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DISCIPLINES OF A SOLID EMPLOYEE (Titus 2:9, 10)

As Paul moves through his instructions to Titus, he includes topics that apply to certain categories of people. We've seen the list of character qualities leaders should have. We considered what older men and women should model and teach younger generations. Paul has even addressed what should be pointed out to false teachers in that day.

Last time, Titus was the focus of the instruction as Paul reminded him that he is a direct example to so many around him, just as we are in our sphere. In this week's text, Paul turns his attention to slaves, but again, there are important applications for us here as well.

Slavery is never promoted in Scripture. It was only acknowledged as a societal reality of the first century. At that time, the slave population in the Roman Empire was about 30% of the total. Slaves were considered to be property, just as they have been in other times in history. We also know that many were responding positively to the early Christian message. So, what did Paul want these believing slaves to be taught?

Titus 2:9, 10 - Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

BE SUBJECT IN EVERYTHING

Obviously, an absolute direct parallel can't be drawn between slavery and modern-day employment, but the principles we read here are a biblical approach to work and to our bosses.

Unlike first-century slaves, today we can choose where we will work and when we do, there are certain conditions to which we agree. Our bosses have every right to expect us to follow through on those agreements or else we can be put on probation,

sanctioned somehow, or even fired for cause. The principle of submission is an overriding attitude we freely give to one who is in authority over us. Peter expended this thought when he wrote to slaves:

*1 Peter 2:18, 19 - Servants, **be subject** to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.*

Again, we have the option to leave employment if the treatment is too harsh, but there can be times, even when being treated unfairly, when staying and displaying a Christ-honoring attitude and testimony may be the only positive model a boss will see.

BE SUPERIOR IN EFFORT

The work ethic we try to instill in our kids is also required of us. Avoiding lateness, volunteering for more assignments, and proving trustworthy go a long way to a boss seeing your overall value to him based solely on effort. Our employer needs to see great effort, if only to show the character of the God we serve.

Twentieth-century man needs to be reminded at times that work is not the result of the Fall. Mankind was made to work, because the God who made him was a "working God." Mankind was made to be creative, with his mind and his hands. Work is part of the dignity of his existence.

- Sinclair Ferguson -

DO NOT SASS WHEN EXPRESSING

Our speech to our boss can be a trap if we let it. This passage says don't be argumentative, disrespectful, and a problem-maker in the way we talk to them. Implicit in this is also how we talk about them to others. The gossip among employees can be rampant behind the back of a boss. Let's not add to it by violating this exhortation to watch our speech in the workplace.

DO NOT STEAL IF ENTICED

There are literally hundreds of ways to steal from an employer. From lifting small things (pens, paper, paper clips, toilet paper, etc.) to large things that are criminal offenses, stealing from work is practiced everywhere. The solid employee will always be aware, though, that their employer has bought all of these things and owns them. To take them for our own use without compensation or agreement is theft and is prohibited in the Bible.

Use of time is also an opportunity to steal. Working hours, breaks, lunch and other time issues should be a clear expectation and to abuse them, resulting in less work performed, is also stealing.

According to the Criminal Law Lawyer's Source (2010), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that employee theft costs businesses \$40 billion dollars each year. This total is ten times the value of street crime losses annually in the USA. The banking industry reports losses of over one billion dollars annually because of employee theft, greater than the amount taken in bank robberies many times over. Recent reports have found that employee theft is increasing at a rate of fifteen percent annually. According to the FBI, employee theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the USA.

Paul knew this was a temptation, even for a slave, so the command not to pilfer is included here. A great example of this from the Old Testament is Joseph's approach as he served in Potiphar's house:

*Genesis 39:6 - So he [Potiphar] left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him **he had no concern about anything** but the food he ate.*

BE SOLID IN EMPLOYERS' EYES

"Showing all good faith" also can be read "show that they can be fully trusted". Again, the character that Paul is trying to instill in the Cretan culture through Titus is made plain in this reminder.

Some of you who are members in the General Assembly are employers. You know the importance of

your employees' integrity and what a lack of integrity does to a business. But you are also under authority in a sense to the ones who have consented to put you in office. To show yourself trustworthy to them, and to the God who placed you in your position, is crucial.

Effectiveness is doing the right thing. Efficiency is just doing the right thing. Excellence is doing the right thing at the right time, and doing it well.

- Stephen Anderson -

BE SHINING AS CHRIST'S' EXAMPLE

The Bible version I quoted in the introduction encourages the slave to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. The New International Version puts it this way: "make the teaching about God our Savior attractive." If we could this in all of life, not just in the workplace, we would do well.

Doctrine, theology, and teaching from Scripture are all things many people, including many bosses, try to avoid. But if an employee can live out the gospel in an effective, winsome way then the doctrine is attractive to others who may not even know they need it.

One final thought that we need to acknowledge on this topic of work. How we interact with those in authority over us as we work is important as we've seen. But ultimately, our goal should be to please God. He is the one for whom we really work and the one who will eventually reward us for how we live before other people, including employers. Paul wrote this truth to the Colossian believers, too:

*Colossians 3:23, 24 - Whatever you do, work at it with 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.***

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building