

“Go You Sluggard!”

I believe in counselors and have seen a few different counselors as an adult. I am typically a very teachable person and receive correction well. I love when counselors tell me to read a specific book or research something. Most know my testimony with burnout, and I found freedom from it with God and a book my counselor recommended. The book was about adrenal fatigue, and it absolutely changed my life. There was one time though that a counselor really offended me. I was explaining my situation and seeking advice and she said, “Do you think you might be a lazy person?” I probably had a look on my face like I had just been slapped. I told her no. I’m in the office bright and early six days a week. I do all the cooking, I clean, I run all the errands, do all the house projects, take care of four properties at the church, handle everyone’s affairs, and don’t sit down at the end of the day until everything is done. But I learned something. You can be busy but not make progress. Am I just content staying busy? Do I need to question if I need to change some things in my life in order to keep growing spiritually and physically. Because if I am not careful, I can use my busyness as an excuse to not have to do hard things.

Today I want to teach from the topic of laziness. I have titled this sermon “Go you sluggard.” That is such a fun word...sluggard. Next time somebody cuts me off in traffic I’ll say, “Oh what a sluggard.”

The seven deadly sins were a list compiled by Catholics in 600 AD. Many preachers have done teaching series out of them. Most of us know them: pride, envy, gluttony, lust, greed, and sloth. Now when we look at this list, the spirit of sloth seems out of place. I mean lust is very bad, pride leads to our downfall, gluttony leads to all kinds of health problems...but laziness? Is it really that bad? Is it really “deadly.” Sitting on a couch with Cheetos binge watching Netflix may not kill you, but it can prevent you from living out your calling or growing in areas the Lord wants you to grow in. Laziness can prevent you from dealing with problems, fixing a bad situation, and even spiritual disciplines. We have been called the generation of apathy. If we have to do something, we often say, “what’s the bare minimum?” As an example, I really like how my school grading system works. My classes our eight weeks long and I have typically one assignment a week. The assignment could be a quiz, a paper, or a discussion post. Every class has a possible 1000 points. Each assignment is typically 100-200 points. It’s cool because I can see my total points as I go through the class. It never fails by week six or seven I already have enough points to get a B. I can’t tell you how many times I have been tempted to just not do the final paper or quiz and take the B.

You and I are really blessed and cursed with comfort. Praise God we live in a free country and our problems are typically minimal. We have more access to education and information than all of our ancestors combined. We could sit in our living room and without moving say, “Alexa order a pizza. Alexa, go to amazon and order me the shoes I have in my cart.” In thirty minutes, you will have dinner and the next day your shoes will be at your door. We are blessed with comfort, but that comfort can be a curse as well. We get too comfortable. We spend too much time on our phones, watching TV, or sleeping.

Now, I want to give a couple disclaimers. The first is to understand that we can only at the speed of our bodies. If we have a disability, if we have a condition, if we are just flat out old. It doesn’t

mean we are lazy. The second disclaimer is that there is a difference between laziness and leisure. I watch 10 hours of commercial free football every Sunday. I work really hard all week long and sometimes I'm still in the office at 6pm on Saturday to really make sure I have everything done before Sunday. 10 hours of football is not lazy in my case, it is rest from the week. If I don't do that rest, I suffer horribly the next week. Leisure is "freedom provided by the cessation of activities." Laziness on the other hand is being "disinclined to activity or exertion." Do you see the difference? Laziness is the "don't want to." My goal today is to not have you write out a five-year plan or help you become an entrepreneur. My goal is to address the "want to."

If you have your Bibles go with me to the book of Proverbs. Solomon had a lot to say about laziness in the Book of Proverbs. We are going to look at two places in Proverbs; one in chapter 6 and one in 26. Let's begin in chapter 6 beginning at verse 1:

My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger, 2 If you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth, 3 Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor. 4 Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids; 5 Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter's hand and like a bird from the hand of the fowler. 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest"— 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.
— ***Proverbs 6:1-11 NASB1995***

Solomon here is not saying rest is bad and that you should always be working. Again, it is a heart issue. He is saying if there is a heart issue, don't stop until you have resolved it. He says to his lazy son, observe, learn, and change your ways. In this second portion of Scripture we are going to see Solomon seeing something and using it as an example. Go with me to Proverbs 24 beginning at verse 30:

I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, 31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. 33 "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," 34 Then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.
— ***Proverbs 24:30-34 NASB1995***

Solomon observed how this lazy man let his property go. Not only was this really bad for the property, but the lazy man was now a public disgrace. So, what are some ways to tell if you are a sluggard. Let me give you a couple marks of laziness. If you are constantly procrastinating, you may be a sluggard. Proverbs 20:4 says, "The sluggard does not plow after the autumn so he begs during harvest." If you are always neglecting your responsibilities, you may be a sluggard. If you make a lot of excuses, you might be a sluggard. Proverbs 22:13 says, "there is a lion outside I will be killed in the streets." Basically, making up a hypothetical situation to avoid leaving the

house. If you lack initiative, you may be a sluggard. Whatever level of “sluggardness” you have, there is hope in the Word of God. I want to encourage you today with some simple things to help remove the spirit of sloth from your life.

Removing the Spirit of Sloth

#1 – Cultivate a great Fear of the Lord.

Moses in Egypt told Pharaoh, “Let my people go.” He did not say, “Let my people go so that we may possess the Promised Land.” Moses told Pharaoh, “Let my people go that we may worship in the wilderness.” John Bevere said, “Why would Moses want to bring the people to the Promise before showing them the Promiser?” So many times, in the wilderness the Israelites complained and wanted to go back to Egypt. They never made it to the Promised land because they did not cultivate a fear of God. They wanted to worship anything that met their needs even if it was a golden calf made out of their own jewelry. Laziness is more difficult to overcome when you don’t have a healthy fear of God.

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Before we google how to be less lazy, or before we buy a book on overcoming the spirit of sloth, let’s consult the God who created everything and knows everything. Pastor Luis shared on our Midweek Jeremiah 33:3 which says, “Call to Me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” We have a promise from God that He will hear us and answer us. Are we being diligent to cry out to God and say, “Lord, I have this issue with laziness, and I want to be more productive and grow in many areas. Bless me Lord with wisdom and revelation in this area in my life.” Then you write down what you feel He says to you and then keep crying out and keep writing things down until you find the revelation.

Nikki taught me a great lesson years ago. If you pay attention your family members can be used mightily by the Lord to give you revelation from heaven. I remember years ago Nikki said, “I would rather hear, ‘babe, I feel the Lord is saying that we need to...’” Rather than, “Babe, I think we need to...” She said, “you will have my agreement and buy in if I know you first sought the Lord and have confidence that He spoke to you.” That’s why in 2019 when I said to Nikki “I believe the Lord is saying now is the time to move to Texas” it was an immediate yes. Think about the comfort we had moving across the country with no job. We had comfort because we first heard from the Lord. Where He guides, He provides. Laziness may not be up there with moving across the country, but God definitely cares about your desire to remove the spirit of sloth.

#2 – Find Instruction and influence.

If there is a problem in my life not only will I go to God first, but I will exhaustively research the issue. I will buy books on it, watch YouTube videos, listen to sermons, get advice from trusted friends. I love that I am surrounded with Foursquare pastors in this area. If there is a ministry God has put on my heart I won’t just research and pray, I will reach out. I will ask my pastor friends what they did in this area. I’ve asked pastor friends, “What rules did you have when your kids

got to dating age?” or “Any advice before I start teaching my kid how to drive?” Solomon said, “Go to the ant, observe her ways and be wise.”

You may have a friend who seems to have a good rhythm and routine. You observe that their house is always clean, they are regular at the gym, and they seem to take initiative. Take that friend out to lunch and say, “How do you do it?” As an example, my office and daily life routines were taught to me by my mentor. I was 19 and taking on my first ministry and I asked him, “What does a pastor do? Can you give me a ‘day in the life’ of Pastor Andre?” And he did. Reaching to someone for advice on laziness also provides the opportunity for accountability. Be humble enough to accept advice and correction so that you can grow. Partner with someone to help keep you accountable. And to do that you will need point number #3:

#3 – Set S.M.A.R.T. goals.

Many of you may already know the acronym for S.M.A.R.T. goals. It stands for goals that are specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time bound.” Goals can’t be vague they need to be specific. You could say, “I want to get healthy, or I want to lose weight,” but you can get more specific and say, “I want to lose 10 pounds.” Next goals need to be measurable. Another way of saying that is that you can track your progress. In the weight loss example, how can you measure your goal if you don’t have a scale? Next, goals need to be actionable. You can’t say you want to lose weight then eat the same stuff and not get a gym membership. If your goal is to lose 10 pounds, then what actions will you take? I am gonna remove the junk food from my house. I’m gonna go on a 10-minute walk every day. I’m gonna buy a fit bit and try to hit 10,000 steps a day. Next, our goals need to be relevant. Mainly relevant to God. Losing weight is very relevant as we are to take care of our temple. But relevant in that you don’t want too many goals or pursue goals that are contrary to God’s will. Finally, goals should be time bound. Consider the difference between, “I want to lose 10 pounds” and “I want to lose ten pounds in ten weeks.” The time bound aspect helps you keep your goal measurable. You know that you can lose a pound a week and get to ten pounds lost in ten weeks. Or let’s say you want to read more. So, you say I am gonna read a book a week. Awesome, how many pages do you need to read a day to hit that goal?

Some of us may be thinking, “that’s a lot of work.” That’s so much planning and thinking...I’m too lazy to even work on my laziness. Well, let me help you with that with our next point:

#4 – Break things down.

In Exodus 18 Moses’ father-in-law showed him how to break things down. Moses would sit all day listening to everyone’s complaints and being the judge. He told Moses to raise up leaders who could be over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

You may want to tackle your laziness all together. But you can also tackle one aspect of your laziness at a time. Let’s say the biggest thing that bothers you about your laziness is house messy your house is. Start there and start small. There is power in consistent little bites. Here is an example. In 2016 I published my second book. Do you know that I wrote that book in two weeks. All 60,000 words in two weeks while still working full time. Do you know how I did it?

On day one, I wrote an outline for each chapter. Then I devoted the first hour of my day to writing from those outlines. I was shocked when the whole project was done in two weeks. A little goes a long. Break things down. If you whole house is messy start with the kitchen. When that's done move to the closets. Break things down so you are not overwhelmed and then stay consistent. The final point here is a fun one:

#5 – Reward your progress.

In 2 Chronicles 15:7 it says, “As for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.” God says do all your work in six days and then reward yourself with a sabbath a day of rest from your work. So, let's say you go that house organized. Awesome, how about the reward of calling Molly Maid to come clean and give you a week off? Rewards don't have to be expensive or extravagant. My biggest reward is watching football on Sunday and resting. Set something up in advance that can serve as a motivator while you are working on the specific goal.

Let me conclude by getting a little serious. Stradivarius violin sold for 16 million and was played by an artist. Why is this violin so expensive. The name Stradivarius is synonymous with fine violins. This is true because Antonius Stradivarius insisted that no instrument constructed in his shop be sold until it was as near perfection as human care and skill could make it. Stradivarius observed, “God needs violins to send His music into the world, and if any violins are defective God's music will be spoiled.” His work philosophy was summed up in one sentence: “Other men will make other violins, but no man shall make a better one.” Stradivarius work ethic was motivated by his conviction or giving God his best. Although the spirit of sloth doesn't seem like such a “deadly sin” but it can be the thing that prevents you from fulfilling what God has called you to do.