

Text: Proverbs 24:30-34**Title: “Street Smarts ... For Your Work”**

Today is the last of this series from Proverbs that I’ve called “Street Smarts.” We’re talking about wisdom we need to live in a way that glorifies God in our life in the streets. And our memory verse reminds us that this wisdom comes from God and we need to download it every day.

Proverbs 2:6 - For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

This wisdom that comes from the mouth of God became flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ who came to show us what this wisdom looks like lived out in a human body, but more importantly to empower us to live this wisdom. We can’t do it in our own strength.

Open your Bibles to Proverbs 24:30. We’ve learned that King Solomon either composed or collected the proverbs perhaps to serve as the curriculum for training young leaders to serve in his vast royal administration. If that is indeed the case, then this topic would be most important for young people to learn early in life. **Read Proverbs 24:30-34.**

ONSCREEN ILLUSTRATION – We need street smarts for the work we each have to do in this world. I ran across this advertisement that appeared in the classified ads of a newspaper here in Texas.

I want you to think with me about that part of life that, unless we’re retired, unemployed, disabled or underage, consumes about one-third of our adult life. You may already be thinking about going to work tomorrow ... and it’s not a happy thought. I read a survey last week that said that nearly three-fourths of Americans have case of the blues on Sunday night because they’re dreading going to work on Monday. Perhaps your work is hard, or you don’t feel fulfilled in your job, or you don’t get along with the people you work with. Maybe you’re a homemaker and you’re never really away from the work of washing dishes and changing diapers.

What if I could show you how to put new meaning in your job? What if I could show you that there’s a reason to look forward to your work tomorrow no matter how demanding it is? Well, here’s a wise man who takes a field trip to the farm of a foolish man. Here are his observations:

Proverbs 24:30 - I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment;

So the wise man took a stroll through the workplace, in this case, the field of the “sluggard.” This is one of about fifteen places in Proverbs where the “sluggard” is mentioned. Later in the verse he’s called “a man who lacks judgement” (understanding). He has ignored the street smarts of God, and it shows in the undisciplined and careless way he goes about his life.

Sometimes in Proverbs he is called “a lazy man” or one who is “slothful,” someone who is apathetic and idle.

Let me remind you that work is biblical. Remember that human history began in a Garden similar to the one here in Proverbs 24. God created Adam and Eve and gave them a job. He put them to work in the Garden of Eden with the task of cultivating the Garden. It was actually a sweet, enjoyable, meaningful part of life ... by God’s perfect design. But then something tragic happened. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and that broke their relationship with God and it poisoned every other part of life, including their work. And as result God told Adam that the ground would be cursed, and that now doing his job of working the ground would be painful all the days of his life. Thorns and thistles will make tending the field and vineyards a huge hassle. Now, by the sweat of his brow Adam would have to work to feed himself and his family. That’s why about three-fourths of Americans dread going to work, even though by the design of God work is good.

That’s what we’re looking at here in Proverbs 24:30 ... a man who is losing the battle with apathy and laziness. And it shows in the next verse where it says that...

Proverbs 24:31 - thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.

So this guy has run into the fact that because of sin work is a hassle, and his solution is just to ignore it. The undisciplined, careless, lazy man’s life is an overgrown, broken down mess. His fields don’t produce any food; instead they are overgrown with weeds. The wall which protected the crops from trespassers or animals was in ruins.

If we’re lazy our family, our studies, our finances, our work life will be a mess.

Let me remind you also that work is essential. It’s the way by which God intends for us to support ourselves and to be good citizens of the planet. It keeps us pushing back against the sins of laziness and boredom.

ILLUSTRATION – Boys and girls, when your parents make you do chores at home they are teaching you that work is good. All your life you will have to work, and that’s not a bad thing. It’s part of God’s design of His creation.

Read Proverbs 24:32-34.

So with no crops to harvest, a lazy person has nothing to eat and nothing to sell to others for income. He wakes up one day to discover that poverty has suddenly come on him like a thief or an attacking soldier. Why? Because he was lazy.

Let me remind you that work is ... spiritual. For us as believers our work is our worship. Our work is our witness.

Jesus understood this when He said...

John 4:34 - “My food (satisfaction),” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

John 17:4 - I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

So our lives are to be consumed with work that becomes our worship of God and a witness to a lost world.

1 Corinthians 15:58b - Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

As believers, all that we do with our waking hours is done before the Lord. For us as believers, every waking hour becomes an opportunity to do the work of the Lord as a husband or wife in marriage, as a mom or dad in parenting, as a volunteer in serving at church or somewhere in the community, and as an employee or employer. It is all work that is good and spiritual. You can't separate your work from your spiritual life.

But don't misunderstand. We are not saved by our good works, but we are saved for good works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

We don't work for our salvation, but we work out our salvation.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

So let me give you from Proverbs some **STREET SMARTS FOR YOUR WORK:**

Let me show you how to find meaning in your work. Let me show you how to make a valuable contribution to your company, your team, your family and your church. Most importantly, let me show you how to glorify God in your work.

1. TAKE INITIATIVE.

The wise person takes initiative in their work ... in finding work, in going to work, and in doing their work.

Proverbs 6:9 - How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Get up and do what you have to do. Diligent workers don't procrastinate. A sluggard is always finding excuses not to get started.

Proverbs 22:13 - The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!"

He imagines all kinds of reasons why he shouldn't get to work. Take the initiative to start doing what you know you need to do. Write that letter. Start that project. Pay off that debt. Take initiative.

2. BE PRODUCTIVE.

The wise person has dreams and goals, and then puts them into action. The foolish sluggard craves things, but never goes to work to produce. Remember this all starts in a field and in a vineyard. The lazy man has no produce because he has not done any work. He daydreams all day long.

Proverbs 21:25-26 - The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.

The sluggard says, "Someday I'll make it big. I'll meet the right person who knows someone who knows someone who will offer me a great job. Someday the husband of my dreams will just walk up to me. Someday my credit card debt will just disappear. Someday I'll be as committed to Christ as I need to be. Someday I'll learn my Bible and teach it to others.

Proverbs 26:15 - The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

The sluggard is so lazy that he never finishes what he starts. How many unfinished projects do you have going in your life? An assignment that hasn't been completed? A room that hasn't been painted? A call that hasn't been made? Be productive.

3. DEMONSTRATE INTEGRITY.

Remember as believers our work is part of our worship and our witness. So do your work with integrity that reflects the character of your Lord.

Colossians 3:22 - Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Colossians 3:23 - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

No matter where you work, you have one Big Boss, the Lord. To work with integrity means being honest and not cutting corners or doing sloppy work. Your boss should be able to trust you. Do your work as though the Lord was watching you ... because He is.

4. SHOW INTENSITY.

Again, Colossians 3:23 says to work at what you do with all your heart. As believers, we should be among the hardest workers in our company or school or plant. Why? Because we are working at it with all of our heart as worship to God.

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

This is a hilarious image. A lazy person is like a door swinging on hinges. When the alarm goes off, rather than getting up to start the day with productive work, they just keep hitting the snooze button and turning over to go back to sleep ... like a door turning on a hinge. Work hard; show intensity.

5. STAY BALANCED.

Some people are at the other end of the spectrum. They're so obsessed with their work that they can never take time for their relationship with the Lord or with their family.

Proverbs 19:23 - The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.

God set the example for us in this. Genesis shows how God worked for six days in creating the universe then He rested on the seventh day. Why? God didn't need rest, so He must have done it for another reason. He did it to build a pattern or rhythm into His creation ... a rhythm of work and rest, work and rest, work and rest. Balance your work with your relationship with the Lord, with your family and the other important priorities in life.

6. TRUST GOD.

Pray about your work. Don't leave God out of your work life.

Proverbs 16:3 (ESV) - Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

You'll find true success in life.

Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

When you wake up in the morning, give thanks. When you park your car and walk into your work, give thanks. When you go to sleep at the end of the day, give thanks.

Our work is part of our worship and our witness. So from the time we get up in the morning to the time we lay our heads on our pillows at night, as believers we are to do the work of the Lord ... loving our family, managing our homes, going to work, going to school, volunteering in our church and community. To come to the end of a day exhausted is a good day. That's what God gave us days for ... to serve Him and to love others.