



ANT DEVOTIONAL

PROVERBS 6:6

“Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.”

EXPERIENCE

I confess that I have never seen ants carrying off a watermelon or a picnic basket, except for in cartoons! I live in a log cabin, so I fend off lots of carpenter ants each year. Sometimes I wonder if the ants look at my house as a large brown cupcake and think—Yum! These pesky little creatures are amazingly strong, industrious, and determined.



I have seen them haul off sizable food crumbs seemingly way too large for them to carry. My son Johnny and I were hiking recently when we noticed the ant pictured here. We observed her (worker ants are all female) for about 20 minutes. She was dragging this crumb across a gravel road. Undeterred by any obstacle, this ant went up and over rocks ten times her size. She fell from these heights a couple times as she

tried to keep hold of the cumbersome load she was carrying. Her tumbles did not seem to faze her, she just soldiered on. She carried, pushed, and dragged her prize to the side of the road and pulled it into a hidden hole at the end of a log. Wow, what an example of dedicated toil and exertion! Have you ever stopped to just watch an ant work? Take some time to observe and meditate upon an ant this week—you will be amazed and blessed!

CONTEMPLATION

Ants are a reminder of laboring with a specific end in mind. They wisely keep the future in view as they store up their food for winter. The ant we were watching was working hard for the future benefit of her fellow ants and for God's glory too. God's glory you might ask? Yes, this ant glorified God just by doing the work she was created to do. As followers of Christ, our work can glorify God and benefit others too, but our sinful nature so often twists our work toward selfish ends. The ant reminds us what it means to labor for God's kingdom purposes. We are also reminded not to be slack in our labor for the Lord, but to offer him our absolute best.

Like ants, I desire to be industrious, determined, and dedicated. As a Christ-follower I desire to labor for God's kingdom purposes. I have always appreciated Ephesians 2:10, it says: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." The thought that God has uniquely crafted me and you to accomplish specific good works is wonderful. I love the idea of rolling up my sleeves and getting after Kingdom-oriented and Spirit-empowered work. Life is too short to waste it on self-absorbed ambitions when we can be the hands and feet of Jesus for the sake of the gospel. I refuse to let an

ant outwork me. The ant has no awareness of the gospel, but I am a blood-bought servant of the King of Kings who can advance the cause of Christ in my workplace, in my community, in my home, and anywhere else God has placed me. I am equipped to share the good news of Christ in word and deed. Yet so often I give in to a sluggish spirit of apathy or to a spirit of fear. My own tumbles and subsequent bumps and bruises cause me to lose focus. I am thankful for the timely sight of an ant in my path to remind me of Ephesians 2:10, to remind me of why, and for whom, I was created. I was made for God's glory and his kingdom purposes. What kingdom task is the Holy Spirit prompting you and empowering you to accomplish today, this week, this month?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, it is so easy to have an adrenaline inspired moment of kingdom-oriented motivation but to fail to follow through. It is so easy to plunge into a perceived kingdom project of my own design. I am quick to skip the discernment process of prayer. Help me Lord to listen well that I might walk in step with your Spirit. Give me a mind to work hard and a heart to labor for the right reasons. Grant me a persevering spirit to pursue you O God, above all else. Thank you for the way ants prompt me to consider a healthy perspective on work and to avoid laboring in vain. In Christ name I pray. Amen.

CONFIRMATION

The ant is mentioned only twice in the Bible, both times in the book of Proverbs, affirming the ant as an emblem of wisdom. According to Proverbs 6:6-9, the ant's wisdom is in her preparation for winter. Her work is future-oriented. She wisely uses her time in the present

circumstance so that her future is secure. She is diligent and hard working on behalf of her colony.

Proverbs 30:24 calls the ant “exceedingly wise.” Humans cannot secure for themselves a bright eternal future no matter how hard they might prepare and work. Only in Christ are sinful humans promised abundant and eternal life. However, there is great wisdom in considering the future and preparing for what lies ahead. The ant is an emblem of working wisely and industriously. The ant is wise to work as a team and to know individually its own role as a part of that team. The ant is wise to work hard. Lastly, the ant is wise to work with a future-oriented mindset. We would be wise to follow in the ant’s footsteps, all the while understanding that the gospel means we do not work to earn God’s approval. We already have God’s approval through the atoning work of Christ Jesus.



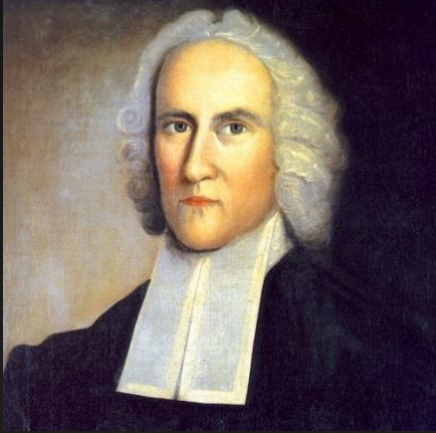
John Bunyan

FROM [*A BOOK FOR BOYS AND GIRLS*](#)

Bunyan, who is famous for writing *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, was a 17th century preacher. He wrote a poetry book of divine emblems for children. This excerpt is about ants: “Must we unto the [ant]¹ go to school, To learn of her in summer to provide For winter next ensuing. Man’s a fool, Or silly ants would not be made his guide. But, sluggard, is it not a shame for thee To be outdone by [ants]? Pr’ythee hear: Their works, too, will thy condemnation be When at the judgment-seat thou shalt appear. But since thy God

¹ I have inserted “ant” in place of an archaic word used in the 17th century.

doth bid thee to her go, Obey, her ways consider, and be wise; The [ant] tell thee will what thou must do, And set the way to life before thine eyes.”²



Jonathan Edwards

FROM *IMAGES OF DIVINE THINGS* #102 [\[WJE 11:90\]](#)

“Grasshoppers and other insects that are idle and don't lay up food in summer against winter, as the ant and the bee does, but spend the time in singing, are never so brisk a-singing as on the approach of winter or just before they are destroyed by the frost; which

represents what is spoken of in Matthew 24:37–39, "But as it was in the days of [Noah], so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that [Noah] entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”³

² John Bunyan's *A Book for Boys and Girls* can be found at: <https://www.chapellibrary.org/book/bubfba/book-for-boys-and-girls-bunyanjohn>, accessed on 8/18/2023.

³ Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings*, [WJE 11:90](#).