



## [Ecclesiastes 4:5](#)

(5) The fool folds his hands  
And consumes his own flesh.

*New King James Version*

Ecclesiastes 4:4-8 records Solomon's analysis of four types of workers. The first he simply labels the "skillful" worker. We might better call this person a skillful *workaholic*.

The second worker, described in verse 5, is at the other end of the work spectrum: He is the lazybones. As the book of Proverbs shows, Solomon has no sympathy for the lazy person. For instance, [Proverbs 24:30-34](#) reveals a major flaw in the lazy worker's character:

I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; so shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man.

As he describes it, laziness is a slow, comfortable path to self-destruction. How does this apply to our [relationship with God](#)? Laziness toward the things of [God](#) will kill us through slow, spiritual suicide! It may be comfortable to "sleep in" or to justify not doing spiritual works, but what laziness produces is not pleasant to experience.

Solomon paints a picture of complacency, and its end is unwitting self-destruction. It reveals much deeper damage than simply wasting a person's material resources, for his idleness is eating away not only at what he has, but more importantly, at what he *is*. It erodes his self-control and grasp of reality.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 4:5 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

Therefore, we must discipline ourselves to work through Bible study and obedience to build our relationship with God. What are we truly losing when we neglect this? What does it take to live comfortably? In this culture, it is money. But laziness produces poverty—that is its fruit whether it concerns material or spiritual things. Paul writes, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” ([II Thessalonians 3:10](#)). Spiritually, then, we can take that to mean that he will not eat at God's table!

Comparing the first two men, Solomon shows the industrious man motivated by competition, while the lazy man is motivated by his desire for personal pleasure. In the end, both extremes are destructive vanities.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Five\): Comparisons](#)

**Related Topics:**

[Comparisons in Ecclesiastes](#)

[Complacency](#)

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living](#)

[Laziness](#)

[Poverty](#)

[Sin Destroys Self-Control](#)

[Sin Produces Lack of Self-Control](#)

Commentary copyright © 1992-2016 [Church of the Great God](#)  
New King James Version copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)