



# abcLinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on January 24-25, 2009

## this week's coreverse

*All hard work brings a profit,  
but mere talk leads only to poverty.*  
**Proverbs 14:23**

*A sluggard does not plow in season;  
so at harvest time he looks but  
finds nothing.* **Proverbs 20:4**

## usingablinks

### Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

### Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabile.org](http://adabile.org)>small groups.

See [adabile.org](http://adabile.org)>message recaps & Links for *ABCLinks* archives.



## Part Three of a Four Part Sermon Series

### "Your Work Matters to God"

"He's such a lazy kid" was how Eddy's mom described her 5th grader. She wasn't being mean, she was just exasperated after hearing a dismal report at a parent teacher conference. My wife, Janice, is a first year teacher; so though we've never met, Eddy is a kid I feel I know very well. Janice describes Eddy as being a bright, handsome kid who loves to make others laugh. But he had fallen behind to the tune of 25 past due assignments. He was failing, not because he wasn't smart, but because he wasn't doing his work. He had dug himself a huge hole and had no interest in climbing out. Lazy. Those were his mom's words. Sounds like she was right.

Janice and Eddy battled his laziness for several weeks after the conference. When Janice would challenge him to buckle down, Eddy would be filled with excuses. Then, his behavior began to decline. His laziness became a huge disruption to the class. Before long, Eddy had been suspended. He kept saying, "It doesn't matter, I'm going to a different school soon." Apparently, mom and dad were considering that as an option for him. Perhaps a new environment and fresh start would help Eddy refocus his education. But Eddy kept coming back to school. A second suspension. Then, a third. The consequences were mounting and becoming painful.

There was a day when something changed in Eddy. It began with a stern conversation in the hallway. Eddy's excuses were no longer working. Mom and dad were not going to pull him from the school. Lost recesses and fun time were getting old for him. Eddy trying one last time to squeeze something out his favorite excuse said to Janice, "I just want to go to another school." And in a moment of wisdom, Janice recalled a saying she had heard from a wise parent. "You know, Eddy. Wherever you go, somebody will always follow you. You. Wherever you go, there you are." Eddy didn't need a new school or a new teacher. Eddy needed a new Eddy. The beautiful thing about that moment in the hallway was that Eddy got it. He decided to change. He was determined to work.

Janice and Eddy set some goals together and in the two weeks before Christmas break, Eddy had completed all 25 missing assignments while staying up to speed with the current assignments. He willingly gave up his free time and recesses to get it all done. Eddy was learning a huge life lesson. He was learning that hard work pays off. Hard work can be fulfilling and necessary for success. He was also learning that laziness has consequences that bring pain and harm. He was learning that someone who dedicates himself to hard work avoids a lot of unnecessary strife in life.

As we continue our study about money through the wisdom of Proverbs, we may need to relearn a key element of finding financial freedom. It's financial freedom the old fashioned way - work really hard. That matters to God.

### Author information

*Phil Niekerk, senior small groups pastor*



**ada bible church**  
8899 cascade road se  
ada, mi 49301  
616.868.7005 | [adabile.org](http://adabile.org)



# personal bible studies

---

In the world where the proverbs were compiled, most people's livelihood was dependent on the agrarian society. Farms produced livestock and crops that a Jewish family would consume for themselves or sell for earnings. Being dependent on the land demanded hard work for success or even to survive.

When we think of the word "work" we often think of something that is difficult, tiring or to get relief from. But, work was not always that way. Read the verses from Genesis below. This was a time when work was painless, thornless and completely fulfilling. God gave mankind work as a gift.

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1.26-30*

When sin entered the world, the nature of work changed. It became difficult, painful and tiring. Man's work still mattered but it developed enemies, the chief of which was laziness. Proverbs speaks words of wisdom to those who work diligently and to those who wrestle with laziness. This week, we'll examine words that can affect our work both positively and negatively.

## Toil

When you lived in an agrarian society, you simply worked hard. Here's a shovel. There's a field. Get to work.

*He who works his land will have abundant food,  
but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. Proverbs 28:19*

How would you describe your work ethic? Where did you learn how to work? Has hard work ever been a necessity for your survival? Describe.

What fantasy would someone chase today that could negatively affect their work ethic? What fantasies are tempting for you to chase?

## Self Discipline

In an agrarian society, you were your own supervisor. Self-discipline was a necessity. A sleeping person valued comfort over freedom.

*He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son,  
but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son. Proverbs 10:5*

Are you a self-starter or do you need someone to push you? What tasks do you tend to want to "sleep" through? What are the consequences of neglecting these tasks?

## Excellence

There are two principles to consider in this proverb; the principle of tending and the principle of caring for your boss.

*He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,  
and he who looks after his master will be honored. Proverbs 27:18*

If you don't "tend" the fig tree, will it still produce fruit? How much and what quality?

In order to accomplish an excellent crop, diligence was needed before harvest time. Describe your pursuit of excellence in your work. How would your boss describe it? How would those who work with you describe your pursuit of excellence?

There's an interesting parallel in the second half of this proverb; taking care of **your** fig tree versus taking care of your boss. Based on your current work situation, how does this proverb strike you?

## Excuses

The proverbs describe the enemy of excellence and hard work as being the sluggard or someone who is lazy. The sluggard is always filled with excuses of why he can't work or why his work is unfruitful.

*The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road,  
a fierce lion roaming the streets!" Proverbs 26:13*

The most dangerous excuses are the ones we believe. What excuses are you tempted to believe?

I'm not qualified.    No one's hiring.    Not enough time.    Boss is a jerk.    Company politics.    Economy stinks.  
I don't have enough resources.    I'm just going to get burned.    Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Alternatives

Another enemy to a strong work ethic is cheating, finding shady alternatives to hard work. One shady option in the day of the proverbs was to move your neighbor's property marker in the dark of night. There is always someone you could cheat out of a few feet of land.

*Do not move the ancient boundary stone  
or encroach on the fields of the fatherless,  
for their defender is strong;  
he will take up their case against you. Proverbs 23:10,11*

What shortcuts are you tempted to take? Who are you cheating when you do? What lies do you tell yourself to justify that action?

Whose side is God on? What future implications should a cheater expect?

## leanin

Option 1: What was your first job? Did you like it? Tell why or why not.

Option 2: What is the most difficult job you have done? What made it a tough job?

## lookdown

Read together the five proverbs you've studied. Stop between each and discuss the word associated with the proverb. What is the wisdom taught in each?

Toil - Proverbs 28:19

Self-Discipline - Proverbs 10:5

Excellence - Proverbs 27:18

Excuses - Proverbs 26:13

Alternatives - Proverbs 23:10,11

## lookout

Compare today's work ethic with the work ethic of your parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. Has anything changed? Why?

What do you think is missing the most in today's work ethic?

## lookin

Which of the five proverbs has hit home with you this week? Tell why.

Have someone read Colossians 3.22-25. How do Paul's words compliment this week's proverbs?

How does this passage speak to what motivates us to work hard? Who's your boss?

What does this passage speak to someone who is struggling with their work, feels unfulfilled or has a boss who is difficult or unappreciative?

What message does this passage have for students at any level whether college, high school or grade school?

What should parents hear from this passage regarding their work as parents, especially stay-at-home parents?

Identify one thing that you desire to change in your work ethic over the next few months. Tell the group, then spend some time praying, asking God for courage and strength for growth in this area. Thank Him for revealing this area to you.