

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 3-4-18

March 4 we will have a topical study of the Christian in the workplace. Discussion questions are:

1. Why is the following statement accurate: *“Every job, if it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit, is a sacred job.”*?
 - a. What is your greatest challenge in seeing your job as sacred?
 - b. How does I Corinthians 1:26 help in understanding the sacredness of one’s job?
2. Agree/disagree: *“If you are a Christian living in the Spirit, you are serving God full-time.”*
3. How should we apply Ephesians 6:5-6 to the workplace?
4. What insight into Daniel’s work habits do you get from King Darius’ statement: *“Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”*
5. What is the flaw in someone wanting to leave their job because of the sinful practices of co-workers?
 - a. What does Jeremiah 29:4 teach about God’s view of his followers finding themselves surrounded by sinful people?
 - i. What does I Corinthians 5:9-10 contribute to this issue?
6. Why is it important to remember the 4 “don’ts” of witnessing? (Don’t brag, nag, lag, sag)
7. What does the following passage contribute to the discussion of the Christian in the workplace: *Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. – Colossians 4:5-6*
8. *We can’t allow ourselves to get tired of living the right way. - Galatians 6:9*
 - a. What helps you implement not getting tired of living the right way in the workplace?

SERMON: *On Relationships in the Workplace*

As we announced last month the first Sunday of each month we are focusing on relationships. Today we focus on relationships in the workplace. Solomon said, *“In all labor there is profit.”* – Proverbs 14:23 Every job, if it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit, is a sacred job. That concept is a contrast to a person who just endures their job or find it meaningless.

It’s not unusual for a Christian to have the idea that the only time they can serve God is when they’re not working. Perhaps you see yourself as an ordinary person with an ordinary job and don’t feel like being a Christian has much to do with your work life. If so, what you are not seeing is how God takes ordinary people and gives them extraordinary power. God has a rich history of using ordinary folks in ordinary places to do extraordinary things. Paul alluded to that when he said, *Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. – I Corinthians 1:26*

Occasionally I hear someone say, “I’d like to get out of this job and serve God full-time.” If you are a Christian living in the Spirit, you are serving God full-time. You may not be in an exciting job. Maybe you work at a factory and screw lids on toothpaste tubes all day long, or maybe you

do routine work in an office, or use the same tools to do the same job day in and day out. If you hear what God is saying to you about your relationships in the workplace it will turn drudgery into delight and monotony into magnificence.

This morning there are 2 things I want to share with you about relationships in the workplace:

THE SACREDNESS OF EVERYDAY WORK

The Bible was written in a culture where the work atmosphere was not much like our employer/employee relationships today. Many of the early followers of Jesus were more likely slaves than they were employees but the directions given to those Christian slaves applies to Christians in the workplace today. Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. – Ephesians 6:5 Did you hear the words “deep respect?” No doubt there were masters of slaves who were cruel and overbearing. Christian slaves are directed to pay deep respect to masters and no exceptions are mentioned.

That same principle was also practiced by God followers in the Old Testament. Do you remember the occupation of a guy named Daniel? He was a government bureaucrat. He didn't choose that job. It was forced on him. Daniel winds up in the lion's den and when the king, who values Daniel for the way he behaved on the job, comes to check the lion's den, his words convey a great deal about how Daniel behaved in the workplace. King Darius says, *“Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”*

So in both the Old and New Testaments those who wish their lives to honor God view their job as a place where they have been sent by God to be a blessing.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF EVERYDAY WORK

It may be that the place where you work is far from Christian. You may find yourself exposed to conversation that is not God-honoring, attire that is not God-honoring, and attitudes that are not God-honoring and conclude, “I want God to get me out of this place so I can serve Him.” Has it occurred to you that God put you in that place so you could serve Him there? How did Daniel become a bureaucrat in Babylon? *This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem. – Jeremiah 29:4* Many a believer finding himself in Daniel's shoes would have prayed, “God, get me out of Babylon.” Do you remember Jesus commenting on such situations? He once said, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” – John 17:15 Paul got very specific about that same subject in I Corinthians 5, When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. – I Corinthians 5:9-10

If you were going to put up a lighthouse where would you put it? In downtown Ada? No, you'd put it on the coast where it could fulfill its intended purpose. The way you see your job will change dramatically the day you see yourself as a lighthouse sent by God to bring light into the darkness of the workplace.

Jesus called us to go into all the world and that includes the world of finance, the world of business, the world of sports and the world of working on the assembly line. Wherever you work, whatever the work atmosphere you are exposed to every day, you have been sent there by God to let your light shine.

While we are talking about letting your light shine at work let me share 4 simple rules for witnessing at work:

1. DON'T BRAG!

Your light is to glow, not glare. Don't brag about your church, your doctrines, or your righteousness.

2. DON'T NAG!

Letting your light shine doesn't mean getting on to somebody when they gamble, or use foul language, or boast about their sinfulness. You will never win an unsaved man by criticizing his sinfulness. The Bible says, *Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. – Colossians 4:5-6*

3. DON'T LAG!

Do your part on the job. Hold up your end of the load. Be the person others want working beside them because you can be counted on to do your share of the work. *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. – Ephesians 6:5-6*

4. DON'T SAG!

Don't let down. Don't lapse back into the ways of this world. Don't begin to complain. Don't get unhappy. Stay happy! Stay full of joy! When everybody else is griping, be the light! *We can't allow ourselves to get tired of living the right way. - Galatians 6:9 (God's Word Trans.)*

I want to close this morning by sharing a story I read in one of Tony Campolo's books. A preacher spoke at a city mission that provides meals and beds for the homeless. At the end of his sermon he offered an invitation and several men came forward and knelt in prayer. One of the men who knelt and prayed started to cry out, "Oh, God! Make me like Joe! Oh, God! Make me like Joe."

Joe was the janitor at the mission and was deeply loved by everyone. There was no task that he considered beneath him. Joe was the one who could be counted on to clean up the vomit or scrub the toilets. And he always did what had to be done with a song. The moment Joe walked

into a room, he lit up the place with his contagious smile. He treated homeless derelicts like hotel guests at the Ritz and always went out of his way to provide an encouraging word to the depressed men who came through the doors of that little gospel mission. So it was no surprise that this man kneeling and praying would cry out to God to make him like Joe. The preacher hearing this, leaned over and whispered in the man's ear, "It really would be better if you prayer, 'Make me like Jesus!'"

With that, the man looked up at the preacher and slowly asked, "Is he like Joe?"

The question I would leave with you this morning is, "Are you like Joe?" Do others so clearly see Jesus in you they can scarcely tell the difference?