

I read a story about an Indian who walked into a cafe w/ a shotgun in one hand and a bucket of buffalo manure in the other. He said to the waiter, "Me want coffee." The waiter said, "Sure chief, coming right up". The Indian then downed the coffee, threw the manure into the air, and blasted the bucket w/ the shotgun before walking out. The next AM, the Indian returned w/ his shotgun and another bucket of manure. He once again walked up to the counter and said to the waiter, "Me want coffee". The waiter said "Whoa, Tonto. We're still cleaning up your mess from yesterday. What was that about anyway?" The Indian smiled and said, "Me in training for upper management. Come in, drink coffee, shoot the bull, and disappear for the rest of the day."

Several weeks ago we started a series entitled *Masquerade* from the book of Colossians. In this series we've been unmasking cultural Christianity by considering what it means to have a faith that aligns w/ God's Word and will instead of a settling for a *feel good* faith that seeks out the comforts and conveniences of our culture. The heart of this series is based on Paul's prayer that we would be filled w/ the knowledge of God's will so that we would walk worthy of the Lord and live in such a way that it would put a smile on God's face.

After giving us a doctrinal statement of what it means to have a relationship w/ God, Paul shows us the discernable differences b/w a cultural faith and a committed faith. Last week we looked at a committed faith in the most challenging arena – the home. Today, Paul is going to address what a committed faith looks like in the workplace.

Did you know that before you retire, you will have invested nearly 100k hours on the job? So it's important to not only enjoy what you do for a living, but also to understand God's expectation on your life on your mission field. For whatever job you have, God wants you to work at it w/ all your heart.

So whether you're an employee or the boss, a student or the teacher, your ethics and practices in dealing w/ people and responsibilities reveal the true reality of your faith.

*Slaves (employees), obey your earthly masters (employers), in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but w/ sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it w/ all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 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 their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Masters provide your slaves w/ what is right and fair, b/c you know that you also have a Master in heaven. Colossians 3:22-4:1*

It's hard for us to imagine today the extent of slavery in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and how cruel it was. Ancient historians estimate there were some 60 mil. slaves in the Roman Empire, which accounted for up to 1/2 of the population. B/c of this, work was considered beneath the dignity of the slave-owning free man, thus practically everything was done by slaves. They worked in the household, in factories, and in the fields.

Occasionally there was a good relationship b/w the masters and slaves, but more often than not, the life of a slave was quite miserable. In both Greek/Roman cultures, slaves had no legal rights and were treated as property. A Roman by the name of Varro wrote, "A slave is no better than a beast of the field who just happens to talk." The Roman lawyer, Gaius said, "We may note it is universally accepted that the master possesses the power of life and death over a slave." So, if a slave ran away, he was branded on the forehead w/ the letter F for "fugitivus" or put to death w/out trial.

W/ this kind of attitude in the ancient world, it's not hard to imagine how slaves felt about their masters. So it shouldn't be a surprise that slave revolts were common. Yet right in the midst of this tension b/w masters and slaves, Paul offers a new standard to Christian slaves w/ some clear and practical instructions for believers on both sides of the issue. These words were as radical as those he shared w/ parents about how they treated their children.

## I God's Call to EMPLOYERS

*Masters provide your slaves w/ what is right and fair, b/c you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

This is actually a simple principle. If you're an employer, you're to treat your employees the way you'd want to be treated and how you would treat Jesus if He worked for you.

## II God's Call to EMPLOYEES

*Employees, obey your earthly employers, in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but w/ sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it w/ all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 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 their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.*

How do you perceive your job? Is it a means to an end to provide for your family or is it more grand and important?

vocation – from Latin *vocare*, means *calling*. The idea is God has placed a calling on your life for His Divine purpose. So whether you serve in a ministry or on the mission field of corporate America, God expects that whatever you do that you do it w/ all your heart as if you're working for His glory.

It is not the job you choose that determines your call; but God who has gifted and called you who has determined it.

There is a tremendous difference b/w a career and a calling.

- (1) A career threatens to become your god; a calling comes from God.
- (2) A career is chosen by self; a calling is something chosen for you by God and discovered through fellowship.
- (3) A career is about a paycheck; a calling is about a missional and fulfilling purpose.
- (3) A career ends w/ retirement; a calling lasts a lifetime.

**The calling is quite simple/straightforward – whether you work in a job you like or dislike or if you're a student whose job is to learn – recognize your workplace or classroom is your mission field and that ultimately, Jesus is the boss you are seeking to please.**

So work for your boss/business as if you're working for the Lord, b/c in reality you are. Never forget your work ethic and relationships serve to testify to the validity of your faith.

## A Excel in Your RESPONSIVENESS

*Employees, obey your earthly employers, in everything;*

obey (*hupoakouo*) we spoke about this last week – it means to listen under and **do what you are asked to do.**

Just as a child is to respond to the directives of their parents, as employees, we're to respond to our employers as we'd respond to God – w/ absolute obedience – the only exception is if they ask to do something immoral or illegal.

You might not realize this, but your compliance to your boss and employer is one of the most effective tools in your witnessing arsenal. It sets you apart and defines your sense of calling. Nothing will discredit your character/credibility as quickly as an unwillingness to follow direction.

## B Excel in your INTEGRITY

*...do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but w/ sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.*

**Question: Who are you when no one is watching?**

In his book, *Your Work Matters to God*, Doug Sherman says we're in the midst of a "moral mudslide" in the American workplace and Christians are caught in the drift and in many instances the instigating the slide.

The sad truth is *Gallup* found there's no difference b/w church and unchurched people when it comes to lying, stealing, and loafing. Which means Christians might act religious on Sunday, but the other 6 days they're acting like the world. There should be a difference.

But this isn't an option to God for Christians. He has called us to be imitators of Christ! We're held to a greater standard b/c of what hangs in the balance. The integrity by which we work is essential for sharing God's love w/ others.

How would Jesus sell stocks or insurance? How would He teach, nurse, or doctor? How would He program computers or manage a company? How would He flip hamburgers or pump gas? **W/ absolute integrity!**

The late Howard Hendricks, professor at DTS, once was sitting on a jet at DFW when it was delayed for takeoff. After a long wait, the passengers became increasingly irritated. Hendricks noticed how kind and gracious one of the flight attendants was as she spoke w/ the passengers. After the plane finally took off, he told the attendant how much he appreciated her poise and patience and asked if he could write a letter to the airline complimenting her work. The attendant smiled and told Dr. Hendricks he could if he'd like, but that she didn't work for the airline, but for Christ.

## C Excel in your EFFORT

*Don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being Christian doesn't cover up bad work. Col. 3:22-24 (Message)*

To work w/ all your heart means that you're working w/ enthusiasm. Did you know the word enthusiasm means "in God." In other words, as Christ followers, we're called to enthusiastically bring God into our work through our effort and pursuit of excellence always striving to go above and beyond the call of duty and expectation! *In everything we say and do we are to do it to the glory of God.*

Sadly, effort and excellence are not a valued commodity in the US workforce. I once came across a funny, but sad, commentary on the efforts people give at work. These are actually evaluations on employee report cards.

- Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig.
- This employee's men would follow him anywhere, but only out of morbid curiosity.
- This employee isn't really so much of a "has-been", as he is a "never will be."
- This employee works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.
- This employee should go far – and the sooner he starts, the better it will be for our company.
- This employee sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.

**If you're doing your job for the approval of Jesus, you will always do more than the bare minimum.**



In the time of Jesus, the Jews were under the domination of the Roman Empire. A Roman soldier had the legal authority to demand that any Jew carry his equipment for exactly one mile. Jews hated to do this, and they bitterly counted each step. At exactly one mile, they dropped the load and said w/ disgust, “There! I have done what is required!” But Jesus requires a higher standard for His followers. He said, “*If someone forces you to go one mile, go w/ him two miles.*”

Jesus’ point was a Roman soldier wouldn’t soon forget the person who cheerfully carried his equipment the 2<sup>nd</sup> mile. It would make a lasting impact on him for the Kingdom.

Are you a 1 mile or 2 mile worker? Do you do the bare minimum or go the 2<sup>nd</sup> mile to leave the mark of excellence on your work? People always remember 2<sup>nd</sup> mile-worker.

Do you know the opposite of enthusiasm? apathy – meaning *w/out feelings*. In our vernacular it means, “I don’t care.” In a recent survey, Americans 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.”

In Truett Cathy’s book, *Eat Mor Chikin, Inspire More People*. Truett wrote that he believed his attitude about work as a Christ-follower was key to his earthly success. He instilled this attitude of servant leadership into the operators who own and operate the Chick Fil-A businesses.

He instilled his attitude and effort into his company. He wrote, “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 U.S. 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 Jesus Christ.” Can you imagine the difference it would make in your life if tomorrow you started making the effort to treat your boss, your teacher, your fellow workers, your employees and your customers as if they were Jesus? If you were working for Jesus you’d be going for it w/ enthusiastic excellence.

What are the keys to exemplifying Christ in this way?

- Claim a New Job DESCRIPTION Work for Jesus
- Claim a New MOTIVATION Life Change
- Claim a New SALARY Structure Eternal not Earthly

Are you committed to excellence and enthusiasm? I heard the story of a pastor 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 w/ 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 w/ excited anticipation as the speaker scrubbed the stain. After a few minutes, as the stain disappeared, the audience went nuts. They stood and whistled, clapped and cheered. The pastor said they were so excited they reminded him of a bunch of happy puppies jumping around.

This pastor later said he 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. 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 w/ great enthusiasm when they discovered that some tough old stain couldn't stand up to a miracle cleaner.

There is a much tougher stain in this world that cannot be cleansed by the ingenuity and ability of man – so God in His mercy and grace provided His miracle cleaner for sin in the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the LORD.*

*“Though your sins are like **scarlet**, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.* Isaiah 1:18