

Principles from Proverbs: Career Success

The Blessing of Work

Introduction: The principle of productive industry (work) dates back to the earliest days of creation. Contrary to a popular theory, work is *not* a part of God's curse on man at the fall. In fact, almost immediately after the creation of Adam God gave him a specific task (Gen. 2:15)—*work*. Therefore, work is *not* a curse, but rather a blessing. God so constituted man that he is only happy and fulfilled when engaged in productive industry, commonly known as “work.”

I. Work is necessary to meet physical needs

He that laboreth laboreth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him. (Proverbs 16:26)

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough. (Proverbs 28:19)

He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding. (Proverbs 12:11)

A. Self-satisfaction is a legitimate motivation for work.

1. Communism failed because Marx and Lenin did not understand a fundamental fact of human nature: a man will work to benefit himself, but he will not work to benefit a community. All communal living meets its ultimate demise on this point.
2. The need or craving for physical satisfaction (food) should motivate work. Welfare programs that satisfy the craving without the work ultimately destroy the character and destiny of individuals.
3. Beware of get-rich-quick schemes promoted by “vain persons.” A “vain” person is someone who is “empty” or demonstrates little true “worth.” Talk is cheap. Success in any endeavor requires hard work.

B. Hard work is the best promise of success. Both satisfaction and plenty are promised to those who till their land—take full advantage of their resources and opportunities by diligent work.

II. Characteristics of a Good Worker

A. Plans and Prioritizes

Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house. (Proverbs 24:27)

1. Whatever the task, think it through first. Preparation begins mentally. Have a general plan for each day.
 - a. Make a list of priorities—either mental or written
 - b. Eliminate the unimportant—recognize you can only do so much in a day.
 - c. Generally, concentrate on the most difficult or time-consuming task first.
2. Make work a priority. The old adage “Business before pleasure” is Biblical. [Note: you must not work to the *neglecting* of the home, but your emphasis on the home should *not* cause you to neglect your work. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. said, “Duties never conflict.”]

C. Works Hard and Conscientiously

He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. (Proverbs 10:4)

The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want. (Proverbs 21:5)

1. To deal with a “slack hand” means to be negligent in work. Those who “live for weekends” rarely prosper!
2. Diligence always meets with reward. When opportunity and diligence meet, prosperity soon joins them! (Consider the prosperity of many Southeast Asian immigrants who only recently settled on American shores.)
3. A diligent man is disciplined in his thoughts. Hard work refines thinking toward prosperity. Diligent people are always thinking about how something can be done more efficiently, thus increasing productivity! They are master multi-taskers!

D. Obedient, Respectful, and Submissive to Superiors

As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters. (Proverbs 25:13)

1. Faithfulness is a key characteristic valued by employers.
2. Every Christian employee should be refreshing to his boss.

E. Timely

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame. (Proverbs 10:4)