These verses remind me of one of my mother’s favorite maxims, something I’ve heard my whole life. Perhaps your mother said something along the same lines: “Shut up, and get to work.” Most times, my mother just says “get to work,” but the first part is absolutely implied. It’s good advice, and we see some similar ideas here in Proverbs! Keeping your mouth shut is a pretty good way to limit troubles in your life. There’s quite a bit of good advice in the Bible—in Proverbs and elsewhere—about controlling one’s tongue. Dealing in “proud wrath,” as verse 24 mentions, certainly creates unnecessary problems. Keeping quiet is a skill of the humble, so that’s definitely something to work on! But controlling your tongue isn’t the same as remaining uninvolved, which is where the second part of my mother’s advice comes in. Slothfulness is death, according to verse 25. This gets frequent mention throughout the Bible as well. 2 Thessalonians 3 has quite a bit to say on the topic. To paraphrase verse 10, if you don’t work then you don’t eat. But there is more to it than working to feed yourself! We are meant to work hard so that we might help others as well as ourselves. A slothful person in essence robs the community of the contribution that they should have been providing. And slothfulness is associated with other problems like covetousness. According to verse 26, the “slothful” person “coveteth greedily all the day long,” but they want things for themselves. In contrast, the righteous give generously to others. Related advice comes up in Ephesians 2:28. “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” So today’s advice from Proverbs is pretty similar to advice I’ve heard my whole life… and it’s time to get to work!

**Proverbs 21:23-26**

**Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.**

**Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.**

**The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.**

**He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.**

**Bamboo Rats**

Bamboo rats are large rodents that live throughout much of Asia, including China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Burma. They can weigh almost 9 pounds and grow to nearly 20 inches long, with a tail half as long again. They are vegetarian, eating mostly bamboo, as their name suggests. But they have a very unique method of grazing! Bamboo rats are quite bulky and slow-moving, and they spend the majority of their time underground. They dig an enormous complex of burrows, which can reach extremely impressive depths. But the shallowest tunnels in the complex run just underneath the roots of plants growing above. Bamboo rats can graze on their favorite food simply by pulling bamboo stalks down through the ceiling. And when the bamboo has been eaten, they plug the hole from the inside! They are always enlarging the top layer of the tunnel complex to reach new plants. Female bamboo rats can have as many as eight babies in a single litter—and they can have four litters in a year. This makes for some very, very busy mother bamboo rats. Tunnels must be extended to reach new plants. Plants must be hauled downward by the roots, cut into usable lengths, and carried to the babies. Then the process starts all over again! The babies are sealed into the tunnel complex, so at least she doesn’t have to chase them all over open ground. These animals are, as you might guess, very successful in Asia—to the extent that they are considered pests. And they do it by following the same advice that we see here in Proverbs—keeping quiet (or at least, keeping an extremely low profile) and getting to work!

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Wildest: Indochina

Season 1

Episode 4: “Vietnam: Phoenix from the Ashes”

Start: 18:06 (34:10 from End)

End: 20:28 (31:48 from End)