



# text message

WestHills Church / January 22, 2012

## This Week's How To: Connect

(Each week we highlight a specific biblical thought that helps us accomplish our God-given mission and vision—we call them "How Tos".)

**Encouragement** – I connect by encouraging other members because their health is vital to the health of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

The blockbuster mini-series "The Band of Brothers" was based on a book by Stephen Ambrose about the 101st Airborne during WWII. It follows Easy Company from their training in Toccoa, GA through the end of the war. The title comes from a speech in Shakespeare's "Henry V."

From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered-  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother...

As you watch the episodes, you realize that even during training, the men of Easy Company were becoming dependent upon each other. As the war progressed, the bonds they developed were necessary for survival (both physical and emotional) and ultimately, victory. The Bible makes it very clear that we are to do life together with other believers. We need one another. This isn't just a brief idea, mentioned in one tiny corner of the Bible; rather it is a constant message of the New Testament. We are a band of brothers and sisters unified in Christ, purposed in love.

**Discussion:** You have friends and family that at one time were very involved in the church and had many close relationships. During that time in their lives, the church was very important to them. Now, many of them have faded from the church and with that, the relationships. Is it possible for Christians to survive and have victory in the world apart from the help and encouragement of the church? What is your personal experience with this?

## Fortune Cookies:

Danger of Doing Nothing



Proverbs 6:6-11

**Day 1: ENCOUNTER** God's word to put yourself in touch with Him.

<sup>6</sup> Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! <sup>7</sup> It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, <sup>8</sup> yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. <sup>9</sup> How long will you lie

there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? <sup>10</sup> A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— <sup>11</sup> and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

**Day 2: EXPLORE** the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

1. Why does the writer of Proverbs tell us to look and consider the ways of an ant? Why not some other animal? Does God impart wisdom to us through nature?
2. Verse 7 speaks of authority figures. Is this a reference to government?
3. What is the main point of verse 8?
4. How would you define a “sluggard”? How would you define laziness?
5. Verse 9 asks 2 questions. Remembering that in a Proverb, a question is often rhetorical, why are these questions being asked? What does the writer want us to think about?
6. Verse 11 says that laziness will cause poverty and want to come upon you like an armed man. What does that mean?
7. We have all known people who are lazy and do not live in poverty. Does this proverb not apply to them?
8. This Proverbs addresses laziness strictly from the work/poverty aspect. Should working to avoid poverty be our sole motivation?
9. There are many different types of laziness and different types of poverty. Some people are very diligent at some things and completely ignore other things in life that results in very negative consequences. What are some things that you know you need to be more diligent in?
10. Does this proverb have any special meaning for a Christian that it doesn't have for a Buddhist or atheist?
11. Do you think this Proverb has any application to retirement where people are encouraged to stop working? How do you define “work”?

**Day 3: EXAMINE** an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

**Main Idea of the Passage:** Laziness has dire consequences.

One has but to run his eyes over the pages of the Bible casually to become convinced that God intends His people to work. He put the man in the Garden of Eden "to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15). Our Lord was a carpenter and He chose active men for His first disciples. The book of Proverbs has some scathing things to say about the sluggard who loafs away his days in careless indolence only to have poverty come upon him at last like an armed man (Proverbs 6:11).  
AW Tozer, Devotional

...individual ants, using local information, produce the coordinated behavior of colonies. An ant colony operates without central control. Task allocation is the process that allows the colony to adjust the numbers of ants engaged in each task, in a way appropriate to the current situation. <http://www.stanford.edu/~dmgordon/research.html>

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!" (Proverbs 22:13) This is not what I expected the proverb to say. I would have expected it to say "The coward says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!'" But it says, "sluggard," not "coward." So the controlling emotion here is laziness, not fear. But what does laziness have to do with the danger of a lion in the street? We don't say, "This man is too lazy to go do his work because there is a lion outside. The presence of a lion does not produce laziness, it produces fear. So what's the point of the proverb? The point is that the sluggard creates imaginary circumstances to justify not doing his work, and thus shifts the focus from the vice of his laziness to the danger of lions. No one will approve his staying in the house all day just because he is lazy. But they might sympathize with him and approve his staying home if there is real danger outside. So, to hide his laziness and justify himself, he deflects attention away from the truth (laziness) to an illusion (lions).

If we would be wise people - people on the way to being "sages" - we must understand how our sinful human hearts and minds work. One profound biblical insight we need to know is that **our heart exploits our mind to justify what the heart wants**. That is, our deepest desires precede the rational functioning of our minds and incline the mind to perceive and think in a way that will make the desires look right. It is an illusion to think that our hearts are neutral and incline in accordance with cool rational observation of truth. On the contrary, we feel powerful desires or fears in our heart, and THEN our mind bends reality to justify the desires and fears." John Piper, *A Meditation*, September 16, 1998

"But we must never underestimate the ability of the human mind to get itself lost on a paved highway in broad daylight."  
AW Tozer

#### **Day Four: EMBRACE how God spoke to you through His word.**

Our desire is to not to be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week:

1. Answer the question... In what areas of my life am I lazy?
2. Answer the question... Who has God placed in my life to help me in my areas of struggle?
3. Share with that person(s) your area of struggle(s) and ask them to pray for you.

**"Danger of Doing Nothing"** (use the provided space for sermon notes on Sunday's message)

**Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group):

Are all Christians called to missions? Should we make sure everyone in our own community is a follower of Christ before we focus on the unreached people all over the world?