

7 Life-giving Virtues Diligence
Colossians 3:23-24; Proverbs (selected passages)
WRCoB 7.24.22

Complete the following quotes:

1

1. *Early to bed, early to rise*
 - a. *makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise*
(Benjamin Franklin)
2. *Nothing worth having*
 - a. *comes easy (Ted Roosevelt)*
3. *There is no substitute*
 - a. *for hard work (Thomas Edison)*
4. *Hard work*
 - a. *never killed anybody*
5. *Hard work never killed anyone*
 - a. *but why take the chance? (Ronald Reagan)*

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We come to the 4th sermon in our series
On the 7 life-giving virtues.

Today we look at the virtue Diligence.

Thus far, we have looked at the virtues of
Chastity, Temperance, and Charity

Virtues that counter the sins of Lust, Gluttony and Greed

You will not find the list of 7 deadly sins in your Bible.
Nor will you find the 7 life-giving virtues.

The 7 Deadly Sins were created by early church leaders.

As the early church studied the Bible and human sin
They discovered that all sin seemed to be rooted
In one or more of the 7 deadly sins.

They then created a list of the 7 life-giving virtues
As opposing qualities to offset the sins.

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The other thing I want to say is that
These sins are nobody else's sins.

They're our sins.

Lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride
Are sins we commit.

The sooner we name them and claim them
The sooner we can fight them off
The sooner we can live meaningful lives.

The other reality here is that we cannot will ourselves
To live virtuous lives.

We can't win the battle for our souls by ourselves.
It takes determination . . . yes!

But along with determination
It takes the grace of God and the power of the HS.

Watchman Lee, an early Chinese Christian leader once said

2

Do not grow overconfident following a few victories. Should you not rely upon the Holy Spirit you will soon be thrown

once more into a distressing experience. With holy diligence you must cultivate an attitude of dependency.

Arm yourselves with tools that fight off temptation
And remember you can't beat temptation without God.

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The virtue diligence holds sway over the sin of sloth.

The Bible defines sloth this way.

3

Proverbs 6:9-11NRSVUE

⁹ How long will you lie there, O lazybones?

When will you rise from your sleep?

¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber,

a little folding of the hands to rest,

¹¹ and poverty will come upon you like a robber,

and want, like an armed warrior.

There's a great definition of diligence

From the website *Healing Grace*.

4

Diligence A zealous and careful nature in one's actions and work; decisive work ethic, steadfastness in belief, fortitude, and the capability of not giving up. Budgeting one's time; monitoring one's own activities to guard against laziness. Upholding one's convictions at all times, especially when no one else is watching (integrity).

The Bible's definition of diligence

Is well described in the earlier verses of Proverbs 6.

5 Proverbs 6:6-8 NRSVUE

**6 Go to the ant, you lazybones;
consider its ways and be wise.**

**7 Without having any chief
or officer or ruler,**

**8 it prepares its food in summer
and gathers its sustenance in harvest.**

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Another way to put it is this

Diligence is putting heart and soul into whatever you do.

That is what our Colossians text refers to.

Our passage comes from Paul's guidelines
For the rules pertaining to the household.

He begins with wives.

"Wives be subject to your husbands."

He then turns and addresses husbands.

"Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly."

Paul then addresses children.

"Children obey your parents."

And to fathers.

"Fathers, do not provoke your children."

Paul then addresses the household servant.

"Slaves, obey your masters."

These household guidelines have been used and abused
For centuries.

It has been used to suppress women's rights
And to justify the enslavement of African Americans.

It has helped to create a very patriarchal culture
Based on so-called biblical truth.

About the only thing good from these verses is
The challenge to consider how fathers provoke children.

And even though these verses
Has been used to the detriment of people groups.

There is a universal truth at the end that is worth noting.

6

Colossians 3:23-24 NIV

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

If you're into outlines

The text breaks down nicely into three parts:

7

1. Whatever you do
2. Work at it with all your heart
3. As working for the Lord

Whatever you do

Whether you are a carpenter, a police officer

A fireman, a factory worker

A doctor, nurse, farmer, student

Or a stay-at-home parent

The vocation doesn't matter
From a janitor to the president of the USA
Whatever you do
Work at it with all your heart.

Put forth your very best effort!

8

Winston Churchill said, *what is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?*

If you're a custodian
Work at it with all you heart.

If you're a teacher
Give it all you got!

If you're the president of the USA
Do absolutely your very best

Not only will it be a job well done
There is character formation in doing your best.

Charles Kingsley an Anglican priest of the 1800s wrote

9

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do which must be done, whether you like it or not.

10

Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of

will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know.

Work like you're working for the Lord Jesus
And not anyone else
And your reward is found in heaven.

Because ultimately what you do, you do for God.

Martin Luther King, Jr. in a speech to students
At Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia 10.26.67
Six months before he was assassinated said

11

If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry.

12

Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.

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When we work hard at something
Devoting ourselves to the task at hand
We will inevitably experience results and successes.

Yes, mistakes too.

But learning from our mistakes
If we remain diligent
We will be successful.

We can begin to experience what is called

The fruits of our labor

A physical and spiritual reward for our labor.

And in my opinion, it has to be more

Than drawing a paycheck.

The reward has to be more than earnings.

Being diligent is about being committed

To do whatever it is you do

With passion, excellence, talent, and devotion

Diligence is the building-blocks of a healthy work ethic.

It is about being honest

Both about one's abilities and one's weaknesses

It is about humility, knowing you don't know everything.

It is building a work ethic of trust and dependability.

It recognizes that work is an essential part of life

It also recognizes that work should be a vocation

A calling impressed upon you by God.

Frederick Buechner says

13

IF YOU LOSE YOURSELF in your work, you find who you are.

If you express the best you have in you in your work, it is more than just the best you have in you that you are expressing.

There is nothing worse than working a hateful job.

And there is nothing better than working a job you love.

My first winter out of high school I worked in a factory.

Since it was winter, it was dark when I arrived to work
And dark when I left.

I was inside those four walls for 8 to 10 hours per day.

I worked with a man who worked his job for 43 years!

And I thought to myself, will this be me in 43 years?

The author of Ecclesiastes teaches us something.

14

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 NRSVUE

18 This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us, for this is our lot.

15

19 Likewise, all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of God. 20 For they will scarcely brood over the

days of their lives because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts.

Whatever you do

Put your heart and soul into it!

As if you're doing it for God.

Because ultimately every word, every action, every deed

You do, you do for God.

It means, enjoying not only the work you do

But the time away from work

The eating and drinking, the time of rest and relaxation.

It does not mean, keeping busy at all costs.

Busyness is not diligence.

16

1. *All work and no play*

a. *Makes Jack a dull boy (James Howell).*