

Lesson 53 - The Character of Avoiding Laziness

1. What two words does the Bible use to refer to laziness, which is, not utilizing the God given time provided to us in a proper manner? **Proverbs 19:15**

EGW: The religion of Christ will be exemplified by its possessor in the life, in the conversation, in the works. Its strong principles will prove an anchor. Those who are teachers of the word should be patterns of piety, ensamples to the flock. Their example should rebuke idleness, slothfulness, and lack of industry and economy. The principles of religion exact diligence, industry, economy, and honesty. "Give an account of thy stewardship," will soon be heard by all. Brethren, what account could you render if the Master should now appear? Many of you are unready, and would surely be reckoned with the slothful servants. Precious moments are yet left you, and I entreat you to redeem the time. {RH, May 12, 1885 par. 12}

2. What do lazy people do to time? **Proverbs 18:9**

EGW: By rising early and economizing their moments, ministers can find time for a close investigation of the Scriptures. They must have perseverance, and not be thwarted in their object, but persistently employ their time in a study of the word, bringing to their aid the truths which other minds, through wearing labor, have brought out for them, and with diligent, persevering effort prepared to their hand. There are ministers who have been laboring for years, teaching the truth to others, while they themselves are not familiar with the strong points of our position. I beg of such to have done with their idleness. It is a continual curse to them. God requires them to make every moment fruitful of some good to themselves or to others. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." {RH, May 12, 1885 par. 10}

3. What are we told not to be as a person implying that the word "follower" is more than a thought process, an encouragement to activity in our relationship with God? **Hebrews 6:12**

EGW: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." {ST, June 12, 1884 par. 1}

The Lord looks with approval upon the works of his faithful servants. He says of the church of

Ephesus, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience;" for my name's sake thou "hast labored, and hast not fainted." But while he takes account of faithful service, he is no less exact to mark neglect of duty or its unwilling performance. It has always been the duty of God's chosen people to labor unselfishly; but some neglect the work they ought to do, and others are overburdened to make up for their deficiencies. If all would cheerfully do their part, they would be sustained; but those who complain and murmur at every step will receive neither help nor reward. {ST, June 12, 1884 par. 2}

4. What can the act of being idle with our time lead to? **1 Timothy 5:13**

EGW: It is best for every soul to closely investigate what mental food is served up for him to eat. When those come to you who live to talk, and who are all armed and equipped to say, "Report, and we will report it," stop and think if the conversation will give spiritual help, spiritual efficiency, that in spiritual communication you may eat of the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." These words express much. We are not to be tattlers, or gossipers, or talebearers; we are not to bear false witness. We are forbidden by God to engage in trifling, foolish conversation, in jesting, joking, or speaking any idle words. We must give an account of what we say to God. We will be brought into judgment for our hasty words, that do no good to the speaker or to the hearer. Then let us all speak words that will tend to edification. Remember that you are of value with God. Allow no cheap, foolish talk or wrong principles to compose your Christian experience. {FE 458.1}

5. What will happen with our "idle words" or gossipy words? **Matthew 12:36**

EGW: Closely connected with Christ's warning in regard to the sin against the Holy Spirit is a warning against idle and evil words. The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words. Often under a momentary impulse, prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are. It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be

condemned." {DA 323.1}

6. What were the women who left the sepulcher falsely accused of that goes back to idleness leading to gossiping? **Luke 24:9-11**

EGW: As yet there had been no revelation of Christ to the eleven, and the women went to tell the disciples the wondrous news. "And as they went to tell the disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Thus Christ made an appointment for a public meeting with his brethren in Galilee. {YI, July 21, 1898 par. 6}

"It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the Mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." {YI, July 21, 1898 par. 7}

"Go your way," said the angel to the women; "tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee." What a comforting message was thus given to Peter! The last look Jesus had given Peter was after the disciple's thrice-uttered denial. Peter was not forgotten by Christ, and this mention of his name signified to the repentant disciple that he was forgiven. {YI, July 21, 1898 par. 8}

Said the angel: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but he is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." {YI, July 21, 1898 par. 9}

The wonderful instruction that Christ had given his disciples was never to lose its force, but they had to be reminded of the lessons which he had repeatedly given them while he was yet with them. {YI, July 21, 1898 par. 10}

7. What are we not to be slothful at that our employers or clientele would appreciate? **Romans 12:11**

EGW: It is not a virtue for men or women to excuse slow bungling at work of any character. The slow habits must be overcome. The man who is slow, and does his work at a disadvantage, is an unprofitable workman. His slowness is a defect that needs to be seen and corrected. He needs to exercise his intellect in planning how to use his time so as to secure the best results. When one is forever at work, and the work is never done, it is because mind and heart are not put into the work. It takes some persons ten hours to do that which another accomplishes readily in five. Such workmen do not bring tact and method into their labor. There is something to be learned every day

as to how to improve in the manner of labor so as to get through the work, and have time for something else. It is the duty of every worker not merely to give his strength but his mind and intellect to that which he undertakes to do. Some who are engaged in domestic labor are always at work; it is not because they have so much to do, but they do not plan in such a way as to have time. They should give themselves a certain time to accomplish their task, and make every move tell. Dullness and ignorance are no virtue. You can choose to become stereotyped in a wrong course of action because you have not the determination to take yourselves in hand and to reform, or you may cultivate your powers to do the very best kind of service, and then you will find yourselves in demand anywhere and everywhere. You will be appreciated for all that you are worth. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." {FE 316.1}

8. What is slothfulness considered in the eyes of God? **Matthew 25:24-26**

EGW: The law of God condemns not only what we have done but what we have not done. We will, in the day of final accounts, find a register of the sins of omission as well as the sins of commission. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. It is not enough that by your own measurement of character you prove you have done no positive wrong. The fact that one has done no positive good will be enough to condemn him as a wicked and slothful servant. {16MR 234.2}

9. What did Sodom have an "abundance" of that contributed to their sinfulness? **Ezekiel 16:49**

EGW: Where there is an abundance of idleness, Satan works with his temptations to spoil life and character. If youth are not trained to useful labor, whether they be rich or poor, they are in peril; for Satan will find them employment after his own order. The youth who are not barricaded with principle, do not regard time as a precious treasure, a trust from God for which every human being must give an account. Money is also a trust from God, and is not given to parents to use in an extravagant way to gratify pride, to the ruin of themselves and their children, but that they may be the means of doing good to their fellowmen. {YI, October 18, 1894 par. 5}

10. What is Sodom and Gomorrah set as? **Jude 1:7**

EGW: This is the principle that needs to be cultivated. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" [John 15:13, 14]. In submission to the principles of the law of God is our only safety. The world is in great need of salt, which Christian precept and practice can introduce into it. The world is following in the

steps of the inhabitants of the Noachian world and of the Sodomites. Of the days of Noah it is written. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" [Genesis 6:5]. And Jude says, "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" [Jude 7]. {19MR 105.1}

11. What do idleness and slothfulness lead to when applied spiritually? **Ecclesiastes 10:18** [Give the literal answer but then supply a spiritual application of the object.]

EGW: Solomon sat upon a throne of ivory, the steps of which were of solid gold, flanked by six golden lions. His eyes rested upon highly cultivated and beautiful gardens just before him. Those grounds were visions of loveliness, arranged to resemble, as far as possible, the garden of Eden. Choice trees and shrubs, and flowers of every variety, had been brought from foreign lands to beautify them. Birds of every variety of brilliant plumage flitted from tree to tree, making the air vocal with sweet songs. Youthful attendants, gorgeously dressed and decorated, waited to obey his slightest wish. Scenes of revelry, music, sports, and games were arranged for his diversion at an extravagant expenditure of money. {HR, June 1, 1878 par. 5}

But all this did not bring happiness to the king. He sat upon his magnificent throne, his frowning countenance dark with despair. Dissipation had left its impress upon his once fair and intellectual face. He was sadly changed from the youthful Solomon. His brow was furrowed with care and unhappiness, and he bore in every feature the unmistakable marks of sensual indulgence. His lips were prepared to break forth into reproaches at the slightest deviation from his wishes. {HR, June 1, 1878 par. 6}

His shattered nerves and wasted frame showed the result of violating Nature's laws. He confessed to a wasted life, an unsuccessful chase after happiness. His is the mournful wail, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through. A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things." {HR, June 1, 1878 par. 7}

12. Where does a lazy person spend too much time? **Proverbs 26:14**

EGW: How prevalent is the habit of turning day into night, and night into day. Many youth sleep soundly in the morning, when they should be up with the early singing birds, and be stirring when all nature is awake. Let youth practise regularity in the hours for going to bed, and for rising and they

will improve in health, in mind, in spirit, in disposition. Let them purpose in their hearts that they will bring themselves under discipline, and practise orderly rules. God is a God of order, and it is the duty of the youth to observe strict rules; for such practices will work for their advantage. {YI, September 7, 1893 par. 5}

13. What do lazy people try to get out of doing? **Proverbs 21:25**

EGW: The prince of darkness has set in operation every device to ruin and destroy man. He has legions of evil workers uniting with him to obliterate the image of God in our youth. I ask those who are acquainted with truth, who know righteousness, What are you doing? Are you using your influence to bring into the ranks of the Lord's army all whom you can possibly reach? Have you yourself enlisted to fight the battles of the Lord? As Christians it is our work to represent Christ. We are to set an example that shall be in striking contrast to the practises of this evil age. He that is selfish will neglect to do the very work he ought to do, and take up a work that God has not given him to do. "He that loveth pleasure ["sport," margin] shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honor." "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not." {RH, August 11, 1896 par. 5}

14. What do lazy people tend to do to get out of doing something? **Proverbs 22:13, Proverbs 26:13**
[Hint: it is not about the lion but what it represents.]

EGW: The power of speech is one of God's good gifts to man. In the day of final accounts, we shall find that the tongue was a power for good or a power for evil. It is often used in making hard speeches, in speaking words that descend like a desolating hail upon tender plants. There is much dishonesty, much exaggeration, in the use of the tongue. All these things come under the head of idle words; and for every idle word that men utter, they must give an account at the bar of God. {ST, November 20, 1884 par. 10}

15. What do the results look like from a lazy person? **Proverbs 24:30-31**

EGW: You fail to carry through what you undertake. You have not disciplined yourself to regularity. System is everything. Do but one thing at a time, and do that well, finishing it before you begin a second piece of work. You should have regular hours for rising, for praying, and for eating. Many waste hours of precious time in bed because it gratifies the natural inclination and to do otherwise requires an exertion. One hour wasted in the morning is lost never to be recovered. Says the wise

man: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelth; and thy want as an armed man." {5T 181.3}

16. When a diligent person tries to work with a lazy person, what is it like in approaching a lazy person?
Proverbs 15:19

EGW: Many who might be fruitful in God's service become bent on acquiring wealth. Their whole energy is absorbed in business enterprises, and they feel obliged to neglect things of a spiritual nature. Thus they separate themselves from God. We are enjoined in the Scriptures to be "not slothful in business." Romans 12:11. We are to labor that we may impart to him who needs. Christians must work, they must engage in business, and they can do this without committing sin. But many become so absorbed in business that they have no time for prayer, no time for the study of the Bible, no time to seek and serve God. At times the longings of the soul go out for holiness and heaven; but there is no time to turn aside from the din of the world to listen to the majestic and authoritative utterances of the Spirit of God. The things of eternity are made subordinate, the things of the world supreme. It is impossible for the seed of the word to bring forth fruit; for the life of the soul is given to nourish the thorns of worldliness. {COL 51.3}

17. What kills a lazy person from accomplishing anything? **Proverbs 21:25**

EGW: (no additional comment as compared to what was supplied previously on this verse)

18. Why will a lazy person not pull his hand out? **Proverbs 19:24, Proverbs 26:15, Proverbs 20:4**

EGW: (no comment)

19. What activity helps beat back laziness? **Proverbs 31:27**

EGW: Let the children and youth learn from the Bible how God has honored the work of the everyday toiler. Let them read of "the sons of the prophets" (2 Kings 6:1-7), students at school, who

were building a house for themselves, and for whom a miracle was wrought to save from loss the ax that was borrowed. Let them read of Jesus the carpenter, and Paul the tentmaker, who with the toil of the craftsman linked the highest ministry, human and divine. Let them read of the lad whose five loaves were used by the Saviour in that wonderful miracle for the feeding of the multitude; of Dorcas the seamstress, called back from death, that she might continue to make garments for the poor; of the wise woman described in the Proverbs, who "seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands;" who "giveth meat to her household, and their task to her maidens;" who "planteth a vineyard," and strengtheneth her arms;" who "stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, . . . reacheth forth her hands to the needy;" who "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Proverbs 31:13, 15, R.V.; 31:16, 17, 20, 27. {Ed 217.1}

20. Instead of being idle servants or idle believers sitting back relaxing in the truth, what does Jesus tell us to go do? **Matthew 20:3-7**

EGW: Wake up, brethren and sisters, wake up. Sleep no longer. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Jesus calls you, saying, "Go work today in my vineyard." Whoever has received the Holy Spirit, will make it manifest; for all his powers will be employed in the most active service. All who actually receive Christ by faith, work. They feel the burden of souls. God now calls upon every one who has a knowledge of the truth, who is a depositary of sacred truth, to arise and impart the light of heaven to others. Those who have been illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will show its office work upon life and character. They will be mediums through which the Holy Spirit will communicate light and knowledge to others. The wonderful truth revealed to us in these last days, is to be revealed to others. "The end of all things is at hand." The Lord has been speaking to you in America, and may the Lord forbid that at the time of great illumination, darkness should come upon you because you fail to walk in the light that has been given. Darkness corresponding to your light will surely come upon you, if you do not now arouse from your slumbers, and shake off your useless musings and selfish indulgences, and trade diligently with your Lord's goods. Move out from your pleasant homes. Develop the talents God has given you, and tell to others what the Holy Spirit has communicated to you. God requires you to work in proportion to the light he has given. {RH, December 5, 1893 par. 10}