“A Biblical Work Ethic”

Ephesians 6:5-9
8-9-2023



***Follow God's plan for employee/employer relationships!**

I. The Master (God) Commands the servants (v.5-8)

A. Be a <u>Submissive</u> Worker (v.5a)
"Be obedient"

B. Be a <u>Serious</u> Worker (v.5b)
"With fear & trembling"

C. Be a <u>Sincere</u> Worker (v.5c-6)
"In singleness of heart...not with eyeservice"

D. Be a <u>Spiritual</u> Worker (v.6b-7)
"Doing service, as to the Lord"

E. Be a <u>Secure</u> Worker (v.8)
He shall "receive of the Lord"

II. The Master (God) Commands the masters (v.9)

A. Be a <u>Just & Fair</u> Boss (v.9a)
"Do the same things [as God will do for you]"

B. Be a <u>Considerate</u>, not abusive Boss (v.9b)
"Forbearing Threatenings"

C. <u>Beware</u> Boss (v.9c)
"There is no respect of persons with him"

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Introduction:

From NY to LA, from Wall Street to Main Street, work dominates the landscape of modern life.

It is said that the average man spends 40-60 % of his waking hours on the job.

However, many people are afraid to work. Just thinking about it can ruin their whole day. A bumper sticker read: "The worst day of fishing is better than the best day of work"

Do you work hard or hardly work?

Someone said: "Salt from the sweat of work preserves the soul."

In the N.T. times, a man was either "bond (a servant) or free" (Gal. 3:28).

In the days of the Romans, approximately 60 % of the people were servants to someone.

The N.T. does <u>not</u> condemn the servant/master relationship (EX: the book of Philemon; I Cor. 7:21ff), but it does regulate it.

The O.T. Law concerning servitude (SEE: Exodus 21:1-11; Leviticus 25:39-55)

How did one become a servant?

1. By <u>poverty</u> - an impoverished man would often sell himself to an owner whom he would serve (Lev. 25:39-40)

2. By <u>theft</u> - The Law required a thief to pay 2 - 5 times the amount he stole. If he could not repay it, he then would be sold as a slave and thereby repay the debt (Exod. 22:1-4)

3. By <u>debt</u> - If someone owed someone money, but did not have the cash, he could sell one of his servants to pay the debt (Lev. 25:39; Amos 2:6; 8:6).

   The average price for a servant was about thirty shekels (Exod. 21:32)

4. By <u>birth</u> - the slave's children also automatically became the servants of the master (Exod. 21:4; Gen. 14:14; 17:12; Eccl. 2:7)

5. By <u>war</u> - prisoners of war (Num. 31:26; Lev. 25:44, 45)

God protected the slaves from injustice; harsh and inhumane treatment (Lev. 24:17, 22; Exod. 21:20, 26, 27).

For example, the penalty for stealing or making merchandise of a human being was death (Deut. 24:7; Ex. 21:16).

A slave who belonged to a Hebrew had to be circumcised (Gen. 17:12) and enjoyed the privileges of security, freedom to worship, partaking in religious festivals, and rest on the Sabbath (Ex. 12:44, 20:11; Dt. 5:14, 12:12, 16:11).

A male Hebrew slave could be free from duty:

1) If a relative redeemed him

2) Upon the seventh year of service (the Year of Jubilee)

However, if a servant didn't want to be free because of his love for his master, he could voluntarily become a bondslave for life (Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17). The boring of the ear was a token of devoted servitude.

For information about slavery in Bible lands, see: Unger's Bible Dictionary, p. 998-999

Though the context here in Ephesians 6 concerns 1st century slaves and their masters, the principles apply to today's employee and employer; workman and supervisor; laborer and management.

Just as the Lord succinctly gave the secrets to a successful home in 5:22-6:4, He now gives the secrets to successful labor/manager relations.

This passage also points out in "no uncertain terms that the answer to the basic problems of the workplace is spiritual, not economic" (NOTE: Every verse makes a reference to God or an act of God).

Several truths about work:

1. Work was established by God before the fall of Adam, but it was complicated after (Gen. 2:15; 3:17-19)

2. Work is God's appointed way for man to make a living and provide for his needs (Prov. 6:6-11, 10:4, 13:4, 11; I Th. 4:11; II Th. 3:6-12)

3. Work is basically a service we perform for others. Every worker is a servant.

Life is about serving others and meeting needs.

> Through our jobs, we not only earn a livelihood and provide for ourselves and our families; but we also serve humanity through providing some needed product or service.

Secret to starting a successful business: find out a need and meet it.

***Follow God's plan for employee/employer relationships!**

I. The Master (God) Commands the servants (v.5-8)

A. Be a Submissive Worker (v.5a)

"Be obedient"

"Your masters according to the flesh" = i.e. your physical or human master. Your earthly master, in contrast to your spiritual and heavenly master Jesus Christ (Mt. 6:24; 23:8-10)

To obey means to listen carefully to what you are told and to do exactly what you are told. Follow the instructions of your employer.

Colossians 3:22 says "In all things" - every job and expectation of our boss is to be cheerfully fulfilled.

The only exception to "obeying in all things" is if your employer's will conflicts with God's (EX: If your boss asked you to lie, cheat, steal, produce an evil object, neglect church due to overtime, etc., you must obey a Higher Authority).

"If a Christian servant had a believing master, that servant was not to take advantage of his master because they were brothers in the Lord" (Wiersbe, Colossians p. 131).

B. Be a Serious Worker (v.5b)

"With fear & trembling"

"With fear & trembling" = to shudder (tremble - Eph. 6:6) at the thought of displeasing Him; to work with the knowledge that you are being watched by God and will be judged by Him.

A fear of God is the key to a successful life (Phil. 2:12; Acts 10:35; I Pet. 1:17; Ps. 25:12)

Why should a worker fear God?

1) He is your always present overseer (to watch your job)

2) He is your supply of needed wisdom (to do the job) Prov. 1:7; 9:10

3) He is your job security (to keep the job)

4) He is your pay roll (to reward your job)

C. Be a Sincere Worker (v.5c-6)
"In singleness of heart...not with eyeservice"

"In singleness of heart" = to have an undivided purpose or motive. To be sincere (not hypocritical) in your heart, working with the single motive of pleasing God.

"Eyeservice" = to serve so as to satisfy the eyes of your employer.

Who is an "eyeservant?"

1. He is a hypocritical worker
   He works only when the boss is around; when the boss is looking

2. He is a deceitful worker
   His work is externally pleasing.
   Not true quality on the non-visible details of the job.
   What's on top looks best; what's underneath is haphazardly done.

3. He is a slothful worker
   He is lazy (a form of selfishness); does not work diligently or with energy, except when the boss is present.

   A "man pleaser" is characterized by two features:

   1) He wears a mask on his face (perhaps even unconsciously).
      In an attempt to cover up for his poor workmanship, in an attempt to please his boss, he wears a false smile, says flattering works, and does special favors so as to be the employer's "pet."

   2) He puts a limit on his work.
      He will perspire only so much; he will exert only so much energy; he will move only so many muscles; he will work only so hard as to "get by," so as to please his boss (forgetting that he should work so as to please God).

An eternal condemnation is upon those who "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn. 12:43).

Work as a "God pleaser" not a man pleaser!

No boss pleaser is a God pleaser, but every God pleaser is a boss pleaser.

If I owned or managed a company and wanted to hire someone, I would think that a wise choice should be to hire a fellow-believer. But this is not always the case!
The best, most honest, most diligent, most conscientious worker anyone could hire should be a genuine born-again Christian! Why? Because he has a higher authority to please (God) and a higher standard to reach! (God's standard of quality)

D. Be a Spiritual Worker (v.6b-7)
"Doing service, as to the Lord"

"Doing the will of God" = The will (desire) of God for secular employment is just as valid as the will of God in "spiritual" things.

"from the heart" - lit. out of the soul or inner-self. Don't just go through the motions mechanically; but do your job from the depths of your soul!

The reference to the "soul" supports the fact that God does not intend for there to be a distinction between the secular and spiritual for the Christian. Everything we do is spiritual! Why? Because everything is to be done from the soul unto God!

"Doing service" - All work is a service of some kind.

Why should a Christian workman do his best? Because of who He represents -- Christ. Our testimony is at stake!

"As to the Lord" = work as if God was your boss; for indeed He is. NOTE: The reference to the LORD (kurios) is in contrast to your master (v. 22 - kurios). By serving your master, you are serving the Master. By serving a boss, you are serving the Boss!

When a worker understands that he ultimately works to please God, he will not only do what he is instructed to do and expected to do, but he will go the extra mile and do more!

EX: Joseph's faithfulness to Potiphor (Gen. 39:1ff).

"as to the Lord" - by serving others, you actually serve Christ. So serve them as you would Him.

"and not to men" - Don't let men be your motive. If you do (when they don't treat you like you think you deserve) you conditional service will slack off.

E. Be a <u>Secure</u> Worker (v.8)
He shall "receive of the Lord"

"Knowing" = refers to a knowledge you have had in the past (beginning with salvation) and still do have in the present

"Whatsoever" - any and every task or responsibility that you are given [Everything from sweeping floors to constructing skyscrapers; from digging ditches to building bridges; from washing dishes to managing restaurants; from manufacturing desks to sitting at them as a secretary, etc.]

"good thing" - your work must be genuinely "good" Not corruption.

"Any man" -- whether printer or plumber, teacher or electrician, computer programmer or copier repairman, milkman or mailman . . . Do your job for future pay; for future reward!

"<u>shall</u> he receive" - future tense; you will positively receive it!

"Of the Lord" = from the Lord

Whereas this verse emphasizes the <u>positive</u> recompense, Col.3:25 emphasizes the <u>Negative</u> recompense ("But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.")

Many workers do wrong on the job by:

--being lazy, slothful
--being careless
--being selfish
--being irresponsible
--being unproductive
--being dishonest
--cheating -- lying -- stealing

God knows our works. One day their value will be revealed and rewarded (SEE: I Cor. 3:10-15; II Cor. 5:10).

A story is told of a man who was given a sum of money to build a house. The man, for selfish purposes, bought the cheapest materials and did an inferior job in building the house. After he completed the job, he was told that what he had built was now his own, as a gift from the man who employed him. He was rewarded according to what he deserved.

"whether he be bond or free" - there is no partiality; no favoritism; no biased judgment. When God judges, He will not reward based on external appearance nor play favorites (like man often does).

While one's "image" may mean a lot today, in Judgment day, God will see through the veneer and will judge irrespective to race, wealth, social rank, or popularity, "success" etc. God will not be duped, bought off, buttered up, etc.

Your lowly job or humble profession now will not mean little reward in heaven.

Some of the most highly rewarded people in Heaven will be those who had the lowest of jobs while on earth, but were the most faithful, honest, hard-working etc.

Mt. 25:23 - "His lord sid unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

II. The Master (God) Commands the masters (v.9)

6:9 balances out 6:5-8. Everyone is under authority!

Servants are to obey their authority (6:5). Now, masters are to give to their servants and thus obey their authority in heaven.

A. Be a <u>Just & Fair</u> Boss (v.9a)
"Do the same things [as God will do for you]"

"Do the same things unto them" - same as what? The same as the Lord rewards (v.8)! In other words an employer should reward his employee justly & fairly just as God rewards His servants (v.8).

God is saying: Masters you treat your servants, the same way I treat mine!

See **Colossians 4:1** "Just and equal" = right and fair

The employer or manager is to give just and fair treatment in . . .
--work assignments
--expectations and demands
--promotions
--wages

Though we live in a sinful, greedy world of injustice and unfairness, a Godly employer will give his employee:

1. Be a <u>just</u> boss (Col 4:1a)

Give an <u>honest</u> pay ("just"). Give what he is entitled to.

To withhold due pay from someone is sin!

Dt. 24:14-15 - "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall he sun go down upon it; for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."

Jer. 22:13 - "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his changers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work."

Cp. Lev. 19:13; Prov. 3:27-28; Mal. 3:5

2. Be a fair boss (Col.4:1b)

Give a worthy pay ("equal")

The word "equal" refers to a fair pay, a pay that equals the task and their faithfulness to it.

Give your employee what he/she deserves!

What is reasonable, appropriate, merited; according to qualification, quality, and quantity of work.

Jesus said: "The laborer is worthy of his hire" (Lk. 10:7; cp. Mt. 10:10)

I Tim. 5:17-18 - "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially thy who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward."

Cp. I Cor. 9:14 - "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

B. Be a Considerate, not abusive Boss (v.9b)
"Forbearing Threatenings"

The God-fearing boss will not use his authority & power to threaten his workers. He does not throw his weight around or impatiently lord it over those under him. He is not a manipulative boss.

C. Beware Boss (v.9c)
"There is no respect of persons with him"

What should motivate an employer to be "just and equal"? What should motivate an employer to give up threatenings?

Answer: His knowledge that he (as a master) also has a Master in Heaven!

Whatever you as a boss give your employees, your heavenly boss will bless you accordingly. The measure of your generosity will be measured to you again.

"You reap what you sow!" (Gal. 6:7)

When you take care of your employees, they will in return work hard and well and take care of you.

What is a major reason why some companies go bankrupt or out of business? Financial mismanagement (they often were not just and equal in remunerating their employees)

"respect of persons" - to receive the face; or show partiality. God will not judge the Master any differently than the servant.

Concl.

The Best Work is God's Work

1 Cor. 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

VBC has a ministry for you!