

Character Building from the Bible Two Lessons on Diligence, not Laziness

Or “A Worker, not a Loafer”

DILIGENCE, NO LAZINESS LESSON 1
YOUNG DAVID’S DILIGENCE

Diligence—Definition:

Working hard and consistently at the responsibilities God entrusts to you.

Opposite of diligence—Laziness.

Forms of the word diligence:

Diligent (adjective) He is a diligent worker.

Diligently (adverb.) He is working so diligently!

Diligence (noun) He shows an admirable amount of diligence in his work.

Song for both lessons:

Be diiiiii-li-gent! Work hard! (2x)

Keep on working, working, working, working, working, working, working,

Oh, be diliiii-i-li-gent! Work hard!

Bible Memory Verse for both Lessons: Proverbs 12:24

“The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor.”

Lesson Scriptures: 1 Samuel 16:18-23, 17:17, 17:34-37 & 40-50, 2 Samuel 23:1

(Put to a rhythmic, catchy tune and sing with the following gestures—
Point as if you are giving orders, then act as if you are pulling a very heavy weight.)

Lesson Aim: To help the students see the values of diligence and to motivate them to show more diligence and less laziness in their lives.

Beginning the Lesson (Introduction):

Put on a skit or tell a story about two young people dreaming about accomplishing great things. Then ask:

Have you ever wondered why some people accomplish great things, while others never make much of their lives?

Today’s lesson gives one very important reason why some people succeed while others fail. The difference is in a character trait the Bible calls diligence. Listen closely to what the Bible says.

Main Points to Emphasize:

1. **David was diligent in his childhood responsibility as shepherd of the family flock.**
 - A. Watching the sheep diligently (2 Samuel 16:18-19, 17:15).
(Student participation: Rhythmic repetition: In e- very lit-tle job, be di-li-gent!)
 - B. Practicing with his slingshot diligently.
(Student participation: Let the students pretend to be practicing with a slingshot.)
 - C. Using his spare time usefully in composing worship songs and learning to play the harp (I Samuel 16:14-23).
(Student participation: Let the students pretend to be playing a harp.)
 - D. Being faithful in simple tasks like errands and carrying things (I Samuel 16:21, 17:17-18).
(Student participation: Rhythmic repetition: “I’ll do it. I’ll be di-li-gent.”)
2. **God allowed David to use all that he learned and practiced.**
 - A. He used his slingshot to kill a lion and a bear (I Samuel 17:34-36).
(Student participation: The boys pretend to use a sling to kill a lion (the girls are the lion, slumping over dead. Then reverse it and the girls pretend to use a sling to kill a bear (the boys are the bear, slumping over dead).
 - B. He used his slingshot to kill the giant Goliath who was terrorizing his people (I Samuel 17:40-50).
(Student participation: Let the students repeat David’s words to Goliath, shouting them out: “This day/ will the LORD/ deliver you/ into my hand!” (I Samuel 17:46a)
 - C. He played music on his harp to bring peace to King Saul (I Samuel 16:14-23).
(Student participation: Bring one student forward to be King Saul. He begins looking at them with a very angry face. Agree on a song they all know, and they pretend to play on harms, humming the music together. As they “play” the music, King Saul begins to relax and smile.)
 - E. He wrote most of the Psalms (songs) in our Bible and we still read them today (2 Samuel 23:1).

(Student Participation: Is there a Psalm everyone knows? Maybe Psalm 23? If so, recite it together, calling attention to the fact that we remember David's words today.)

3. God rewarded David's diligence with greater opportunities for service. Through his Psalms he has a continuing influence today, 3,000 years after he lived. Because David was diligent, God made his name to be remembered and respected.

(Student participation: Ask them if they think they will be remembered 3,000 years after they leave this earth.)

Lesson in a Nutshell:

David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse in a large family with several boys. He worked as a shepherd boy, a simple, lowly occupation. David watched the sheep well, so that he was able to protect them from wild animals, even a lion and a bear. This required constant alertness, and probably also lots of practice with his slingshot.

While David watched the family's sheep, he made good use of his time. Besides practicing his slingshot, he also taught himself to play the harp and probably practiced on it for hours on end, so that he became very skillful (I Sam. 16:18 & 23). He also composed songs of praise to God, and he became so skillful as a songwriter, that he is still known as "the sweet Psalmist (or songwriter) of Israel", and he is credited with most of the book of Psalms in our Bible.

He was frequently sent on errands by his father, like taking lunch to his older brothers who had bigger, more important jobs. He did these errands willingly. (I Sam. 16:23 and 17:17-20) Later he was drafted by King Saul to serve as his armor bearer (I Sam. 16:21). Then he was travelling with the king, but still his job was only to carry things for him.

Because David was diligent in doing the simple tasks assigned to Him, God gave Him greater responsibilities. God chose David to become King after Saul because God saw his pure heart. In his youth, David did what God gave Him to do. He also did what He could to use his time well. He did his jobs well—diligently.

God later used the skills he developed. He used David's skill with a slingshot to kill the giant Goliath that was a threat to the armies of Israel, and was defying God in the process. He used David's skill on the harp to bring comfort to King Saul when he was suffering from depression, and to cause evil spirits to leave him alone. He used David's skill in songwriting to give us part of our Bible, including some of the portions that people still love most even today.

Conclusion:

David worked diligently at the simple tasks before him each day, and God used his diligence to prepare him for great achievements that are still a blessing to us today.

Application:

What has God given you to do today? Will you do it diligently, knowing it is preparing you for greater things?

Invitation:

Being diligent will not take you to heaven. It will not save you or take away your sins. Only One person can do that, and it is Jesus. If you want to say “yes” to Him today, just pray and ask Him to save you. Tell Him you believe in Him. Then, would you write me a little note saying “I took Jesus.” I will be so happy, and will pray for you.

DILIGENCE LESSON 2

YOUNG JESUS' DILIGENCE

Note: Use definitions, word forms, memory verse & songs from last lesson.

Lesson Scriptures: Mark 6:3, Luke 2:41-52, 3:31-35, Matthew 4:18, 4:23-25, 5:1, 8:1, John 5:39, 19:30)

Lesson Aim: to help the students continue to appreciate the values of diligence, that they may become more diligent and less lazy in their daily lives—at home, at school, at work, and in every situation of life.

Beginning the Lesson (Introduction):

Who can remember what diligence means? (Yes, it is working hard and consistently at the responsibilities God entrusts to you.) Have you tried to do that this week? (Let some students respond briefly with their experiences and encourage them for their efforts.) Who do you suppose is the best example of diligence in all the Bible? Well, there are many good examples, but Jesus, of course, is the very best example. Since He lived a perfect, sinless life, He is always the best example of every character trait. How did Jesus show diligence in His life? Let's see what the Bible says.

Main Points to Emphasize:

1. **Young Jesus was a diligent student of the Bible (Luke 2:41-52).**
(Student participation: Ask students to open the Bible and begin reading any portion of it as long as your hand is up. When you lower your hand, they should stop reading and be quiet.)
2. **Young Jesus was diligent in home and family life (Luke 2:51).**
(Student participation: Let several students show how Jesus would have responded 1. If Mary asked him to help peeling some vegetables for dinner, 2. If the children were working together to clean up the wood shavings in the carpenter shop, 3. If Joseph called Jesus for dinner.)
3. **Young Jesus was diligent as a carpenter (Mark 6:3).**
(Student participation: Let the students pretend to be using hand tools that they would be familiar with for woodworking.)
4. **Jesus was diligent in His public ministry (Matt. 4:18, 5:1, 8:1).**
(Student participation: Rhythmic repetition: Jesus worked di-li-gent-ly,/ Teach-ing, heal-ing, show love to people.)
5. **Jesus was diligent in finishing all the Father gave Him to do, even to the point of dying for our sins and rising from the dead (John 5:39 & 19:30).**

(Student participation: Rhythmic repetition: Jesus finished all His work—e-ven dy-ing on the cross!)

Lesson in a Nutshell:

Young Jesus was a diligent worker and a diligent student of the Scriptures (Luke 2:41-52). When He was 12 years old, he showed an amazing knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, answering and asking questions of the learned Doctors of the Law who had spent their whole lives studying the Scriptures.

As a young person, Jesus was obedient to His parents, both His mother Mary, and his stepfather Joseph [God being His real Father] (Luke 2:51). His life must have included home chores and errands like other children performed. Jesus had four half brothers and at least two half sisters, children of Mary and Joseph, who were married after Jesus' birth by the power of the Holy Spirit. It seems likely that Joseph died sometime between the time Jesus was 12 and 30 years old, for his mother and brothers are mentioned afterwards, and it is apparent that Mary is living alone. (In Mark 3:31-35, it is Jesus' mother and brothers who come looking for Him.)

He was known in His home town, Nazareth, as “the carpenter,” a simple, lowly occupation (Mark 6:3). We never read of anyone complaining about Him doing bad work or cheating them. Since many people were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, if anyone had had even a minor complaint, we can be sure they would have come forward. After Jesus was born of the virgin Mary with God as His Father, Mary and Joseph had several other children together. That makes them half-brothers of Jesus, growing up in the same family. The Bible talks about his brothers James and Joses and Juda and Simon, as well as some sisters. If Jesus had not been diligent in His work, surely His half brothers and sisters would have spoken up about it. You know how brothers and sisters can be.

Jesus was 30 years old when He began His great life's work as Teacher, Preacher, Healer, and Savior. It may be that during his teens or young adulthood, He was responsible for the welfare of the younger children in the family. When He began His work as Teacher and Healer, look how He used His time. As He was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He called his first disciples (Matt. 4:18). They were fishermen, another lowly occupation like carpentry. He traveled all over Galilee on foot, diligently preaching, teaching, and healing as He went. Multitudes followed Him. Seeing the multitudes, He sat down on a hill and taught them (Matt. 5:1). Still pressed by people all around Him, He took time for the needs of one lowly leper (Matt. 8:1).

Jesus was always diligent in the work God gave Him. Eight long chapters of the book of John represent teaching Jesus gave in the very last week of His life. Even the night before His arrest, He was still teaching His disciples. Jesus said, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).

Jesus ministered for three years before His enemies put Him to death. How many beautiful sermons He preached! How many wonderful teachings He gave! How many demons were cast out! How many thousands were healed of their diseases! It is very tiring to have big crowds of people around you all the time. Yet Jesus always found time for one person who needed Him—and one more person, and one more person. How many people learned of God’s love for them because of Jesus’ diligent work!

Jesus finished the work God gave Him by dying for our sins as the perfect sacrifice and then rising from the dead. He said He must finish the work the Father gave Him (John 5:39), and the last thing He cried out from the cross was, “It is finished!” (John 19:30).

Conclusion:

If Jesus had not been diligent to complete the work the Father gave Him, we would have no way to be forgiven for our sins. We are so thankful that Jesus was always diligent!

Application:

Maybe you have been a bit lazy, not really working diligently at the tasks God has given you. This is a sin because it does not honor God and it is not a reflection of who He is. However, if you are sorry and want to change, God is always ready to forgive you. If you need His help to become more diligent, just call out to Him and ask. He is always ready to help those who love Him. Let’s all try to be more diligent!

Give each student a small piece of paper. Ask them to write one or two ways they need to be more diligent. Let them hold it in their hands as you pray that God will help them become more diligent.

Invitation:

Because Jesus was diligent and completed the work God gave Him, even to the point of dying on the cross for our sins, we can be saved, just by trusting in what He did for us. If you are ready to say “yes” to Jesus, just pray. Tell him you are saying “yes” to Him. Ask Him to forgive your sins. Tell Him that yes, you believe in Him. Jesus will make you a brand new person. Then would you write “I took Jesus” on a little note and sign your name? Would you slip it to me so that I can pray for you?