

God's Goals for Christians at Work

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[0 : 00] When you go to work every day, how does the fact that you are a Christian, if you're a Christian, affect the way you approach your job?

Does the fact that you are a Christian have any influence, any effect on your attitude toward people? The people you work with, the people you work for, or the people who work for you if you're in a position as a supervisor, manager, or something?

Does the fact that you are a Christian affect the quality of your work? I hope everyone in this room knows that being a Christian should impact every aspect of our lives.

When you put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He put His Spirit in you. And as Christians indwell with the Spirit of God, we cannot help but be who we are, whether we're at home, work, school, church, if a hundred people are looking, or if no one is looking.

Being a Christian, it affects everything about us, if we are. What I want us to look at today is how it affects the way we do our work and how we treat people.

[1 : 33] We're looking today at God's goals for Christians at work. This is the third of the household type things Paul addressed in Colossians chapter 3.

We looked the first week at God's goals for couples in the home, husbands and wives. Then we looked at God's goals for parents and children.

Well, today we're looking at God's goals for how we live as Christians at work. We're going to begin in Colossians chapter 3, verse 22. But before we read, I want you to note, this is addressed to Christian slaves in the first century.

Paul, in verses 22 through 25, Paul is writing to Christian slaves. And then chapter 4, verse 1, he's writing to Christian owners of slaves, masters.

Now, at that time, first century, first century in the Roman Empire, slavery was universally accepted.

[2 : 49] Now, that does not mean that it was morally right, but it was an unquestioned way of life. At that point in time, a lot of scholars tell us that there were as many as one-third of the population of the Roman Empire slaves.

Some even say half the people you'd meet on the street would be slaves. Slavery that existed in first century Rome was different from the horribly inhumane institution of slavery that existed in this country up until the Civil War.

But no form of slavery has ever been humane. Life was harsh and cruel for many slaves in the first century. Think about it. Slaves were considered property.

Breathing property. Breathing property. Human beings were sold and bought. But the institution of slavery that Paul addressed was better than many forms of slavery throughout the history of the world.

For an example, many people became slaves for a number of reasons, like being captured in a war, being born into slavery. Some were sold into slavery to pay off their debts.

[4 : 14] And there were people who even sold themselves into slavery, listen to this, to make their lives better. And in their case, by obtaining Roman citizenship.

Or by achieving the social status of their master. In other words, as a slave, they could move up in life class-wise.

Many slaves were able to work and save their money, make money and save money, and even buy their freedom. Race was not a factor.

I know that comes to mind when we think of slavery in this country. But race was not a factor in first century slavery. There was no slave social class. They could be found at every level of society.

Some did unskilled manual labor. But some were highly educated and they were teachers. Some were medical doctors. The point of this information about slavery is to show that there are parallels, definite parallels, between first century slaves and masters and today's employees and employers.

[5 : 34] There's even some parallels, probably equal parallels, between students and teachers. Military personnel of different ranks.

What Paul says to these slaves and masters could even apply to inmates and guards in a prison. Let's look now at Paul's instructions to slaves and masters as principles for how Christians should approach their jobs and relate to people that they work for or supervise.

Now, if you're a student, elementary, high school, college, apply this to the way you do your schoolwork and the way you treat teachers.

Teachers, you can apply this to the way you relate to and treat your students. Let's read it. Colossians 3, beginning in verse 22. Bondservants.

Bondservants. As far as I know, only the English Standard Version. ESV translates this word, bondservants. Every other translation uses the word slaves.

[6 : 52] The English Standard Version translators, what they're trying to do is look at it, at the context that this word slave is found. And what they're doing here is they have in mind that Paul is addressing slaves who had the opportunity to buy their freedom.

Sort of like an indentured servant, even in days gone by in our own country. So that's why that says bondservants in ESV and every other translation is going to say slaves.

Paul is thinking, the ESV translators believe, that he's addressing the kind of slaves who most likely had the opportunity to buy their freedom.

Bondservants. Obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service, as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

[8 : 01] You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

How should Christian employees approach their jobs? Well, Paul tells us. First, do your job to the best of your ability.

That's what he's talking about in verse 22. Let's look at it, break it down into two parts. Number one, do your job. He says, bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters.

Now, slaves in the first century, they had no choice but obey or suffer extreme consequences if they did not. It's not that way for employees today.

If you go to work tomorrow and you are ordered to do this and you really don't want to do it, you can quit. You can say no, turn around and walk out, and it's over.

[9 : 12] There are no repercussions other than you don't have a job. You don't have to obey. But if we take a job, we need to do it completely.

If we take a job, we need to do the entire job, not just the parts that we like. Not just the parts that are easy to do.

Every job has some things about it that you just don't like. You don't want to do. You're supposed to do it, what you're being paid to do. Well, as Christians, being conscientious, doing our job, doing it all the way, we need to do the parts even that we don't like, that are no fun.

Because of the fact that we are the Lord's, and we're doing this for Him as well, as we'll see in a moment. Now, the idea of doing our job also means do your job sincerely.

Look at the last part of verse 22. Not by way of eye service, not when they're just looking at you. As people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart. Paul is condemning the idea of doing your work just while somebody's watching you.

[10 : 32] He is condemning the idea of you being a great employee because you're pleasing certain people.

They're looking at you and you want to look good in their eyes. That's the mentality that the old comedian Groucho Marx described when he said, No man leaves before his time unless, of course, the boss has gone home early.

You see, God calls us to do our work. Do it all. And do it with sincerity of heart.

Which means having pure motives. Pure intentions. We should care about our work. See, that's the idea. As Christians, we need to take the right kind of pride in what we do.

And be able for people to trust us to do our job. Do it with all our heart. Do it sincerely. No matter who's watching or if anyone's watching.

[11 : 39] Or even if no one will ever know what we did. What Paul is saying about doing our job sincerely from the heart, it's really more of a character issue, isn't it?

Than a work issue. Red corn built my house. A lot of you knew red.

Ray Reese helped Ray. Ray was retired. And so he helped. Ray helped Red. Both men were faithful members of our church, for those of you who do not know.

And both men are now in heaven. I've been living in that house for over 22 years now. I have never had one thought if something was done right.

If something slid by and is not good today. Those men were great examples of Christians who did their jobs.

[12 : 50] And they always did it the right way. It's the only way they knew to do it. And they did it no matter what day it was, how hot it was, how tired they were.

And they also did it as Christians as a part of their serving the Lord. I can affirm those guys. I can hold those guys up as models for what I'm talking about here today.

Here's what I want you to think. Would the people who work with me or supervise me describe me like that?

Day in and day out. No matter who is watching, would they say about me, he or she, they always do their best.

They do what's right. They don't know how to do any other way. It's a part of just who they are as Christians.

[13 : 57] It's a part of their service to the Lord. Red and Ray shouldn't be exceptions. They should be us.

If we take God's word seriously. The next verse will help us to see that if we, the next verse will help us to see how to do this and really take it to heart.

Look at this. Do your job as if you were working for Jesus. Verse 23. Whatever you do, work hardly as for the Lord and not for men. Paul emphasizes we should go about our work with a conscious awareness that we're working for our Lord.

He even says this in the verses before and after. Verse 23. Look at verse 22. With sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. And then verse 24. You are serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wants us to respectfully serve the Lord. And let that be what motivates us.

[15 : 06] Let that be what charges our battery. We go to work. We're seeking to serve the Lord and honor Him in the way that we do our jobs. Listen.

Paul understands that it's not easy to do that a lot of times. Remember, he's originally talking to slaves. Some of those slaves had cruel masters.

Some of their expectations were totally unrealistic. You may work for an unreasonable boss. Or for a company that has unrealistic expectations.

And the attitude of your boss or your company can cause a demoralizing environment. Some people, that's just the way it is, where they work.

And the truth is, there's not a thing in the world you can do to change the boss or change the company's expectations. You know the only thing you can change is you.

[16 : 23] Your attitude. Your motivation. It might be helpful as you go to work tomorrow. Don't think of having to work for that jerk boss.

And he very well may be a jerk with capital J. But I want to encourage you to go and think of yourself as working for your Lord.

Show respect for the Lord. And for that person of authority that He has set. That He has in His providential workings.

He has over you right now. As you go to work tomorrow. Instead of focusing on your company's unrealistic expectations.

Work as if Jesus owns the company. And you're there to please Him. To the best of your ability. I want to be honest.

[17 : 26] Doing what you do for Jesus may not change a thing in the world about your boss or your work environment. But it can and will change you.

The way you approach it. The way you do it. Your attitude. Your motivation. Even your work ethic. You know God's goal is for us to become more and more like Jesus.

We've looked at that throughout this series back earlier in Colossians. What God is doing in every situation in life. He's working in us. Shaping and molding us.

Developing our character. Making us more and more like Jesus. That includes doing our job in less than ideal circumstances. That brings us to the third thing Paul says about God's goal for us at work.

Do your job with the realization that your work ethic will ultimately be judged by Jesus. That sort of ramps up the, gets our attention doesn't it?

[18 : 27] And notice that Paul points out both aspects of judgment in these verses. The reward, the Lord rewards our faithfulness in every aspect of our lives.

Including the way we do our jobs at work. Look at verse 24. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are serving the Lord Jesus. Neither your boss nor your company may appreciate your work ethic. And they may never truly reward you as they should.

But God more than makes up for any earthly loss. And what he's given us now and will give us for all eternity.

Think about this. If you're a Christian. United to Jesus by faith. The penalty for your sin has been paid. You are forgiven.

[19 : 30] The perfect life that Jesus lived has been credited to you. That's how God accepts you. When God saved you. He didn't just make you right with him.

He made you his child. And as his child. Serving him faithfully and sincerely.

We will receive an eternal reward that is beyond our ability to imagine. I want you to look at this verse of scripture. From 1 Corinthians 2. From the New Living Translation.

No eye has seen. No ear has heard. And no mind has imagined. What God has prepared. For those who love him. I've got an uncle.

He's about 97 now. His health is terrible. He's just basically waiting to die. Actually praying that the Lord will take him home. Faithful committed man.

[20 : 27] For the last several years. If you go and see him. Or he was able to communicate much. If you ever went to talk to him. He would quote that verse. He'd got the most out of life in this world.

And what he was focused on was. What God had prepared for him. He can't even imagine it. But he's excited. Because he trusts God. And he's looking forward to this reward.

That words cannot describe. That our minds cannot imagine. That's the kind of reward God will have for you.

As his faithful son or daughter. No matter what anybody else. Does or does not. Reward you with here on earth. Paul is encouraging us with that word.

But on the other hand. He warns us. About being unfaithful. Look at this. God will not reward unfaithfulness. Verse 25. For the wrongdoer will be paid back. For the wrong he has done.

[21 : 29] There's no partiality with God. It's hard for us to not show favoritism. I mean if you say I don't show favoritism.

You're lying. Don't you love your wife. More than any other woman in this room. If you don't. Shut your mouth. Don't say that.

Most important woman in the world to me. Is Lisa. I'm very very partial to her.

God is not partial. We're all human beings created in his image. If we are his children. He loves us all.

Equally. And it doesn't matter who we are. What we are. He holds us responsible. For our level of faithfulness.

[22 : 29] Your boss may not notice every half hearted. Or sloppy thing you do. But God does. And I'm serious. And such unfaithfulness. Will not be.

Rewarded. Now he's not talking about losing your salvation. Salvation is not a part of the equation here. Salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Period.

But he is talking about losing rewards for being unfaithful at work. Clear and simple. It's a warning. It matters how we do our job.

It matters how we treat people at our job. God cares. Look at one more thing. How should Christian employers treat people who work for them?

That's in chapter 4 verse 1. Two things. Treat people justly and fairly. He says masters treat your bond servants justly and fairly. Now I want you to think. A slave.

[23 : 27] As Paul wrote this. A slave had absolutely no rights whatsoever. So these words to slave owners about treating slaves justly and fairly.

They were something no one had ever even thought about. That's surprising. God cares about how slaves are treated.

He cares about if you own a company. If you're a supervisor. He cares about how you treat people. God cares about how we use authority. We've talked about that a little bit in all these studies about the home.

It matters how you use your authority as a leader husband. It matters. It matters how you use your authority as a parent.

And it matters how you use your authority as a boss or business owner at work. It matters how you use your authority as a teacher and coach at school.

[24 : 36] Christian employers and supervisors must be concerned about more than just what is profitable. You've got to care about what's profitable or you can't stay in business.

But you've got to care about more than that. You've got to be committed to what's right and fair for the people involved.

That you're leading. That you're managing. Just like Christian employees. Christian employers will be judged one day. Look at this. Remember that you will answer to Jesus for how you've treated people under your authority.

Look at the last part of verse 1. Knowing that you also have a master in heaven. If you're responsible for leading or supervising people at work.

Take an interest in them as persons. Think about how your actions affect them individually.

[25 : 40] And their families. Do what you can. To make sure they're paid fairly. Have good benefits.

And have a safe and positive working environment. Several years ago I had a conversation with a Christian man. Who was a plant manager.

In a different county from this. None of you would know him. His specialty throughout his career had been turning failing companies around. Making them profitable.

That's why he was brought to this particular plant. Where he was at that time. He told me. I knew the man fairly well. He was in his 50's.

And he told me that it has been later in life. That I got serious about living a Christian life. When I was younger. I came in.

[26 : 38] And I did what needed to be done. And turn companies around. And make them profitable. And I didn't really care that much about people. I didn't think that much about people. But it's different today. During our conversation.

He poured his heart out to me. About how he had to lay off. Some of his employees. Because business was down. He had no choice.

It was a mandate from above him. He had waited as long as he could. To let them go. And he planned to bring them back. Just as soon as he could.

But it obviously. By the look on his face. And the tone of his voice. As he spoke. It just stressed him out. He talked about how he knew.

Those employees had families. And they were dependent upon. The income. That came from that job. He said. It hurts me. To think of the hardship.

[27 : 37] Those families are going to go through. As a result of. Me laying them off. That man.

Modeled. What it meant. To be a Christian. Employer. You say. No. He needs to toughen up. No. There was no one tougher than him.

His entire life. He was an intimidating man. But as an older. Man. Who got serious about following the Lord.

He took an interest in the actual people. That he managed. And he didn't just think about. Shaving the numbers down.

He realized. He realized. He was a man. He was a man. He was a man. Or a woman. Who had a family. And had. Needs. That some were going to go unmet.

[28 : 39] He cared. He did his job. He did what had to be done. The owners. Were happy with him. But he struggled.

In the right kind of way. Because he wanted to treat people right. He cared about people. He did his job wisely.

He kept it productive. But he cared about a whole lot more. Than just the bottom line. He did everything he could do.

To care about and support the people. He led. If you are an employer. Or supervisor. Or business leader. Do you care about people.

Anywhere. Like that. Do you know them by name. Do you know something. That goes on in their lives. Do you treat them.

[29 : 39] Fairly. Do you do what's right. This passage. Expresses God's goals. For Christians at work.

I want to encourage you. To ask God. To help you. To think and act this way. When you go back to work tomorrow. Or whenever you go back. This week. I want to encourage you.

Right now. To make the commitment. That when you walk. Into the place. Where you work. Or where you go to school. That by God's grace. You're really going to focus on.

Honoring your Lord. In the way that you relate to people. The way you treat people. And in the way you actually.

Do your job. Let's pray together. Father. Help all of us in this room. To know. How we should apply this.

[30 : 40] Father. Where there's just plain. Sin. And failure. Convict that person. Call them to truly. Repent. To come back to you.

To make a new commitment. Of their life to Jesus. As their Lord. And to start going to work. And living like a Christian. Help them.

To truly. Honor the Lord. In the way they treat everybody. Above them. Below them. Beside them. Help them.

Truly Father. To do their job. Their job performance. With all their heart. As if they're working for the Lord Jesus.

Father. If there's people in this room. Who. Do not know Christ. As your Lord and Savior. Call them to faith.

[31 : 41] Right now. Make it clear to them. That they do not have a relationship. With you. Enable. Enable them dear God. To truly want. To turn from their sins.

Change their mind. To repent. Help them to see. Through eyes of faith. That when Jesus died on the cross. He paid the penalty. For their sin. And by faith.

Help them right now. To call upon Jesus. To save them. Lord. If there are Christians. In this room. That they've been convicted. This morning. As employees.

Or employers. That they're just not. Taking their. Taking the responsibility. To live as faithful Christians. At work.

Or at school. And help them dear God. To get serious about that now. And make a new commitment. To you. That with your help.

[32 : 34] By your grace. They will. Honor you. In the way they. Treat people. And do their job. Let's just in an attitude of prayer.

Listen to the Lord. And respond to him. As he speaks. You obey. Let's just take the next few minutes. To do that.■■■