

引言 INTRODUCTION

“There are two forms of ministries.” I responded to a question when I interviewed for a pastoral vacancy in my previous church. I continued: “There are things you like to do. But there are other things you need to do.” Many people enjoy their career because they turn what they need to do to what they like to do. Sure enough, there are certain obligations we prefer someone else to handle. For example: mowing the lawn, washing dishes and laundry. The lesson for parents is that we should assign those chores to our kids while they still live at home! That reminds me of the Greek mythology story of Sisyphus. He enraged Zeus, the god of all gods. Therefore, Zeus gave Sisyphus an eternal punishment after his death. His job was to roll a heavy stone up a hill. However, when he reached the mountain top, the boulder would fall down to the other side. Hence, Sisyphus had to start all over again. The process was repeated forever. Some people use the story to explain that life is meaningless. You simply duplicate the things you did yesterday. I am sure you will not want to get out of bed if you see your study, job or housework that way. The Proverbs tells us that God wants us to be productive. He equips us with talents and skills to contribute to the society.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 貧窮的必然因素 Sure Ways to Get Poor

First, the Proverbs tells us that we will surely get poor if we do not work. Read Proverbs 24:30-34 – **30 I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; 31 thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. 32 I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – 34 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.** A person walks by the field of a lazy guy. Due to a lengthy time of neglect, the field is in a bad shape. With no produce from the land, economical loss is unavoidable. The Proverbs equates laziness to a lack of wisdom. This man has his field and vineyard. We can assume that he is healthy. Therefore, he can work, but he just does not want to. He fails to fulfill his minimal obligation to provide for his family. A responsible man must work hard. My dad’s experience is quite similar to many first-generation U.S. immigrants. He was single when he came to Hong Kong. He had little money and education. His first job was a baker. Soon he could not bear the heat in the kitchen. Then he became an apprentice at a tailor shop. Making suit jackets became his trade. Dad set up a good example that a man should work to raise a family. He worked long hours and even on the weekends. He was usually sleeping when we went to school and we were already in bed before he came home. Many of you or your parents also began from nothing. By God’s grace and through diligent work, you succeeded in what you did. People say that the U.S. is a land of opportunities. No one can excuse that he/she does not have the means to make a living. This man in the Proverbs story suffers loss before long. Weeds take over his field. The “stone wall” may refer to the hedges surrounding his field. Nature does not waste a barren ground. If you do not plant something in your front and back yards, wild grass will soon creep all over the place. Similarly, if we do not put our talents and time to good use, we will develop some unhealthy habits. Some people play computer games all

day and all night with little food and sleep. Christians will slip into various sins too. Our God is the Lord of rhythm. The sun rises and it sets. There are four seasons in a year. There is a time to work and a time to rest. Even leisure activities are called recreation. It allows our body and mind to relax, so that we can make room to re-create new ideas when work is resumed. This wise person may be shaking his head after seeing the situation of the lazy man's field. He ponders on the scene and learn from it. A person of wisdom understands that God can communicate with us through our circumstances. What he observes will lead to a change in attitude and action. He learns to follow good examples but also avoid bad behaviors. As for our lazy friend, he wants to rest a little more before getting up. Procrastination is a deadly trait. The mentality is: if I can delay till tomorrow, then why not put it off till next week or next month? The problem is, you will never finish a task if you do not start now. The only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time! A wise person is more than likely a diligent person. He finds joy in completing one job, then he moves on to the next one. He will feel less stressful by not allowing things to pile up. He can free up time to help others, or simply take a short break. By not willing to work, poverty will eventually rush in. Money and resources will run out before the lazy man knows it. His loss will come swiftly like a burglar. His credit card transaction will be denied and checks will bounce back. He will be unable to pay even for a small bill.

2. 發財的錯誤方式 Wrong Ways to Get Rich

Laziness will eventually lead to poverty. Next, the Proverbs tells us about some wrong ways to get rich. We can group them into two categories. First, some people look for easy money. Read Proverbs 13:4 – **The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.** The contrast is between a person who only dreams about success versus another man who works hard to pursue his goals. An excellent plan is but a proposal until you work on it. Mere thinking will not accomplish much. There are basically two types of workers in the world: those who use their brains and those who use their hands. The former ones come up with ideas and direct the latter people to complete the tasks. Both groups work together as a team. Besides the day-dreamers, Proverbs 14:23 describes another group of people who want to get rich easily: **All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.** These people speak about their aspirations. But talk is cheap! There will be no gain without pain. While an inspiring concept can motivate people, ultimately one must roll his sleeves up to work. Building good relationship with the right people, and having enough resources and manpower can give you a good start. But you still have to take one step at a time. A student has to complete enough courses to get a degree. A house is built by one nail, one brick and one panel at a time. Hard work will finally pay off. Then there is another kind of easy money. Read Proverbs 20:21 – **An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end.** In the Biblical world, a Jewish father would leave his money and properties to his sons. The oldest son would get a double share. Such instant wealth may not turn out to be a blessing if a person does not put it to good use. It reminds us of the parable of the prodigal son. He asked his father for his portion when dad was still alive. That was an insult to the family! Before long, the young man squandered all that he had. Money will eventually dry up unless a person invests it wisely. Livestock has to be cared for and fields must be farmed. All that need work and good management. Nowadays, some grandparents and parents set up trust funds for their descendants. Those children cannot collect the fortune unless they have reached a certain age. It is hoped that they will become more mature by then. Besides easy money, the Proverbs also talks about dirty money. Look at Proverbs 11:1 – **The Lord abhors**

dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight. The use of deception in business is a direct violation of the Law of Moses. Our God is holy and righteous. Therefore, He expects us to practice integrity. God's Law prescribes a society where people treat each other fairly. Customers pay with real money in exchange for the exact amount of goods and services the merchant sells. Both sides do their jobs right. Not too long ago, we live in a world where people can even trust complete strangers. Shop-owners allow customers to get what they need even when they do not have enough cash at hand. People will honor their promise and pay later. We can hardly do that anymore unless there is a signed agreement. Then some deceitful businessmen find unethical ways to gain more profit. They produce fake goods and false advertisement. They see revenue more important than their conscience and reputation. However, God wants us to be trustworthy. Honesty is the best policy. People will give good ratings about a trusted store or product. Proverbs 15:27 talks about other forms of unethical practices: **A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live.** Greed is to crave for things that do not belong to you. It drives people to find a crooked way to get what they want. One such means is to pay bribes. A vendor can secure a business contract under the table. But it will create an unfair competition. Those who follow the proper way will lose. Over and again, God tells us in the Bible that He hates bribery. Such wicked scheme would blind justice. For example, some powerful people bribed judges to twist the outcome of court cases. As a result, the innocent would suffer but wealthy wrongdoers could dodge their responsibilities.

3. 致富的正確途徑 Right Ways to Get Rich

Of course, there are some right ways to get rich. The correct means is to earn it. Proverbs 16:26 tells us a direct motivation for work: **The laborer's appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on.** You work because you have to eat! It is surely a blessing to enjoy the fruits of your labor. The Cantonese say: work hard and eat comfortably. My dad earned a meager salary as a tailor. But very often he let us enjoy a better dinner on Sunday. Mom would cook some soup for long hours. Right now we have Instant Pot to make our life easier. Mom would also buy some special food from the market. We kids learned early on that it was a right thing to reward yourself. Similarly, you may take your family out for dinner, or buy a small gift for yourself on payday. The farmers in the Biblical world also enjoy the harvest from their hard work. Proverbs 27:23-27 describe: **23 Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; 24 for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. 25 When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, 26 the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. 27 You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family and to nourish your servant girls.** Workers have to tend their livestock. A herd of healthy animals will bring a steady income. The fur can be used for clothing. People used cows to till the fields and donkeys to haul goods. Milk is one of the stable food in an agricultural society. At that time, people seldom ate meat until the time of a festival. In the rural Chinese society, people will not kill a chicken unless there is a celebration like the Chinese New Year! Animals were also good as cash in the Biblical world to exchange for other commodities. The passage also mentions working in a field. Besides, a farmer also gathered vegetations from the hills, perhaps as an extra food source. As you can see, those are recurring activities. Animals and crops continue to grow and so they need constant attention. In today's term, they are renewable resources. It is just like your car. It will give you many years of service if you keep it well-maintained. People have to eat every day and so farmers also need to stay

busy. People will gradually accumulate wealth from the surplus they produce. God wants us to stay productive in our expertise. He sets a pattern for us. God used six days to create the universe. He then rested on the seventh day. God of course will not get tired. The model is for us to follow. Therefore, the Israelites worked six days and rested on the Sabbath to worship God. We are more blessed in the U.S., as most people only work five days! Another interesting observation about the creation is that God took pleasure in what He had made. For five times in Genesis chapter 1, God saw what He created was good. Then after God had finished all His work, He saw everything as very good. Those comments may sound odd when you think about it. First, God of course only made perfect things. Second, with whom God shared those remarks? The only audience at that time were the Trinity God and the angels. One lesson we can learn from it is that we can find contentment in what we accomplish. God makes beautiful things, and so should we. Though we cannot achieve perfection like God does, we can pursue excellence. Put your heart into what you do, at work, at home and in your ministries, even if it is a simple task. When you eat at a restaurant, the chef will arrange your food nicely. Perhaps a better presentation can give you a better appetite. Even every product in a grocery store will be arranged with the labels facing outward. Those workers will not earn extra for doing that. But it shows their professionalism. Fulfillment will become the deciding factor when money or people's approval is not the incentive. Others can see the difference when you barely get the job done or if you truly enjoy your work. Even when no one is paying attention, God will remember your effort when you do it well to please Him. He deserves the very best from us.

結論 CONCLUSION

God equips us with talents and skills to contribute to the society. He wants us to be successful in what we do. Unused capabilities are like an idled machine. In 1957, a brand-new car was kept in a concrete vault and it was buried under a courthouse in Tulsa. In June of 2007, the vehicle was dug up to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the statehood of Oklahoma. People were shocked to see a rusted machine when the car was revealed. After 50 years, water seeping into the chamber changed a shiny car into a pile of rusty metal. An expert was consulted to check on its engine. He concluded that the car was useless. Just like cars are made for the roads instead of a garage, God wants us to use the gifts He has given us and be productive.

引言 INTRODUCTION

我還記得我申請第一份教會傳道工作的時候和同工會說：「有兩種形式的事奉。有些事情是你喜歡去做的。但是，另外卻有一些是你必須要做的事情。」許多人熱愛他們的職業是因為他們將需要做的事情變成了自己喜歡做的事情。當然，有些事情我們還是情願別人代替我們來處理。例如：剪草、洗碗和洗衣服。家長們都知道，他們要趁小孩還住在家裡的時候讓他們來做那些家務！這讓我想起了希臘神話西西弗的故事。他激怒了眾神之神宙斯。因此，宙斯在西西弗死後給了他一個永恆的懲罰。他的工作是將一塊沉重的石頭推上山坡。然而，當他到達山頂時，巨石會從另一邊滾下去。因此，西西弗必須重頭開始。這個過程一直重複。有些人用這個故事來說明人生沒有意義。你只是重複昨天所做的事情。如果你這樣看你的工作或家務，你肯定不會想起床的。箴言告訴我們，神希望我們勤奮地做事。祂賜給我們才幹和技能，使我們貢獻社會。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 貧窮的必然因素 Sure Ways to Get Poor

首先，箴言告訴我們，如果我們不工作，我們肯定會變貧窮。請看箴言 24:30-34：**30 我經過懶惰人的田地、無知人的葡萄園，31 荊棘長滿了地皮，刺草遮蓋了田面，石牆也坍塌了。32 我看見就留心思想；我看著就領了訓誨。33 再睡片時，打盹片時，抱著手躺臥片時，34 你的貧窮就必如強盜速來，你的缺乏彷彿拿兵器的人來到。**有一個人經過一個懶惰蟲的地。由於長時間的荒廢，那塊田的狀況很糟糕。由於那個人不事生產，經濟損失是在所難免的。箴言把懶惰等同於缺乏智慧。這個人有他的田和葡萄園。我們可以假設他的身體是健全的。因此，他有工作能力，只是他不想工作。他沒有履行養家糊口的最基本的義務。一個負責任的人必須努力工作。我父親的經歷與許多第一代美國移民非常相似。他來香港時是單身，而且他沒有什麼錢和教育。他的第一份工作是麵包師，但是很快他就受不了廚房裡的熱氣。之後他在一家裁縫店當學徒，製作西裝外套成了他的職業。爸爸樹立了一個努力養家的好榜樣。他工作很長時間，甚至週末也要上班。我們幾兄弟姐妹上學的時候他通常仍在睡覺，他回家之前我們也早已在床上了。我們中的許多人或你的父母也是白手起家的。靠著神的恩典和勤奮的工作，你有所成就。人們說美國是一片充滿機會的土地。沒有人可以藉口會他沒有謀生的方法。在這個箴言故事中的主角不久就會遭受到損失。到處野草叢生。「石牆」可能指的是他的田周圍的圍牆。大自然不會浪費

空地。如果你不在你的前後院種些植物，野草很快就會爬滿整個地方。同樣，如果我們不好好利用我們的才能和時間，我們便會慢慢養成一些不健康的習慣。有些人白天黑夜都玩電腦遊戲，幾乎不吃不睡。基督徒也會陷入各種罪中。我們的神是節奏之主。太陽升起又落下，一年有四季。有工作的時間，也有休息的時間。休閒活動也是讓我們的身心得到放鬆，使我們騰出空間來創造新的想法。這位有智慧的人看到懶人的田地之後可能會搖頭嘆息。他會從中思考並汲取教訓。有智慧的人明白神可以通過我們的環境向我們傳達信息。他的觀察會改變他的態度和行為。他會學習好的榜樣，並避免不正確的行為。至於我們那位懶惰的朋友，他想要在起床前多休息一下。拖延能帶來嚴重的後果。拖延的心態是：如果我能推遲到明天，那為什麼不推遲到下週甚至下個月呢？問題是，如果你現在不開始，你將永遠無法完成任務。要吃掉整頭大象的唯一方法就是一口接一口去咬！一個有智慧的人很可能是一個勤奮的人。他在完成一項任務後找到樂趣，然後他繼續進行下一項工作。他不讓事情累積，如此壓力便會減低。他可以騰出時間幫助別人，或者稍為休息一下。不願意工作的人最終便會貧窮，金錢和資源會逐漸耗盡。他的損失會像盜賊一樣迅速來到。他的信用卡交易將被拒絕，支票將打回頭。他連很小的帳單可能也無法付款。

2. 發財的錯誤方式 Wrong Ways to Get Rich

懶惰最終會導致貧窮。接下來，箴言告訴我們一些錯誤的發財方式。我們可以將它們分為兩類。首先，有些人想要不勞而獲。請看箴言 13:4 – **懶惰人羨慕，卻無所得；殷勤人必得豐裕**。這裡是比較一個只夢想成功的人與另一個為追求目標而努力的人。一個再好的計劃也只是一個建議，除非你付諸行動。空想不會帶來成就。世界上基本上有兩種工人：用腦的人和用手的人。前者提出想法並指導後者完成任務。兩組人在一個團隊中分工合作。除了做白日夢的人，箴言 14:23 描述了另一類想輕鬆發財的人：**諸般勤勞都有益處；嘴上多言乃致窮乏**。這些人談論他們的願望。但是空談是沒用的！沒有耕耘就沒有收穫。雖然一個動聽的概念可以激勵人心，但最終你必須動手去把計劃完成。建立了良好的伙伴關係，擁有足夠的資源和人力可以給你一個好的開始。但你仍然必須按步就班。學生必須完成足夠的課程才能拿到學位。一棟房子是用一顆釘子、一塊磚和一块板子建造起來的。努力工作的人最終會得到回報。然後我們看另一種想要輕鬆發財的人。請讀箴言 20:21 – **起初速得的產業，終久卻不為福**。在聖經的世界中，一個猶太父親會將他的財產留給兒子。大兒子將得到雙份的產業。但是如果一個人沒有好好去善用它，這種即時的財富不會是一種祝福。這讓我們想起浪子的比喻。當父親還活著的時候，那個人向父親要他的那份。這是對家人的羞辱！沒多久，那個年輕人就把所有的花光了。除非一個人有智慧地經營，否則錢最終會用完。他必須餵養牲畜，並耕種田地。所有這些事務都

需要努力去做和有效地管理。如今，一些祖父母和父母為他們的後代設立信託基金。那些孩子必須到了一定的年齡才能領到錢。希望到那時他們會變得更成熟。除了容易得到的錢，箴言還談到不義的錢財。看看箴言 11:1 – **詭詐的天平為耶和華所憎惡；公平的法碼為他所喜悅**。在商業交易中使用詐騙的手段是直接違反摩西律法的。神是聖潔公義的主。因此，祂要求我們正直。神的律法規定了一個公平的社會。客戶用真錢付費，商家也老實地做生意。雙方各盡其職。不久之前，我們甚至可以完全信任陌生人。就算顧客手頭上沒有足夠的現金，店主也會允許顧客先拿他們需要的東西。人們稍後會回來付帳。但是如今，很少人會願意這樣做，除非雙方簽署合約。還有一些狡猾的商人以不道德的方法來獲得更多的利潤。他們賣假貨和用虛假的廣告。他們認為收入比良心和信用更重要。然而，神希望我們做一個可靠的人。美國人說誠實是最好的號召。人們會對優良的商店或產品給予很好的評價。箴言 15:27 談到其他形式的道德的交易手法：**貪戀財利的，擾害己家；恨惡賄賂的，必得存活**。貪婪就是渴望得到不屬於你的東西。它驅使人不擇手段地去圖利。其中一種方式是賄賂。供應商靠走後門拿到商業合同。但這樣便會造成不公平競爭。按照正途做生意的人必然會吃虧。神在聖經中一遍又一遍地告訴我們，祂厭惡賄賂。這種不公義的方式會使人蒙蔽眼睛。例如，有權勢的人賄賂法官以扭曲法庭的判案結果。結果，無辜的人會受苦，而富有的犯案者卻可以逃避責任。

3. 致富的正確途徑 Right Ways to Get Rich

當然，有一些正確的致富途徑。正確的方法就是努力去賺取。箴言 16:26 告訴我們工作的直接動機：**勞力人的胃口使他勞力，因為他的口腹催逼他**。你工作是因為你要吃飯！享受辛勞的成果當然是一種祝福。廣東人說：辛苦賺來，自在吃。作為裁縫，我父親的工資微薄。但他經常讓我們在周日享受比較好的晚餐。媽媽會花一整天煮湯。現在一些家庭有高壓鍋就方便多了。媽媽也會從市場買一些特別的食物。我們孩子們很早就知道獎勵自己是一件正確的事情。同樣，你會帶家人出去吃飯，或者在發薪水時給自己買一份小禮物。聖經世界的農民也知道享受他們辛勤的成果。箴言 27:23-27 描述：**23 你要詳細知道你羊群的景況，留心料理你的牛群；24 因為資財不能永有，冠冕豈能存到萬代？25 乾草割去，嫩草發現，山上的菜蔬也被收斂。26 羊羔之毛是為你作衣服；山羊是為作田地的價值，27 並有母山羊奶夠你吃，也夠你的家眷吃，且夠養你的婢女**。工人必須照料他們的牲畜。一群健康的動物將帶來穩定的收入。毛皮可以用來做衣服。人們用牛耕田，用驢拖運貨物。奶是農業社會的食物之一。那時，人們除了過節很少會吃肉。就像在中國的農村，除非是過年或是慶祝活動，否則人們不會殺雞！在聖經世界中，動物也可以作為現金來交換其他貨物。這段經文也提到在田裡工作。此外，一些農民還從山上收集蔬菜，可能是

作為額外的食物來源。可以想像，這些都是經常性的事務。動物和農作物會不斷生長，因此需要持續的照顧。以今天的用語中，它們叫作再生的資源。就像你的車一樣。如果你好好保養它，它將為你提供多年的服務。人們每天都要吃飯，所以農民也需要保持忙碌。他們會逐漸地積累財富。神希望我們保持勤奮工作。祂為我們樹立了榜樣。神用六天時間創造了宇宙。然後祂在第七天休息。神當然不會疲倦。這個模式是給我們學習的。因此，以色列人工作六天，並在安息日休息來敬拜神。我們在美國更幸福，因為大多數人只工作五天！關於創造的另一個有趣的觀察是神欣賞自己創造的東西。在創世記第 1 章有五次提到，神看到自己創造的東西是好的。然後神在完成了所有的創造之後，祂說一切都甚好。仔細想想，這些評語聽起來有點奇怪。首先，神當然只創造美好的東西。第二，神與誰分享祂的意見？當時唯一的觀眾只有三位一體的神和天使。我們可以從中學到的功課是，我們可以在自己的成就中找到滿足感。神創造美好的事物，我們也應該如此。雖然我們不能像神那樣達到完美，但我們可以追求卓越。專心做好你的工作、家務和教會的事工，即使是簡單的任務。當你去餐館吃飯時，廚師會把盆子上的食物整齊地擺好。也許更好的造型可以增進你的胃口。甚至超市裡的每一件產品都會被排好，標籤朝外。員工不會因此而賺取額外收入。但這顯示出他們的專業精神。當金錢或別人的認可不是推動力時，滿足感便成為決定因素。你是隨便了事還是真正享受工作，別人能夠分清楚。就算沒有人在注意，神必然會記念。祂配得我們一切最好的。

結論 CONCLUSION

神賜給我們才幹和技能，使我們貢獻社會。祂希望我們在自己的專業上有所成就。不去使用的才能就像一台廢置的機器。在 1957 年，一輛新車被保存在水泥造成的存庫中，並被埋在塔爾薩 (Tulsa) 的法院大樓下面。2007 年 6 月，為了慶祝俄克拉荷馬州 (Oklahoma) 建州 100 週年，這輛車被挖出來。當汽車亮相時，人們震驚地看到一台生鏽的機器。在那 50 年期間，水滲入存庫，將一輛閃亮的汽車變成了一堆生鏽的廢鐵。政府官員找了一位專家來檢查引擎。他的結論是那輛車已經沒救了。汽車是為馬路而不是為車庫而製造的。同樣，神希望我們使用祂給我們的恩賜才幹去勤奮地工作。