

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, it's tough to find a good job. If find yourself looking for a job, take your time when you fill out your application form. Make sure all your words are spelled correctly. One wrong or misspelled word might prevent you from being hired. Here are some actual statements taken from job applications:

1. I served as an assistant sore manager
2. Education: I went to school on a fool scholarship
3. I am very detale oriented
4. I am a rabid typist
5. I was involved in ruining an entire Midwest division
6. Reason for leaving previous job: Pushed aside so Vice-President's girl friend could steal my job.
7. On a Federal Government job application there was a question: "Do you favor the overthrow of the United States government by force, subversion, or violence?" Apparently this person thought it was a multiple choice because they wrote: "Violence."

Once you get a job, it may be tough to keep it because sometimes supervisors can be rather critical. These are actual statements from employee evaluations:

1. Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.
2. This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.
3. Slipped into the gene pool when the lifeguard wasn't watching.
4. She brings a lot of joy when she leaves the room.
5. Some drink from the fountain of knowledge—he only gargled.
6. If brains were taxed, he'd get a rebate.
7. Gates are down; lights are flashing; but the train isn't coming.

The Bible is not an ancient book of outdated stories. It's a love letter from God in which He gives us specific directions about life. In this passage, He gives us practical advice on how to be good workers. Peter addressed these words to "slaves" so you might be tempted to think they don't apply to us. Dr. William Barclay describes the historical setting for this time:

"In the time of the early church there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire. Doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, secretaries, and stewards were slaves. It would be wrong to think that the lot of slaves was always wretched and unhappy, and that they were always treated with cruelty. Many slaves were loved and trusted members of the family; but one great inescapable fact dominated the whole situation. In Roman law, a slave was not a person but a thing; and he had absolutely no legal rights whatsoever."
(*Letters of James and Peter*, pp. 210-211)

Although the words in this passage are addressed to slaves, these principles can be applied to employee/employee relations. The Old Testament is full of laws, but the New Testament is full of principles. There are only two laws in the New Testament. Jesus said we are to love the Lord God with all of our being, and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. He said "All the Law

and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:40) When you read the New Testament, don't look for laws to obey, search for life principles that show you how to live. This passage can also be applied to students and teachers. For all of you who are children and teenagers, your "current job" is being a student. So this message for you is "how to be cool with school." If you're retired, you still work with people—whether it's at church or with some other organization. These words are for anyone who relates to other people in any organization. Here's what God says in 1 Peter 2:18-20:

Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and endure it, this is commendable before God.

Most people in America live by the mantra, "Thank God It's Friday." Why, they don't really like their jobs. Around here we say, "Thank God It's Sunday." But you don't hear too many people saying, "Thank God It's Monday!" Instead we have songs about "Monday, Monday, can't trust that day." Or "It's just another Manic Monday." Let me share with you three important biblical Principles that can revolutionize your attitude toward your job or your schoolwork.

1. APPROACH YOUR WORK AS IF JESUS IS YOUR BOSS

What would happen tomorrow if you arrived at work or school and Jesus was your Boss or your Teacher? Would that make a difference in your attitude? If you are a follower of Jesus, the Bible says that **SHOULD** be your attitude. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." (Colossians 3:23) The Message paraphrase says: "Don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being Christian doesn't cover up bad work." If you approach your work and school as if Jesus is your boss, you will excel in two areas:

(1) You will excel if you work with positive enthusiasm

If you are doing your school work, or performing your job for Jesus you will do it "with all your heart." When someone approaches a job with apathy or indifference we call it "a half-hearted effort." When you do something with all your heart, it means you are enthusiastic about it.

The word "enthusiasm" means "in God." When you're enthusiastic you're bringing God into your work. I really didn't get serious about being a student until I was in college, but when I did, on the first day of class I always took a seat on the front row—I was enthusiastic about learning.

I've been preaching for 34 years, and I'm still so excited about it that sometimes I have to backslide just to go to sleep!

Edward Butler wrote: "One man has enthusiasm for 30 minutes, another for 30 days, but it is the man who has it for 30 years who makes a success of his life."

In his book, *Over the Top*, Zig Ziglar asks if you've ever noticed how hard you work before you go on vacation. Most people triple their output to get everything done before they leave. Zig writes the man or woman who works consistently as if they are about to leave on vacation will never be without a good job. Even if their company downsizes and they lose a job, word will be out what an enthusiastic worker they are. That's what it means to work with all your heart.

If you are doing something for the Lord, you should always do it with excellence. Martin Luther wrote: "The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."

(2) You will excel if you always do more than expected

If you are doing your job and schoolwork for the approval of Jesus, you'll always do more than the bare minimum. In the time of Jesus, the Jews were under the domination of the Roman Empire. A Roman soldier had the legal authority to demand that any Jew carry his equipment for exactly one mile. The Jews hated to do this, and they bitterly counted each step. At exactly one mile, they dropped the load and said with disgust, "There! I've done what is required, now don't bother me anymore!" But Jesus requires a higher standard for His followers. He said, "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." (Matthew 5:41) A Roman soldier would not soon forget the person who cheerfully carried his equipment the second mile.

Are you a one mile worker? Are you a single mile student? Do you do only the bare minimum that is expected? Or do you go the second mile and leave the mark of excellence on your work? People will always remember second-mile-work.

Second-mile people always excel. Around 1920 a pharmacist bought a drug store on the south side of Chicago. Soon, he was bored with his job and began to dream how he could make it more exciting. It was during a time when people were just beginning to call in their orders using a telephone, so this man decided to challenge himself to make his job more interesting. He decided to see how quickly he could deliver a telephone order. When someone called in, he repeated the order aloud, including the name and address. As he spoke with the caller, his assistant filled the order and a driver left immediately to deliver it. The druggist kept the customer on the phone chatting until the order arrived at the caller's home.

Most of the customers lived nearby, of course, but this kind of prompt service was revolutionary, and word soon spread. It became the busiest pharmacy in Chicago. He bought other stores and added new ideas like a soda fountain. Within a few years, he had a chain of stores. Can you guess his name? He was Charles Walgreen. Today, there are over 5,000 Walgreens because of a man who decided to go the second mile.

So treat your boss as if he was Jesus. Some of you are thinking, "I don't have a boss. I own my own company." Oh no you don't. God owns it. He owns it all. Your title may be President, CEO,

or Grand Poobah—but the only title that should matter to you is the Lord Jesus Christ, who has bought us for a price.

2. ENDURE UNPLEASANT TREATMENT WITHOUT WHINING

Peter writes that sometimes slaves are punished—they suffer. Sometimes they deserve it, but sometimes they just suffer because of a mean master. In the same way, you'll have some unpleasant experiences at work and school. The Bible says when that happens, we should endure it without complaining. No matter who you are, you are going to create some enemies in your life, even Jesus did.

I recall a Wizard of Id cartoon where Rodney comes from battle to stand before the king. He's beaten and bruised. The king asks, "Where have you been?" Rodney replies, "Out fighting our enemies to the West. I've pillaged and I've burned and I've killed our enemies to the West." The king says, "But I don't have any enemies to the West." Rodney said, "Well, you do now!"

According to the latest statistics, job stress is one of the biggest struggles facing Americans. According to a Gallup Poll taken in 2000, 80 percent of workers admit they feel stress on the job. 25 percent of them say their job is the #1 stressor in their lives. 42 percent of those surveyed reported yelling or verbal abuse is common. 14 percent of the workers admitted they wanted to strike a co-worker in past year. And 18 percent of those polled said they had received threatening or verbal intimidation in past year. (Attitudes in American Workplace VI, Gallup Poll, 2000)

Have you noticed it's easier to complain than to be thankful? Sometimes we even complain to God. A six-year-old girl named Joyce wrote a letter to God that said, "Thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy!" (*Children's Letters to God*)

Complaining is the great American sport. That's why companies have to have a complaint department. I saw a funny picture not long ago featuring a sign saying, "Complaint department—take a number." The number was attached to the pin of a grenade!

Verla Gilmore is a business consultant who helps employees maintain a positive attitude. She writes: "How many times have you sat in the employee lunchroom with coworkers when a person starts to complain about a change in the office hours, the vacation schedule, or the telephone rotation? Within five minutes, everyone sitting around the table feels obliged to chime in with their own litany of job gripes. Complaining is contagious. It's hard not to become a carrier. If you're waiting for your job to behave—expect a long wait!"

Everybody has tough days at work and at school; the difference is because we are followers of Jesus, we react differently. We don't whine and complain. There's a job description found for Christians in 1 Corinthians 4:12: "We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it. When we are slandered we answer kindly." (1 Corinthians 4:12)

Larry Burkett hosts a radio broadcast where he teaches Christian financial principles. In one program he spoke about the value of hiring Christian employees. He received a letter from a

listener that said: "I heard your radio program and decided to hire all Christians. I did, but I have never had a more complaining, griping group of people. They were always mumbling about something. I've now replaced them with refugees. The refugees are so grateful to work; they'll do everything I ask. They don't grumble and complain. I think American Christians need to wake up."

We need to remember that life isn't fair—but God is good. So, when you go through tough times at work or school don't become a whiner—God is watching.

3. CLAIM YOUR WORKPLACE / SCHOOL AS YOUR MISSION FIELD

We have done a disservice to the Bible by creating a limited category of jobs we call "full time Christian service." We think people like Pastors, Ministers of Music, Youth Pastors or Missionaries are the only ones in full-time Christian service. I've known men and women who fell so deeply in love with Jesus, they think the next logical step is that God wants them to leave their jobs and go into "full-time Christian service." Oh, God is still calling out special workers all the way from Pastors to Broadcast ministers, but you need to understand God is also calling Christian teachers, Christian dentists, Christian truck drivers, and Christian policemen.

On October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus, whose name means "Christ-bearer," sailed toward an Island in the Bahamas. He didn't discover it, it was already there. When he landed on the beach, he planted a standard and claimed the territory for Spain and for the glory of God. He recorded his prayer that day in his log. He prayed, "O Lord, Almighty, by Thy Holy Word Thou has created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea; blessed and glorified be Thy Name, and praised be Thy Majesty, which has designed to use us, Thy humble servants, that Thy holy Name may be proclaimed in this second part of the earth."

Then he named the island San Salvador which means "Holy Savior." Each of us ought to be a Christopher Columbus at our job and school. We should be a Christ-bearer and we should claim our workplace and school for God. He is calling you to this full-time Christian service.

You see, there is a tremendous difference between a career and a calling. (1) A calling is something that comes from God; a career threatens to become my god. (2) A calling is something God chooses for me; a career is something I choose for myself. (3) A career may end with retirement; a calling lasts a lifetime.

The Bible tells us: "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12) I'm not saying you should set up a pulpit in your break room or study hall and start preaching away. The best ways you can serve God in your job or at school is by doing your job with excellence. That's how you win their respect.

Bill Hybels wrote: "Jesus never commanded us to engage in theological debates with strangers, flaunt four-inch crosses and Jesus stickers, or throw out Christian catch phrases. But He did tell

us to work and live in such a way that when the Holy Spirit orchestrates opportunities to speak about God, we will have earned the right to do so." (*Becoming an Authentic Christian*)

CONCLUSION

The Bible is full of people who applied these three principles to their jobs. Do you remember Joseph—the one with the amazing technicolor coat? In his life, Joseph held down three different jobs. When he was just a kid, he was part of a blended family and his step-brothers hated him. They wanted to kill him, but one of his step-brothers, Reuben convinced them to spare his life. So they just beat him up, took his coat, and tossed him in a pit. Later they sold him to a band of traveling merchants for 8 ounces of silver (at today's rate, that's about \$64). Don't start complaining about your family until they sell you into slavery, okay?

Joseph was delivered to Egypt by the slave traders and sold to a man named Potiphar. That was his first job. Even as a slave, Joseph demonstrated such integrity and excellence in his work, he was soon promoted to the head of his household. The Bible says Joseph was a hunk, "well-built and handsome," (Genesis 39:6) and like many people today, he encountered sexual temptation in the workplace. Mrs. Potiphar cast her eyes on handsome Joseph and tried to get him to sin. But Joseph refused. She kept seducing him, and he kept refusing. Instead, Joseph took her advances as an opportunity to claim his workplace for God. He told Mrs. Potiphar he didn't want to betray his boss or sin against His God. His job was his mission field.

One day, she was so persuasive she grabbed him by his shirt and tried to drag him to bed. Joseph slipped out of his shirt and ran away from her—the Bible says to "flee youthful temptations" and he did! You've heard of the fury of a spurned woman, well Mrs. Potiphar held up Joseph's shirt and started screaming that Joseph tried to assault her. She told Potiphar, and he threw Joseph into prison. Even though he was innocent, Joseph suffered—yet he didn't complain.

Joseph became a prisoner, and he just went to work. That was job #2. The Bible says while he was in jail, "God was with him" and he performed his prison job with such honesty and dependability he was promoted to be the chief prisoner, in charge of all the other prisoners. Genesis 39: 23 is a statement about his job performance: "The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did." Joseph used the prison to tell people about the one true God. While there, he was joined by two servants of the king—the baker and the butler. They both had disturbing dreams and Joseph told them his God could interpret dreams. After telling them the meaning of their dreams, he requested they help him get out of jail. Three days later, the two servants were released because it was the king's birthday. As Joseph correctly interpreted, the baker was hanged and the butler was restored to his job. But he forgot about Joseph.

After two more long years of unjust suffering, finally Joseph got out of jail. Pharaoh told his butler about a troubling dream, and finally, the butler remembered Joseph. The king sent for him and said, "I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph replied, "I cannot do it...but God can!" (Genesis 41:15-16) He's telling Pharaoh about God! Joseph interpreted the dream, and kept on serving the king.

As you know, Joseph became such a trusted, valuable worker; Pharaoh made him the Prime Minister of all of Egypt. Throughout his life, Joseph had been treated unfairly, and unkindly. Yet through it all, he continued to be a diligent faithful worker. He never became bitter and tried to get even.

Years later, during a famine, his step-brothers came to Egypt and didn't recognize him. He had the power and the opportunity to extract revenge against the men who beat him and sold him into slavery. But instead, he showed them grace and forgiveness. Before he died, Joseph made this observation about his life: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20)

Will you apply those three principles to your job? To your school work? To your involvement as a volunteer? Imagine you're working for Jesus. Expect and endure unfair, unkind treatment—and don't be a griper. And consider your job or your school as a mission field to which God has called you. If you do, you can come to the end of your life and hear the best performance evaluation possible: You'll hear the Boss say: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

OUTLINE

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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes