

PUTTING CHRIST FIRST AT WORK

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Introduction:

Colossians 1:18 "He (Christ) is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

Overview of Chapter 3-4 = Putting Christ first in our lives (3:1-17) our homes (3:18-21) our jobs (3:22-4:1) our worship (4:2-4) our conduct toward unbelievers (4:5) and in our speech (4:6)

- Colossians 3:22-25 "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality."
- Colossians 4:1 "Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven."
- Ephesians 6:5-9 "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."
- Titus 2:9-10 "Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect."
- 1 Timothy 6:1-2 "All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles."

"The closest to perfection a person ever comes is when he fills out a job application form." (Stanley J. Randall)
It's time to be honest about our work habits, attitudes and motivations...

I. REGARDING CHRISTIANS IN THE WORKPLACE

A. The Godly Worker's Principles

Colossians 3:22-23 "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,"

The Godly Worker's Principle #1: I will serve my employer with complete obedience

Colossians 3:22 "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord."

- We are to obey those who have earthly authority over us in the workplace (Greek: hupokouete...kata panta ="obey...in all things" The same phrase is used of children completely and immediately obeying their parents (3:20).
- 1 Peter 2:18-21 "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps..."
cf. The story of Jacob working for his unreasonable father-in-law, Laban (Gen. 30-31)

The Godly Worker's Principle #2: I will serve my employer with sincere obedience.

Colossians 3:22b "...not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart..."
sincerity of heart = a singleness and simplicity of heart/ not phony/not double-minded/sincere obedience from the inner man

The Godly Worker's Principle #3: I will serve my employer as an expression of worship to my God.

Colossians 3:22 "...fearing the Lord."

- Our work here on earth needs to reflect a reverence or fear of God in heaven. Work is certainly one of the ways we tell the world who God is and what He has done in our lives.
- Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

- 1 Peter 2:12 “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.”
- 1 Timothy 6:1 “All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.”

"Did my effective work habits cause others to glorify God in heaven?
 “Did my poor work habits cause others to speak against God on the earth?”

The Godly Worker’s Principle #4: I will serve my employer wholeheartedly.

Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, do your work heartily..."

“heartily” = "from the soul" = putting our whole body and soul into our work effort for the Lord

- 2 Thessalonians 3:10 "...if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."
- Proverbs 18:9 "He who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys."
 Genesis 30:27 "...the Lord has blessed me on your account."
 Genesis 31:6 "I have served your father (Laban) with all my strength."
- It is our Christian duty to make the people we work for profit by our hard work.

The Godly Worker’s Principle #5: I will serve my employer as if I was working for the Lord.

Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men..."
 If God Himself were to hire us to do a job, how well would we do it?

B. The Godly Worker’s Motivations

Motivation #1. It is the Lord who rewards.

Colossians 3:24 "...knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance."

- Our work on earth should reflect the assurance that we are heirs of promise.
- Matthew 6:31-33 Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Motivation #2. It is Christ we serve

Colossians 3:24b "It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

Motivation #3. It is God who judges

Colossians 3:25 "For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality."

- We may not get caught and punished by our earthly employer, but we will be dealt with by our Heavenly Father.
- 2 Corinthians 5:9 "Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." (Including the workplace)

II. REGARDING CHRISTIANS WHO SUPERVISE WORKERS

Colossians 4:1 "Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven."

A. The Godly Supervisor’s Guiding Principle

Colossians 4:1 “...grant to your slaves justice and fairness...”

"An ounce of justice is worth a ton of charity." (Alexander Maclaren)

- Paying workers what they deserve • Not showing favoritism or having a double-standard
- Treating workers as we would want them to treat us • Being committed to the success of our workers
- James 5:4 “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”

Lord of Sabaoth = the Lord who has hosts of angels to fight His battles.

B. The Godly Supervisor’s Motivation

Colossians 4:1b "...knowing that you too have a Master in heaven."

- Ephesians 6:9 “And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

“I am being supervised from Heaven. Therefore, I must treat my workers accordingly.”

Concluding Challenge:

God makes no distinction between the importance of our ministry at church and our ministry in the workplace. Wherever and whenever we labor, we are do our work as a form of worship to the Lord.

“I am an Ambassador of Christ in the Workplace...for such a time as this!”

I am to labor FOR the Harvest by faithfully laboring IN the Harvest

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord...It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.