

# Be An Excellent Employer

Ephesians 6:5-9

5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:5-9 (ESV))

I recall an occasion when my children were very young, one of them came to me asking, "Daddy, what is a vice president?" I immediately suspected that the question had arisen out of one of those children's conversations about how my daddy is bigger, or stronger, or more important than your daddy.

Later, as I looked back on their question and my answer, I recognized that our conversation was one of those divinely arranged moments, because that question and that answer could be of lasting importance for my child, but even more so for me, if I was able to get the answer right, really right, an answer that God would agree with.

My fading memory keeps me from remembering the exact words of my answer, but essentially, and using language I hoped he could understand, I said to him that, "A vice president is a person with certain responsibilities and authority. And while yes, it sometimes puts one person in authority over another, it does not make the vice president any better than the ones who work for him. Simply put, it is just one of many jobs that men and women do.

I don't know if my son really understood my intended answer, but the conversation has been a lasting memory for me. It gave me opportunity to think through what it means to have those responsibilities and to have authority over other people. And it has helped me through many difficult circumstances with my fellow workers.

Again, essentially, the positions of authority that many of us are cast into are simply functional in nature and needful for the completion of the jobs within our employment. Titles do not define the person who is in the position of authority, and neither does it define the ones who work for him or her. They are simply a necessary requirement to the fulfillment of the job.

May I pause here in these thoughts about the “employer’s” position, and revisit some of the things we said in the message last week about the worker as he or she responds to the authority of those vice presidents and supervisors and owners.

In that message, we urged great care in the manner that workers conduct themselves while engaged in their daily employment, always being diligent to work hard, rendering service with good will and a cheerful heart as they give a good account of themselves to their employer. And we noted that within these verses of scripture, God equates the diligence and honor and respect that each worker should show to his employer to be of the same manner and substance that he would show to Christ Himself.

Now, while that might seem a bit overstated, it really is not. Listen again to these words of scripture and note each occasion that God instructs the worker to work for his employer in the same manner that he would work for Christ Himself.

5 Bondservants (workers), obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.(Ephesians 6:5-9 (ESV)

And then, here in verse 9, God adds the employer into this equation of the workplace. Here, God tells the employer . . .

9 Masters (employers) do the same to them (the workers), and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:9 (ESV)

These words are plain and clear, saying that just as God holds the behavior of the worker accountable back to Himself Personally, so also, He holds the employer accountable for his or her behavior back to Himself, Personally.

May I also make the same observation that I made last week regarding these matters of employment, that most Christians probably have no idea how very important this relationship between workers and employers is to God, but it is! And again, God is making that ever so plain and clear to us here in these words by repeating on five separate occasions that both, the employee and the employer are directly accountable back to Him for their behavior.

And because God tells us here that the “same” requirements stand for both the worker and his boss, may I again paraphrase the words of these scriptures for us, but this time, may I substitute the word employer . . . listen!

“Employers, bosses, supervisors, be obedient to God in your treatment of your workers, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, just as you would be towards Christ Himself, doing the will of God with all your heart. And employer, do not render your service as a supervisor of your employees “grudgingly” and in a harsh manner, threatening them to get them to work. But be of “good will” and a “cheerful heart” toward your employees as you supervise them, just as you would do if you were working directly with Christ Himself, because in fact, you truly are working directly with Christ; and it is Christ who will reward you for your service.”

Now yes, I do realize that I have taken some liberties in this paraphrasing, but it sure seems that verse 9 is saying that the very same rules apply to the employer as apply to the workers. Listen again!

9 Masters (employers, bosses, supervisors) do the same to them (the workers), and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:9 (ESV))

These words picture God in the heavenlies all around us observing all that we do. And as He looks upon His children, there truly is no partiality in His heart, whether you be the employer or the employee. Both are equal in God’s sight.

But what is our problem and why do we have such a difficult time doing some of the simplest of things as it regards our daily employment? Sadly, the answer to that question is the same for the employer as it is for his employees. The employer is faced with the same temptations and inclinations and desires for “self” as does his workers. And just as with his employees, the employers “pride” and “ego” are ever-present, demanding his “claim to his right to his self”.

And too often in the heat of daily stress in the workplace, “obedience” to God’s guidance and instruction suffers loss, and he forgets that the title “vice president” does not give him or her license to be unkind, that the job of “vice president” is simply one of many jobs within the business and carries with it no special privilege to be unkind or unreasonable.

I can identify with this from personal experience, that during those daily encounters with stress the boundaries of “pride” and “ego” and the bosses’ “claim to his right to his self” are especially tested. And that is because as the boss, he has power and

intimidation at his fingertips. And it is ever-so tempting to use that power in haste, or in anger, or foolishly. And folks, power within the hands of an angry man, or within the hands of a fool is a recipe for destructive conditions. And sadly, those are real and present circumstances in many of our ordinary workplaces today.

Here in verse 9, the Lord addresses the problem “head on”, by warning the employer to not be “threatening” the workers in order to get them to work more or harder . . .

9 Masters (employers, bosses, supervisors), do the same to them (the workers), and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:9 (ESV))

There is a strange and corrupt inclination within the heart of most all men and women who occupy the role of owner or supervisor or boss, the thought that “if I raise my voice just a little bit louder, if I berate and shame and coerce a worker a little bit more, then that worker will magically begin to do more and better work.” But that will never be so! And may I add, it especially will not work if the employer is a Christian man or woman who desires to do the will of God. God tells us in James 1 . . .

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19-20 (ESV))

And I can personally identify with the whole range of emotions that course through the heart and mind of a supervisor. I was very young and inexperienced when I was first cast into the role of a supervisor. And to make matters more difficult, in those first days of my being a boss I was not a believer, so I had only my own wits to guide me in my behaviors.

Thankfully, even as an unbeliever, I was not given to yelling or threatening or belittling workers to get them to do more work! But I did often use other means that were probably just as unkind. I tended to “lecture”. And “over-lecturing” can be just as discouraging to a worker as berating and belittling. I do now wish very much that I had not done those things.

It was after I became a Christian and began to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, both through the scriptures and through “unctions” from His “still small voice” that my methods of “encouraging others on to love and good works” began to truly change. And yes, I still did often find myself resorting to my old ways. But thankfully, God is faithful to His word and He always gave me those convicting “nudges” within my spirit to stop me before I made too much of a mess of things.

Probably the most difficult circumstance that I engaged in as a “boss” involved making hard decisions that I knew would surely hurt my fellow workers, but still needed to be made. And those occasions took place far more often than I would like to remember. I speak of such times as when a worker, often a good friend, was simply not able to do the work that was given to them, sometimes not only doing their work badly, but also causing problems for the other workers and people around them.

That was especially so as we ministered daily to adolescents and teens at French Camp. Folks, it is an easy thing to get angry and frustrated at teenagers. But the acting out of anger and frustration on the part of a staff member cannot be permitted to continue. Instruction and guidance must be given. And if that instruction and guidance is not followed, sometimes those workers needed to be removed from their position.

Thankfully, in most all of those circumstances, the worker, being Christian, already knew they couldn't continue with their behavior of anger and frustration. But the decisions that had to be made by “the bosses” still broke the fellow worker's heart. And may I say, as one of those bosses, our hearts were also broken.

In all cases, we have the character of Jesus to help model our behavior and response. Jesus was never seen to be frustrated or angry in the manner that He behaved. Contrary to the things that are often preached about Jesus being angry, such as with the money-changers in the temple and other such incidents, his anger was of a whole other kind of anger.

Jesus was never frustrated or angry in the manner that we often experience. Yes, He probably came close as He wept over His dear children and wanted to cover them over as a “mother hen covers over and protects her children”. But He never demonstrated the kind of anger and frustration that is common to you and me.

Jesus was a gentle “servant-leader”. He led by serving. And without any exception, He was by far the greatest leader this world has ever known, or ever will know. Never yelling at His disciples, never threatening them, He went about building a kingdom of followers that would do anything for Him, even unto death.

Working at French Camp where all of our staff members were strong believers in Christ, I enjoyed a very special privilege as a supervisor. And thankfully, we were all generally “on the same page” in our understanding, making my job a relatively easy one.

But such is not so in most workplaces. Some of the workers are believers in Christ, but others are not. But regardless of their condition before the Lord, we as devoted Christian supervisors and bosses must always treat an unbelieving worker just as kindly and as fairly as we do our fellow believers.

Again, these scriptures are clear and plain in their instruction to us. With God, there is no partiality and the same must be true for you and me. Yes, we will obviously find some of the words we say to be somewhat different as we address unbelievers. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit within their soul, they have no real concept of Christian values; and their “world view” might often be frustrating. But thankfully, when God calls you or me to be a supervisor or a boss, He is faithful to fully equip us to deal with all manner of worker. And for that reason, we are without excuse. We can do exactly as these words instruct.

9 Masters (employers, bosses, supervisors), do the same to them (the workers), and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:9 (ESV))

By far, the best standards of good behavior ever given to man are contained right here within these scriptures. And I encourage each of us to know these standards well, and to always be careful to listen for the “quiet unction” of the Holy Spirit as we go about the duties of our workplace. And if we be supervisors, bosses and employers, these same words apply to us as they do to our workers . . . Colossians 3 . . .

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily (from the soul), as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23-24 (NASB))