

# PROVERBS – Lesson 7

## Work Vs. Laziness

By Beverly McKey

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Very often laziness is spoken of in humorous terms.
1. The most famous fictional lazy creature is the cartoon cat Garfield. The August 20, 2001 strip contains three sections.
  2. In the first one, Garfield smiles at the reader and says, "*I think I'll take a nap.*"
    - a. As he thoughtfully develops this notion, he adds, "*Then doze awhile...and then top it all off with a nice snooze.*"
    - b. Finally, as the smile remains intact, he provides his concluding advice: "*Remember, kids, for well-balanced rest, you must have something from the three basic sleep groups each day.*"
  3. While a lazy cat is humorous, laziness in people is not.
    - a. We should clarify up front that we are not talking about people who have an illness or disability that prevents them from working.
    - b. "Lazy people" are defined as those who are mentally and physically capable of work or contributing to the welfare of their families, yet they consistently do not.
- B. These underachievers have no goals or accomplishments and are likely to blame others for their failures.
1. There is a story that a man once made an offer to a group of vagrants on the street.
    - a. He offered one hundred dollars to the laziest man present.
    - b. All of them raised an arm except one man, who kept his hand in his pocket and pulled his pocket slightly open and said, "*Just put the money here.*"
  2. Panhandling, otherwise known as begging, has become common place in many cities in the United States today.
    - a. We have all seen people with cardboard signs at intersections saying "*Will Work for Food*".
    - b. While very few of these may be victims of unemployment, most simply find this an easy way to make enough money for food from day to day.
    - c. I personally approached a woman holding a sign to offer her work, but she gave me an excuse why she could not work that day, yet she continued to hold the sign.
    - d. I also had a young man approach me one day at a gas station saying he needed \$11 to replace a broken belt on his car, which he held in his hand.

- 1) About a week later, the same young man approached me at the CVS Store a few blocks away from the gas station with exactly the same story.
- 2) He had given this story to so many people during week that he didn't remember seeing me before.
- 3) So when I reminded him that I had given him \$20 the week before for the exact same story, he turned and walked away.

## II. LAZINESS WAS NOT CREATED BY GOD NOR IS IT ONE OF HIS CHARACTERISTICS.

A. Jesus said, *"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."* **John 5:17**

1. That only leaves the Devil as the originator of sloth, but when he convinces people to move in that direction, he is not encouraging them to follow his example.
2. Satan never rests. He keeps busy spreading destructive thoughts and practices to mankind.
  - a. erroneous philosophies
  - b. immorality
  - c. false doctrines in the church (which have captured some of our brightest men)
3. It is impossible to imagine Satan ever relaxing—even for a few moments.
  - 1) This means that while he is convincing us to relax and pursue pleasure, he is a hypocrite, since he never stops working.
  - 2) Satan actually has a great work ethic, but he uses it exclusively for the destruction of men's souls.

## III. THERE ARE MANY POSITIVE THINGS TO BE SAID FOR DILIGENCE AND MANY NEGATIVE THINGS TO BE SAID FOR LAZINESS.

A. Regardless of the cynical attitude about life that Solomon revealed in the book of Ecclesiastes, this statement is true:

**Ecclesiastes 9:10** – <sup>10</sup> *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."*

1. Whatever we want to accomplish, we must be diligent in doing it while we have the opportunity.
2. Opportunities can be lost while we postpone until a "more convenient time", which never seems to come.
  - a. Jesus worked under this assumption when He said: **John 9:4:** *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day: the night is coming when no one can work."*
  - b. **Luke 16:19-31** – The rich man learned too late that his chance

to be benevolent to Lazarus had ended when he died suddenly, as had his moment to be evangelistic toward his own brothers.

- B. A person's character can be easily seen in his attitude toward work and his ability to provide for his family will be the evidence.
1. It must be understood that, in Proverbs, the words "wealth" or "rich" most often means that their needs will be fully met instead of "luxuriously wealthy".
    - a. Some Televangelists use passages like this to preach a "gospel of prosperity", meaning that God has "promised" to make us wealthy."
    - b. Of course, in order to claim that promise you have to send him a donation.
    - c. This donation is called "seed money" that he ensures his viewers will grow and be returned to them many times over.
    - d. However, history has shown us that usually it is the televangelist who really prospers.
  2. What constitutes wealth or riches is varied by many factors.
    - a. The country where you live
    - b. Your educational level
    - c. Your work ethic
  3. Obviously, many people work very hard in important jobs but they will never become wealthy (as some define it), such as nurses, teachers, policemen, fireman and the military service.
  4. When we compare "wealth" in the United States to many other countries, even the poor in the US are wealthier than most of the rest of the world.
  5. Let's look at some examples from Proverbs:
    - a. **Proverbs 10:4** – *"He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich."*
    - b. **Proverbs 20:13** – *"Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread."*
    - c. **Proverbs 19:15** – *"Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, And an idle person will suffer hunger."*
- C. Sometimes we find that the lazy person will even resort to dishonest means in order to increase his income, rather than working harder.
1. This is not a new thing in modern times, Solomon pointed out this same problem.
    - a. **Proverbs 13:11**: *"Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase."*
    - b. In business those who lack ambition may cheat with a false system of weights.
    - c. They may charge a premium price for shoddy labor and

- substandard materials.
- d. Many such businesses are here today and out of business tomorrow because their bad reputation gets to be known.
  - e. The Law of Moses forbids such practices. **Leviticus 19:35-36** – “<sup>35</sup> *You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume.* <sup>36</sup> *You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.*” (Also found in **Deut. 25:13-16**)
2. On the other hand, hard workers are noticed and rewarded by their employers or by their customers.
    - a. They and their families prosper because of their diligence.
    - b. **Proverbs 28:19** – “*He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough.*”
    - c. **Proverbs 14:23** – “*All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*”
  3. Diligence often also results in honor:
    - a. **Proverbs 22:29** – “*Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.*”
    - b. The following proverb is referring to the “*woman who fears the Lord*” according to verse 30.  
**Proverbs 31:31** – “*Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*”
- D. When an employer seeks to hire someone, he wants an employee who is honest, hardworking and reliable because a lazy, dishonest employee is a handicap to his company.
1. Solomon said providing food for one’s family should motivate anyone to be a diligent worker: **Proverbs 16:26** – “*The appetite of laborers works for them; their hunger drives them on.*”
  2. And yet, some still lack the inclination to work altogether.
    - a. **Proverbs 10:4** – “*Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.*”
    - b. **Proverbs 12:27** – “*The lazy do not roast any game, but the diligent feed on the riches of the hunt.*”
  3. The avoidance of work only makes one’s life worse:
    - a. **Proverbs 18:9** “*One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.*”
    - b. **Proverbs 21:25** – “*The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.*”
- E. Even though diligent work brings wealth, we must remember that all of our prosperity is a gift from God.
1. As stewards over what God has entrusted to us, we are obligated to

manage it well.

2. We must resist being wasteful and be good accountants of our possessions.
3. While diligence in one's work is important to his success, we must not forget that "all good things" come from God.
  - a. Properly handling our finances means that we must not be wasteful and we must plan for the future.

**Proverbs 27:23-24** – *"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; <sup>24</sup> for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations."*

- b. Jesus told a parable about a man who planned for the future, but his plan was totally selfish.

**Luke 12:16-21** – *"<sup>16</sup> Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup> And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store **my** crops?'<sup>18</sup> So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down **my** barns and build greater, and there I will store all **my** crops and **my** goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to **my** soul, "**Soul, you** have many goods laid up for many years; take **your** ease; eat, drink, and be merry."<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'"*

<sup>21</sup> "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

4. Preparing for the future is certainly a Biblical concept.
  - a. **Proverbs 21:5** – *"The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty."*
  - b. **Proverbs 27:25-27** – *"<sup>25</sup> When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. <sup>27</sup> You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed your family and to nourish your female servants."*

5. However, we must not believe that the blessings we enjoy are all due to our own diligence and planning and forget that they came from God.
 

**James 4:13-15** – *"<sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; <sup>14</sup> whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

6. Planning for the future certainly does not mean "worrying about the future". Jesus spoke about this very issue as well:
 

**Matthew 6:31-34** – *"<sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore*

*do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*

### III. THE FOLLY OF LAZINESS

A. Many still remember the old Tonight Show starring Johnny Carson.

1. Occasionally, during his monologue, he would make a statement such as, *"It was really hot in Los Angeles today."*
  - a. Right on cue, Ed McMahon would ask, *"How hot was it?"*
  - b. The reply would be, *"It was so hot that the birds were using potholders when they pulled worms from the ground."*
  - c. The opposite weather condition might evoke the comment: *"It was so cold today that the lawyers were walking around with their hands in their own pockets."*

2. It almost seems as if Solomon had made the statement, *"I saw a really lazy man today."* and someone asks, *"How lazy was he?"* Solomon's answers, *"I'll tell you how lazy he was."*

a. He was so lazy that he wouldn't get up out of bed.

**Proverbs 6:9-11** – *"How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? <sup>10</sup> A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep — <sup>11</sup> so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man."*

- 1) Probably we have all had mornings when we just didn't want to get out of bed — especially when the alarm clock goes off unusually early.

a) However, the kind of condition described in this proverb is chronic laziness.

b) **Proverbs 19:15** – *"Slothfulness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger."*

- 2) The lazy person described here senses no spark of ambition whatsoever.

a) If he had his way, this man would remain in bed permanently.

b) **Proverbs 26:14** – *"As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed."*

i A door only moves when someone pulls or pushes it.

ii Even then, it doesn't go anywhere; it just goes back and forth on its hinges.

iii It never initiates any movement on its own.

b. He was so lazy that he refused to go outside because it's just too dangerous out there.

- 1) **Proverbs 26:13** – *"The lazy man says, "There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!"*

a) Is really likely that a fierce lion is just roaming the streets?

b) What makes this lazy man think so?

- 2) Maybe this was a more common attitude of the lazy person in Solomon's day, since he used this proverb twice:
- a) **Proverbs 22:13** – *"The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!"*
    - i Life is full of fearful things: terrorists, drive-by shooters, auto accidents, germs and viruses, cancer, being struck by lightning and much more.
    - ii If a person has no incentive to work or contribute to society, he can find some fearful reason not to go outside.
    - iii However, being fearful that we *"shall be slain in the streets"* is a preposterous way to live.
- c. He was so lazy he would not plow his field because the weather was never just right.
- 2) *"The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing."*
    - a) Although the best time to plow the ground is in the fall after the harvest.
    - b) The land needs to be prepared for the following year, but the lazy person will not do it then because it is too cold.
    - c) In the spring, he still can't plow because the rains make it difficult.
    - d) He just can't seem to find the right time to work; something always gets in his way.
    - e) The result is that when it is time for harvest, he has no crop because he never planted.
  - 2) Apparently, some in Paul's time subscribed to this same philosophy. Paul said: **2 Thessalonians 3:10** *"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."*
    - a) God made provisions for widows, the fatherless, and strangers. (**Deut. 24:19-21** and **Jas. 1:27**)
    - b) However, nowhere are provisions made for the lazy -- he must do without.
- d. He was so lazy that he did not take care of his property.
- 1) **Proverbs 24:30-34** – *"<sup>30</sup> I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; <sup>31</sup> and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. <sup>32</sup> When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: <sup>33</sup> a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; <sup>34</sup> so shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man."*

- 2) One might ask, *“How did this person ever end up with any land to begin with?”*
  - a) The Israelites’ land was passed down in the family from generation to generation.
    - i Undoubtedly, he had inherited it but had never done anything with it.
    - ii Perhaps he learned his lazy attitude from his father who had the land before him.
  - b) The condition of this land did not occur overnight; it was gradual.
    - i The evidence of persistent laziness is the deterioration caused by neglect of his land.
    - ii Where once there were profits and plenty, now there are barren fields and hunger.
- e. He was so lazy he wouldn’t do any work.
  - 1) **Proverbs 21:25** -- *“The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.”*
  - 2) All people have something that motivates them: popularity, wealth, social standing, reputation or favor with God.
  - 3) The man Solomon describes only has one overriding goal, to avoid work.
  - 4) When I was in my early teens, there was a television series called *“The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis”* (a comedy).
    - a) One of the main characters was a “beatnik” (a term generated in the sixties) for one who is against society’s established way of doing things. His name was Maynard G. Krebbs.
    - b) Every time anyone suggested that he find a job and “work”, he jumped like he was bitten by a snake and shrieked the word “work” as if it was a curse to be avoided.
    - c) The problem is that in real life, this attitude is not funny, it is self-destructive.
    - d) Ordinary people cannot expect to have food, shelter and clothing without working for it.
    - e) Maybe some rich “trust-fund” babies can get by with it, but certainly not the majority of people.
- f. He was so lazy that he could not be trusted to complete any job.
  - 1) **Proverbs 10:26** – *“As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy man to those who send him.”*
  - 2) Just as the taste of vinegar sets one’s teeth on edge and smoke is an painful irritant to the eyes, so the lazy man is an irritant and a frustration to the one who hires him to complete a task.
- g. He was so lazy that he would not even go out and hunt for food.



- 1) **Proverbs 19:15** – *“Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.”*
- 2) The same excuses the lazy man uses to avoid working, he also applies to hunting game, or any other productive activity.
- 3) He is willing to suffer hunger if necessary rather than working.
- h. He was so lazy that he refused to prepare food to eat.
  - 1) **Proverbs 12:27** – *“The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man’s precious possession.”*
  - 2) How is this possible, we ask? Surely, if this individual became hungry enough to actually hunt something, he would at least cook it.
  - 3) Solomon is attempting to show how deeply laziness is ingrained in the lazy person, and it gets even worse.
- i. He was so lazy that, once the food is prepared, he was too lazy to lift the food to his mouth.
  - 1) **Proverbs 19:24** – *“A lazy man buries his hand in the bowl, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.”*
  - 2) Surely Solomon is exaggerating in this proverb. He is trying to evoke a strong image, but it is not intend to be taken literally.
  - 3) The survival instinct would prevent a man from starving himself when food is in front of him, ready to be eaten.
- j. He was so lazy that he could only dream of possessing what honest toil would provide.
  - 1) **Proverbs 13:4** – *“The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.”*
  - 2) As close to success as this lazy soul ever gets is to imagine what it would be like to be rich.
  - 3) How sad to be imprisoned by one’s own laziness; even when he envies the prosperity of others and covets what they have.
  - 4) He knows that he will never achieve what he desires because he remains caught in a trap of his own making.
  - 5) It is simply a matter of “reaping what you sow”, but sadly he has not sown anything.

### III. CAN LAZINESS COST A PERSON HIS ETERNAL SOUL

A. Jesus described laziness as **wicked** in the Parable of the “Talents”, **Matthew 25:14-29**

1. A man traveling to a far country called three servants and gave each of them some money to manage while he was gone.
  - a. The “talents” referred to here is not a type of coin, but a measure of weight for gold, silver and bronze. I have used the current price for gold in the following conversions.
  - b. First, let’s convert talents to pounds/ounces and its see the value of the wealth these men were expected to manage:

- 1) shekel = 4/10 of an ounce (1/50 of a mina)
  - 2) 1 mina = 1.25 lbs
  - 3) 60 minas X 1.25 lbs = 75 lbs = 1 talent of gold
  - 4) 75 lbs = 1,200 oz.
  - 5) Gold = \$1,108 per ounce as of Aug 11, 2015
  - 6) 1,200 oz X \$1,108 = \$1,329,600 in US dollars = 1 talent of gold
- c. The parable was about three servants, each being entrusted with a portion of the master's wealth to manage in his absence.
- 1) The first servant was given five talents = \$6,648,000
  - 2) The second servant was given two talents = \$2,659,200
  - 3) The third servant was given one talent = \$1,329,600
- d. When the master returned, he called his servants in to account for the profit they had made with the funds they were given.
- 1) The first servant received five talents and he reported that he had gained five more for his master. \$6,648,000 profit
  - 2) The second servant received two talents and reported that he had gained two more. \$2,659,200 profit
  - 3) The third servant received one talent.
    - a) First, he made an excuse: *"Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid."* **Vs. 24-25**
    - b) Next, he took the easy way out (choosing not to work), he hid the talent in the ground until the master returned.
    - c) Surprisingly, when he reported to the master, he seemed to think the master would be satisfied to received back ALL of the money entrusted to him.
    - d) But the master was not pleased and he said, *"You wicked and lazy servant. You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest."*
    - e) It would have taken very little effort to deposit money in the bank, but he was too lazy even for that. Instead, he lost his good job because of his laziness, which the master called wicked.
    - f) The wicked servant was *"cast into outer darkness" where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* **Matt. 25:30**
- B. When a lazy person refuses to work, he brings suffering upon himself, but what if he has a family depending upon him?
1. In **I Timothy 5:3-8** Paul instructed Timothy on the duty of the church to care for "real widows"

- a. Paul begins by saying, "*If any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.*"
- b. Paul ends this passage by saying: **Vs 8** – "*But if anyone does not provide for his own (family), and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*"
- c. What is the difference between "family" and "household".
  - 1) Family can include extended family members, parents, brothers sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.
  - 2) The "household" refers especially to those who live in his house.
2. When laziness prevents a person from providing food, shelter and clothing for his family he is condemned as an unbeliever (some translations use the word "infidel").
3. What sin can you name that is worse than "unbelief".
  - a. **Hebrews 11:6** – "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*"
  - b. An unbeliever does not believe that "God is", that He exists.
  - c. No unbeliever will ever see Heaven and Paul said that the lazy person who does not provide for his family is WORSE than an unbeliever.
4. Every lazy person should have this passage written in big, bold, red letters attached to the refrigerator, the bathroom mirror, the back door and the front door of his house.
5. No one is more obviously a "fool" than the one who is willing to have his soul condemned eternally because he is lazy?

## II. WHAT ABOUT SPIRITUAL LAZINESS?

- A. Can a Christian be a diligent worker who provides well for the family and yet be lost because he is "spiritually lazy"? If so, what are the consequences?
  1. In **Matthew 13:4-8 & 18-23** Jesus tells a parable that answers this question.
  2. This is the parable of the Farmer who went out to sow seed on his plowed field.
    - a. The tossed the seeds in a sweeping fashion over the land.
    - b. It was inevitable that some did not fall on the plowed earth where they were intended.
  3. Some fell on the path around the field that had been hardened by walking on it.
    - a. There was no soil to cover the seed, it just lay on top of the hard packed soil.
      - 1) These seeds were then seen by birds who swooped down and picked up the seed and ate it.
      - 2) This seed never had an opportunity to grow.
      - 3) It never produced any fruit.

- b. Jesus said these seeds represented everyone who hears the word of the kingdom (the gospel message) and does not understand it.
  - 1) Because the hearer did not understand the message, it was easy for “*the wicked one*” (Satan) to snatch away the seed that was sown in his heart.
    - a) Why didn’t this hearer understand?
    - b) Maybe he really wasn’t interested so he didn’t pay attention.
    - c) Maybe he had never heard this message before so it didn’t make much sense to him.
    - d) Maybe he was curious, but not enough to ask any questions that might have helped him understand.
    - e) Maybe his life is consumed in worldly wickedness and he simply didn’t want anything to do with God or the Bible.
    - f) Maybe he was **just too lazy** to make the effort to understand?
    - g) He never produced any fruit.
  - 2) Whatever the reason, he had an opportunity to hear the word and he did not take advantage of it.
- 4. Some of the seeds fell on stony ground near the plowed ground where there was little earth to allow the seed to germinate.
  - a. Seeds have difficulty surviving in rocky soil.
    - 1) Rocky soil cannot hold moisture
    - 2) When the sun beats down on the tender shoot, the plant withers and dies.
    - 3) It never produces any fruit.
  - b. Jesus said these seeds represented those who hear the word of God and “immediately receives it with joy”.
    - 1) Then why did it die?
      - a) The “root” of his commitment to the gospel message was shallow.
      - b) When he sees that there are changes that need to be made in his life, he finds it too hard and quits.
      - c) When his old worldly friends mock him or persecute him because of his faith, he isn’t strong enough to stand fast.
      - d) He is also too **spiritually lazy** to invest the time for Bible study, prayer and attending worship and other classes that would build him up in the faith.
      - e) He never produced any fruit.
    - 2) The result is that he had an opportunity to hear the gospel and to grow, but he was too weak or too lazy to take advantage of it.
- 5. Some of the seeds fell among the thorns near the plowed land.
  - a. Those seeds also germinated quickly and grew into young plants.
    - 1) But the thorn bushes grew bigger and thicker as well.
    - 2) Soon the young plants were choked and died.
    - 3) They would never produce any fruit.

- b. Jesus said these seeds that fell among thorns represented one who hears the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becomes unfruitful.
  - 1) The cares of the world were his priority, so all of his time was committed to that priority.
  - 2) The deceitfulness of riches choked the word because he thought riches would make him happy and successful.
  - 3) He never really felt a need for God – he could do it himself.
  - 4) He never spent time learning the principles of living the Christian life or growing in faith.
  - 5) No one would call him lazy because he worked really hard on his job (grasping for riches), but he was definitely **spiritually lazy** and he never produced any fruit.
  - 6) The result is that he had an opportunity to hear the word of God and he exchanged it for the lure of riches.
- 6. Every seed that fell on the soft, plowed field grew quickly, became a mature plant and produced fruit, some even one-hundred times more than the one seed it took to create the plant.
  - a. These seeds represent the ones who hear the word of God and understand it.
    - 1) They invest the time in continued Bible study.
    - 2) They love attending worship and Bible classes every time it is made available.
    - 3) They are consuming the “bread of life” which makes them mature quickly.
    - 4) They are so grateful to God for the salvation He has offered through faith in Jesus Christ that they can’t wait to share that blessing with the lost around him.
    - 5) They learn that they are a part of the “body of Christ” and they eagerly participate in the work of the church.
    - 6) They learn that they cannot love God unless they love the children of God as well and help them when there is need.
    - 7) They understand that they have made a “life-time commitment” to serving God and they never intend to forsake that commitment – no matter what.
  - b. These Christians produce fruit in many, many ways.
- B. The church is described as a body (**Colossians 1:24**) whose individual parts all have a function (a job they are responsible for).
  - 1. A body is unified in one purpose. **Ephesians 4:3-6** -- <sup>3</sup>endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
  - 2. In this body, Christ is the head. **Colossians 1:18**
- C. Christians who never mature are a “handicap” to the church.

**Hebrews 5:12-14** – <sup>12</sup> *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.* <sup>13</sup> *For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.* <sup>14</sup> *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

1. It isn't normal for a baby to remain an infant for years and years.
  - a. A normal child grows, observes and learns more and more every day.
  - b. He begins to eat solid food more and more and milk less and less.
  - c. His muscles get stronger allowing him to walk and then run.
  - d. His mind develops so that he learns to speak and then to read.
  - e. If these things don't take place in the life of an infant, then there is a serious problem.
2. When I was a child, my father had a friend he worked with who had a child that failed to develop and we would go visit them periodically.
  - a. At that time, the child was twenty-one years of age and he was approximately the size of a three year old child.
  - b. His mind had never developed beyond infancy and he behaved as an infant and he had never even developed all of his teeth.
  - c. Thankfully, this child was well cared for and loved and he had no idea that life was supposed to be different for him.
  - d. His parents had to feed him, bathe him, carry him from place to place every day of his life. Imagine how limited their lives were.
3. This is how Paul is describing the Christian's who have remained "babes".
  - a. Are the underdeveloped Christians oblivious that there is so much more they were expected to achieve?
  - b. This handicap is a "self-imposed" condition since they could have grown and matured with more study of the Bible.
4. The underdeveloped child I knew had no choice; he was born that way. He would never have any responsibility for taking care of himself or for helping anyone else or learning God's word; and yet God will welcome him into heaven when his life was over.
  - a. The same may not be true for the underdeveloped Christian who remains an infant by choice.
  - b. When we have the ability to learn and grow as Christians and we are satisfied to remain an infant who watches while everyone else takes on the responsibilities of mature Christians – we will simply be judged as **lazy**, not helpless.

**IV. CONCLUSION – Let's end on this happy thought from Solomon, who also wrote Ecclesiastes: Chapter 1:24** – *"Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God."*