yourself.

## **Prov 26:15**

*A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*

*Sometimes we are lazy in speech. We use efficiency of words but then fail to communicate meaningfully. “So avoid using the word ‘very’ because it’s lazy. A man is not very tired, he is exhausted. Don’t use very sad, use morose. Language was invented for one reason, boys - to woo women - and, in that endeavour, laziness will not do. It also won’t do in your essays.”*

— N.H. Kleinbaum, *Dead Poets Society*

**Diligence requires self-discipline.** I wish it was easier but it’s not. **“We often miss opportunity because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work” - Thomas A. Edison.**

## **1 Cor 9:24-27**

<sup>24</sup>*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. <sup>27</sup>No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

We see from the passage above that **Diligence is necessary for goal-attainment.**

## **Heb 6:11-12**

<sup>11</sup>*We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. <sup>12</sup>We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

It is easy to become lazy and weary when you lose faith and patience. Many people do not start lazy but because of unbelief and despair they lose heart. Loss of heart results in inactivity.

## **What are some guises of laziness?**

Making a quick buck becomes your default, gambling, profiteering, prioritizing excessively your hobbies, inability to wake up early, oversleeping.

## **Steps in Overcoming Laziness**

### **1. Set specific goals**

It is important to have plans and goals. To plan is to prepare the details before-hand. A goal is a dream with a deadline.

## **Prov 21:5**

*The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.*

## **Ps 20:4**

*May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.*

**Aimlessness results in demotivation which produces laziness.** Lazy people often have no goals they are committed to. If you don't have a plan or a goal you will always be on someone else's schedule. You will be part of their plans not your own. Often if you ask a lazy person about his dreams, vision and action plan he struggles to give an answer. There is nothing wrong with binge watching TV series once in a while but when that is your default it is usually because you have no goals that you are committed to. I don't know how people find the time to do certain things. Time is limited. Lazy people often have no sense of urgency. There will always be things competing with these goals, so have self-conversations through your priority ladder. I feel like doing A but I can't until I have first done B, because B is a priority.

## 2. Be straightened towards God in everything

### **Col 3:17, 22-24**

*<sup>17</sup>Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. <sup>22</sup>Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

Be straightened to God and not bent towards man. This mindset is crucial if you want to overcome laziness.

- I must do it with all my heart
- I must do it for God
- I must do it in His name (meaning I am representing Him)
- I must do it giving thanks (meaning that I am not moaning I am cheerful)

This includes everything I say and do. As long as you are doing things bent towards man you will not try hard when you are upset with them. **In my busyness I must still be displaying Christ-likeness.** There are some hardworking people out there that no one wants to work with. They are busy and even productive but they are not Christlike. Some people work hard but when they are busy they change. They say, "I was in work mode" or "Ministry mode".

Sadly some people are only engaged in their work when someone else is watching. See your work as worship.

### **Eccl 9:10**

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.*

We are called to work with all our might. This speaks of engagement. The three pillars of engagement are dedication, vigour, and absorption. Present your body to God as a living sacrifice. We are called to do this even in the small tasks. Luke 16:10 *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."*

This passage shows us that we must be trustworthy with seemingly insignificant things. God is watching and it is a key to your promotion.

### 3. Pray against passivity and slumber in your life

#### **Rom 13:11-14**

*And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. You can be a believer but because of slumber not walk in the things associated with salvation.*

#### **Matthew 25:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>*At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup>The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

You can get into a state of slumber whilst waiting. What do you do whilst waiting for your breakthrough? Are you becoming cynical? When you are awake you take care lest you fall. You understand that you can run out of oil.

#### **Mark 14:37**

*Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?'*

Jesus was surprised by their slumber. Would He be surprised by yours today?

### 4. Understand the consequences of laziness

#### **Jer 48:10**

*'A curse on anyone who is lax in doing the Lord's work! A curse on anyone who keeps their sword from bloodshed!'*

Lax = negligently, idle, lazy

#### **Prov 19:15**

*Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless go hungry.*

**Laziness can open a door to the spirit of slumber.** Laziness here means sluggishness. The word deep sleep is the same one used speaking of when God put Adam into a deep sleep and pulled out Eve from him. Shiftless here speaks of idle, lazy, laxness, and slackness.

#### **Prov 18:9**

*The one who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.*

**When you are lazy you become slack and the result is destruction.**

#### **Prov 24:30-34**

<sup>30</sup>*I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; <sup>31</sup>thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. <sup>32</sup>I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: <sup>33</sup>a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – <sup>34</sup>and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.*

**What aspects of your life are in ruins or full of weeds because of your laziness and passivity?**

## **5. Meditate on the benefits of diligence**

### **Prov 10:4**

*Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.*

**Diligence is a key to wealth creation. Be careful of shortcuts and miracle money.**

### **Prov 10:5**

*He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.*

### **Prov 12:11**

*Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense.*

There are some people who don't like working. Instead, they always have a grandiose idea they are pursuing which is really a fantasy. Laziness has many guises.

### **Prov 14:23**

*All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Lazy people are not necessarily disengaged from the deals. They are often involved but just talkers. There is no real action.

### **Prov 13:4**

*A sluggard's appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.*

No pain, no gain.

### **Prov 20:4**

*Sluggards do not plough in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing.*

The scary thing is that they still look even though they didn't plough. They expect things to come to them on a silver platter or through miracle money despite their lack of diligence.

## **6. Assess your recovery time**

**Sometimes we are not lazy but just tired.** In sport we need recovery time. Ted Spiker writes in Runner's World magazine, *"when you run, you aren't just building stamina and strength, you're also breaking your body down, causing a tiny amount of tissue damage. Allowing yourself time to recover afterward is what makes it possible for you to come back better next week, next month, next race."* Sometimes my running improves after I have had a rest day. Are you eating and sleeping right? Some people pride themselves in the fact that they can get by without much sleep. Unfortunately, when you interact with them during the day they are on a personal go-slow because of lack of sleep. I explained to my wife that I am always feeling tired, until one day I decided to go to bed early. The following day I had more energy than usual. **I rest so that I can recharge.** Getting up early helps but make sure you go to bed early.

**Ps 127:2**

*In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

**Mark 6:31**

*Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’*

**Ex 34:21**

*Six days you shall labour, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the ploughing season and harvest you must rest.*

**Ex 23:12**

*Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.*

Now some people like talking about the importance of the Sabbath and they forget that the context is that you are actually working for six days. It's important to see that this rest is to do with daily sleep and weekly time off. We need to be refreshed so that we can continue to glorify God in our fruitfulness.

**Conclusion**

We talk a lot about the Proverbs 31 woman but many fail to see that one of her underpinning values was that she was diligent and industrious. The passage says “she gets up whilst it is still night.... she goes about her work vigorously.”

**Prov 31:27-29**

<sup>27</sup>*She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

<sup>28</sup>*Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: <sup>29</sup>‘Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.’*