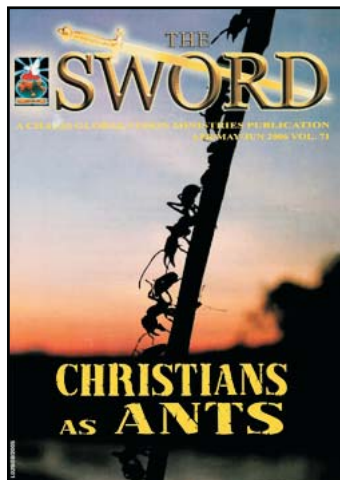




THE SWORD

VOLUME 71



A Charis Global Vision Ministries Publication

CHRISTIANS AS ANTS

Volume 71

April / May / June 2006

The Bible teaches how Christians should be like ants. We can learn from this Book of books and be successful in life. The key passage for our topic is taken from Proverbs 6:6-11 -

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,

7 Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler,

8 Provide her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.

9 How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep -

11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.

WHAT QUALITIES DO ANTS HAVE?

ANTS ARE HARDWORKING

Ants are among the tiniest insects in terms of size. Yet they are highly industrious in their own world. In Proverbs 6:6, we are told to learn the ways of the ant, to avoid being sluggards. If you are idle, you are simply wasting time and ignorant about what to do. But when you wait before the Lord, you can draw strength from Him to do great exploits.

ANTS ARE CO-OPERATIVE

Proverbs 6:7 tells us that ants have no captain, overseer or ruler. However, they know how to work in unity without breaking rank, in order to help one another. Similarly, as Christians, we must learn how to do the same. How often



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ANTS ARE CO-OPERATIVE *(Cont'd)*

have you found fault, broken rank or gossiped about the people you have been grouped with? Are you co-operative? Or are you always Mr / Ms Right and others Mr / Ms Wrong? Are you constantly quarrelsome? How long do your relationships with people last? Do you destroy your relationships instead of keeping them? Are people wary and unsettled when you go close to them or do they thank God for you? Many of us stay close to our friends in the times of abundance, but forsake them during times of adversity. True friends stick with one another in good times and bad.

Remember this: United we stand, divided we fall. Why do you find fault with everyone besides yourself? Something is wrong here. Have you checked your own life? Your character reflects who you really are. You may claim to have the Holy Spirit in you, but do you live in peace with others? Hebrews 12:14 says -

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Are you a peace-lover or the kind of person who thinks you know it all? Indeed, what do you know? You only know what you claimed to know, but it still need to be proven.

ANTS ARE PROVIDERS

Proverbs 6:8 says that ants collect their food in the proper season. This is to avoid lack and poverty. It is time for us to do the work we are called to do, especially to provide for our families. A husband chooses not to work if his wife does. A wife fail to co-operate with her working husband by spending money unnecessarily. Ultimately, the whole family suffers.

It is time for us Christians to stock up our barns in times of abundance. This way, needs can be met in times of adversity. Just look at how the ants plan their lives. Some Christians, even though they claim to be Pentecostal or Evangelical, have incurred debts through careless expenditure. What they have today is spent today. What they have this month is all spent this month. The most foolish person is the one who does not live according to his or her income. A borrower is a slave to the creditor.

The ants provide for themselves, so they do not lack. Are you lacking? If you live above your income, poverty will be your friend. And later on, poverty will become your master. It will assume authority over you.



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ANTS ARE PARENTAL

Ants are also very attached to their young. Are you attached to your children? Do you keep your children at a distance once they reach 16 or 17 years old? Do you view your son as just a man and no longer your son when he grows taller than you? Do you still view your daughter as just a woman and no longer your daughter when she is physically mature? Are you still fond of your children no matter how old they are? If we as Christians, are equally attached to our children and youth, we will not allow their future to be jeopardized by the power of Satan. Look at how misled most youth are nowadays. They have even pierced their tongues and navels, as they have no direction from anyone.

Many Christians have neglected their responsibilities as parents. That is why the children have become slaves of Satan. Romans 6:16-18 state that whoever we yield ourselves to, we will become slaves to that person. Do you have good relationships with the young? Do you reach out to them, show that you love and care for them? Do you rebuke them in love when they are wrong?

It is much easier to preach than to practice it. Talk is cheap, to act on it is expensive. We have to be responsible for the young, even though they may not be our children. It is our job to lead them, teach them and discipline them. Let them know that you love them.

Ants are concerned about the future of their young as well. They are not self-centred. They work together to protect their young and to give them a future. This is why they are always so busy working. Ask yourself, have you made any plans for your children?

Some people think that it is sufficient to provide for their children till they are 18 years old, then kick them out of the house. Or just feed them with food and do not bother to communicate with them.

As parents, we only see the wrongs in our children's lives, not their good. That is where we err. Many a time, children are lost. You may not necessarily make decisions for them when they are older, but you can teach them, guide them and lead them. If you do not know how to counsel them, you can always get advice from someone who does.



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ANTS ARE QUIET WORKERS

Ants do not have a lot of showmanship. They simply go about their work quietly. Let the spirit of quietness envelop you. 1 Peter 3:4 talks about the "quiet spirit" -

...rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Some people like to let everyone, including the whole world, know of the work they do. They love blowing their own trumpets, saying, "I did this, I did that." Keep your mouth shut. God will see what you do in secret and reward you openly. There is no need to boast of how big your love offering is to a minister or the amount of work you do for the ministry. Maintain that inner quietness, so that people who draw close to you, will thank God for you.

ANTS ARE COMMITTED

Ants keep working without getting weary. How many of us complain that the task is too heavy? Ants do not complain. They would work until the work is done. What about you? Some of us begin diminishing in our efforts after a few months of work. The zeal shown to impress our superiors at the start of a new job can disappear quickly. We merely want to impress others, we are not sincere in our efforts. If we as Christians can work tirelessly, we will lift up the name of Jesus in the world.

Some preachers get only a few hours of sleep each night. People may think that ministers have nothing to worry about. That is not true, as there are many people to be prayed and interceded for. One has to go into the presence of God to look for the word that is to be brought to the people. The ants also show us that those of us without work have to start working, while those of us who are working need to pick up the pace.

ANTS ARE ORGANISED

Ants are highly organised creatures. Some Christians lack organisation in their personal lives. They have no plan, no direction and no sense of purpose. Do you know people like that? They are messy and disorganised.

We need to be organised to avoid mistakes or offend people due to our own irresponsibilities. Check your life and know where you are heading. It does not matter where you came from. It matters more where you are going. You may have a vision, but you must make that vision a mission to be accomplished.



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ANTS ARE ORGANISED (*Cont'd*)

Do you have any idea which direction you are heading? Do you know what you want to be? Do you know what you need God to help you to do? Apostle Paul himself said that he had not reached the maximum of where he is supposed to be, but he was trying to catch hold of what Christ had caught hold for him (Philippians 3:12-14).

ANTS ARE TALENT-MAXIMISERS

Ants use their God-given talents to build their own underground tunnels. They have an excellent system of homes created by their own strength. Every one of us would have at least one talent. Have you fully made use of what God has given you for His glory? Some of us maximise our talents when we are still non-believers. But when we become Christians, we become lazy. Some people choose to major in minors and minor in majors.

Have you reached out to bless others with your talents? We must not be like the foolish servant who buried his talent in the ground. We must be like the wise servant who built his house upon the rock. Many Christians claim they do not have time to serve in the church or that it is not yet time. When will the right time come? Ecclesiastes chapter 3 says that there is a time for everything.

Can we have a home cell in your home? You may say, "It's not yet time." Can you serve in this ministry? You may say, "It's not yet time." Can you participate in evangelism? You may say, "It's not yet time." When will the time come? Are you just going to bury your talents?

The Lord did not bless you with those talents just to have them buried. You are to use them for His glory. The home you live in is given to you by God, not by Satan. What is wrong for you to use it to glorify God, by allowing believers to come to your home for fellowship? Do you want demons to congregate there instead?

Jesus was the one who clothed you, fed you and healed you. He said that whatever you did not do for the little ones, you did not do for Him. So start utilising your talents.



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ANTS ARE CLEAN

Ants keep their homes clean. Let us just put aside spiritual cleanliness for a while. Is your home physically clean? Do you fill your home with demonic things, like heavy metal music, idolatrous items that you call "artifacts" and hard liquor that are "just for decoration"? Do you see how we disgrace ourselves? If an unbeliever comes to your home, he will find that it is the same as his home.

Do you keep your body clean and free from pollutants? Do you keep your heart clean and free from bitterness, anger, mischief, wrath, malice, unforgiveness, wickedness and other evil thoughts? The Bible says that we are the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Out of the heart evil thoughts proceed. What defiles a man is not what goes in, but what comes out.

Is there spousal strife in your home? Or parents in conflict with children? Are you clean in your heart towards your family members? If someone speaks badly of your spouse and you just keep quiet, can you be considered clean? Love covers a multitude of sins. Even if your spouse is a wicked person, love will cover it.

ANTS ARE FOCUSED

Every ant has a definite job to do. As Christians, we should be quick to serve in the ministry, not wait to be served in the house of the Lord. Have you ever asked yourself, "What can I do in the house of the Lord? What can I do to build God's kingdom?" Could you be a Sunday School teacher? Or get involved in the youth ministry? Or become a member of the worship team? Or be part of the evangelistic ministry?

Just take a look at Jesus in John 13. Before the last supper, He washed the feet of His disciples, just as the lowest-ranking servant of any household washes the feet of others before meals. This happened before Jesus' impending departure. He wanted to see if His disciples had learnt and practised what He taught about humility. Yet none of the disciples washed anybody's feet, as all of them held some level of status. None of them wanted to assume that responsibility of being the lowest-ranking servant.

Therefore, Jesus Himself started washing His disciples' feet. When He came to Simon Peter, he tried to stop Jesus from doing so. But Jesus said that if He did not wash Peter's feet, Peter would not be part of Him. Jesus then instructed His disciples to wash one another's feet, as we read in John 13:14-16.



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ANTS ARE FOCUSED *(Cont'd)*

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

It is common for most of us not to make the first move in serving others. We would usually do so only after someone has done it. Few of us possess initiative. Why must we do something only after being told or shown what to do? Start doing something to bless the Lord, or something to help God's people, or something to build God's kingdom because you are part of it.

ANTS ARE FIGHTERS

Ants would fight to death to protect their colony or their young from enemies. Will you stand up and fight for your beliefs? Will you be able to answer anyone who asks the purpose of your faith? Will you be persistent and consistent? Sadly, many of us are willing to sell our faith for a morsel of bread. In 2 Timothy 2:4-5, Apostle Paul told Timothy .

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

Basically, we should not give up our faith even at the cost of our life. Apostle Paul also said in Philippians 1:21. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Jesus Himself said in John 12:24. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Can we be like the ants who fight for their young? Will you fight for your family? Will you fight for your brethren? Will you fight for the household of God? A house that is divided will not survive.

Will you tell God that you want the right way of thinking and the right sense of purpose? Will you tell Him that you want to reach out to others and fight for the kingdom of God? Do not let the devil have his way. Our mode of warfare is not through missiles. We must learn to fight using God's equipment. Let us live for Jesus and let us not be found spiritually naked when He comes. If you do not know what you believe in, you are spiritually naked.



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ANTS ARE WISE

Ants have the same kind of social structure as humans because they possess wisdom. Do we apply wisdom in our undertakings? Many of us are foolish. Yet ants do their jobs without being forced to. They understand their purpose for living.

Do you understand your purpose of living? Do you have a sense of direction towards God? The Bible tells us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Proverbs 4:7 says - Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

Proverbs 1:7 says - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...

A wise man will always inherit the riches of the fool. You always need to be wise in whatever you are doing, so that the name of the Lord will be glorified. Have you ever asked yourself whether you exercise wisdom in all your actions? Do you ever tell God that you want to bring glory to His name by reaching out to others? Many of us make rash decisions without thinking the situations through. This is how we ruin ourselves and our families. We may be like puppets that do not think before we talk and consider before we act. Just because others have done certain things in certain ways does not mean we have to do the same. What favours others may not favour you. Those of us who wish to act boldly end up acting foolishly. Many of us want to do something to show that we can do it through our own strength. But we cannot. We need to depend on God as Proverbs 3:5-7 tell us -

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

We can learn many lessons from the ants in order to glorify God. These insects are co-operative and work for the common good. Many Christians are like the Dead Sea. They keep receiving but do not give out anything. We always like people to show us affection, yet we are not willing to show others affection. We are self-centred, going by our whims and fancies, rather than by the Spirit of God.



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WHO IS A SLUGGARD?

Let's go through Proverbs 6:6 again - Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise...

A sluggard is a lazy person, a good-for-nothing, an idler, someone who cannot fulfill a single thing in his life.

A SLUGGARD IS A PROCRASTINATOR

You may know your responsibilities, but you often try to put them off. If you want to learn from God, then you should learn from an insect like the ant. Do not put off for tomorrow what you should do now.

A SLUGGARD GIVES UP EASILY

A sluggard does not finish what he or she has started. Are you like that? The Bible says that God who started a good thing in our lives will not leave it unfinished. Many people say that they will do this and do that, but they will never complete the job. This also applies to job-hoppers who cannot stick to one place. The saying goes that the house of a traveller is never lit because the owner is always on the move. Similarly, a rolling stone gathers no moss. Would you start something and make sure you reach the end?

A SLUGGARD TAKES THE EASY WAY OUT

A sluggard adopts the least difficult course of action, avoiding the problem at hand. Many of us do not like going to the trouble spots, we tend to choose the easy way out.

We do not want to take on any responsibility. We do not want any difficulties in our life. We do not want to take on anything that makes us sweat or cause us inconvenience. We do not want anything where we have to reason thoroughly before we act. We do not want to till the ground and sow the seed. We merely want to harvest and eat the fruits of someone else's labour.

However, we need to be persistent and consistent in whatever we are doing, then success will be ours. The Lord will surely crown our efforts with success. The question is, do you depend on the easy way out? But you must remember that your shortcut can become your expressway to doom. There is no success without hardship. No cross, no crown. Experience brings one to senses.



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PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SLUGGARDNESS

Spiritual sluggardness is even more tempting in the spiritual realm than the physical realm. In the secular world, you may get into trouble if you come in late or fail to do your job. You are afraid of breaking your rice bowl and so you strive harder. On the other hand, if you serve in the ministry, you are not accountable to anyone except God. You may think you can do the work as and when you like, and nobody has any right to question you. The temptation to be lazy is greater when you work for God.

You may want to hold a high position in the ministry, but you must be responsible. Remember, the amount of slothfulness you have in your physical life, will also take away a lot of things from your spiritual life. That is because the price has to be paid. No cross, no crown. You can bluff a congregation for one or two weeks, but very soon, they will leave because they are not getting anything spiritually useful from your church anymore. You need to spend time to wait before the Lord to bring a message to the people, otherwise, people will see through you. If God wakes you up in the middle of the night to pray for someone, you need to do that and not tell Him, "No God, let me sleep. I'll wake up tomorrow and fast." God expects both your obedience and your sacrifice. However, obedience is better than sacrifice.

2 Peter 1:10 says that if we are diligent to our calling, we will never stumble - Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...

2 Corinthians 8:7 also reminds us to be diligent in whatever we do - But as you abound in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us - see that you abound in this grace also.

2 Peter 1:5 tells us to be diligent in adding more to our faith - But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge...

Rise from your position of laziness and start doing something. If you do not work, you do not eat. Even if you are a home-maker, you should not be idle. You can always ask your church for a list of items to pray for, or what area you can help in. You can evangelise, reach out to your neighbour or minister to people. You would then start being an ant to the Lord. He wants you to be an ant for Him, always working to extend His kingdom. Remember to pray, otherwise you become a prey to Satan. Quit feasting and begin fasting. Do something for the Lord and His kingdom. Read Proverbs 30:24-28 -



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PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SLUGGARDNESS *(Cont'd)*

24 There are four things which are little on the earth, But they are exceedingly wise:

25 The ants are a people not strong, Yet they prepare their food in the summer;

26 The rock badgers are a feeble folk, Yet they make their homes in the crags;

27 The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks;

28 The spider skillfully grasps with its hands, And it is in kings' palaces.

Ants may not be strong, but they are wise enough to store up food when it is abundantly available. This is akin to being prepared for the coming of the Lord. In Amos 4:12, the prophet told the people, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" Are you prepared to face God? If you are not prepared, you only have yourself to blame. There are many uncertainties around us today.

Rock badgers are not strong, yet they can still build their own homes. We can learn from them that even if we are weak, God is strong. He is able to keep us, protect us and lead us in the way we should go.

Locusts have no leader, yet they move in an orderly fashion. Even though we have leaders, we still step on one another's toes, find fault with others, gossip behind people's backs, backstab them, or assassinate their character.

Spiders can even enter kings' palaces and live with the kings. Would you dare to enter a king's palace without permission? We can learn from these creatures that we are able to conquer our enemy and weakness with God's help.

A lizard may fall from a wall or ceiling to the floor. However, it would take it a very short time to return to its original position. Therefore, it means that you need not stay at the spot where you have fallen. You can get up and go back to your original position or even further. The downfall of a man does not spell the end of his life. I read an article about a man who was a bankrupt in the 1970s when he was in his teens. Yet, he is now a multi-millionaire. The richest man on earth today, Bill Gates, was once a college dropout. He now makes more than \$25,000 a minute.

Revelation 2:5 instructs us to get up from where we have fallen - Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.



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PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SLUGGARDNESS *(Cont'd)*

Proverbs 24:16 says - For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again...

Micah 7:8 tells us not to rejoice when someone has fallen, for the Lord will be a light for him - Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The LORD will be a light to me.

Let us learn from these creatures and the ants. When we walk, let us not stumble into one another's path. Let us not plan for someone else's downfall. Let us encourage one another and help others accomplish what God wants them to do. Let us not fight with one another, but fight for one purpose to help our community and our family. When we teach our children the right way, they will be greater than we are. They will worship and serve the Lord.

1 Peter 2:21 says that we should learn from Christ - For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...

Let us begin to live for Jesus and for Him alone!

This magazine is published quarterly, back issues (*previously released issues*) of the magazine are also available. The annual subscription is based on love offering and is inclusive of postage within Singapore.

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