



The Wisdom of Proverbs

Sunday, March 8, 2026

Life Lessons From the Ant and Sluggard

Proverbs 6:6-11, *“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: ⁷Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, ⁸Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. ⁹How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? ¹⁰Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: ¹¹So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.”*

Have you ever heard of a Myrmecologist? It's not talking about a person that studies "murmuring." But Myrmecology is the study of ants. It may not sound like the most exciting of career choices but there is much wisdom that can be gained from just watching ants. Did you know that there are over 10,000 different species of ants? They are able to lift 20 times their own body weight. That means that if you had their strength you could lift approximately 4000 pounds. Ants have been found to build structures 500 times their own height. The brain of one ant has 250,000 cells whereas the human brain has 10,000 million brain cells. However they probably use more of their cells than we do. Ants also have 2 stomachs. One for storing up food to share with others later, and one for itself. Actually, that is one characteristic they can keep to themselves. I'm not sharing my food! The life expectancy of an ant is 45-60 days. Yet these tiny creatures accomplish much in their short life-span. If ever there was a creature that had to make the most of his allotted days it is the ant.

A French surgeon was once quoted as having said, "If I was given only 10 minutes in which to complete an operation, I'd first take 5 minutes to best decide how to perform it."

Okay, the two parts of the lesson today that I want to cover are 1. Lessons from the ant, and 2. Lessons from the sluggard.

First of all **Ants Are Determined**. Ecclesiastes 9:10, *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”* Ants, unlike people, do not give up easily. Life is full of people who have lost ambition and given up on their dreams and goals. It was Emerson who said, "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." Why? Because they don't have the commitment and tenacity to accomplish what they set out to do. If you have ever stopped and watched an ant you have seen that it does not give up easily. Ants are not deterred by life's obstacles. They are not deterred by stumbling blocks or circumstances.



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Stop and think about it for a moment. How many times have you found ants in the most unlikely of places? You find them in a bag of sugar. You find them in a cookie jar. You find them in the seemingly airtight container. How did they get there? From sheer determination and stick-to-it-ness, that's how! Just like that ant, if we are to succeed in life we need that same determination and stick-to-it-ness! So ants are determined.

Secondly, **Ants Are Opportunists**. I Corinthians 9:22, *"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* What exactly is an opportunist? It is the individual who will use whatever resource or means at hand to accomplish a given goal. Watch the ant very long and you will see them use broom handles, sticks, paper, a leaf, or whatever they have to in order to get over impassable terrain. Opportunistic ants look for opportunities. They refuse to allow the obstacle to deter them from what they want.

But all too often we are defeated before we even really begin because we look at the impossibility of certain things. The ant doesn't seem to even consider defeat! It just simply takes advantage of whatever opportunity it has before it. It just seems like the ant just keeps on going using whatever means possible.

Thirdly, **Ants Are Not Selfish**. Luke 6:38, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom."* This is probably best illustrated by the fact that ants do have two stomachs. They have one for themselves and one for sharing. However, we won't dwell too much on that. The fact that ants live in colonies speaks of their concern for the other ants. Within the colony all the ants work together for the common good.

This is vastly different to humans who, although they live together in cities and towns, do not always work together for the common good. We are taught to look out for ourselves. Perhaps the primary lesson the Lord wanted us to learn here is that we should be concerned for, and willing to help each other.

Have you ever been intrigued when you have watched ants move certain objects? We already have said that they can lift 20 times their own body weight, but what do they do when something weighs even more than that? They simply enlist the assistance of other ants. It really is quite a thing and interesting to watch several ants carry a grasshopper or cricket back to the anthill for dinner. I wonder how different our families, communities, churches and world would be if we would simply apply the same practice in our lives? That we would not be concerned only for ourselves.

The next thing about ants is **Ants Communicate Effectively**. Proverbs 8:8-9, *"⁸All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. ⁹They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge."*



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Insects, like animals, have means of communicating. If you watch ants for any length of time you will see that they really do communicate with each other and very effectively too. Ants communicate by touching each other with their antennae, and also by using chemicals called pheromones to leave scent trails for other ants to follow. There is a gland in the head of some species of ants called the Mandibular gland which produces a substance which, among other things, acts as an alarm chemical and is used to alert other ants to impending danger or attack. When released this substance will cause nearby ants to adopt a state of readiness, and will cause them to come to the aid of the stricken ant. A worker ant who happens upon a new food source will run back to the nest, repeatedly touching the ground with the tip of its abdomen. This produces a chemical, or scent trail leading from the food to the nest and within. As it meets up with nest mates the excited ant will harass them by knocking against them and touching antennae, which causes other ants to follow the trail back to the food source. After a while a line of ants can be observed making their way between nest and food. Within a short time, there is an army of ants eating.

If we could take a lesson from this. We need to be declaring everywhere we go what Psalm 34:8 says, *“O taste, and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”*

Fifthly, **Ants Are Focused And Unified**. Psalm 133:1, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* Ants are not only determined as individuals, but they are also focused as a colony.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. “What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?” asks Linus. “These five fingers,” says Lucy. “Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold.” “Which channel do you want?” asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, “Why can't you guys get organized like that?”

You hardly ever see “lone ranger” ants. We need to be the same way. We need others in our lives. Although we have different personalities and ways of doing things, we do have common goals. Just like an ant colony, we will accomplish more if we all work together.

Finally, **Ants Take Initiative**. Let's look at another aspect of wise living – taking initiative. Someone said there are three types of people in the world:

1. Those who do not know what is happening;
2. Those who watch what is happening;
3. Those who make things happen.

Wise people make things happen. Wise people take initiative. When they see a problem they act on it. They don't just sit passively and wait for their ship to come in. They are willing to dive off of the pier and swim out to it.



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However, they do not act foolishly. They prayerfully take actions. When faced with a situation, problem or need, the wise person goes to God, seeking for wisdom. He then asks himself the question "What would God have me to do?" Then, and only then, do they take action. This really makes sense doesn't it? If you have a problem, you need to take action. After all, real problems never go away of their own accord. Unfortunately, many people expect problems to either go away or for someone else to solve them, so they do nothing. This human tendency to do nothing motivated the writer of Proverbs to warn us of laziness.

Instead of taking action, the lazy person does nothing. Instead he or she sits passively, watching, waiting for something to happen. Sam Ewing once said, "Hard work spotlights the character of people. Some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all."

The Book of Proverbs call people who live by this philosophy as sluggards, or more commonly a slug. A slug is a slimy snaillike creature that may sometimes have a shell attached to its back or no shell at all. It walks slowly and without direction. Slugs are found in places that are high in humidity. They retreat into their shell or under rocks when danger comes. A slug moves by crawling, swimming, or floating with the available current. They move at the amazing speed of 23 inches per hour. They sustain themselves by eating both living and decaying plants and are more active at night. Now the symbolisms from all of that should be enough to encourage you to not be sluggardly.

Lessons from sluggards. **They make excuses.** Proverbs 22:13, "*The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.*" In other words, he uses whatever excuse he can come up with to do nothing. It has been said that if you don't want to do something that any excuse will do. No one can find more excuses to not do something than the person who is too lazy to do anything.

They love to sleep. Proverbs 26:14, "*As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.*" Just as the door turns back and forth on its hinges, the sluggard turns over and over in his bed. They go around yawning and all day long all you hear them say is that they can't wait to get to bed or to lie down. Proverbs 6:10-11 says, "*10Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.*"

Sluggards are know-it-alls. Proverbs 26:16, "*The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.*" Have you ever heard the phrase "They'd argue with a sign even if they had painted it?" That's the sluggard! You cannot argue or reason with a lazy person. They will be the most self-justifying person in the entire world. Some lazy people hide behind excuses like, "I just didn't like the work environment," or "They didn't treat me right," or "I'm not going to take just any old job." Some of the sluggard's favorite words are "yeah, but", "Well, what about", or "You just don't understand."



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Sluggards procrastinate. The motto of the sluggard is “Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow!”

They always put things off until the last minute and are late for everything, that is, if they show up at all. When given a project they usually bail out on it and find every excuse for not following through. Instead of trying to improve they just give up.

Sluggards are the ultimate victim. Everything that is wrong in their life is someone else’s fault. Instead of admitting their laziness they are busy pointing fingers. They tend to be reactors instead of responders.

Sluggards are unbelievably irritating. Proverbs 10:26, *“As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.”* That means a lazy person is a pain to his employers, just like smoke in their eyes or vinegar that sets the teeth on edge. If there is a grain of sand in the clamshell of life its name is sluggard. Their laziness will be like smoke in your eyes. While you are busy working they are laying around looking for a hand-out. If you are assigned a project to do with a sluggard, two things are sure: You will do most of the work and they will probably irritate you.

The results of being a sluggard: Proverbs 19:15, *“Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.”* They will struggle to succeed financially and spiritually because they are not willing to pay the price of success in either area. They will continually lack for the things necessary to maintain a decent existence. Proverbs 10:4, *“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.”* Ultimately they will live in spiritual and financial poverty. God cannot, and will not bless the individual who does not use his time wisely. Neither will He bless those individuals who are wasting their life by playing the part of the sluggard.