

INTRODUCTION

Please open your Bibles to Colossians 3:22. This section of God's Word is all about relationships. Beginning in verse 3:18, God has instructions for husbands and wives. In September, I spoke about the need for "Step Forward Wives and Prefect Husbands." Then the next section is about parents and kids. In October, I spoke on, "Insanity is Hereditary: You get it from your kids." In these verses, God has a word for employees and employers.

These words are addressed to slaves and masters. When you read those words, you shouldn't imagine the antebellum South and plantation owners with slaves. In the Roman Empire, half of the population worked as slaves. They were the craftsmen and professionals of the day. Almost all the doctors and teachers were slaves. The economy of the Roman Empire operated on this model. The principles the Bible addressed to slaves and masters applies to employees and employers today. In addition there is one of the most powerful general principles in the Bible found in verse 23.

Colossians 3:22—4:1. "Slaves [employees], obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. [This next verse is the powerful personal principle. If you're a young person looking for a life verse, this would be a good one.] Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. Masters [bosses], provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven."

This morning the title of my message is "G.F.I. w/ E²." I've always liked using initials. When my girls were growing up they'd make a game trying to figure out what I meant when I talked using initials. Some of them were easy. I'd say, "Are you GTG?" That meant, are you "Good to go?" Or I'd say, "LDI." That stood for "Let's do it." Sometimes they'd ask me something and I'd answer either "COI" or "NGH." COI stood for "Count on it." NGH stood for "Not gonna happen." One of my favorites was LOITCARE. That stood for "Last one in the car's a rotten egg." I still use initials when I'm playing golf with my friends. When I'm behind early in a match, I'll say, "LOGL." That stands for "Lot of golf left."

If you want to succeed in life, if you want your life to be blessed by God, you must G.F.I. w/ E²! It stands for: Go for it with enthusiastic excellence. Now, you should be thinking, "Okay. Go for it...what is IT?" Look at verse 23 again. "IT" is *whatever* you do. And God says whatever you do; you should do it with enthusiasm. I love the word enthusiasm. Our English word "enthusiasm" is a combination of two Greek words, *en theos* which literally means "in God." The meaning is "God in us." The more you are aware of God in you, the more enthusiastic you will be.

Here are some great quotes about enthusiasm. Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Charles Schwabb the founder of U.S. Steel wrote, "You can succeed at almost anything for which you have unlimited enthusiasm." The great pastor Norman

Vincent Peale wrote, "Years wrinkle the skin, but lack of enthusiasm wrinkles the soul." Winston Churchill said, "Courage is going from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." But my favorite quote about enthusiasm came from the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi. He said, "If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm." Enthusiasm has special meaning for the Christian. When you enter into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit immediately comes to take up residence in your heart. But the Holy Spirit doesn't merely want to dwell in your heart, He wants to take charge. And the more God takes charge of your life, the more enthusiastic you will be. Enthusiasm is simply faith set on fire. How enthusiastic are you about God? Let me share with you two important areas where you should demonstrate enthusiastic excellence.

I. G.F.I. E/ E² IN YOUR DAILY JOB

God wants you to honor Him in your job. Everybody has a daily job: You may be a laborer who is paid by the hour or a salaried worker, God wants you to honor Him on your job. You may be a homemaker, or a student, God wants you to honor Him in what you do and how you do it.

In the Bible, working is a noble act God established from the beginning. First, God worked in the process of Creation, and on the seventh day He rested. God is still working. Jesus said in John 5:17, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." God gave Adam a job of cataloging all the animals. God said in Exodus 20:9, "Six days you shall work." The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica that if a man doesn't work, he shouldn't eat.

I heard about a preacher who was talking about work and said, "Because of Moses, you don't have to work on Saturday. Because of Jesus, you don't have to work on Sunday." One man said to his friend, "Five more Jewish boys like those two and we wouldn't ever to work again!" In the Bible, good, hard work isn't to be avoided. It is a noble calling.

If you haven't settled on a job career yet, you might be interested in seeing a list of the top jobs for 2006 according to *Money Magazine* and www.salary.com. They are: 1. Software engineer; 2. College professor; 3. Financial Advisor; 4. Human Resources Manager; 5. Physicians Assistant; 6. Market Research Analyst; 7. Computer/IT Analyst; 8. Real Estate Appraiser; 9. Pharmacist; and 10. Psychologist.

Do you have the kind of job where you say "TGIF?" Or do you have a job where you say, "Thank God It's Monday?" Studies have shown roughly 50% of the people working in America say they don't like their jobs. They are working only to earn a paycheck instead of doing something that really gives them fulfillment. If they aren't careful, they can fall into a vicious trap. They allow a bad job to temper their attitude rather than allowing their positive attitude to transform a bad work environment. Before you retire, you will spend approximately 100,000 hours on your job, so it's important to do what you love, or at least love what you do. Whatever job you have, God wants you to work at it with all your heart. He wants you to work with enthusiastic excellence. Notice God's instructions to workers and employers.

1. As an employee, work at your job like Jesus is your boss!

In this passage God tells us to obey our bosses not to simply please them, but in order to reverence the Lord. In other words, you should honor God in the way you do your job. In Ephesians we read, “Don’t just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ’s servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you’re really serving God. Good work will get you good pay from the Master.” (Ephesians 6:7-8 *The Message*)

Do you sloppy, sub-par work? Do you only work hard when your boss or teacher is watching? I can recall playing high school football and we’d be doing exercises. We always started with jumping jacks. When the coach was watching, all the players did them the right way, but if the coach turned his back, some of the guys got sloppy and started doing choppy, mini-jumping jacks. Then when the coach turned back, they’d do them right. God says that is the kind of attitude and behavior that will guarantee you fail in life. A lazy, sloppy employee brings shame to the name of Jesus.

A Christian who is dedicated to enthusiastic excellence in everything he does presents a good testimony for Jesus. And in the same way, a Christian who is lazy and unreliable brings dishonor to the name of Jesus. A friend of mine worked at an aircraft refurbishing factory in Birmingham. This was a huge company employing several thousand workers and had a contract with the U.S. Air Force to provide maintenance for their heavy aircraft. My friend applied Colossians 3:23 to his job and did his job quickly and well. When he finished his part of a job, he looked around for something else needing doing, and he did it too. After a few weeks, several of the older men who worked there for years cornered him in the fuselage of an airplane and told him he was working too hard and too fast and in order to save their jobs, he had to work more slowly. My friend couldn’t do that with a clear conscience, so he kept working efficiently and quickly. Their threats soon turned in action and he found all four tires of his truck slashed in the parking lot. He soon quit his job. When he told me that story, I couldn’t believe employees intentionally worked slow—I was just naive. A couple of years later, I wasn’t surprised when that company lost their Air Force contract and went out of business.

Our word “vocation” comes from the Latin word *vocare*, meaning “calling.” God is calling all Christians to some kind of a service for Him. Just because you may not serve the Lord as your employment, He still wants you to serve Him in your job. God is looking for Christian teachers, Christian lawyers, Christian plumbers, Christian students, and Christian homemakers. Whatever you do, do it with all your heart as if you are working for Jesus.

Howard Hendricks, a teacher and author from Dallas Theological Seminary, was sitting on a jet at DFW when it was delayed for takeoff. After a long wait, the passengers became more and more irritated. Hendricks noticed how kind and gracious one of the flight attendants was as she spoke with them. After the plane finally took off, he told the flight attendant how much he appreciated her poise and patience and asked if he could write a letter to the airline complimenting her work. The flight attendant smiled and replied she didn’t work for the airline company, but for Jesus Christ. She said that just before going to work she and her husband prayed together that she would be a good representative of Christ. She has discovered the value of G.F.I. w/E!”

2. As an employer, treat your workers like you want to be treated by the Big Boss!

God goes on to give a word to Masters. This would apply to bosses and especially those of you who own or operate a business. Colossians 4:1 says you should treat your workers with kindness and compassion, because you have a Master in heaven. You may think you’re the big boss, but according to the Bible, you are going to have to give a final accounting to a bigger boss. In addition to what we read in Colossians 4, God has this word to bosses: “Masters, it’s the same with you. NO abuse, please, and no threats. You and your workers are under the same Master in heaven.” (Ephesians 6:9 *The Message*)

I recently reread Truett Cathey’s autobiography again, appropriately entitled, *Eat Mor Chikin, Inspire More People*. Truett is the founder of Chick Fil-A and a committed Christian. The reason Chick Fil-A makes over a billion dollars a year is because Cathy has instilled his attitude about work into the operators who own and operate the Chick Fil-A businesses. When he was a teen, he delivered newspapers in Atlanta, Georgia. He decided to treat every customer as if he was delivering the paper to the Governor’s mansion. He never simply threw the newspaper on the front lawn, he ran up the steps and put it inside the screen door, or in a rocking chair if he knew his customers read there. He later owned two diners outside Atlanta, called the Dwarf Houses. He treated every customer as if they were the most important person in the world. He taught his employees to be cheerful and always go beyond what was expected of them. He has grown a massive business without being open on Sundays so his workers can have a day of rest and worship. Early on in his business, he started honoring God in his business, by giving a tithe of not just his income, but at least a tithe of his business to the Lord.

He has instilled his attitude into his entire company. In his book he writes, “Ever since I was a teenager delivering newspapers, I have tried not to lose a single customer. I treated each one like the most important person in the world, and delivered each paper as if I were delivering it to the front door of the Governor’s mansion. This image still works to improve customer service. If you were working in a restaurant and suddenly the President of the United States showed up, your voice and facial expressions would change. You’d be eager to serve the President well, make sure he had a clean table, then go up and see if everything was all right, or if he needed anything. If we’re willing to do that for the President, why not treat every customer that well?” (p. 26-27)

That’s great leadership from a good boss. But, according to this passage, there’s more at stake than serving the President. Colossians 3:24 says, “You are serving the Lord Jesus Christ.” Can you imagine the difference it would make in your life if tomorrow you started treating your boss, your teacher, your fellow workers, your employees and your customers as if they were Jesus Himself? If you were working for Jesus you’d be going for it with enthusiastic excellence.

Your work really matters to God. A man passing a construction site, stopped to ask three bricklayers what they were doing. One said, “I’m making a living to pay my bills.” The second said, “I’m throwing these bricks together to form a wall.” The third man said, “I’m building a great Cathedral for the glory of God.” What a difference your attitude and perspective makes about your work!

The immediate application of this passage is directed to employees and employers who should go for it with enthusiastic excellence, but this principle permeates every part of our lives. Colossians 3:23 says, “**WHATEVER** you do, do it heartily.” In other words, everything we undertake in life should be characterized with enthusiastic excellence. For instance

II. G.F.I. W/ E² IN YOUR DEVOTION TO GOD

God deserves our excellence and our enthusiasm. I’ve had the privilege of traveling to Europe several times and touring many of the massive Cathedrals built there. It’s sad that these cathedrals attract more tourists now than worshippers, but they represent a time when people believed God deserved the best. Some of these Cathedrals took sixty or seventy years to build, and they used the best architects and craftsmen of the day. No expense was spared and no detail was ignored. These people made sure the largest, finest, more beautiful building in every city was the house of worship. It was their way of saying that, to them, God was more important than anyone or anything else in their lives. Somewhere along the way, we’ve come to believe God really doesn’t deserve our best. But God wants to occupy first place in your life. He desires and deserves the very best from each of us. He is worthy of our enthusiastic excellence in all we do. I’m happy to report our staff team here at Green Acres is committed to excellence in everything we do. We have deacon leaders, and volunteers who have bought into this culture of excellence. We believe if anything is done in the name of Jesus it should be the very best and it should be done with enthusiasm! Two areas where we should GFI w/E² are:

1. Worship the Lord passionately!

As Bible believing Christians, we have the truth, but I fear we have substituted learning about God for loving Him passionately. The idea of enthusiastic worship scares us. It’s not really politically correct to talk about Indians anymore, but the old preacher/writer, Vance Havner, used to say he never understood how Christians could go to a football game on Saturday and cheer like a bunch of wild Indians and then go to church on Sunday and sit like a bunch of wooden Indians. I’ve never figured that out either. I’m not advocating foaming at the mouth or jumping the pews but we’re suffering from a kind of Christianity that is as dry as dust, as cold, as ice and as dead as King Tut. We’re suffering not from a lack of correct heads but from a lack of consumed hearts.

I watched recently as thousands of Texas A&M fans whooped and cheered as A&M beat Texas. I’m not saying faith is like a football game. I’m saying it’s **MORE** important than a football game. When we’re trying to encourage someone to take it up a notch, we say, “Put your heart into it!” That’s what Jesus said about worship. He said, “Love the Lord your God with **ALL YOUR HEART** and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

Some of our young people are getting it. If you’ve ever attended a Passion worship event led by Louie Giglio and Chris Tomlin, you’ll see young people getting more excited about worshipping Jesus than you can imagine. The fact that this movement is called “Passion” demonstrates a hunger on the part of people to love God with all their hearts. When asked about the name of their ministry Louie Giglio said, “We struggle with calling our ministry ‘Passion,’ because the world has basically ripped that word off. Passion is not zeal, emotion, or hype. Passion is the

degree of difficulty that we are willing to endure to accomplish the goal.”

With that definition in mind, let me ask you, “What are you really passionate about?” What is that activity or affection you’re willing to endure any amount of difficulty to experience? Is worshiping the Living God at the top of your passion list?

2. Serve the Lord energetically!

The Bible says we ought to “worship the Lord with gladness!” (Psalm 100:2) Energy drinks are the latest fad—young people are buying them by the thousands. These concoctions of sugar, caffeine and other secret ingredients are supposed to get folks “wired.” But long before energy drinks came along, God offered something much better—His energy.

The Bible says, “To this end I labor, struggling with all his ENERGY, which so powerfully works in me.” (Colossians 1:29) I don’t really need an energy drink, because years ago I had a drink of Living Water and since that time, I haven’t been thirsty! Since that time I’ve had a river of Living Water overflowing from my life. It’s the energy the Holy Spirit generates in my life. Enthusiasm is simply the supernatural overflow of the Holy Spirit’s energy.

Do you know what the opposite of enthusiasm is? Apathy. Apathy means “no feeling.” In our vernacular it means, “I don’t care.” In a recent survey, American were asked, “What’s the biggest problem in America, ignorance or apathy?” The #1 answer given was “I don’t know and I don’t care.”

CONCLUSION

Are you committed to excellence and enthusiasm? I have a pastor friend who was asked to lead in the opening prayer for the national sales convention for a carpet cleaning business. As he observed their meeting, he was impressed by how excited and enthusiastic they were about their products and their jobs. He said someone would produce carpet samples with a wide variety of dried stains such as mud, wine, blood, chocolate, or ketchup. Then the presenter would apply the company’s carpet cleaner and the audience would wait with excited anticipation as the speaker scrubbed the stain. After a few minutes, as the stain disappeared, the audience went nuts. They stood and whistled, and clapped and cheered. The pastor said they were so excited they reminded him of a bunch of happy puppies jumping around.

This pastor was deeply affected by the enthusiasm of these people. As he was driving home, he stopped his car and bowed his head and asked the Lord to forgive him for not demonstrating excitement about the good news of Jesus Christ. At that moment, a powerful idea grabbed him. He thought, “These people have taken something ordinary and turned it into the most important thing in the world.” His next thought was: “We have taken the most important thing in the world and turned it into something ordinary.” His carpet cleaning friends jumped around and cheered with full throated enthusiasm when they discovered that some tough old stain couldn’t stand up to a miracle cleaner.

There’s another tough old stain some people think cannot be cleaned. It’s the terrible stain of sin

each of us has in our hearts. But we have the miracle cleanser for that stain. God says, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18) “What can wash away my sin? / Nothing but the blood of Jesus! / What can make me whole again? / Nothing but the blood of Jesus! / Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow / No other fount I know, / Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Now, that’s something worth getting excited about! So whatever you do—on your job, in your school, worshiping God, serving God: **GO FOR IT WITH ENTHUSIASTIC EXCELLENCE** and you will find your life will be changed by God’s power!

OUTLINE

Go For It with Enthusiastic Excellence!

IT = Whatever you do

EN THEOS = “IN GOD”

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God’s word to workers:

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If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

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