

Go To The Ant

For most people, an ant marching across the picnic blanket is nothing more than a pest.

Some might stop to marvel at the tiny creature's ability to carry off crumbs of cake many times its own size.

A few might even pause to admire the ant's industriousness before brushing them aside or crushing them out of existence.

Our Creator God tells us to study the ant closely.

Proverbs 6:6-8 [NIV] *“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”*

Your first reaction to this may be *“I’m no sluggard,”* but let us first consider the lifestyle of this little creature.

Note first the context of these verses.

Proverbs 6:4-5 [The Amplified Bible] *“Give not [unnecessary] sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, deliver yourself as a roe or gazelle would from the hand of the hunter, and a bird from the hand of the fowler.”*

Ants are hardworking and strong –

If we compare ourselves to the ant, millimetre for millimetre, we are very slow moving in our actions!

Ever watch a parade of ants hiking across a pavement?

They cover a distance hundreds of times their own body length in just a few seconds.

Blow the ant up to our size and it would be travelling up to 70 miles an hour!

The crumb of cake she is carrying in her mouth would be like a builder's truck.

The size of ants can differ greatly, the smallest class of worker could be 1/500th the size of the soldier ant in the same nest.

No matter what size, ants are very productive workers, even when they have no eyes!

Ants busily disperse the seeds of thousands of species of plants, devour other insects and turn over more soil than earthworms.

The harvester ant, to which Solomon referred, are common in Palestine and surrounding areas.

These ants gather seeds or grains, sort them, throw away the useless outside husks and store the food in long underground chambers and galleries for winter use.

After periods of wet weather the ants bring the material out in the sunshine to dry.

If the seeds start to sprout or germinate inside the nest, the ants cut off the shoots to prevent further growth.

Some ants actually make a sort of biscuit from the seeds they collect. They put the seeds out in the rain until germination begins. They then dry the seeds again and chew them into a kind of dough, which they dry into biscuits.

These ants certainly verify Solomon's statement in **Proverbs 6:6-8**.

These ants are a good example for us to follow in planning ahead, and making the most of every opportunity that comes our way.

Ephesians 5:15-16 [NIV] *“Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”*

Paul understood the wisdom in *“going to the ant.”*

There are other ants that are called dairying ants, they live on the sweet juice secreted by small insects, particularly aphids and other plant lice.

In many cases such ants obtain this juice by stroking the insects with their antennae, in effect milking their insect *“cows.”*

These ants even carry their tiny livestock from one plant to another to find the best feeding places.

Some species spin silk to make shelters or barns for the smaller insects. Others take them into their nests, where they keep them and feed them so they serve up a continuing supply of juice during the winter.

There is another species of ant that grow gardens in their nests.

These ants place leaves, flower petals or other plant materials on their gardens as fertilizer and raise fungi as food.

A well-known group of fungus growers are the leaf-cutter or parasol ants.

They are named parasol ants because they are often seen in processions, each carrying a piece of green leaf above its head.

The ants cut the leaves and carry them back to their nests, where they chew them into a pulp, which they place like compost on their gardens.

These ants sow, manure and even prune and weed their crops, different kinds of fungi before finally harvesting them.

Romans 1:18-20 [NIV] *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

As the apostle Paul tells professing atheists that they are without excuse, and show themselves to be fools, when they with open minds look at the physical creation on this earth.

Just to look at one small part of this creation, the ant, will be enough.

Ants are leaderless –

Proverbs 6:7 [NIV] *“It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,”*

Let us look at another important character trait of the ant for us to emulate.

In addition to the ant's remarkable strength and diligence, ants are basically self-starters, self-motivated.

Ants do **not** have to have someone constantly prodding them.

Every ant has a personal job to do and does it without being told.

If you damage an ant's nest or disrupt a column of ants at work, perhaps by placing a pebble in the entrance to their nest, how do they react?

Within seconds the ants on mass begin to rebuild or dislodge any obstruction, responding to the challenge in high gear.

Our Creator God is telling us to respond to any situation in the same way as the ant and become wise.

God is telling us that if this marvellous little creature can get done what is needed without leadership, how much more should we be able to get done with the help of leadership our Creator God has provided?

Ephesians 4:11-16 [NIV] *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

These are the leaders and teachers that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, has provided for every Christian.

Ants are selfless –

Selflessness is, in fact, a hallmark of most species of ant, which appear to act almost exclusively in the interest of the colony's survival.

A peculiarity of ant biology produces female ants [there are very few males in a colony] that are genetically more closely related to their nest mates than most other animal siblings.

These “*sisters*” seldom reproduce, leaving that to their mother, the queen, who dedicates her life to continual reproduction.

Ants have taken the practice of altruism to an extreme, willingly giving up their lives for the good of the family.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Out of gratitude to God for what He has done for all humanity [**John 3:16-17**] we as Christians should lay down our lives for God to fulfil His great desire, to create a family of human beings in His likeness [character] to share eternity with. [**Genesis 1:26-27**]

Soldier ants of a Malaysian species have taken chemical warfare to a suicidal extreme.

Poison-filled glands occupy much of their bodies.

When an intruder approaches the nest, the soldier ants contract muscles that rupture their abdomens, spewing poison over the intruder and the aroma summons reinforcements.

These soldier ants die protecting the rest of the nest.

The ant is a lowly little insect that embodies many wonderful traits for us to emulate.

Hebrews 2:3-4 [NIV] *“how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”*

The salvation that we as human beings have been offered by our Creator God, is testified by wonders; I believe the ant is one of these created wonders.

Let us go to the ant and consider her ways and then thank our Creator God for being the wonderful, compassionate, loving, all wise, all powerful being that He is.

Much of the facts on the life of ants in this article comes from the book, *‘The Ants’* by Edward O. Wilson, who dedicated his life to the study of this little but very wise creature.