## WOW: Word Of the Week

### Laziness

**September 2, 2026**

One summer when we were in Antigua, Guatemala, we stayed at Casa Cony, a hospitality house where about a dozen guests shared meals around a large dining table. Most of the guests were in Antigua to study Spanish. The Spanish abilities of the guests around the table varied; most were less than fluent.

Conversations were sometimes difficult, always interesting. One day, guests began telling jokes they had learned in their studies. In Spanish as in English, many jokes are word plays. After hearing several jokes, one lady began telling (with translation) an English joke: what is black, white, and red (read) all over? You perhaps know the joke. "The newspaper!" The joke does not work in Spanish. The guests politely laughed while restraining themselves. What was funniest was that the lady did not understand why the joke was not funny when told in (translated to) Spanish!

Here's a Spanish joke. Some of you will get it; more of you will get it if I tell you that the Spanish verb to swim is nadar. Which is the laziest animal in the world? A fish. Why? What does a fish do all day? Nada (which translates to English as "nothing" or "he swims").

Earlier this year, Crossway published an article from John Piper, adapted from his *Taste and See* meditations. Piper urges clearer thinking when reading Scripture, especially wisdom literature. Wisdom literature has to be "translated" so that the original is not lost.

Consider Prov. 22:13: The sluggard (lazy person) says, "There is a lion outside! I will be slain in the streets!" Does that make sense? Is that what you expect? Why is the lazy person talking about a lion and danger in the streets? Is there really a lion? Is there really danger?

Piper points out that these are more often the words of a fearful person, not a lazy person. The verse is about laziness. What is the wise man saying? A lazy person creates self-justifying illusions. Do not miss the disconnect. We do not say that a person is too lazy to go to work because the streets are hazardous. No, a person is too afraid to go to work because the streets are hazardous. Do not miss the point of the proverb.

How often do we make up reasons why we cannot do this or that or the other? Often the real reasons remain hidden, unspoken. We make up a reason that sounds better. No one is going to applaud us for staying home because we wanted to sleep in. You don't get to stay home because you are lazy. Think how that sounds! But if it is dangerous to go to work, others are more likely to approve. In the proverb, the truth is laziness and the illusion is lions. We bend reality to justify ourselves. We may even convince ourselves – self-deceived!

Here is truth. At church a lot of things don't get done because no one wants to do them. Evangelism is a good example. We are adept at illusions. "People aren't really interested (really?). I don't have that gift. I don't know what to say (translation: I am so disinterested that I haven't taken time to learn). I can't do that (yes, but God can do it through you)." Truth is sacrificed on the altar of self-desire, self-justification, self-interests. Truth is suppressed. In evangelism, God's saving truth is suppressed.

Based on Eph. 4:17-18, Piper observes, "Our only hope is the transforming work of God in our hearts to free us from the bondage of a hardened heart that produces a futile mind." Be not deceived! The proverb is focused on a lazy problem not a lion problem. The proverb is a call to admit the truth: there is no lion in the street and you are lazy! Laziness is a heart problem. Christianity is a matter of the heart. Obedience comes from the heart. Don't be lazy!