

TURNING WORK INTO WORSHIP EPHESIANS 6:5-9

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Recently I ran across a list of *occupational hymns*.

Here's a list of praise songs to God that could be sung by people occupying various lines of work...

Builders might sing, "How Firm A Foundation."

Dentists hum, "Crown Him With Many Crowns."

Baseball Players sing, "Seek Ye First."

Electricians croon, "Send The Light."

Fishermen sing, "Shall We Gather At The River."

Astronaut like the song, "Nearer My God, to Thee."

Bakers are heard singing, "I Need Thee Every Hour."

News reporters, "Pass It On."

IRS agents, "All To Thee I Owe."

Politicians, “**Standing On the Promises.**”
Optometrists like to sing, “**Open My Eyes.**”
Purchasing agents, “**Sweet By and By.**”
Stonecutters, “**Rock Of Ages.**”
Tailors want to sing, “**Holy, Holy, Holy.**”
Weathermen favor, “**Showers Of Blessing.**”
And security guards like singing, “**Silent Night.**”

My point is that no matter what type of work you do, or job you hold - as a Christian you've been called to take care of business in a way that glorifies God.

In God's eyes there's not much difference between a *hymn* and *hard work*. Certainly, **a definite mark of spiritual maturity is the ability to turn work into worship!**

This is a *Sunday AM at CC* that has real application for *Monday AM* at your place of employment...

The first three chapters of Ephesians are spiritual in nature. They're all about *how we see ourselves!*

In Christ we have a new identity. We're chosen, and forgiven, and accepted. We're God's kids! His “**poema**” or **work of art**. We're now somebody special in Christ!

Whereas, the first three chapters are **spiritual**, the last three chapters are intensely **practical**. For *how we see ourselves* should impact *how we live our lives*.

The changes Jesus works inside us should influence the relationships we carry on with the people around us... our marriage, our family, *even our life at work*.

Whether you're *a veterinarian or a librarian, a mortician or an electrician, a drummer or a plumber, an engineer or a cashier, a truck driver or a deep-sea diver, a teacher or a preacher, a baker or a furniture maker, a director or an inspector...* whatever your line of work - your attitude toward your job is vital to God!

Remember, **God created work!** Labor is not a temporary excursion from the eternal design - a necessary evil - a time-filler with no ultimate purpose.

Before man sinned he was given meaningful work.

Specifically, Adam and Eve were assigned the task of tending the garden. God created man with a disposition for work. Labor is our God-sanctioned duty.

In fact, the Bible teaches if a person is unwilling to work, he or she shouldn't eat. Work is the will of God.

Many Christians make the mistake of dividing life into *secular* and *spiritual*. We assume God cares about spiritual matters like *Bible study, and church, and prayer* - whereas secular concerns like *finances, and family, and vocation* are issues He leaves up to us.

We figure God cares only about the spiritual side of life, and not about the secular facets. Nothing could be further from the truth! All of life is important to God!

He is as concerned about *how we do business* as He is *how we pray*. He cares as much about our *work* as our *worship*. To God there is no such thing as *secular* and *spiritual* - every issue in life is a spiritual matter.

So, what's your attitude toward your job?

Once, an instructor at a company first-aid course opened the seminar by asking the employees, "What's the first thing you'd do if you found you had rabies?"

Without the slightest hesitation, one of the workers answered... "Bite my supervisor." Well, if that would have been your answer *you've got a bad attitude.*

Years ago Johnny Paycheck sang a song. It became an anthem for the working class. Here're the lyrics...

"Foreman, he's a regular dog. The line boss, he's a fool. Got a brand-new flat-top haircut. Man, he thinks he's cool. One of these days I'm gonna blow my top. That sucker, he's gonna pay. Man, I can't wait to see their faces, when I get the nerve to say...*(Take this job and shove it. I ain't working here no more.)*" Some of you remember that song... You even sung that song!

Johnny was biding his time. Longing for the day when he could walk into his boss' office, and tell him he's done! He had a crass way of phrasing it, but if we're honest, that's how some of us feel about our job!

Your attitude stinks - your performance has become shoddy - often times you're guilty of a subtle insubordination. And quite frankly, *God is not pleased!*

In Ephesians 6, the Holy Spirit teaches us how we can infuse meaning and value into whatever it is we do every day. We can turn our *business* into *blessing*.

In fact, God wants to change your tune - from "take this job and shove it" to "take this job and **love it.**" He wants every Christian to view his *work* as *worship*.

Remember, Paul was writing to the Christians at Ephesus, a Roman colony. There were 60 million slaves in the Empire (*excluding Charlon Heston*).

That's half the population! All across the empire these *"bondservants"* or *"slaves"* made up the largest percentage of the work force. Many of the first believers came from this group of slaves, and thought that as a Christian they should rise up and rebel.

But Paul says, *"No!"* If slaves did their job faithfully *they could change society by their godly witness.*

Today, none of us are slaves (*although some of you might feel as if your job is treating you like one*) - but Paul's instructions apply equally well to employees.

We're all servants of the company that employ us.

This AM we want to look at our job performance, and test how well we really understand Christianity... We'll look at **the who** - **the how** - and **the why** of our work.

Who do we work for? The answer might surprise you... **How should we do our work?** Our attitude...

And beyond just pocketing a paycheck - just feeding our family - **why should we care about our work?**

Answer these questions correctly, and you'll be well on the way to *turning your work into worship!*

First, and most importantly, understand the **who** - *for whom do we work?* Paul tells us in verse 3, *"be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ..."* And again in verse 6, *"not... as men pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ..."* And once more, verse 7, *"as to the Lord."* The answer is *Jesus!*

I'll bet you thought you worked for Greasy Wrench Automotive - or Bullwinkle and Associates - or Atta-boy Burgers - *but in God's eyes you work for Jesus!*

Perhaps you've had difficulty attaching significance to what you do - **your work carries no weight!** All you do is shuffle papers, or drive nails, or clean dishes.

You figure, "Hey, if I don't show up tomorrow what's it matter. It's no big deal. The world will go on without me! The American economy will somehow survive."

I understand how you feel... every job has its moments of despair - but what makes your work important is not *what you do*, but **who you serve!**

Your boss is not the flat-topped line boss - or the foreman who thinks he's cool... As a Christian your real boss is Jesus. As Paul says to the Colossians (3:23), "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord."

According to Paul when our supervisor gives us a task we need to undertake it with the same energy and enthusiasm as if it were a direct command from Jesus!

That is... with a few exceptions...

First, never follow an order that's immoral or unbiblical. When a *boss' command* conflicts with *God's command* then we need to be obedient to God!

Second, this doesn't mean a laborer loses his rights on the job site. There's nothing wrong with filing a legitimate grievance when you're treated unfairly.

And **third**, this doesn't mean you're locked into a penny-paying, dead-end, frustration-filled job for life, just because your boss says he can't do without you. There's nothing wrong with you seeking a better job.

But what this does mean is that whatever job God has given you *at this time* - while you're there - you need to work as if you were doing it directly unto Him.

Ask yourself... *Is the Lord Jesus going to be glorified by the quality of the project I'm presenting in the AM?*

Does this truly represent my best efforts? Would I have taken greater pains - avoided some shortcuts - if I had known this was being done for Jesus Himself?

I have no doubt we'd all be more *careful* - more *consistent* - more *conscientious* - even more *cheerful* in our work - if we realized our boss was not the guy who signs our paycheck - but our Lord Jesus Christ!

Once, three stone masons were working on a cathedral. Each man was asked what he was doing?

The first worker responded, "I'm laying bricks..." The second fellow said, "I'm toiling for a living..." The third man cast his eyes toward heaven and answered, "I'm building a place where people can worship God..."

Only one laborer saw the big picture, and understood his job's true significance! If all that motivates you on your job is a paycheck - then you've missed the point.

Your job is a showcase where you can display your devotion to God in a practical way for all to see! We're told, "be obedient... in sincerity of heart, as to Christ..."

As I mentioned earlier, I believe one of the marks of genuine spiritual maturity is **the ability to turn a wearisome act into an act of heart-felt worship.**

Can you transform the *boring* into a time of *adoring* - the *petty* into *praise* - *hard work* into *hosannas*?

If you're a student, is your love for God strong enough to see a homework assignment as an opportunity to bring glory to your Lord and Savior?

We've all been taught that *lifting hands*, and *bowing knees*, and *singing songs* are acts of worship - but by adding the right attitude you can transform *the filling out of a report*, or *the sweeping of a warehouse*, or *a divisional meeting*... into an act of worship before God.

We get up on Sunday morning and *go to church to worship* - but God also wants us get up on Monday morning and *go to work to worship*? Martin Luther once said, "[A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God.](#)"

It reminds me of the 17th century monk - a simple man - he was called "*Brother Lawrence*," and he wrote a book entitled, "[Practicing the Presence of God.](#)"

In it he says: "[Our sanctification does not depend upon changing our work, but doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own. The time of business does not differ from the time of prayer.](#)"

It's by recalling *who we work for* that we cultivate a constant awareness of God's presence even in the midst of our work. *Adore the Lord as you do the chore!*

[When you know who you work for](#), it effects [how you work](#). Notice Paul's words, "[with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart... not with eye service, as men pleasers... doing the will of God from the heart...](#)"

If we're working to bring glory to Jesus we'll do our job with *integrity*, *honesty*, *loyalty*. We'll seek to serve the interests of our employer, with no hidden agendas.

If your job is to represent your company - it's wrong to go behind its back and funnel business into side jobs for yourself. You're stealing from the company.

If you see clients with the intention of later opening up your own business - that's dishonest! *Are you pilfering pads and pencils - furniture or computers?*

Do you take little perks you're not really given?

Are you padding your expense account with personal purchases? Are you being honest with your employer?

God expects us to work with *“sincerity of heart, as to Christ...”* Don't try to justify a lack of integrity with the rationale, *“They don't pay me enough - they owe me?”*

As a Christian in the workplace we represent Jesus. Never *take* - what your employer did not agree to *give!*

How many employers have discovered, after the fact, that a person he hired, and trusted, was actually stabbing him in the back? It was employee sabotage.

It reminds me of the Korean man who was a Christian. He was also cook on a US Navy vessel. And the sailors onboard always played pranks on him.

One day they snuck into his cabin and coated his toilet seat with Vaseline. When he came out of the bathroom they roared with laughter. The Korean fellow took it all in stride. All he said was, *“Praise the Lord”*.

On another occasion they rigged the kitchen door so when he opened it a bucket of water poured down on his head. Again, he shrugged it off, *“Praise the Lord”*

After several other stunts, and the same response, the sailors grew convicted. They approached the man and apologized. They promised to never do it again...

But they did want to know how he had always managed to stay so cool? How did their cook endure such treatment, and yet still maintain a joyful attitude?

Well, before the cook answered, he wanted to be sure he understood correctly... "No more Vaseline on doorknob?" *No.* "No more water on head?" *No...*

He said, "Okay, well no more spitting in your soup!"

The point of the story is that it's possible for a person to hustle, and do a good job, *and seem to have a good attitude* - yet be working from the wrong motivation.

How many of us harbor a grudge toward our boss?

Yes, we work hard, because we want to show him up, or prove a point, or pass him over with a promotion.

Yet, under the surface a sour attitude brews. *Are you drawing a paycheck, but still spitting in the soup?*

If you were just working for the company perhaps your attitude might be justified - but you're working for more than an employer - *you're working for Jesus!* We should serve Christ "*with fear (and) sincerity of heart.*"

This is why Paul says to "*(serve) not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers.*" Don't just work when the boss is in the house - then slack off when he leaves your area.

We've all seen "*men-pleasers*" in action. They work furiously at their terminal when the supervisor is in the room, but the moment he walks off, they go right back to their coffee, and conversation, and personal chores.

They *work* only when they're being *watched*. They *serve* only when *seen*. They need an audience to do their job. It's called, "*eyeservice, as men-pleasers.*"

When I played football and we did push-ups, I'd do them one way when the coach was watching - body planked - arms moving on the count - nose pressing the ground on every rep... I mean beautiful push-ups!

But once the coach turned his head, my stomach immediately dropped - my head and arms barely moved - now I was missing every other beat!

I was a man-pleaser doing only eyeservice.

Some folks go to work with one concern - to see how little work they can do that day, and still somehow impress their boss. For a Christian there's only one problem with that goal - **our boss is always watching!**

It reminds me of the company that posted a memo on the office bulletin board: "To all employees: Due to increased competition and a desire to stay in business, we find it necessary to institute a new policy. We are asking that somewhere between starting and quitting time, and without infringing too much on the time usually devoted to lunch periods, coffee breaks, rest periods, story telling, ticket selling, vacation planning, and the re-hashing of yesterday's TV programs - that each employee endeavor to find some time that can be set aside and known as the 'Work Break.'"

What a novel idea – *the work break!*

I've read where the average American employee works at only 20-30% of their ability. And I wonder if that's a liberal assessment... But what an opportunity for Christians to stand out and be witnesses for Jesus!

What would happen if tomorrow, when you went to work you really did your job as *unto Christ*? What if God's *light* really shined through your *labor*? What if you did your job "**heartily**" - literally, "**from your heart.**"

Did you hear of the college graduate who was asked, *“Are you looking for work?”* He said, *“Not necessarily, but I would like a job.”* A lot of people have the same problem. They want a job, they just don’t want to work.

When I first became a Christian I immediately tried to witness to my co-workers. A few of them shrugged, or nodded politely - then just ignored what I had to say.

But one fellow named *“Dave,”* was not so nice.

When I told him I’d become a Christian he literally doubled over in laughter... He pointed out how I was usually late arriving for work - I took 30 minutes for my 15 minute breaks - and when I did work, I really wasn’t doing my fair share. Dave ended the conversation by calling me a *“hypocrite,”* snickering, and walking off.

Needless to say the Holy Spirit used Dave to get my attention! His words woke me up to the poor employee I’d been. And from that day forward I went to work trying to straighten out my work habits and attitude.

My goal was to change Dave’s opinion of me, and earn his respect, so I could share with him the Gospel.

By the time I resigned I think he saw me differently.

So let me ask you, if your co-worker’s only exposure to the power of Jesus is how it has motivated you in your work, what impression would they be left with?

Would they see Christianity as an impotent, Sunday-only religion - or as a vital, dynamic unleashing of God’s joy and power that reaches into all facets of life?

Here's another notice found pinned to a company's bulletin board: "The management regrets that it has come to their attention that workers dying on the job are failing to fall down. This practice must stop, as it's impossible to distinguish between death and the natural movement of staff. Any employee found dead in an upright position will be dropped from the payroll."

We work as to the Lord when we work "*heartily*" - that means "with zeal, and zest, and enthusiasm."

I know a guy who's got a *great job* - he does a *good job* - but you'd think he hated every second he was there. *He's a grouch at work*. You're tempted to ask him if you can help him get the rock out of his shoe!

If you want to be a witness at work try a friendly smile. Be cordial. It's refreshing to find some kindness in the dog eat dog curtness of the business world.

It's been said, "God puts work into our lives, let's put God's life into our work." Be congenial and gracious on the job, and you'll stand out! People will pay attention.

In World War 2, the American Marines deployed in the South Pacific developed the expression, "*gung ho*."

Today, we use the word to describe a person with great zeal - the guy or gal with some get-up-and-go.

The word "**gung**" is Chinese for "*work*." "**Ho**" means "*harmony*." And we as Christians should bring a little "**gung ho**" to the workplace. We can be pleasant.

Let's do our job *happily and harmoniously*...

We need to know for **whom** we work, and **how** to work - and thirdly, we need to know **why** we work...

Paul states in verse 8, *“knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord.”*

Always remember, your earthly boss may sign your paycheck - but your ultimate *reward* is from the *Lord!*

My heart breaks when I hear someone say, *“That salesman is suppose to be a Christian, but...”* *That mechanic serves in his church, but...”* *That guy advertises that his is a Christian company, but...”*

A lot of folks flaunt their Christianity to draw in business, but it holds them to a higher standard. Say you're a Christian... and I should expect *more* not less.

In the second century, one of the early church fathers, Justin Martyr, penned a description of his fellow Christians and their witness. *“Our Lord urged us by patience and meekness to lead all from shame, and the lusts of evil - and many who have come in contact with us were changed from violent characters, either from having watched the constancy of their Christian neighbors or from doing business with Christians.”*

What a tremendous strategy... people drawn to Jesus - sinners converted... not by our preaching, but by our *taking care of business!* Imagine, customers, and vendors, and even creditors coming to know Jesus by the conduct of Christians in the marketplace?

I've talked to a lot of Christian businessmen, and some of them have been quick to remind me, "Yes, Pastor Sandy, our goal is to run our business according to biblical principles, but let's not forget the main point of any business is to make money." And what I'm saying this morning is that **they are wrong!**

Ten-thousand years from now you'll look back and realize the real purpose for your business, or job, was NOT to make money. The reason you went to work each day - and your company existed - had nothing to do with money! The point was to influence people for Jesus. God wanted you as *a witness in the workplace.*

In the process, you will make some money - God will see to it! He's promised to provide your needs. God uses businesses to bless - *but the making of money is not the point at all! God wants us to bring Him glory!*

The real reward for our labor is God's eternal approval of our faithful witness. Verse 8 promises us, that in His time, God will reward whatever good we do.

Up until now, I've been speaking to hired-hands - but let's not forget what's said to employees also applies to employers. If you run a business - or supervise workers - you also need to remember the **who**, the **how**, and the **why** - for **whom** do you work... and **how** do you perform your work... and **why** do you work?...

Ephesians 6:9 speaks to bosses, "*And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.*" In other words, if you're somebody's boss, remember you also have a boss!

Every boss on earth has a boss in heaven!

Nobody really works for themselves. Even the CEO - even the business owner - has a Boss named "*Jesus!*"

Paul tells the employers to "*give up threatening.*" In other words, if you're the *boss*, don't be *bossy*.

Don't try to intimidate or manipulate your employees. Motivate them with your love and appreciation.

All bosses should be a servant to their servants.

Every boss should recall that he or she has a boss, and while Jesus was on Earth, our Boss laid aside His royal robes, humbled Himself, and became a servant.

Don't expect your employees to do more than you'd be willing to do yourself! Serve them with *sincerity*. Treat them with *integrity*. Care for them *heartily*.

Do you give your employees the honest impression they're not just working *for you* but *with you*? It's been said, "*Better to have three men working with you than a dozen working for you.*" An employer can create that kind of atmosphere if he honestly serves his servants.

Employers should care for their employees and their working conditions - not just to keep the EEOC off their back, or OSHA from inspecting, or to pacify the Union.

All bosses are accountable to the Boss in heaven

Paul says, with Jesus "*there is no partiality.*" Thus, those who represent Him should always be fair.

He makes a similar comment in Colossians 4:1, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair.”

It’s true, a laborer owes his employer an honest day’s work. But the boss also owes his worker an honest day’s pay. There’s a reciprocal responsibility.

Over the last few decades the business experts have finally recognized what the Bible has taught all along.

What’s been biblical has always been successful. *Biblical principles* make for good *business practices*.

Companies that are people-oriented - that share profits with their employees - that provide healthcare and benefits - that genuinely care for their employee’s welfare... end up with the most committed workforce.

And that devotion translates into economic success.

Let me close with a story. In the 11th Century, a king ruled Germany named Henry III. King Henry was a devout Christian who’d grown tired of life in the palace.

He wanted to enroll in the monastery, and serve God for the rest of his life in prayer and quiet meditation.

When King Henry met the superior in charge of the monastery, the priest asked him, “Your Majesty, do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? And that will be hard since you've been a king.”

King Henry replied: *“I understand. For the rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you.”*

That's when the wise priest replied, "Then I will tell you what to do. Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place God has put you." He knew God can be served as much in *the secular* as in *the sacred*.

It seems whenever a young man gets fired up for Jesus he thinks he needs to turn his back on his former pursuits, and become a pastor. *But I'm not so sure...*

When God called me to be a pastor I fought it... Not because I wasn't willing to follow the Lord - I just figured the last thing the world needed was another pastor. Trust me, the world today has plenty of pastors!

As I see it, the great need today is for Christian *doctors, secretaries, accountants, lawyers, carpenters, programmers, teachers, policemen, coaches, and executives...* folks who take Christ into the workplace!

Since becoming a pastor I now realize how limited pastors are in reaching people on a personal level.

In daily conversation, when someone finds out I'm a pastor they tend to clam up - they stop talking honestly and openly. They have a hard time relating to a pastor.

That's why the people who win mechanics to Christ are usually the Christian mechanics who let their light shine... The folks who win architects to Christ are the Christian architects who are living out their faith...

Without a doubt the most pressing need in the world today is for Christians to do their work **"as to Christ."**

By doing so, we can attract people's attention, and stir their interest, *through the excellence of our work...*

Then we can use the platform we've earned to lead thirsty hearts to the living water. Realize, we can use everyday work to introduce folks to the eternal life and joy and love found only in our Lord and Savior Jesus!

Ole Johnny Paycheck use to sing, "Take this job and shove it... I'm walking out that door." But as Christians we should sing a different tune. *How about these lyrics,* "Take this job and *love* it. I'm now working for the Lord."

Let that be our challenge this morning. We can love *our* job if we learn how to *turn our work into worship!*