

INTRODUCTION

We just finished the section of Ephesians that deals with the family “Home Improvement, Jesus Style.” We talked about husband and wives, and parents and children. We come to the section in Ephesians 6:5, that speaks about how we ought to relate to God through our job and how we ought to relate to others through our vocation. Some of you may think the Bible is just an old book of religious stories, but the Bible is more up-to-date than tomorrow’s newspaper. It is extremely practical. It speaks to us where we are right now. This book not only tells you how to have a good family life, it tells you how you ought to perform in your job 9 to 5, five or six days during the week.

One of the problems that we have in church is the practice of dualism. Dualism is when people come to church on Sunday and dress a certain way, have a certain vocabulary and have a certain lifestyle—but Monday through Friday or perhaps even Monday through Saturday—they live a totally different kind of life. The Bible says that ought not to be. Our Christian faith should express itself not just in church on Sunday. It really ought to express itself in our businesses, even if you don’t have a job. Everyone here does something, even if you are a student or a housewife or a retiree, you have a job. Whoever runs a family runs a business. This message tells you how you ought to be living Monday through Saturday. I have entitled today’s message, “Your Work Matters to God,” based on the book written by Doug Sherman in 1987, in which he says your Christian life is not something you practice only on Sundays but throughout the week.

In America today people really don’t like their jobs. A survey conducted by *USA Today* reports that 65% of Americans really don’t enjoy their work. It’s not a joy; it’s a job. It’s not a delight; it’s a drudgery. Sixty five percent said they don’t really like their work. That’s why the whole attitude of America is, “T.G.I.F” “Thank God It’s Friday.” Most people aren’t happy with their jobs. Some of the principles from the Bible will cause you to say, “T.G.I.M.” “Thank God It’s Monday. I get to go back to work again. I’m going to take this job and love it!” Would you be interested in some principles like that? the Bible tells you how as a Christian you can work in a way that will bring glory and honor to God.

Sometimes people are just not really qualified for their job. I’m certainly not going to tell this on the Aggies, or the Longhorns, or (heaven forbid) the Baylor Bears but there was this guy from LSU who finished school and was applying for a job and it was a rather strange job application. The first question was, “How many seconds are there in a year?” The guy thought for a minute and then he said, “Twelve.” The man said, “Well how do you get that? Twelve seconds in one year?” The guy from LSU said, “Yes. There’s January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd, etc.” The next question was, “How many days in the week start with the letter, “T”?” The guy thought for a minute and he said, “Four.” “Four how do you get that?” Tuesday, Thursday, Today and Tomorrow.” The final question was, “How many times does the letter “d” appear in the song, “Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer”?” He answered, “159.” “How in the world did you come up with 159?” The guy from LSU said,

Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer,
Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah.
Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah

Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah.”

Many of you are saying to yourself, “I have people like that working with me on my job.” Part of the challenge is the struggle, the conflict sometimes existing between what we call “labor and management.” In the Bible this relationship is addressed but it is called “slaves and masters.” Where it says “slaves,” replace that with employees or workers.

Ephesians 6:5-9. “Slaves [employees], obey your earthly masters [bosses] with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters [bosses] treat your slaves [employees] in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.”

There are four principles to help you be a better boss and a better employee.

I. BE A SERVANT IN YOUR SITUATION

Number one. Be a servant in your situation. The key there is the word on servanthood. If you adopt the posture of trying to be a servant in whatever your job is, God can use you in that job. Verse 7 says “we are to serve wholeheartedly” You are to act like you are a slave of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We use the words, slaves and masters. Most of us who have been exposed to American history really stumble over that terminology, but when the Bible talks about slaves and masters, it is absolutely nothing like what we would call antebellum slavery in the South in America. That was when ships sailed to Africa, kidnapped people and brought them back and sold them into slavery. That’s not the kind of slavery that existed in Bible times. In fact, in Bible times there were six million slaves in the Roman Empire, and many of them were voluntary slaves. They voluntarily sold themselves into temporary slavery so they could earn Roman citizenship. Slaves were often considered family members and were trusted employees. There was a good relationship there. Many of the craftsmen, tradesmen and even many of those we would call professionals today were slaves in the Roman Empire. So the relationship is that of bosses and employees, not so much of masters with a whip beating on slaves as we sometimes picture. The attitude Paul says we ought to adopt is one of being a servant. Instead of considering yourself an employee, consider yourself a servant of your company; consider yourself a slave of the Lord, Jesus Christ. In your job you are working for Jesus. That will make you a great employee.

A lot of Christians have a problem in their jobs. Sometimes I envy you who are in full-time Christian service. I wish I could be in full time Christian service. You can be in full-time Christian service even if you are not in the vocational ministry. You can be a full-time Christian servant if you work as a lawyer. You can be a full-time Christian servant if you sell insurance, cars or in any job that is not illegal or immoral. You can do it to the honor and glory of God in a full-time sense. One of the biggest heresies still around today is the throwback from the Old Testament and even the Roman Catholic Church that maintains the clergy is on one level of

spirituality everybody else is below them. The New Testament teaches what we call the “priesthood of all believers” meaning that because I am a pastor, that does not mean I am elevated above any of you. All it means is I am called and gifted to be a pastor, but we are all brothers and sisters together and are all priests before God, which means you do not have to go through me to get to God and I don’t have to go through you to get to God. The only one you have to go through to get to God is the Lord, Jesus Christ. He is our High Priest. So when you say, “I want to be in full time Christian service,” you don’t have to quit your job. You can serve the Lord in your job and that’s what this message is all about.

A great Old Testament example of somebody serving the Lord in his job is Daniel. Most of you know the story of Daniel in the lions’ den, but have you ever wondered what Daniel’s job was? What did he do all day, every day? He had a job, just like most of us. He was a government administrator. Daniel 6:1-2 says, “It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel.” So Daniel was a government worker. He never was out of work, because they didn’t have Republicans and Democrats. He was such a conscientious worker it says “Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.” (Daniel 6:3)

So here was Daniel’s job: He got up and went to work every day and he was so good in his job that he kept getting promoted. Here was the problem: Some of the people he worked with were jealous of him so they devised a scenario by which he could be arrested. They made it a breach of the law for anybody to pray to anybody except the king. Daniel wasn’t going to obey that law! So he bowed down and prayed to the God of Israel. He was arrested and this is where the part of Daniel in the lions’ den occurs. Can you just picture what it must have been like down there in the pit with all these hungry lions? But Daniel wasn’t afraid, because the Bible says his faith was in God. I don’t know about you but in my sanctified imagination I can just picture Daniel down there in that den of lions and they rolled the stone over the door and here he was with those hungry lions. Angels of God are there to close the mouths of the lions. I can just see old Daniel he pulls up one old fluffy lion on one side and pulls up another fluffy lion on the other side and he just lays down in the middle of them and he pulls out his old pocket Old Testament and is just laying there “reading between the lions” just taking it easy relaxing and resting. You wonder where that phrase came from, right? Meanwhile back in the palace, Darius can’t sleep. He is biting his fingernails and pacing the floor all night long. “Oh what have I done? How is Daniel doing?” Here’s Daniel down there, sound asleep in the lions’ den. The next morning the king goes down there and pulls the stone away. And Daniel 6:20 records what happened next. “When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, *whom you serve continually*, been able to rescue you from the lions?’” Wait a minute. Doesn’t the king say Daniel served the Lord full time? Doesn’t the king say Daniel “your God whom you serve full time” has he rescued you? Of course the answer to that question is “yes.” The thing I wanted you to see is that even his employer recognized that Daniel was serving the Lord full time. But what was his job? He was a government administrator. Whatever your job is if you are a salesman if you are an accountant whatever it is you do, you can serve the Lord full time in your job.

Dr. John R. W. Stott said, “The way to be a Christian employee is to always imagine that you are

working for Jesus instead of your boss. It is possible for the housewife to cook a meal as if Jesus Christ were going to eat it or to spring clean the house as if Jesus Christ were going to be the honored guest. It is possible for teachers to educate children for doctors to treat patients for nurses to care for patients for lawyers to have clients for shop assistants to have customers for accountants to audit books and secretaries to type letters as if in every case they were serving Jesus Christ.” When you get up tomorrow morning and go to work, what kind of difference would it make in your job if when you arrive at your workplace you said to yourself, “Today I’m going to work for Jesus”? I’m going to treat my boss as if my boss is Jesus. I’m going to treat my company as if my company belongs to Jesus.” Your boss may not even be a Christian or your workplace may not even be a Christian-based company but your *attitude* can be, “I want to serve the Lord in my situation.” That will make a tremendous difference.

II. BE DILIGENT IN YOUR DUTY

1. A Christian employee should be consistent

Here’s principle number two. Be diligent in your duty. I believe as a Christian you ought to be the hardest working employee in your entire business. You ought to be the hardest worker there in your whole office. I think there are some qualities of being a Christian employee that we find here from Ephesians 6:9. “Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart.” What’s that talking about? There are three qualities you ought to strive for as a good worker. Number one. Consistency. In other words, you ought to be faithful in your job, whether you are supervised or not. If you’ll notice in verse 6 it says, “Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you.” Isn’t it a tendency for all of us to work a little bit harder when we know the boss is watching us? I call this the “push-up principle,” because I can remember when I used to play football and we were doing exercises before the game or before practice or something we’d get down there and we’d be doing push-ups and when the coach was looking at you, man you were doing those push-ups good, but when he turns and walks to look at somebody else, you would take it easy slow down a little bit but when he turns back boy you start doing it again. That’s the tendency we all have to work harder when we are being watched.

I heard about a Methodist preacher (I have to use Methodists because they have bishops to supervise them) who was in his office one day and looked at the back window and there was Jesus standing there in the flesh! It scared this Methodist preacher and he didn’t know what to do, so he called up the bishop and said, “Bishop. You’re not going to believe this, but Jesus is standing outside my office window and he’s looking at me! What should I do?” The bishop said, “Look busy!” Isn’t that what you do when the boss walks by? You work harder and look a little bit busier? The Bible says as a Christian you shouldn’t do that. Don’t do that just to please men. Be consistent in your diligence.

2. A Christian employee should demonstrate honesty

Number two. A good Christian employee ought to demonstrate real honesty. I recently read that in America employee theft is responsible for a loss of \$2 billion per year. I’ve also read that if employee theft was completely eliminated, all of our retail prices would be 15% lower than they are today. You and I are paying 15% more because of all this employee theft. We almost joke

about it. Do you remember the old song “One Piece at a Time” by Johnny Cash? The song is about a Detroit autoworker who smuggled out Cadillac parts for years until finally he had enough parts to build his own Cadillac. When he drove it down the road, people said, “What year Cadillac is that? The chorus says, “It’s a 59, 60, 61, 62,” because he used all those parts from different years. And we laugh about that. There is nothing funny about employee theft in fact, it is robbery. Do you think you would never steal products like that or big things like that? Every year \$50,000 worth of paper clips are stolen, sometimes even inadvertently. Those little things add up. sometimes when we are late for work, we don’t put in the amount of time that’s required of us. That’s not just being lazy, that’s stealing from the company, because it has been contracted with you that you would work a certain amount of time for a certain amount of money if you don’t do that, you are stealing from the company. Christians should be honest in all of their dealings.

3. A Christian employee should demonstrate loyalty

The third quality is loyalty. Several years ago American economists began to study the Japanese economy and realized the Japanese did things differently. That resulted in a lot of philosophies changing and created new paradigms for businesses in America. One of the things the economists learned was the people who work for the companies in Japan consider those companies part of their family and they do whatever it takes to make sure that company succeeds and prospers and profits whereas in America in many, many cases people did not have that attitude. They weren’t loyal to their business: They worked their eight hours, punched out, went home and forgot about it. They didn’t have any loyalty to their business. Christians ought to be so diligent that you really have a loyalty to the company you are working for. Sometimes it means you have to go the second mile. Sometimes it means you may have to put in a little overtime that you are not paid for. Like one guy said, “The only man who ever got all of his work done by Friday was Robinson Crusoe.” that means you may have to work extra sometimes. Christians ought to be willing to put in the second mile. Consistency, honesty and loyalty.

Did you know there is a personnel agency up East who will work with you to place an actor who will commit employee theft in your company for six weeks? It is all part of a sting operation. It will help you discover who else may be stealing from your plant, but the main reason these personnel agencies provide this “thief” is so at a certain time the boss “confronts” this person in a very ugly, confrontational situation and fires him or her, thereby putting the fear of God into the other employees so they won’t steal. I don’t think a Christian employee needs that kind of scenario or threat, because if you are serving the Lord, Jesus Christ, there will be consistency, honesty and loyalty.

III. BE KIND TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

Verse 9, says, “Masters (bosses) treat your employees in the same way.” So principle number three is if you are a boss, manager or a business owner, be easy on your employees; treat them with respect; treat them with real kindness. A good example of this in the Old Testament is Boaz. Boaz was a very wealthy business owner, a farmer. Yet we read in the book of Ruth that whenever he greeted his workers, he said, “The Lord be with you.” Is that the way you greet your employees, with kindness? Boaz even gave his workers instructions that when they were

cutting down the wheat to be sure they left ample portions of wheat lying in the field for Ruth and the other peasants to pick up so they would have something to eat. He showed generosity and kindness. I think that ought to be the attitude of every Christian manager supervisor or business owner.

I was speaking to someone this week who talked about how a hotel owner was so shrewd and mean that whenever he saw one of the workers drinking something that looked like a clear drink, the owner went up to them and made the worker stir it to see if it was a Sprite that they were stealing or if it was water, which they were allowed to drink. When you are working in an atmosphere like that, the company has a lot of problems. Instead, all you owners, supervisors and managers—greet those people with kindness with love.

Several years ago I went to Columbia, Tennessee, and visited the Saturn automobile factory. I doubt I will ever drive a Saturn automobile, but they advertise that as being a different kind of company and it is! The whole emphasis of this company is not on the finished product the car as much as it is on the workers themselves building a family and providing for the needs of the workers and the employees. I went in and took the tour and there was just a different atmosphere—from the top to the person who was working on the assembly line. They all felt like they were part of a team, their families were invited to be a part of company events, and they were providing the right kind of benefits for their workers. The managerial attitude was “we really care for you.” I think that’s the attitude that ought to describe every Christian leader and every Christian supervisor.

During the Revolutionary War at Valley Forge there is a story about how George Washington was walking along on a snowy morning, dressed up in his hat and his topcoat and he was not easily recognized. He came upon a detail of soldiers. There was a corporal commanding this detail and they were straining to lift a heavy wooden beam to build a cabin, but they didn’t have enough strength to do it. But rather than help them, the corporal was just standing there barking out orders. Washington joined the men and helped them lift the beam and set it in place. When he finished he turned to the corporal and said, “Why didn’t you help them?” The corporal said, “I’m a corporal that’s why!” not recognizing to whom he was speaking. At that time Washington unbuttoned his topcoat so the corporal could see his general’s uniform and he simply said, “Next time you need help, call me, because I’m only a general.” I think that’s the attitude of supervision and management Christian business owners ought to adopt. “Be easy on your employees.”

IV. BE A WITNESS IN YOUR WORK

1. Don’t brag

Number four (and I think this sums it all up), be a witness in your work. How can you be a witness in your work? There are a lot of ways. Number one. Don’t brag! Many times Christians in the workplace just talk about how good they are. They adopt the attitude: I don’t drink and I don’t smoke and I don’t chew and I don’t go with boys that do! That turns off a lot of people who are not Christians. So you shouldn’t take the attitude, “This is how good I am Look how nice I am.” Instead, you ought to take the attitude of a servant of humility.

2. Don't nag

Number two. When you're trying to witness in your job, don't nag. Don't keep beating them over the head. I think we all know some Christians who are not very tactful in their witness. I'm talking about the ones who carry around a big Bible and are always beating people over the head with it. They like to say, “If you're not saved, you're going to die and burn in hell!” That's true, and people ought to consider whether or not they are going to die and go to heaven or hell, but it's not something you constantly pound in and nag them about. Colossians 4:5 tells us how a Christian worker should witness to those on the job. “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace.” That means kindness. How you speak to those people you work with is at least as important as what you say to them. Then it says, “seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” this is how you ought to witness to people on your job. Don't just beat them over the head at every opportunity; instead drop little seasonings of your faith in there just like salt. Of course doctors tell us to limit our salt intake. When I eat those sliced tomatoes I love to pour a little salt on them. But too much salt just ruins the taste. If you took 2 or 3 tablespoons of salt and just dumped it on a slice of tomato, you couldn't eat it. That's the problem with some Christians—they pour on too much salt. The Bible is saying your verbal witness for Jesus Christ ought to be like salt—just a little bit of seasoning every now and then really makes it just exactly right. It makes life more tasteful when you do it that way.

3. Don't drag

The final advice is don't drag, because if you are a lazy, incompetent, unreliable, disloyal worker it doesn't matter what you say about the Lord, Jesus Christ. You have ruined your witness. The Bible says, “Let your light so shine that they'll see your good works.” Some of you may be wishing you worked at a church where you all pray together and talk about the Lord all the time, but instead work in an office where they curse and take the Lord's name in vain, tell filthy jokes and distribute obscene material. Have you ever stopped to think that God put you there for a purpose? where do you need the most light? You need the most light where there is the most darkness. On Sunday mornings when we're here like this praising the Lord, you don't need a lot of light. There's already a lot of light here, but in your job there's a lot of darkness and you need to be the light of the Lord, Jesus Christ there and you can make a difference. Your job really does matter to God.

Jack Eckerd is the founder of Eckerd Drugs. He decided years ago he was going to try to be a Christian business owner. He didn't know it, but they were selling pornography. He received a letter from an upset grandmother. She had cut out an excerpt from Penthouse Magazine that her grandson had bought at an Eckerd's Drugstore. She had highlighted a real steamy section. When she complained because this magazine was sold to her grandson, who was a minor by the way, Jack Eckerd decided he was going to make a difference. He sent orders to every one of his stores to take every one of those filthy magazines off the shelves and within 48 hours they were gone. He was threatened with lawsuits and his CFO his Chief Financial Officer came in and showed him the numbers. He said, “You're going to lose \$3 million this year if you take these magazines off the rack.” Jack said, “I don't care if we lose \$30 million, we're not going to sell them.” The

next year their sales increased 43%. Some of you business owners, managers, employees need to make a commitment that you are going to make a difference on your job.

CONCLUSION

One of my favorite writers is Norman Grubb, who tells the story of an Australian lady named Margaret who for many years was antagonistic toward the faith and ridiculed and scorned Christians. But she had a friend who lovingly kept sharing Jesus with her and Margaret eventually became a Christian. She was a nurse and used her vocation to help a lot of people and tell them about Jesus. Several years after she became a Christian, she was diagnosed with a terrible disease in which her circulation was damaged and she ended up having to have both of her hands and both of her feet amputated. She literally became so disabled she couldn't get around. She wondered, “What can I do for the Lord now?” And she prayed a prayer that went something like this “Lord, I commit whatever there is left of me to your service.” She rigged up a harness much like Joni Eareckson Tada and began to draw pictures with a pen and a harness by moving her mouth around. She became known as an artist and she would write letters to people and she wouldn't preach she'd just give her testimony. She did that for years using her business to try to influence people for Christ. When she died, Norman Grubb said there were over 1,500 people who reported they were Christians because of Margaret's witness.

Do you have two good hands? Do you have two good feet? My challenge to you today is that you will go out into your workplace tomorrow and you will be a witness for the Lord, Jesus Christ!

OUTLINE

I. BE A SERVANT IN YOUR SITUATION

II. BE DILIGENT IN YOUR DUTY

Qualities of a Christian employee

1. Consistency
2. Honesty
3. Loyalty

III. BE KIND TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

IV. BE A WITNESS IN YOUR WORK

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. *Colossians 3:23*

Don't

1. Brag
2. Nag
3. Drag



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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