



[study guide]

RELATIONSHIPS:

11.18.12: Ephesians 6:5-9

[warm up]

Where have you worked where you experienced great satisfaction in your job and good work relationships?

What about the opposite? A challenging job with difficult work relationships?

What qualities make for an ideal employer/supervisor, someone that will motivate you to want to work hard and enjoy your job? If they profess to be a Christian, how should it make them a better boss?

What qualities make for an ideal employee, someone that an employer will consider a blessing to their business and work environment? How should being a Christian make that person stand out as an employee?

[digging deeper]

We wrap our 8 week relationship series this weekend looking at working relationships from Ephesians 6:5-9. Read and review the passage.

The first obstacle to get over in understanding this passage is regarding the terminology of “slaves and masters” In order for western Americans to grasp the practice of slavery in ancient Roman times, we have to think beyond the limited scope of the 19th century historical account of our own country. Slavery in Rome was more domestic and integrated with social and economical practices rather than racial superiority. People that were typically in a slave situation were either captured in war, purchased, born into it, paying off debt, or voluntarily placed themselves into servitude due to poverty or the need to provide better conditions for themselves and their family. Slavery has been a slippery topic in the Bible, because God does not directly condemn slavery in His Word, nor does He promote it. There are Scriptures passages that clearly line out the evils of slave trade practices (Ex. 21:16 & 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as well as laws to regulate the care and well being of those who were slaves (Ex. 21; Deut. 15; Lev. 25, Col. 4:1). The spirit of the gospel of Christ is against the evils of slavery, and over the centuries has led many followers of Christ to become active in bringing freedom to those in slavery.

Although the terms “slaves” and “masters” are used here, we can contextualize those words today to the employee and employer relationship due to the implications of authority structure and the similarity of the servant/overseer dynamic.

To dive deeper into the content of the Ephesians 6 passage, take the time to read the following verses:

1 Tim. 6:1,2 Titus 2:9,10 Col. 3:22-25 Col. 4:1 1Peter 2:18

Philemon 1:8-19 (where Paul is writing to Philemon on behalf of his slave Onesimus)

Explain the instructions that God has given those under authority in the work environment? What are specific, tangible, real life scenarios of what this looks like lived out?



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Explain the instructions that God has given those in authority in the work place? Again, what are specific, tangible, real life scenarios of what this looks like lived out?

What is the highest motivation for us to be better employees and employers?

Why is it then that some Christians don't have a good reputation as workers or bosses?

How does God want the spirit of unity in Christ to be lived out in our work relationships? (1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:28 Col. 3:11)

How can applying these verses help us "live new" in our work environments?

How can the homemaker, student, coach, team member, volunteer, retired person, unemployed person, etc. live these instructions out as well?

[living it out]

After studying these verses, what is one realization that you have had in relation to your work relationships? What needs to change for you?

Which practical applications am I willing to implement immediately with my supervisor, employer or employees?

- Speak with a more respectful tone
- Do not engage in speaking negatively behind their back
- Apologize for anything I did or said that has produced tension between us
- Offer forgiveness to them if they have wronged you (or chose to forgive them if the conversation will take you down an unhealthy road)
- Pray more frequently for them (for physical, mental, emotional & spiritual needs)
- Write a note of appreciation or encouragement to them
- Engage in an act of kindness for them, with no ulterior motive, just to bless them.
- Other _____

Looking back on the relationship series as a whole, what are a few things that you have learned or applied that has strengthened or restored some of your relationships, or that you are implementing to help strengthen or prepare for future relationships?

Close this time praying over your relationships, especially work relationships and other environments where the principles above can be applied. Thank God for His offering of a relationship with you. Thank God for the relationships He allows you to have with others. Confess anything that you have thought, done or failed to do to strengthen your relationships. Ask God to help you apply His Word and His ways to your relationships and bring restoration or new life to the ones that need it.