

22. God at your workplace

March 3, 2013

According to the article from June 28th, 2012 Forbes Magazine web site, the American workers' job satisfaction was less than 46%. Only 15.4% said they were "very satisfied" in their work. Most of the people who responded to the survey are relieved to be employed in this economy, eager to stay employed, but stretched to the max at work, and somehow hoping for a winning lottery ticket.

I wonder how many of you like what you do for a living . Even if your job is not what you'd love to do, does it reflect on your job performance and your relationship with your coworkers and your boss? Or better yet, how do you carry yourself at your workplace? Do your coworkers know that you are a born-again Christian because you tell them or because they see in your excellent work ethic?

We spend most of our waking hours on the job, yet many churches seldom address how Christianity should affect the way we work. The Bible, though, doesn't skip this topic. Unfortunately, many believers think that what they do at work has nothing to do with what they believe. They justify this twisted logic by compartmentalizing "secular" and "sacred" when it comes to the way they handle themselves at work. A wrong idea!

For the last four Sundays, we've been learning about submitting to one another through the power of the Holy Spirit who enriches the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children. It would be a terrible thing if the Lord didn't teach us anything about our attitude at workplace through His apostle Paul. But He does.

A. FROM GOD TO EMPLOYEES

Ephesians 6:5-8 Bondservants, (1) be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, (2) doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, (3) he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

Is Paul endorsing slavery here? No. It's important to understand that the issue is not slavery but attitudes. He wasn't addressing the rightness or wrongness of any given situation but the heart of the person in the situation.

Besides, in the original Greek word, Paul makes clear which group of people he is speaking to. The Greek word is "doulos" which means 'bondservant'. According to the OT Law, if you are a Jewish servant, the maximum time your master can keep you as a servant is 7 years. By the end of that 7th year, you can be released or remain with your master as a bondservant by your own free will for the rest of your life.

Apostle Paul is not speaking to 'slaves' in general, rather the believers – either free or slave – in our case, employees. He spells out the kind of behavior a Christian employee ought to exhibit in these 3 verses.

What I am about to say may not go well with some people's idea, but that has never stopped me from saying it. Listen, your boss and the company which you work for do not owe you anything. When they hired you and pay you the wage you agreed to

work for and provide the benefits they promised, that is what you deserve. Don't like it? Then, go find another job if you can in this economy.

Nothing wrong the union negotiates with the company for the better salaries, benefits, and job security. More power to you. But I am tired of hearing the liberal Teamster Union leaders who are motivated by their political, socialistic, and communistic agendas expecting the company owners do everything for the workers free.

By the way, all these union leaders make six figure salaries plus benefits. A frequent guest to the White House, Richard Louis Trumka, the current President of the AFL-CIO makes \$272,250.00 for his base salary. 95% of the union's political contributions, about 24 million dollars, go to the Democratic Party and their liberal causes against many of the conservative union members' wishes.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

Apostle Paul instructs us to be obedient and be good workers for three reasons:

1) As to Christ

In reality we are working for Christ, not just our earthly employers. Especially, if you have a Christian employer, you must not take advantage of your boss, rather you should work more faithfully. Instead of goofing around and just waiting to clock out, you should devote your full attention and energy to the job at hand.

The best way to be a witness of Jesus Christ on the job is to do a good day's work and be the best employee they can find without pretense.

The phrases "*in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers*" here means 'integrity,' 'honest,' and 'incorruptibility' whether your boss and company deserve them or not. How can we do that? This takes us to the next point.

We can do it because our motivation differs from the rest of the world. Our true aim is not to please our bosses but to please our God.

2) Doing the will of God from the heart

Whether you like this or not, your current job is what the Lord wants you to have. He might have something different down the road or just around the corner. That is then, but you now have this job and you do your best in this job for the glory of God and doing the will of God.

No matter what kind of job you currently have, you do need to know that you work for Jesus if you are a born-again Christian even though Jesus is not the one who signs your paycheck officially.

3) He will receive the same from the Lord

As employees, we receive a paycheck for the work we do, unlike the slaves of Paul's time. But that reward is temporary and soon spent. The reward God offers us is eternal. Your employer may not appreciate everything you do – actually he or she may not even see everything you do. But God sees, and He won't forget your diligent, wholehearted efforts at your job for His glory.

B. FROM GOD TO EMPLOYERS

Ephesians 6:9 And you, masters, (1) do the same things to them, (2) giving up threatening, (3) knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and (4) there is no partiality with Him.

A friend of mine who used to work for a Christian radio station sometime ago told me that his station general manager had an idea that when it came to receiving money, it was a business; but when it came to taking care of his employees, it was all about a ministry. In other words, that boss would take money from other people as much as he could, but he was not very good at taking care of his employees. That is a shameful thing for that Christian boss to do for his fellow Christian employees.

In essence, Paul applied his words for employees to employers as well. They, too, are to please the Lord in their work, particularly in their treatment of those under them. But Paul's instructions went a step further. He not only told them what they were to do, he also told them something they should not do: threaten their employees.

Here are four points you employers and bosses must take heed:

1) Do the same things to them

Do what? What we just learned in v5-8. In other words, take care of your employees. If you as an employer expect your employees to do their best for you and your company, you must do your best for them. All the companies around the world have the two most important assets: Clients and employees. Take care of these two, they will take care of the company.

It makes good, practical sense to treat your employees with kindness – after all, the attitudes you show to them are likely to be the ones you get back. But whether your employees deserve it or not, it's what the Lord requires of you.

2) Giving up threatening

The negative power of fear from your threats could result in the employees doing less instead of more, and this kind of motivation can not be continued over a long period of time.

There is an old proverb: "You draw more flies with honey than you do with vinegar." Some bosses think that the only way to communicate with their employees is barking orders at them. If you do that constantly, soon they will tune you out and not hear you.

If you allow your employees to have the benefits and profits of their hard work generously, they will work harder for you.

As employer or boss, you do have the right to hire and fire your employees according to your company ethics and guidelines. But you should not use that power to manipulate or threaten your employees. You cannot demand that your employees respect you, you must earn it. If you manipulate or threaten them day in and day out, it only shows that you are a very insecure person, you will be despised by them with disrespect.

There is another form of manipulation and threat by a boss: Micro -management. It comes from insecurity, pride, and distrust toward one's employees. If this is your management style, you need to change it, because you drive everybody crazy. Micromanagement is just one of several surefire ways to demotivate employees.

Here is a cure for you if you are a micromanager: Find someone whom you can trust and capable to handle the work, delegate the work, and give them the full authority to do their job without hovering over them and dictating every step. They will do better than you can if you let them and they will make you look good, too. Acknowledge their good performance in public. They will be loyal to you.

3) Knowing that your own Master also is in heaven

Mark 9:35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

This explains why many of the great men of the Bible were first servants before God made them rulers: Jesus, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Nehemiah are just a few examples. Even after a godly man becomes a leader, he must still lead by serving. An African proverb says, "The chief is servant of all." I don't think that the Commander-in-Chief of our country understands the meaning of serving other, but he understands taking what belong to others very well.

Employers and employees are equals in God's eyes, and both will someday stand before the Lord and account for their attitudes and actions.

4) There is no partiality with Him

One of the quickest and sure ways to destroy the morale and confidence of your company employees is showing partiality among them.

Here is my advice for your employers and bosses: Practice 3 Fs – Fair, Firm, and Friendly.

C. APPLICATIONS

1) To employees: You work hard with integrity, honesty, and incorruptibility not only for your earthly boss, but also for the Ultimate Boss Jesus.

2) To employer and boss: You treat your employees with integrity, fairness, kindness, and honesty as your want to be treated.

3) To both: Both of you will give account for your attitudes and actions to the Lord someday.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.