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Do It Now!
Proverbs 6:6-10

If one has a problem, a need, unfinished business, a conflict, an obvious weakness...common sense tells us that we need to think of a solution, make a plan of action that seeks to remedy and correct our problem, right? Right! But too few of us do anything more than dwell on the problem. Few of us go past trying to define the problem and decide on a plan of action and it is the rarest one that comes up with a solution to try, makes a plan of action and then actually does the hard work of carrying it out from start to completion. Why? Because it is far too easy to complain about the unfairness of this world. Why take responsibility. Why take the initiative to solve our problems when we can blame the one most convenient to us; our spouse, our kids, our employer, our teacher, our government, our pastor...or even blame God for our problems. Its easy to make excuses and blame other people isn't it instead of actually working on a solution.

Some of us don't make excuses, we don't blame other people, but we do procrastinate. That is the unmotivational urge to put it off until tomorrow. That messy garage...its going to be there tomorrow. Its that voice that says, Why don't you wait until tomorrow to do that homework. Those chores can wait until after the TV show. That cluttered closet you've been wanting to tackle, its been there for years and will be there tomorrow so..go ahead just let it slide. You've done enough for today, your tired, you deserve a break today. Leave that weedy flower bed until next weekend. Those gutters were just as clogged up last year. Those bills...they can wait a few more days. If you wash your car now its just going to rain again...come on this is winter in Yacolt. Why clean the house this week, its just going to get messed up again.

I remember when I was a kid. Mom would call me in from outside "please set the table...take out the garbage." My reply, just as soon as I finish this game, right after I get this project complete, I have just a couple more pages to finish this chapter. I'm almost done with my Lincoln log house. Sometimes she would say, OK it can wait until your

done there. But often she would say, NO we are waiting on you. I need you to do it now. At the time it seemed inflexible and unreasonable, but mom had a reason for wanting me to get my stuff done now, get my homework done first, get my trombone practice done first before play. Why? She didn't want to have any part of raising a lazy son. She wanted to drive the slug out of me. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but what a gift mom gave me in getting the slug out of me at an early age so I didn't have to endure the pain and poverty of being a sluggard later.

It's easy to procrastinate the things we really need to get done. We could make excuses, we could procrastinate or we could just settle into the oozing mud that "something will just happen and it will just happen to work out better in the future. We want are life to improve...but aren't really interested in taking any strategic steps to take it that way. That's living stuck in the mud of some day, some way my life will just improve. It will start to work out better. This is hoping for a fantasy reward without any work on your part. I want a new job that pays better and I actually enjoy...some day, someone will just call me up with that great job offer I've wanted. Is that the way life usually works? Some day, some way I'll start exercising and getting in shape like I need to. Some day I'll start getting my school homework done. Some day, some way I'll stop wasting my time partying. Some day, some way I'll quit my craving for another cigarette, I'll stop yearning for another drink, another high. Some day, some way I'll get my finances in shape. Some day, some way my boss will finally notice my work, I'll start spending more time with my kids, I'll work on my marriage. I'll start reading the Bible more. I'll restore that broken relationship. Some day, some way it will just happen. Well....are you sure it will just happen? Is that the way life normally works? The norm is the opposite. Those who just let life float on by without pursuing any change tend to get worse, not better. There are alot of us in danger of becoming what Proverbs calls a sluggard. Slugs are slimy little creatures that have no backbone and nobody likes, but Proverbs spends alot of ink describing the sluggard and how to avoid his slimy ways.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs. It's pretty easy to make excuses, to procrastinate, to blame others to look in the face of a pressing responsibility and say, "naah I'll just do it later." Turn

with me to the middle of your Bible, the book right after Psalms and read with me as Proverbs describes for us what a sluggard looks like.

10:26 is an interesting description of a Biblical sluggard. "As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes so is a sluggard to those who send him. Hire a sluggard and he will be more of an irritant, a nuisance than a help. People will avoid the irritating sluggard.

Sluggards make excuses. They could spend their god-given brain power on coming up with creative solutions and alternatives, praying for peace, strength and wisdom. Instead they spend all their time and brain power trying to come up with excuses to tell their parents, their boss their friends in why they failed or didn't come through, didn't get the job done. Look at 22:13 "The sluggard says, There is a lion outside I shall be slain in the streets!" Now that sure sounds like an exaggerated excuse for not going to work. All those things that are fearful out there that could get the sluggard. He makes excuses and refuses to face things. Its the sluggard that avoid all possible dangers and risks at any costs. I'm not going to go outside...I could be hit by a car! I'm not going to try and pursue that job, I could be rejected. I'm not going to try and start that business venture, it could fail. I'm not going to pursue that relationship, if I get close I could get hurt bad. Its true there are risks in taking initiative. There are risks in going out in the streets. There will always be fearful responsibilities, overwhelming challenges, discouragement and disappointments. but a sluggard will be paralyzed by the fear of the possibility of these, cowering in fear hoping they will all go away sometime, making excuses for not stepping up and doing.

Look with me at 19:24 "The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth." Now there is a graphic picture of a sluggard. We may assume he came to the table, prepared some food or at least got himself to where food was being served, but he never bothers to finish the job. He gets his hand down into the food that he really does need, but then doesn't even bother to finish the job. That's characteristic of sluggards, they never finish what they start...and so waste alot of resources. In 12:27 we read about a hunter sluggard who takes the rare initiative to go shoot an animal, but then doesn't want to do the work to skin, haul it home, prepare and roast the meat, so it just spoils and goes bad. What a waste.

Look at 18:9 One who is slack in his work is a brother to one who destroys. A sluggard is a slack workers who is always looking for the easy way, the short cut. Not to be more efficient, but to do less and are left with an inferior product. A slacker doesn't bother to check if the bolts on the brakes are all tightened. A sluggard is potentially dangerous. You don't want a sluggard wiring your house or checking for level, it will be a waste that will cost you twice in the long run

The sluggard wants the benefits of diligent work but they don't want the effort needed. Look at 12:24 "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand is forced to labor." It is the disciplines the motivated the responsible one that follows through and actually does what she says she will do that gets the promotion and positions of leadership. The sluggard rarely follows through, you can't count on them when they agree to do something. So they are naturally given less and less opportunity and promotion. But they look around and wonder why is everybody else getting the raise and promotions. Why do I get passed by? They was the benefits of diligent work without the effort.

The sluggard is just plain lazy. Look at 24:30-34 "The sluggards field is Described and observed to overgrown with weeds and thorns and walls broken down. We are told to look and reflect and learn from the mess they have around them. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will and rob you. Like a surprise bandit suddenly attacking your lack is now obvious. Did you notice how habit forming the sluggards ways can sneak in little by little. A little sleep, a little rest a little folding of the hands..Sluggards are not created overnight it happens just as the Bible describes, little by little. Miss a Sunday here, miss a time reading the bible there. Miss a workout here and there, miss a week of cleaning there...and little by little it overpowers into a sluggard habit. Look at 15:19 to see where the sluggards way is headed. "The way of the sluggard is a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway. The sluggards way will be blocked with thorns it says in the NIV. They will runs into things in life that will hurt and scratch them and wonder why its always happening to them and not the other guy. Their hedges are so overgrown they can't see beyond their own chosen path and see no way out. So they remain in their own slug slime.

To observe a sluggard it may appear he exerting a lot of motion, but you will notice that it is not producing anything. 26:14-16 As the door turns on its hinges so does the sluggard on his bed. A door moves back and forth but goes nowhere. At best it just gets shoved out of the way for someone who is going places. Lots of motion not progress. The greatest motion you'll get out of a sluggard is a rolling over in the bed every now and then.

Look at v. 16 "a sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who talk sense. The sluggard thinks he can outwit anyone. He is an unteachable know-it-all that is unable to see his own foolishness. The sluggard is blind. He's convinced everyone else around him is an idiot and he's the one who knows how life really should work...only it never has for the sluggard. It's everyone else's problem. Others are to blame for his misfortune. He's never succeeded at anything in life but can sure tell others how it ought to be done.

It's like those 75,000 fans in the stands watching a football game of 22 guys on the field. One group is stuffing their faces, ridiculing mistakes in desperate need of exercise and the other, much smaller group are focused on their goal, working together in desperate need of rest.

The sluggard is full of excuses, procrastinates, rarely starts anything and never finishes. The sluggard is unteachable, a lazy know-it-all who fails to plan and follow through. all talk, no action. All motion, no production, no discipline, motivation or initiative. Just an irritating smoke in the eyes kind of person. And most of this morning are finally happy that the sermon this morning not for them.

Most of the people I know would hear that list of characteristics of the sluggard and say, "Are you kidding?" I already have more than enough to do. I work my tail off like the energizing bunny I keep going and going and going. My problem is I'm far too busy...not far too lazy. You never see me taking lazy afternoon naps with my hands folded and hat over my eyes. Take a look at my body, I don't have any problems getting that fork out of the dish and up to my mouth. I am no sluggard. So does that mean we can't learn from the sluggard?

We may be pictures of industry, diligence and hard work on the outside yet still suffer from a hidden disease within called selective

sluggardness. There are little pockets of laziness, inactivity in our life that may seem insignificant...but little by little these can too destroy and cause damage to our lives. These little pockets of laziness can hit anyone. The student who is quite successful in her social life, maybe successful athletically but struggling academically. If so, you may look like the picture of progress on the social and athletic scene, but you are an educational sluggard. Maybe you are the dad who pours his life into work, your sales set records at the office, you are the one they all turn to in order to get the job done, Maybe you can pull in the fish and get the biggest buck of the season... yet you are failing miserably at home to meet the emotional needs of your wife and kids. You are a family sluggard. Maybe your a mom who pours herself into her work and family yet neglects her relationship with God. You are a spiritual sluggard. Maybe the hidden pocket of sluggardness is deals with money. You say you will go on a budget, but that day never comes. Maybe you are one of those who agrees with the pastor on Sundays but when Monday comes you slime back into your casual Christian way.

Isn't that convicting? Its deadly to be a selective slug, because we can convince ourselves that if we are looking good in one area, or most of the areas in our lives then we must be OK. that we deserve a break. I mean really we can't be perfect? Isn't it just good enough to be diligent in most of our areas?

There was an Old Testament leader named Eli. He was a prophet, a priest, for the most part respected. But it all unraveled because of his one area of laziness. He refused to discipline his sons. It was hard work. There was too much pressure on them any way from the expectations of the people to be goody-goody...why add to it he thought. Discipline takes work, I want my boys to like me. When he got home from the temple he wanted to rest. He was tired of dealing with peoples problems, tired of being the hard-nose. He just wanted a break. So he refused to discipline his sons. I'm sure at some point he had good intentions, but somewhere it just became too tough so he gave it up. Those little rascals became big rascals and caused Eli an incredible amount of pain and trouble. When we get lazy in a certain area it can become incredibly destructive for us and for the people around us.

So what should we do when we see these pockets of laziness in our lives? I think we need to learn from the little guys. Proverbs calls them the ants. Turn with me to Proverbs 6:6-10. We are told by the Wise writer of Proverbs to go to ant school and learn from these little guys, the same little guys you squash on the pavement or fry in the summer under a magnifying glass. Reading in Proverbs 6:6 "go to the ant, O sluggard and observe her ways. No one has to stand over her shoulder and tell her what to do. She is not just punching a time clock in the most important areas of life. This ant is motivated. If you have to wait for external motivation, a paycheck, a paddle, hunger, a ranting coach or raging teacher or yelling parent just for you to get the job done, then forget it you will be destined to slime with all the rest of the slugs until you can learn to become self-motivated. If you have to rely on a boss, or teacher or parent or spouse to keep you going, then what are you going to do when nobody is looking. Nothing. Right. And Proverbs tells us that is exactly where your life will be headed. No where. Learning from the ant, the secret of motivation is to keep the goal in mind all the time. For the ant, its food. Food, food, food. That little ant pictures the in his miniature little brain the pain of an empty stomach when the winter comes. He pictures how good those delectable bits of crumbs will taste in his stomach and is motivated to work hard. Secondly, the ant plans ahead. V.8 stores up food in the summer, comes up with a plan. Determines what needs to be done and then does the hard work of carrying it out. No excuses, just gets it done.

So...when you look in your life and observe..are there any areas in your life where you have allowed little by little, bit by bit the slugs to creep in? Is there an area of sluggardness that is showing up its ugly head? Is there a pocket of slug in your life? In the area of relationships? money? work? health? spiritual areas? What are you going to do about it....not tomorrow, not some way some day. What are you going to begin to do about it today? I want you to begin thinking about what area God wants to partner with you and begin working on together. If you are feeling overwhelmed that's not from God. Satan wants to overwhelm us and make us feel like there is so much to work on we can't possibly do anything. I want us to spend just a moment and listen to God. Is there one area you need to work on. What are you going to do today?