

Proverbs 24:30-34 (Sloth) - Godoy

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Preacher: Dan Godoy

[0:00] Good afternoon, everyone. Wow, maybe that's really warm, really hot. Good afternoon. It's good to be gathered together. To those of you visiting, welcome. My name is Dan Godoy, one of the pastors here at Holy Covenant Church. And as you've heard a few times, this is a new space for us.

And it's the afternoon, which is a little bit unsettling. And if I say something about this morning while I'm preaching, I don't know, you can track it and maybe three strikes I'm out. We'll just be done, right?

It is the afternoon. I want to acknowledge on behalf of the elders, we met this Thursday and talked. This evening or afternoon, evening church thing is kind of weird. It's been a little tough for some of us. Maybe not forever. Maybe someone here loves it, but it's been a little awkward.

What do you do on Sunday morning when you're not worshiping at church? What do you do on Sunday evening when, like, the Bears game is going to be in a few minutes here? Don't worry, it's after the service. It's kind of a weird season, so we just want to acknowledge that and encourage you to be at peace, rest in the Lord on Sunday morning.

Some of us have been visiting with friends at other local churches, worshiping on Sunday morning. Some of us have been doing brunch with friends. Some of us have been getting extra sleep.

[1:20] So whatever you're doing, be at peace, rest in the Lord. And this season will be over soon. So February 15th at 10 a.m., you can circle that on your calendars.

The elders just met on Thursday. That's one week earlier than we've previously been saying. That's when we plan to meet here in the morning for the first time here at Crossway, February 15th, 10 a.m.

The season will be over soon. But let's enjoy it while it's here, and let's turn to the preaching of the word this morning. Let me ask you to pray with me once more before we come to the sermon. Father, give us ears to hear. Help us to see, to hear this wisdom that you have for us. Make us wise workers for your kingdom, we pray, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Well, we are in a seven-week series in the book of Proverbs. So the past two weeks, we looked at chapter 1 and chapter 2 of the book of Proverbs.

[2:22] John and Daniel walked us through this virtue-building, wisdom-seeking invitation of the Proverbs. And now these next three weeks, today and the two weeks following, we have three topical sermons.

Okay, so as we get to the middle section of the book of Proverbs, we don't find long discourses. We find sayings all mixed together. And the best way to preach through this is to choose some topics and trace out those three themes in the Proverbs.

So that's what we're going to do. Three topical sermons today on sloth, next week on speech, and the week after that on money.

So three topical sermons from the Proverbs. Now I need you to know that, as usual, I didn't pick my sermon assignment.

The elders gave me this assignment to preach. And I've been wondering the last couple weeks if there's a reason why this topic was chosen for Dan. So I don't know. We can think about that.

[3:26] Maybe talk to me later in private if there's something I need to know. But sloth. I'm going to tell you right now what the Proverbs teach on the topic of sloth. Here we go. People grow in wisdom through habits of diligent work.

But they're destroyed by slothful leisure. I'll say it again. People grow in wisdom through habits of diligent work. But they're destroyed by slothful leisure.

Now, having said that, maybe you're thinking that's fairly obvious and familiar. Especially if you inhabit sort of the American work culture, which all of us in some way are influenced by. Maybe you could recite some of these classic sayings. Early to bed and early to rise. Do you know the rest? Makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise.

Wow. Here's another one. Never leave that till tomorrow, which you can do today. You've heard that, right? Here's a slightly less familiar one that I enjoyed when I found it this week.

[4:34] No man ever was glorious who was not laborious. You like that? Yeah, nice rhyme. Maybe you know some of these sayings.

Maybe you thought some of these sayings were in the Bible. These are not biblical sayings. These are actually written by Ben Franklin. And published in his, I've forgotten what it's called.

Poor Richard's Almanac, right? In the mid-1700s. Thanks to Ben Franklin and other culture-setting personalities like that, here in the U.S., we are captivated by this moral vision of work and industry and prosperity that we call the American dream.

Which sounds something like the road to riches is paved with hard work. A person can rise above their station with heroic effort. A civilization prospers when every citizen puts their shoulder to the wheel and works.

And these are good ideas. These are true. They're not exclusively American ideas. Those of you who have spent lots of time or maybe lived in other cultures will know that other cultures similarly hold these ideas.

[5:47] My Indian friends and colleagues at work can often articulate the American dream better than most Americans. It's said that the 9th century king of England, called the father of England, Alfred the Great, he sort of transformed that early English nation through his own habits of work and study and worship, which he then instilled in the rest of the culture.

And that civilization flourished. It seems that every civilization in human history that has flourished has embraced these virtues of work. And the scriptures resonate with that wisdom.

But what I want to say, not this morning, but this afternoon, I almost said this morning, that would have been strike one. What I want to say today is that the moral vision of the Proverbs on this topic of sloth and diligence is more than just work hard and prosper.

The moral vision that's given to God's old covenant people is much more than that. And for Christians, as we read the wisdom of God in Christ, it's all the fuller, all the more beautiful, and all the more urgent for us.

So today we want to hear the wisdom of the Proverbs on the topic of sloth and diligence. And we want to grow in wisdom as workers for God's kingdom.

[7:06] So here's a roadmap for the rest of the sermon. Here's where we're going to go. I'm going to work in three headings. Number one, the wisdom. So what does the book of Proverbs say about the topic of sloth?

And there's a lot, so we're going to spend most of our time doing that. Then number two, the gospel. What does the gospel have to do with this topic, with this wisdom?

And how is this teaching amplified in the light of Christ? So number two, the gospel. And then number three, the church. How can I, how can you grow in habits of diligence today?

And let me just warn you once again, this is a topical sermon. Usually at HCC we preach in an expositional style. We take one passage and we work our way through it. It's going to be a little different for the next three weeks.

So we had Proverbs 24 read out for us. Don't hold your breath waiting for me to start talking about Proverbs 24. You'll be a little bit confused. We're going to work through a few background bits, and we're going to jump around a little bit in the Proverbs before I start talking about Proverbs 24.

[8:15] So just fair warning, a topical sermon. Okay. To get started, we need to define a couple terms. First of all, let's define what is sloth.

Where's Amber Wang? When I was, Amber was walking in and she saw me, and she said, she held up that animal that Samuel's got, and she said, are you preaching about this today? So I love this. Anyways, what is sloth? Sloth is a cute animal that some people have stuffed animals of, but that's not mainly the definition we need to help us today.

Sloth, I'm defining this way. Sloth is the aversion to work. So if somebody finds every excuse not to do work, they're being slothful. Now, I don't use this word very often.

I might use the word lazy or lethargic, but sloth says something more. Sloth is the aversion to work, even the obstinate opposition to doing work.

[9:15] Now, we need to acknowledge from the start, this is a common experience for all of us. This is kind of baked into the human experience. We all know something about being slothful.

Why? Because work is hard. Work is not always pleasant. Sometimes it's painful. Have you heard the expression, do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life?

Have you heard that? It kind of means like if you find a job that aligns with your passions and your interests, it won't feel like work at all. It'll be great. That is a lie.

That's not helpful. That's like a meme for somebody's Instagram. That's all it's useful for. Work is hard. Just ask Adam and Eve.

God said to them, with thorns and thistles, with toil and labor, you'll bring forth the fruit of the ground. Work is hard. Behavioral economists observe that given the choice between doing something hard and avoiding doing something hard, humans choose not to do something hard, even when they know that that path will lead to something worse for them in the end.

[10:28] And that's all of our experience. Sloth is like this infection of the human condition. We don't want to work, even when it's what's good for us. But in the moral vision of the Proverbs, that's no excuse.

A life full of avoiding work becomes a spiritual problem. The sum total of a life of avoiding work is a person who becomes hardened into foolishness, hardened against the fear of the Lord.

Hardened into the person of a sluggard. And that brings us to the second term we need to define.

What is a sluggard? Once again, there's sort of an animal thing here. When I was a boy, I remember reading the Proverbs and reading about the sluggard and being kind of confused.

Like, how can this little snail creature own vineyards and not get out of bed and all of these things? It's kind of confusing. So children, a sluggard is not a slug. A sluggard is a person.

A person who has so completely given himself over to habits of leisure and rest that he has become bent against the good of doing work.

[11:35] That's what a sluggard is. Now in the Proverbs, we meet the sluggard early on in chapter six. And then chapter by chapter, we get layer after layer of teaching and sayings and pictures and stories that help us develop this character, this persona of the sluggard.

And it becomes a warning against the slothful life. Don't become the sluggard. Okay. We've defined sloth. We've defined the sluggard. And now we're ready for a sampling of teaching from the book of Proverbs about sloth.

And so to do that, I've prepared a little syllabus for us of six lessons and a final exam on the topic of sloth from the Proverbs. But before we get into the syllabus, just a quick disclaimer from our HCC Biblical Hermeneutics Risk Management Division.

We have that here. No, but seriously, I'm convinced that these lessons of the Proverbs are not meant to be learned the way I'm about to present them.

Okay. The Proverbs are the wisdom of the Lord inscripturated for our knowledge and formation.

And they're meant to be read as Proverbs the way that they've been given to us. I imagine the Proverbs are like jewels strewn about in the sand that we're meant to pick up and sift and examine and muse over and read alongside the other Proverbs.

[13:01] And so my plea is that you take this list I'm about to give you and use it like a treasure map and go back to the scriptures this week and this month and all the days of your life and dig, as Daniel said last week, dig as for hidden treasure for this wisdom of the Lord.

So with that disclaimer, a list. A list of six lessons from the Proverbs. Number one. Sloth causes poverty. This is probably the most noticeable saying or most noticeable lesson about sloth in the Proverbs.

For example, chapter 10, verse 4. A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Very simple, very clear, and somewhat challenging because it doesn't always seem true, does it?

Sometimes there are people, I know people, who have worked very hard their whole life and they can't seem to get ahead. I know people who have hardly lifted a finger their whole life and they seem to have everything they desire.

We need to understand the Proverbs are not trying to develop a grand, unified, economic labor theory. The Proverbs are saying this is generally the way the world works.

[14 : 25] Sloth produces poverty and work produces wealth. Are there exceptions? Yes. But this is the construct of reality and raging against reality makes you a fool.

It doesn't make you wise. Sloth creates poverty. We also need to say the Proverbs are not saying that the reason to work is to get rich.

That's more Ben Franklin wisdom, not biblical wisdom. The Proverbs are more measured in their take on wealth. Now, Tad's going to teach about wealth and money in a couple weeks, so I'll try to stay out of his lane.

But here's one example from Proverbs 28, verse 6, where it says, Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.

Some of you know that my primary vocation is in asset management in the financial industry. And in my line of work, I know plenty of bad men who have gotten very wealthy through their hard, disciplined work.

[15 : 34] And the Proverbs are not excusing or glorifying them or saying that they are walking in the way of wisdom. No, the reason to work is not to get wealthy.

The reason to work is because it's for our good. And the threat of poverty if you refuse to work is some God-given encouragement to walk in the way of wisdom. So that's lesson one.

Sloth leads to poverty. Lesson number two. Sloth is a misuse of the good of rest. The main thing we find the slugger doing in the Proverbs, do you know what it is?

Sleeping. For example, chapter 10, verse 5. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.

Sleeping in harvest is like sleeping in the busy season. That's when you need to be working. In chapter 6, verse 9, the wise sage is pleading with the sluggard, How long will you lie there, O sluggard?

[16 : 38] When will you arise from your sleep? Have you ever hit the snooze button one too many times and then ended up late to work or school? I've done that.

Have you ever taken a nap in your car on your lunch break and then you missed the start of your next shift? Maybe it's just me. I've done that too. Sleeping when you should be working is slothful. Now, this may not connect very well for all of us because maybe most people in this room would say, I need more sleep. We live in a sleep-deprived culture. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that 20% of Americans slept less than five hours per night on average over the last year. And 57% of Americans say they would be healthier if they could just get more sleep. Maybe you feel that way too. I kind of do. We would be better off if we could get more sleep.

We don't have enough time. And when we do have time, we're too stressed out to stay asleep. For a sleep-deprived culture, this might be hard to understand. But what we need to understand is that sleep and the broader good of rest, these are creational goods.

[17 : 52] God created these things for the good of his creatures. In six days, God worked to create heaven and earth. And on the seventh day, he rested. And he means for creatures created in his image to do the same.

You remember the fourth commandment. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

Did you ever notice that the Sabbath command contains a mandate to work for six days? Six days you shall labor and do all your work. And then on the seventh day to rest.

Rest and work are created by God for our good. The slothful person has a disordered love of that creational good. And they twist it into evil.

Even to the point of absurdity like chapter 26, verse 14. As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed.

[18 : 55] Turning and turning. The sluggard doesn't rest one day in seven, but two days, three days, maybe all the days. Now for us, maybe it's not sleep that we misuse, but maybe it's some other form of rest.

We'll talk about that a little bit later. Okay, lesson number three. Sloth lacks foresight. Foresight is anticipating the future and acting today.

Chapter 20, verse 4. The sluggard does not plow in the autumn. He will seek at harvest and have nothing. It takes foresight to plow in one season so that you can harvest in the next season.

Do you know any farmers? Farmers can't afford to procrastinate. They have to get the seed in the ground or it won't grow and be ready at harvest. By contrast to the sluggard, the wise woman of

Proverbs 31, who is sort of the model of diligence in the book of Proverbs, I think. She considers a field and buys it. With the fruit of her hands, she plants a vineyard. We'll talk about vineyards a little more, but this is a picture of acting today in careful anticipation of a distant future. [20 : 16] That's the model of diligence. When was the last time you procrastinated? What did you procrastinate about? If it's too hard to think about, you can do it later.

Lesson number four. Thank you for the laughs there. Sloth finds every excuse not to work. Here's one of my favorite Proverbs.

Chapter 22, verse 13. The sluggard says, there's a lion outside. I will be killed in the streets. Is there a lion outside?

Will you be killed in the streets? I mean, maybe there is. They keep a bobcat up at Cosley Zoo over there, and I don't know if it got out last night.

Do you know? It's a lion, pretty much. People of Wheaton in January. It's like single digits outside tomorrow. Will you die on your way to class?

[21 : 17] I mean, you might. It's freezing. It's trying to kill you out there. But is that any excuse to stay in your room and not go to work or not go to school? No. Right?

No. No. I'm not sure you guys are so sure. Most of the time we don't avoid work because we think we're going to die. Our excuses are more subtle.

I'm already getting a bad grade in that class. It doesn't matter if I blow off that next assignment. It doesn't matter if I fold my laundry. It's just going to go back in the bin after I wear it.

Friends, listen. Each of these excuses, each of these choices become the character that harden a person into foolishness and slothfulness.

The sluggard finds every excuse not to work. Okay, lesson number five. Sloth upsets community. Chapter 10, verse 26.

[22 : 21] Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him. Vinegar and smoke sting. You want to get it out.

When a sluggard joins your team at work, everybody suffers for it and the manager eventually wants to get rid of that person. A son who refuses to work at home frustrates his mother and his father and his siblings.

That neighbor who can't be troubled to mow his lawn becomes the embarrassment of the neighborhood. The point is, slothfulness is not just an individual thing, but it harms the whole community.

Lesson number six. Sloth leads to a person's destruction. Two weeks ago, John DeCicco taught us about the warning of wisdom in Proverbs chapter one, and I've hinted at it already, but he said something like this, our choices become our habits, our habits become our character, and our character leads to our destiny.

And the destiny of the slothful person in the Proverbs is humiliation and bondage and death.

Chapter 26, verse 15, the sluggard buries his hand in the dish, it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth.

[23 : 47] It's like he can cut up his food, but he can't even bring it back to his mouth to feed himself. What a picture of humiliation, of ridiculousness. It's a warning to the slothful.

Chapter 12, verse 24, speaks of the bondage of a life of sluggard behavior, of slothfulness. Chapter 12, verse 24, the hand of the diligent will rule while the slothful will be put to forced labor.

Hard workers get put in charge of things. That's just the way the world works. Slothful people will eventually work, not on their own terms. Now, it might not look like slave labor in our time and place, but there are plenty of jobs that feel more like bondage than rule.

And that's the warning to the slothful. Then chapter 21, verse 25, the desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.

The destiny of the sluggard is death. Spiritual death, certainly, and bodily death, besides, sloth leads to a person's destruction.

[25 : 03] Well, there we have six, maybe sobering, lessons about sloth from the Proverbs. And now we're ready for the final exam. The sluggard's vineyard. And this is the passage that Daniel read out for us as the sermon text this morning, chapter 24, verse 30, the sluggard's vineyard.

In this picture, which is like a summative test of everything we've learned, the wise sage is teaching and he says this in verse 30, I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns, the ground was covered with nettles and its

stone wall was broken down.

Did anyone grow up in wine country, meaning not in Chicagoland? A few of you did. This may not be a very familiar picture to those of us from the Midwest, but what you need to know is that vineyards are not the sort of thing that you plant in one season and harvest that fall.

The owner of a vineyard carefully selects the piece of property. Think of the wise woman in Proverbs 31, which we read about earlier. She selects that field for its soil quality and moisture and drainage and then carefully plants vines, knowing that they won't yield fruit for four or five or six years later and weeds it and manures it and tends it and then especially in ancient times builds a wall, a costly wall around the vineyard to keep invaders out of that vineyard.

This is no mere hobby farm. The vineyard is a deliberate generational investment of wealth and work and it's up to the sons and daughters to whom that vineyard is passed down to preserve that heritage and how do they preserve it?

[26 : 56] the same way it began with a continual investment of hard, productive work. The wise son is trained in how to do this and he sets himself to that task.

The sluggard can't even get out of bed or doesn't know that he should and so in the sluggard's vineyard here in the Proverbs, this vineyard succumbs to the attack of entropy.

Weeds come up and thorns choke out the fruit and the vines and invaders come over the wall. The walls are breaking down because of years of neglect, disrepair and the narrator, the sage, sees this picture and knows that it's not an accident.

The field is declaring something about the person responsible for it and so he invites his student to learn, to get wisdom from this picture.

Verse 32, I saw and considered it. I looked and received instruction. This is a model of growing in wisdom. If the sage can learn from this picture, this story, how much more can the student, the simple, grow in wisdom by examining the vineyard?

[28 : 17] And what's the lesson? Verse 33, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and a little more and a little more and just one more time on the snooze button and a little more.

And what happens when rest is misused? Verse 34, and poverty will come upon you like a robber and want like an armed man.

Sloth causes poverty. We learned that already. Sloth even invites poverty like leaving the doors unlocked and posting it on Facebook and going on vacation for a month. Sloth is inviting the attack of the robbers and of the armed man of poverty.

But the sluggard is so hardened by habits of sloth that he has given himself over to that destiny.

Brothers and sisters, this is the wisdom of the Lord in the Proverbs.

Instructing us to grow in wisdom through habits of diligence. Well, having learned the wisdom of the Proverbs, we turn to the gospel.

[29 : 29] And we might ask, what does the gospel have to do with a lesson from the Proverbs about sloth? I want to say it has everything to do with it because in the first place, the gospel is the good news that in Christ God forgives sinners.

When we read this kind of teaching, this wisdom teaching, moral teaching, for some of you, maybe many of you, it can stir up guilt about your own slothful choices or a lifestyle of slothfulness.

And so, if that's you, you need to hear the gospel once again that God forgives sinners, that there's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, as we heard earlier. believe this gospel and live in Christ's peace.

But more than that, the gospel is the good news that Christ sets us free from destructive patterns of slothfulness. God gives life to our mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in us, which means that we're not determined by the sum of our choices, but in the power of the resurrection of Christ, we may walk by the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit and learn anew disciplines of work.

And more than that, the gospel is the good news that in Christ and in his resurrection, God has begun to make all things new. And a day is coming when Christ will return and complete that new creation project, but until that day, we get to work with him, leaning forward to that day of his return.

[31 : 05] My point is this, when we pick up these jewels of proverb wisdom and hold them up to the light of Christ as revealed in the gospel, we find that they're not fading, but they are intensified.

The volume is cranked up, the urgency of this wisdom teaching, because now we understand that we are working for the Lord. We are workers in the now and coming kingdom of Christ.

Christ. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable and many of you will know it. A master is going away on a trip and he gives money to his three servants and two of those servants, the wise servants, take his money and invest it wisely and earn a return for their master.

But the third servant takes the money and does everything he can. He makes every excuse not to put that money to work. And when the master returns, what does he say?

You remember, you wicked and slothful servant. And now I'm paraphrasing. If you knew me, he says, if you knew what time it was, put that money to work and earned a really about ministry work or spiritual work, not secular work.

[32:17] And I think it's probably a false distinction. But let me ask you this. If somebody can't get off their couch and sweep their floor, what makes us think they'll be able to sit and study and teach and write and serve and pray and counsel, the habits of discipline are the very stuff of work in the kingdom of Christ.

Paul knows that, the apostle Paul, and so he writes to the churches in his letters to the churches in 2 Thessalonians. he says to the church there, we give you this command, if anyone's not willing to work, let him not eat.

For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busy bodies. Such persons we command and encourage to do their work quietly and earn their own living.

1 Corinthians 15, Paul says to the church in Corinth, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

So the gospel amplifies the urgency of this wisdom teaching for his people. We've heard the wisdom, we've heard the gospel, and now I want to round out this teaching for us with a brief word for the church.

[33:36] And so before we leave this teaching, I want to offer some practical points of connection for us because we're not planting vineyards, we're not planting fields, sleep may not be the great enemy of virtue for us today.

So how can we relate to this instruction just a few suggestions, exhortations. First, for those of you who are just starting out on the path of wisdom, young people, if you are 12 years old or younger, raise your hand.

Nice and high, raise your hand, 12 years old, you're great. Okay, if I've lost you at any point, come back in because I want you to hear this word of wisdom for you.

God wants you to grow in wisdom by working. Think of a place in your house that belongs to you that tends to get a little bit messy.

Maybe for you younger people, it's a box of toys. Maybe for slightly older ones, it's a sock drawer or maybe your whole room. Okay, can you picture a place?

[34:41] Tomorrow, clean it up, tidy it up. The next day, do it again. It'll be easier the second time.

The day after that, do it again. Make yourself a checklist if you need to and do it every day next week. Clean that place. And then the next week, do it again and do it again the next week until you don't even notice that you're doing it anymore.

That's called building a habit. Now, you might be wondering, does the Bible really say to clean my room and is Mr. Godoy getting paid by the parents to say this right now?

I'm not getting paid to say this, but I do think the Bible suggests that you should do this. Why? It's what I've been saying. We grow in wisdom through habits of work.

And for a young person, maybe something as small as cleaning your toy box or cleaning your room is a way of growing in that wisdom, being shaped into a wise worker for the Lord.

[35:43] Okay. Teens and undergrad students, you don't have to raise your hands. I assume you've been listening the whole time. You can if you want. Here's my advice to you.

Sometime before you graduate college, ideally before you graduate high school if you're still in high school, get a job with a manager who can fire you and do whatever it takes to keep that job.

One of the most formative experiences of my life was eight months I spent working at Menards. You save big money, you save big money when you shop at Menards at the corner of North Ave and 59.

And I know that because I heard a jingle that told me that like a hundred times a day for eight months. But during those eight months, I learned to go to work when my family and friends were doing something more interesting.

I learned to do things that didn't seem to need to be done just because my boss told me I needed to. I learned to hustle. I learned to deal with fools.

[36:52] I'm still learning to do that well, but I draw on all of those lessons every day. It's incredibly formative for each of you.

It's a way of being shaped into workers ready for the now and coming kingdom of Christ. Okay, for all of us who are fulfilling some vocation at home or in the workplace or in grad school or anywhere else, a word of wisdom, maybe a little more on the nose.

Tame the weeds of the technology in your life. Did you know that the average American spends four hours and 30 minutes every day on their phone?

Did you know that's a 50% increase from four years ago? That's a really bad trend. How much time do you spend on your phone every day? Do you know? How many loads of laundry could you have folded in the time you spent watching videos on your phone last week?

How many pages could you have written in the time you spent mindlessly scrolling on Instagram in the last week? I wondered how much time I spent on my phone so I found an app on my phone.

[38:12] It was already there. It's called Digital Wellbeing and it told me in all the detail exactly where I spent time and here's what I found out. In the last week I spent two hours and 38 minutes texting.

I spent one hour 19 minutes on Gmail and here's the sloth. I spent 27 minutes on the Wall Street Journal news app and here's what I observed.

When was I most likely to fire up the Wall Street Journal app and scroll through the news? It's when I should have been doing some work and I knew it. The weeds of technology in our life.

I think if the Proverbs were written to our culture today it would say something like this. How long will you stare at your screen oh sluggard? When will you arise from your mindless scrolling?

We don't misuse sleep anymore because we're using our phones when we should be sleeping or working. Brothers and sisters tame the technology.

[39:22] Okay one more thing. AI. I'm going to do a takedown of AI right now. By the way did you know that I'm a technology professional in my full-time vocation? This is a little bit ironic I realize but I have to use AI at work.

In fact I have a mandate from the board and senior management of First Trust to figure out how to make AI productive for our firm. I have to use AI. And let me tell you something.

I've found that ever since Chat GPT 4.0 came out last year it has gotten a lot harder for me to write a sermon. Okay I refuse to use AI in any of my sermon work and in fact that's a public commitment and a promise that in the ministry of the word here at Holy Covenant Church your pastors will do our own work in the pulpit.

But here's the thing. My mortal brain knows there's an easier way now. And I sit down to work on a sermon and I hear the sloth in my ear saying you don't have to do that hard work and it's painful. You don't have to do your own reading and research and sketching and outlining and rewriting. You just have the AI do all that. Brothers and sisters if you get in the habit of letting the AI do your work it will make a sluggard out of you.

[40:47] Be warned. I should have thought of a better way to off-ramp this sermon but that's where we're going to leave it. AI might have done better.

Friends, God's people grow in wisdom through habits of diligence. They are destroyed by slothful leisure. May we grow in wisdom and may we abound in the work of the Lord.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.