

Adopting the Christian Work Ethic:

Glorifying God in All Things

Text–Ephesians 6:5-9 NKJV

5 Bondservants, 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, 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, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

When reflecting on the jobs you've had over the years, take a moment to consider which one stands out as the greatest. Now, let's briefly focus on that. Do you have one in mind? On the other hand, were there any jobs that you found less satisfying or enjoyable? I sincerely hope your current job isn't one of those. We all experience a mix of great and not-so-good jobs throughout life.

Personally, one of the worst jobs I ever had was selling eyeglass cleaner to customers at Kmart during high school. My role was to approach people with a small table and a vaporizer, offering to clean their glasses. Most folks were reluctant to hand over their glasses, but some would feel sorry for me and allow me to do it. As I talked with them, I would smear their glasses with a jelly-like substance and then clean them. I would promise that the glasses would be fog-free, but more often than not, they fogged up almost immediately after the demonstration, which was quite embarrassing.

I remember one time when my boss happened to be present during one of these demonstrations. Afterward, he approached me and said, "That was terrible." To which I replied, "Well, thank you so much." Needless to say, I didn't keep that job for long.

Looking back, I was quite a shy kid, and honestly, I didn't believe in the product I was selling. As you know, believing in what you're offering is crucial in sales. Without conviction, you won't be convincing, and people won't be interested in buying from you.

As I was preparing this message, I pondered what was the worst job I ever had. Strangely enough, the very job I just mentioned, the one where my boss told me I was terrible, was perhaps the best job I ever had. Let me clarify that. You see, I've come to

realize that being in the right place, aligned with the will of God, is crucial. And that job, despite its challenges, felt like where I was meant to be.

Work is Not Part of the Curse

Let's take a moment to reflect on the concept of work. As it's written, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work," a principle rooted in the fourth Commandment given to humanity by God. It's essential to recognize that work was not a part of some curse but an integral part of God's original plan for humanity.

Work serves several purposes: providing a means to earn a living and support our families and allowing us to be a blessing to others. Moreover, work becomes a beautiful avenue to glorify the Lord, which is ultimately the purpose of our lives.

As Christians, the Bible guides us with the principle of doing everything to the glory of God. Whatever tasks we undertake should demonstrate the power of the God we claim to serve. Our actions should serve as visible testimonies of our faith. Whether it's a simple task like peeling an orange or directing a symphony, the quality of our work, our integrity, and our attitude can all bring glory to God.

It's crucial to reflect on how we approach our work. Is our heart genuinely invested, or are we merely doing it for a paycheck or to get by? The distinction lies in whether we work to glorify the Lord. We can choose to casually go about our duties, or we can choose to worship while we work, making our labor an act of worship.

A Christian Work Ethic for Today

Even though "bond servants" referred to Christian slaves in the text, the underlying principle extends to Christian employees today. The biblical guidance is clear: be obedient and submissive to your bosses, supervisors, and those who have authority over you. This attitude of respect and obedience applies in the workplace as part of living out our faith.

Even if you feel disheartened or unsatisfied with your job, this sermon can change your perspective. After hearing it, you might wake up with renewed enthusiasm, eager to tackle the day ahead and apply the teachings of the scriptures to your work and daily life.

Now, let's address the idea of being obedient to your boss. Some might think this only applies if they have a good boss, but that's not true. In the times of the New Testament, most businesses were family-owned and operated, so servants and household workers were often part of the extended household.

Peter's words in First Peter 2:18 apply to them. Listen to Peter's words:

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear or respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh or unreasonable."

In this context, "harsh" can be translated as "unreasonable," meaning that the instruction is to be respectful and obedient regardless of the boss's temperament or behavior.

Have you ever had an unreasonable boss? You know, someone with unrealistic expectations, perhaps like J. Edgar Hoover, the first director of the FBI, who would keep agents on call 24/7, even for trivial matters like fixing his lawnmower. Can you imagine calling an FBI agent to repair a lawnmower? It sounds unbelievable, but that was his expectation.

Whether your boss is understanding or unreasonable, saintly or not, as a Christian employee, there are compelling reasons why we should obey and submit to them. However, let's clarify this. We are to obey and submit unless they ask us to do something illegal or immoral. In such cases, it's essential to seek help from God and consider finding a new job.

Obedience Shows You Serve Christ

Reason number one for being submissive to those in authority at our workplace is that we ultimately serve Christ. The term "bond servants" can be substituted with "employees." We are to be obedient with fear and trembling, with sincerity of heart, as if we are serving Christ Himself. While we may have earthly masters, Paul reminds us that our true Master is in heaven. How we conduct ourselves at work directly reflects the God we serve.

Remember, when you're on the clock, your work becomes your witness. You can share a billion Scripture verses with people, but what truly demonstrates the God you serve is how you do your job.

People won't listen to the testimony of a Christian who does shoddy, careless work or constantly grumbles and complains throughout the day. We've all experienced working with someone like that. While we're laboring and struggling, they do nothing but murmur and grumble, making it even harder to deal with the job.

Consider how you talk about your boss, the company, and co-workers. What are you saying? What are you venting? How do you share with others? Christians should strive to be better, more productive, and more agreeable workers. There should be a noticeable difference in how we approach our tasks and responsibilities.

When Your Boss is a Believer

Even with a Christian employer, that's no excuse to be lazy, give less than your best, or expect special treatment. Instead, it should serve as motivation for you to give and do more. First Timothy 6:1-2 advises that if believers have fellow believers as their masters, they should not be disrespectful but serve them even more diligently.

Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

Having a Christian boss should inspire you to go above and beyond. If God wants us to be respectful and obedient to unbelieving bosses, we should show even greater respect and obedience to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

When No One is Watching

Our text also tells us that as Christian employees, we shouldn't work merely to please others or do our job only when someone is watching over us. Instead, we should work as if we are serving Christ Himself.

You don't want to treat your boss like a slave driver. Instead, you should be self-motivated, guided by the Holy Spirit. Allow God to direct and empower you to do your job to the best of your ability. We see an inspiring example of a strong work ethic in Genesis chapter 39:23, where Joseph's dedication to his work is highlighted.

The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

Despite working as a prisoner in prison, the guards and other prisoners respected Joseph's authority. Everything Joseph did prospered because God was with him. This story shows us that God can cause success even in unexpected or challenging work environments.

The workplace can either be a lifeless place, like a cemetery, or a bustling and productive environment, like a beehive. It often depends on the presence of the boss. Some may slack off or cut corners when the boss is absent, but as a Christian employee, you should consistently give your best effort, regardless of the boss's presence. Why? Because the Lord is with you just as He was with Joseph. Remember that God goes to work with you, and that should motivate you to excel in your responsibilities.

When Your Job Seems too Small

Now, let's turn to Exodus 3:1, where we find Moses tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, in the desert.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Here's a question: how do you attend to someone else's flock, leading them diligently, even when no one else is watching?

The answer lies in recognizing that God knows and sees everything. He judges the faithfulness and quality of your work, even in the most remote and unnoticed places, like the backside of a desert. It doesn't matter whether your job is highly visible or an isolated and obscure position, rest assured that God knows exactly where you are and sees your efforts.

A great example of an obscure job is when my nephew served on a USS aircraft carrier that was being commissioned. On the commissioning day, the ship was polished and bustling with dignitaries, officials, and even President Bush.

Amidst all the grandeur, someone noticed an area on the ship's backside that needed cleaning. They approached my nephew and asked him to take a bucket and a brush and scrub that spot. Now, this little spot was far away from all the action on the ship. Despite that, my nephew obediently submitted to the authorities, took the bucket, and went out to scrub the seemingly inconsequential area on his hands and knees.

While diligently working on this tiny spot, he suddenly heard a voice asking, "How are you doing, son?" He turned around, and to his astonishment, it was President Bush himself. The President had grown weary of the crowd and wanted a moment of solitude, so he sought a place away from the bustling activity. That little spot on the ship became his retreat, much like the backside of a desert.

Never in his wildest dreams did my nephew imagine he would have a face-to-face encounter with the President. He stood up, dropped the brush, and had the incredible opportunity to speak with President Bush. It was a surreal and unexpected moment that left a lasting impression on him.

The moral of this story is that no matter where you are in your job or how insignificant you may feel your role is, remember that God sees and knows everything. Just like that little spot on the ship had significance for President Bush, your diligence in your work matters to God. You never know what unexpected opportunities or encounters may

come your way as a result of faithfully doing your job. So, keep giving your best effort, knowing that God is with you, and He takes notice of your actions.

Despite many people's rebellious inclination towards authority, you must do what your boss asks without complaining or resisting. In those moments, even in what might feel like the backside of a desert, you could have a profound encounter with the Lord because He is always with you, observing your efforts and work.

When You Don't Feel Appreciated

As a bondservant of Christ, you should give your best effort in your work, even when your boss passes you over for a raise or promotion. The disappointment of not being selected for a promotion can be disheartening, but your work ethic should remain consistent. You don't do a good job merely to make a good impression on others, as some might do to please their superiors. Instead, you work diligently, knowing that your ultimate reward comes from the Lord.

If you receive a raise or promotion, praise the Lord and be grateful for the recognition. Embrace such moments with gratitude, but always remember to work to serve Christ and not merely to please people. Stay steadfast in your commitment to excellence in your job, and let your motivation be grounded in your devotion to God.

Obedience Aligns with God's Will

The second reason for being obedient and submissive to those in authority at work is that it aligns with God's will. As bondservants of Christ, our aim should be to do the will of God from the heart, not just reluctantly or mechanically. When God gives us an assignment, it's crucial to recognize it as His voice and respond with enthusiasm and a wholehearted commitment to do our best.

Even if we initially feel discouraged or have a bad attitude about a task, we should take the time to correct our spirit before starting, and if necessary, pray for the right mindset before proceeding. God sometimes tests us, and He might assign tasks we don't want to do. But if we remain faithful and obedient to what He asks of us, He will promote us in time.

When You Work a Secular Job

Consider the story of David, a mere shepherd boy, when the prophet came to anoint the future king of Israel. David's older brothers seemed more suitable for the role based on their appearance, but God knew David's heart. While David sang worship songs to his sheep, God saw his devotion and faithfulness. When the prophet inquired about all of

Jesse's sons, it turned out that David was the one God had chosen to be the future king. David was sweaty, dirty, and smelling like sheep because he faithfully worked for his father.

It's intriguing how God chooses His servants from unexpected places, like a simple shepherd in the field. This reminds us that God's will is not confined to certain sacred activities or locations; instead, as Christians, we can consider any good work we do as a ministry to Christ and for the glory of God, no matter where or what it is.

Let's avoid the notion that only church-related activities are sacred while everything else in the marketplace is secular. Instead, we should understand that our Christian witness is not limited to certain times or places. When we work, we can view it as a sacred act and dedicate our efforts to the Lord. We may have our flaws and bad attitudes, but we can ask God to work on us and transform us so that we can be a blessing to Him and others through our work.

When we go to our job, we can ask God to guide us throughout the day, making it a meaningful and worshipful experience rather than just whistling through the tasks. We can pray for His touch to influence those around us positively. This perspective applies even if we are looking for a new job; we should seek opportunities that align with our desire to serve God and bring glory to Him through our work.

If you're searching for a new job and aiming for a better one, that's great. However, it's essential to continue working in your current job until the right opportunity comes along. Just like Jesus, who worked as a carpenter for a significant portion of his life before beginning his public ministry, we should recognize that all our actions have a sacred aspect. Even at 12, Jesus understood the importance of fulfilling his father's will. His father ran a salvage company, and Jesus knew he had to be part of that business, saving and rescuing what was lost.

The example of Paul also teaches us that one's occupation doesn't define the sacredness of their actions. Paul was an apostle, but he was also a tentmaker, and he emphasized the importance of doing everything for the glory of God. So, just like parents feel proud and happy when their children reflect positively on them, we should strive to let everything we do reflect the awesomeness and greatness of our God. Our actions are a testament to our faith and devotion.

Just like in our everyday lives, our work as Christians becomes a part of our service and mission field for the Lord. When we approach our work with care, sincerity, and respect, it becomes a powerful testimony to those who don't believe. People observe how we conduct ourselves at work, and our actions can encourage fellow believers while serving God.

When You're Tempted to Complain

It's amusing how we often pray for a job, but shortly after starting one, we might think it's not right for us. However, perhaps it is the job that God intended, and He has a purpose for us being there. Sometimes, God uses our work experiences to bring about profound changes in our character and to make us better individuals. Instead of always looking for an exit, we should embrace the opportunity for growth.

We shouldn't complain about the pay or feel undervalued. If we believe we are worth more, we should demonstrate it through hard work and dedication. A sincere heart and a willingness to do God's will are crucial attitudes to maintain in our work.

We should be mindful of what we say at work because others are listening. Our words reflect the condition of our hearts, so it's essential to speak with care and consideration. By doing so, we can positively impact our workplace and those around us.

If you're frustrated about not getting a promotion and complaining about your boss, it might affect your chances for a raise. If you genuinely dislike your boss, consider finding a new job. But if that's not an option, ask God to help you change your attitude toward your boss.

When dealing with difficult colleagues or situations that won't go away, remember that even the apostle Paul faced challenges that didn't vanish despite his prayers. Such obstacles can be growth opportunities, and God's grace is sufficient to help us overcome them.

Lastly, the Lord will reward obeying your boss and doing an excellent job in due time. Trust in His plan and stay committed to doing what is right.

When You're the Boss

As Christians, whether you are an employee or an employer, remember that God is your ultimate master, and He treats everyone impartially. Christian employers should have the same attitude as Christian employees - seeking to obey and please God.

Think of Boaz from the book of Ruth, who greeted his workers with blessings and demonstrated mutual respect. As a Christian employer, the main principle guiding your decisions should be to do God's will and follow the example of Jesus. Bless, help, and encourage your employees genuinely.

Avoid using threats or lording over your employees like a warden or commandant. Create a tension-free work environment where blessings flow, and teamwork prevails.

Treat each employee equally, as God does not show favoritism. Love and care for all your employees alike.

God loves us all the same, without favoritism, and as His followers, we should love and care for others similarly. Don't focus on changing your boss. Pray for God to change your heart and attitude toward your work. Approach your job with enthusiasm, kindness, and a desire to honor God through your actions.