**Proverbs 6:1-5**

**My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,**

**Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.**

**Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.**

**Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.**

**Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.**

Here is some strikingly practical advice. Written hundreds of years ago by Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived: Don’t get yourself into a bad financial position out of a misplaced sense of duty to someone else. This is not coldhearted advice to disregard your friends. Instead, it’s the commonsense suggestion that you should only pledge resources that you can actually afford to lose. And there is also the advice that should you find yourself in such a situation, perhaps through affection or inexperience, you should spare no effort to extricate yourself quickly from the snare you’ve fallen into.

**Surety:**

**security against loss or damage or for the fulfillment of an obligation, the payment of a debt, etc.; a pledge, guaranty, or bond.**

**a person who has made himself or herself responsible for another, as a sponsor, godparent, or bondsman.**

**a person who is legally responsible for the debt, default, or delinquency of another.**

It’s very difficult to find an example in the natural world for this sort of financial man-trap. Fortunately, I didn’t have to. Because Solomon extends his discussion into an example of how hard one should work in order to escape from such an unwise commitment:

**Proverbs 6:6-11**

**Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:**

**Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,**

**Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.**

**How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?**

**Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:**

**So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.**

[](http://ichef.bbci.co.uk/images/ic/1200x675/p01jy46s.jpg)I rather doubt that I need to convince anyone of the astonishingly hard-working nature of ants. Their astounding teamwork and extensive fortifications are well-known, although if these are indeed unfamiliar to you, I’m certain that there’s a well-established colony of Texas-style fire ants somewhere on the church grounds that would prove instructive. Ants of all types are ceaselessly busy with a variety of useful tasks. Breaking open an ant mound, for instance, results in immediate frantic activity, with some ants beginning the rebuilding while others mount an attack. As Solomon suggests, we should extricate ourselves from ill-advised financial arrangements with similarly single-minded, almost frenzied energy.