

Workout 2 ▪ Dealing with Procrastination & Laziness

Prompt, Exercise & Practice for Hesiod's *Works & Days*

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"Let him hear the advice of Hesiod. . . . The advice of Hesiod is good." —Aristotle

"Lampon . . . greatly honors the sayings of Hesiod, the one he declares and recommends to his sons."
—Pindar

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The following workout is related to Hesiod's poem, the *Works and Days*, which may be found in the Cave's *The Best of Hesiod's Theogony & Works and Days*. To read some of it, go to "Hesiod" in the Cave Library.

WORKOUT 2 ADDRESSES procrastination and laziness, something many of us wrestle with on an all-too-regular basis.

When it comes to procrastination, Hesiod's advice is straightforward: "Don't procrastinate!"

Here's what he says in the *Works and Days*: "Do not put your work off until tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

Why? "The aimless worker who puts his work off does not fill his storehouse." And, "The negligent man is always wrestling with ruin." In other words, we won't get what we really want (a storehouse full of what we need) if we procrastinate. And worse, we may end up with something we really don't want (ruin).

What, then, is the remedy?

For Hesiod, the remedy is simple: "Careful attention prospers work"—a care and attention that re-

Greek & English ▪ The Greek word used by Hesiod for one who procrastinates or puts things off is *anaballomenos*. "Lazy" is *aergos* (literally, it means no-work or non-working).

quires regularity and discipline rather than putting things off until we feel like it.

As for laziness, here's what Hesiod says: "The lazy man, needing what it takes to live and

waiting upon an empty hope, plots all sorts of evil in his spirit. Hope doesn't take care of the needy man seated on a couch, the one who doesn't securely have what it takes to live."

Just dreaming about things—lounging on the couch, wishing and hoping—doesn't typically result in anything good. In fact, if Hesiod is right, such laziness may result in the opposite when we end up looking for easy ways and "plotting all sorts of evil" to get what we want.

So what can we do to get the best outcomes? Let's begin with a self-examination.

"Do not put your work off until tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. For the aimless worker who puts his work off does not fill his storehouse. Careful attention prospers work. But the negligent man is always wrestling with ruin."

—Hesiod, *Works and Days*

WORKOUT 2 • DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION & LAZINESS

PROMPT • Self-Examination & Impact Assessment • Take some time to answer the following questions with as much honesty as possible. The goal is not to beat up on yourself but to honestly see where you are so that you can, if need be, find and practice a remedy.

Self-Examination • Do I procrastinate? Am I lazy? That is, do I habitually put off things I need or want to do? Or do I simply not do what I need or want to do? How frequently? Rarely? Sometimes? Most of the time? And why? Why do I procrastinate? Why am I lazy? Does it make sense? If possible, try to identify specific times you've procrastinated or been lazy.

Impact Assessment • If I engage in procrastination, and if at times I am lazy, what *apparent* benefits do procrastination and laziness provide me (however small)? On the other hand, how have procrastination and laziness negatively impacted my life? That is, how have they harmed me? And what about others—how have my procrastination and laziness impacted others? Again, if possible, try to identify specific times you've procrastinated or been lazy along with specific benefits or harms.

“Always keep in mind my command to work. . . . Work is no disgrace; rather, it is not working that is the disgrace.” —Hesiod, *Works and Days*

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EXERCISE ▪ Remedies ▪ Hesiod offers the following remedies (bits of advice) as antidotes to procrastination and laziness. We've summarized each in *italics*. **Evaluate** each. **Determine** the benefit of Hesiod's advice to you for your daily or weekly life in terms of achieving your goals. Put a **check mark** next to the **two** you find most useful.

Work at the right time and in an orderly manner. "Remember every sort of work at the right time. . . . Get used to arranging your work in due order."

Get an early start. "Dawn carries a man forward on the pathway to success, advancing his work. . . . Rise early so that your fields will be full."

The best is order and management. Be regular. "To be well-ordered is best for mortal human beings. Mismanagement and disorder is the worst."

Act! Don't daydream! "The man who is rich in fancy thinks his wagon is as good as built already. The fool! He does not know that there are a hundred parts to a wagon! Take care to prepare these beforehand at home."

Little bits of work added together add up to a lot. Add a little to a little for a lot. "If your spirit within you longs for wealth, then work in this way, and add work upon work. . . . The man who adds to what he has will ward off burning hunger. If you add only a little to a little, and you do this often, soon the 'only a little' will become a lot."

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Do not procrastinate. “Do not put your work off until tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.”

Take care, be disciplined, in what you do. “Careful attention prospers work.”

Let competition with others motivate your hard work—work hard in order to achieve success and glory. “If you work, the man who does not work will quickly become jealous when you are wealthy because the excellence of success and glory of being a prominent man follow upon wealth.”

PRACTICE ▪ Identify and describe one specific, concrete **way** you can battle and overcome the procrastination and laziness in your life (assuming there is such). Your way can either be inspired by one of Hesiod’s remedies above or something you come up with. **Practice** the way for one week. Then **assess** how things went.

My way to battle and overcome procrastination and laziness. _____

Assessment of my practice (how things went). _____

3 ACTION POINTS

- **Examine** yourself relative to procrastination and laziness. Do you (at times) procrastinate? Are you (at times) lazy? What is the impact of such procrastination and/or laziness?
- **Evaluate** remedies for procrastination and laziness (from Hesiod and otherwise). **Identify** the most useful remedies for you and your own situation.
- **Practice** one way (remedy) that will help you battle and overcome procrastination and laziness.

Extra Space for Answers and Journaling

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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