

Study Guide- July 4-8

Monday July 4. Read Proverbs 26:14-15. The author of Proverbs paints us a couple of vivid word pictures here. Just imagine it: this person reaches into the potato chip bag, but it takes too much effort to take his hand back out again. One imagines the sluggard sitting with mouth half-open, eyes focused on nothing, the mind a blank. This isn't a case of mental deficiency. This is a case of character deficiency. The Bible, particularly the Book of Proverbs, has quite a lot to say about what will happen to those who develop laziness to a high art. A sluggard is a person completely dominated by a sin called slothfulness. In ordinary language, slothfulness is basic, serious laziness. Unlike some sins, which involve doing wrong actions, slothfulness is the sin of doing nothing. That's right – just nothing. Nothing bad and nothing good either. People with this fatal distraction do nothing to hurt someone else and nothing to help someone who is in need right before their eyes. They simply do nothing. Has it occurred to you that overt disobedience isn't the only kind of sin? In what areas might you be guilty of sinning by doing nothing? Spend some time today thinking about this.

Tuesday, July 5– Read Proverbs 15:19. The whole goal of a lazy person is to avoid effort. A sluggard or sloth always looks for the path of least resistance. The best way sometimes looks too painful or too difficult, so we avoid it, doing something easier instead. At the time, this may seem like the easiest path to take because it takes effort to think and plan. Actually, when we are slothful, we are shooting ourselves in the foot. The longer we let things slide, the harder our lives will be in the future. God always blesses those who act uprightly. It won't be easy at the time, but it always saves future trouble. If we are truly motivated to avoid problems, we will deal with them when they first show up and are still small and easy to handle. What chores do you tend to put off doing? What problems in your relationships do you tend to ignore? Is there something you need to mend now, before it gets any worse?

Wednesday, July 6 – Read Proverbs 22:13. A slothful person is really good at coming up with excuses. We can make ourselves sound so responsible, so caring, so sincere when all the time our real motives are simply laziness. "I would help you, but I just don't want to put my family in danger." "I would stop by, but I might catch the disease too." Sometimes fear motivates these excuses, but often we are excusing ourselves from effort, not danger. We just don't want to deal with the inconvenience. The sad thing is that when we excuse ourselves from effort, we are also excusing ourselves from blessing. What excuses have you used recently to keep from doing something that disturbed your comfort? What do you think your real motive was?

Thursday, July 7 – Read Proverbs 24:30-34. Have you ever heard of the Law of Entropy? Even if we don't recall its name, we know it well. Entropy is the general trend of the universe toward disorder. What happens when you clean the house perfectly, and then sit back with your feet up for a few days? It looks like a whirlwind went through. In spite of a lifetime of experience with entropy, we don't really believe in it. We still somehow think that everything will stay the same until we get around to dealing with it. We don't realize that the time will come when things have gone too far, when our chance is over. Weeds will take over the vineyard. The house will fall down around us. The relationship will die. The opportunity to serve will pass. The hurting person will languish. Just because we did nothing, does not mean nothing happened. Where is entropy taking over in your life? What action do you need to take to bring back order?

Friday, July 8 – Read Hebrews 6:12. Slothfulness is one of the faces of impatience. Some people who lack patience grow frustrated and angry. Some just lie down and quit when things start to get hard. If something isn't easy the first time, the sloth doesn't bother to keep trying. If the answer doesn't come through instantly, he quits praying. If he can't get rid of a sin on the first try, he doesn't bother any more. This isn't what God has called us to be. Instead, He has called us to strive for faith and patience. Faith believes that God is working, even when we can't see it. Patience believes that His solution and His timing will be perfect. Identify one area of your spiritual life where laziness has taken over. Is it prayer? Is it Scripture reading? Is it ministry? Something else? What can you do to change this?