

TURNING WORK INTO WORSHIP

COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1

Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

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

Here's a list of songs of praise to God that might be sung by people in various lines of employment...

For example, a baker could sing, "[I Need Thee Every Hour.](#)" A builder will whistle, "[How Firm A Foundation.](#)" Baseball players like to sing, "[Seek Ye First.](#)"

Dentists often hum, "[Crown Him With Many Crowns.](#)" Electricians often to sing, "[Send The Light.](#)" Fishermen love the hymn, "[Shall We Gather At The River.](#)"

IRS agents sing, "[All To Thee I Owe.](#)" Politicians sing, "[Standing On the Promises.](#)" Optometrists play, "[Open My Eyes.](#)" Security guards like, "[Silent Night.](#)"

Stone masons sing, "[Rock Of Ages.](#)" A clothing tailor likes to sing, "[Holy, Holy, Holy.](#)" And meteorologists love to song, "[There Shall Be Showers Of Blessing.](#)"

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 sight there's no difference between a *hymn* and *hard work*. I think one of **the most definite marks of spiritual maturity is the ability to turn work into worship!**

Earlier, in 3:16 we read, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

The Christian life should be a continual concert of praise - which involves, verse 17, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

But listen to this paraphrase of Colossians 3:17: "*Let every detail in your lives - words, actions, whatever - be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.*" In other words, let the joy in your heart put a bounce in your step.

Real praise quickly turns practical.

Colossians 3 teaches us that one of the first areas of life that's impacted by a love for Jesus is a person's approach to their work. Your love and praise for Jesus Christ is reflected in how you *take care of business!*

Whether you're *a veterinarian or librarian, a mortician or electrician, a drummer or plumber, an engineer or cashier, a*

truck driver or deep-sea diver, a teacher or preacher, a baker or a furniture maker...

Realize an important truth, whatever your line of work, your attitude toward your job is important to God!

God created work!

Work is not a temporal excursion from the eternal design - a necessary evil - a waste of time with no ultimate purpose. From the beginning of human history God directed the man toward productive activity.

Before Adam sinned, God gave him the task of tending and tilling the garden. God created mankind with a disposition for meaningful work. Even today, work is every Christian's 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 **spiritual** matters like *Bible study, church, prayer* are what concern God.

Whereas **secular** concerns like *finances, family, vocation* are the issues that God has left 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!

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

What's your attitude toward your job?

I heard of an instructor at a company's first-aid course. He opened the seminar with the question, "What's the first thing you'd do if you found out you had rabies?" One worker replied, "*Bite my supervisor.*"

That's not the attitude to have toward your boss.

In 1977 Johnny Paycheck sang a song that became popular with many working class folk... "*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 workin' here no more. You better not try to stand in my way, cause I'm walking out that door.*"

Obviously, that's a rather *crass and crude* way of phrasing it, but if we were honest, that's how some of us - *perhaps many of us* - really feel about our jobs!

Our attitude stinks, our performance has become shoddy, we're guilty of a subtle insubordination - and quite frankly, **God is not pleased!**... Here's what our text teaches us, we can infuse meaning and value into what we do every day by *turning our work into worship.*

In fact, God wants us to change our tune. From "*take that job and shove it*" to "*take that job and love it.*"

Tonight, we learn to **turn our work into worship!**

In Colossians Paul is writing to both slaves and masters. At the time there were 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire - about half the total population.

Many of the first believers were slaves, and some thought as Christians they should rise up and rebel.

Paul says, *“Not so!”* He says to Roman slaves they should love and serve their masters. He challenges them to change their society by their godly witness.

Today, none of us are literal slaves (*although some of you might feel as if you get treated like one*) - yet Paul's instructions apply equally well to employees.

We are servants of the company that employs us.

And this evening we want to look at our jobs... We'll focus on **the who, the how, and the why** of our work.

Who do we work for? The answer might surprise you... **How we should go about our work?...** And beyond bringing home a paycheck, **why we should care about our performance while we're there?...**

First, and most importantly, realize the **who** - *for whom do you work?* Paul tells us in verse 23, **“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”** I'll bet, you thought you worked for Greasy Wrench Automotive - or Bullwinkle and Associates - **but as far as God is concerned you work for Him.**

Perhaps you have difficulty attaching significance to what you do. **Your work carries no weight!** *“All I 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!* Verse 24 says emphatically, *“for you serve the Lord Christ.”*

Your boss is not the foreman who thinks he’s cool.

Your real boss is none other than Jesus. Whatever you do - don’t do it as unto men - do it as to the Lord!

Paul is saying when your supervisor gives you a task you need to undertake it with the same enthusiasm and energy as if it were the Lord's direct command!...

Of course, this doesn't mean you should do anything that's immoral or unbiblical. (When the *boss’ command* conflicts with *God's command* be obedient to God!)

Nor does it mean a worker has no rights in the workplace. (*There’s nothing wrong with filing a legitimate grievance when you’re treated unjustly.*)

Nor does it mean you're locked into a penny-paying, dead-end, frustration-filled job for the rest of your life just because your boss says he can’t live without you.

But what it does mean is that whatever job God has given you at the time, while you’re there, you need to perform it as if you were doing it directly unto Him.

Will the Lord Jesus be pleased with the project I’m presenting in the morning? Does it truly represent my best

effort?... Would I take greater pains on the house I'm building or remodeling, and avoid the shortcuts I've planned - if I was constructing it for Jesus to live in?...

I'm sure we would be much more *careful*, and *conscientious*, and *consistent*, and even more *cheerful* in our work, if we saw our boss not as the guy who signs our paycheck, but as the Lord in heaven!

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, "I'm toiling for a living..." But the third worker looked up to heaven and replied, "I'm building a place where people can worship God..."

Only one of the three laborers saw the bigger picture, and understood his job's real relevance!

If all that motivates you is a paycheck 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! In **"whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord."**

As I said earlier, one of the marks of genuine spiritual maturity is the ability to turn a *wearisome act* into an *act of worship*. Can you transform the *boring* into *adoring* - the *petty* to *praise* - *hard work* into *hosanna*?

We've been taught that lifting our hands, and bowing our knees are acts of worship - but did you know that by adding the right attitude to the task you can transform filling out a report, or sweeping a warehouse, or stocking the shelves... into the worship of God?

We get up on Sunday morning and *go to church to worship*, but God also wants us get up on Monday through Friday mornings and *go to work to worship*?

The great reformer Martin Luther once stated, "[A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God.](#)"

A 17th century monk - a humble, simple man - his name was Brother Lawrence - wrote a famous book entitled, "[The Practice Of The Presence of God.](#)"

In it he writes: "[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** it is we work for that we can cultivate a constant awareness of God's presence! Let me say it again, *adore the Lord as you do the chore!*

When you know *who* you work for, it effects **how** you work. Verses 22-23 tell us to work "[not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.](#)"

Paul says we need to work "[heartily, as to the Lord.](#)"

If we're working to bring glory to Jesus we'll do our job with integrity, vigor, and loyalty. We'll seek to serve the interests of the company, 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 your employer.*

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 that aren't really given? Are you padding your expense account with personal purchases? Are you being honest with your employer?

God expects us to serve our company with **"sincerity of heart."** Don't try to justify a lack of integrity with the attitude, *"They don't pay me enough - they owe me?"*

As a Christian in the workplace *our concern* needs to be *our employer's concern*. Our priority his priority.

Many an employer has discovered, *after the fact*, that a man he hired, and trusted was stabbing him in the back? Employee sabotage is a real problem.

It reminds me of the cook who was a Christian. He worked on a US Navy vessel. The sailors always played pranks on him. One day they snuck into his cabin and put Vaseline on the toilet seat. When he came out of the bathroom they roared with laughter.

He took it all in stride and uttered, **"Praise the Lord."**

On another occasion they rigged the kitchen door so when he opened it up a bucket of water soaked his head. Again he shrugged it off, **"Praise the Lord."**

After several other stunts and the same response from the young boy the sailors grew convicted. They came to him and apologized. They promised to never do it again... *but they did want to know how he always managed to keep his*

composure? How did the lad endure such treatment and still keep a joyful attitude?

Well, before the cook answered - he wanted to be sure of their apology, "No more Vaseline on the toilet seat?" No. "No more water on my head?" No. That's when he said, "Ok, no more spitting in your soup!"

The point of the story is that it's possible for a person to hustle, and on the outside do a good job - yet in their heart or hearts be working from the wrong motivation.

How many of us are harboring a grudge toward our boss? We're working hard to *show him up* or *prove a point*, but we're working with a sour attitude. Are we drawing a paycheck, *yet still spitting in the soup?*

If you were just working for the company perhaps your attitude would be justified - but don't forget, you're working for the God in heaven! Paul tells us we're to serve the Lord with "sincerity of heart, fearing God."

This is why we're told to "serve not with eyeservice as men-pleasers." Don't just work when the boss is in the house, and then slack off when he leaves the 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 out, they go right back to their coffee and conversation.

There are some workers who specialize in "eyeservice." They *work* only to be *watched* - *serve* only to be *seen*. They need an audience to do their job.

When I played football and we were punished with a few push-ups I'd do them one way when the coach was watching... *back straight as a board, arms moving with the count, nose touching the ground...*

But when the coach turned his head... my stomach drooped, my arms barely bent, I missed every other beat! *I was a man-pleaser functioning by eye-service.*

Some people go to work with one goal, and that's to see how little work they can do, and still impress the boss. For a Christian there's only one problem with that kind of attitude... **your 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 be known as the '*Work Break.*'" What a novel idea: ***the work break!***

I've read where the average American employee only works at 20 to 30% of their ability... What an opportunity though for those of us who are Christians to stand out and be a witness for our Lord Jesus!

What would happen if we put 100% of our effort into our work? If we did business tomorrow in such a way that God's

light shined through our *labor*? What if we did our job “heartily,” or literally, “from the heart”?

Did you hear of the college graduate who was asked if he was looking for work? He answered, “Not necessarily, but I would like a job.” That’s the problem.

When I first became a Christian I immediately tried to witness to my co-workers. A few nodded politely, and just ignored what I had to say... But one fellow named Dave, was not so polite. When I told him I’d become a Christian he literally doubled over in laughter...

He pointed out how I was always late... how I took 30 minutes for my 15 minute breaks... and how I didn’t do my share of the work. Dave called me a “hypocrite,” snickered at me, shook his head, and walked 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. From that day on, I went to work to straighten out my work habits and develop the right attitude.

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

If your co-worker’s only exposure to the power and joy of Jesus is how it motivates you in your work, *what impression are they left with?* Will they see Christianity as an impotent, hollow, Sunday-only religion, or a vital dynamic that reaches into every facet of our lives?

Here’s another announcement found on a company’s bulletin board: “We regret that it has come to our 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 the staff. Any employee found dead in an upright position will be dropped from the payroll."

We work as to the Lord when we perform our tasks "heartily" - "with zeal, and zest, and enthusiasm."

I once knew a guy who did *a great job but had a sorry attitude*. You'd think he hated every second on the job. He was a grouch. You were tempted to ask him if you could help him get the rock out of his shoe!

If you want to be a witness at work put on a friendly smile - make a cordial comment. It's refreshing to find genuine kindness in the dog eat dog world of business.

I've heard it said, "God puts work into our lives, let's put God's life into our work." Be kind and gracious on the job and you'll stand out! Folks will definitely notice.

In World War 2, American Marines in the South Pacific developed the expression, "Gung Ho."

We use it today to describe a person with zeal - with some real get-up-and-go. The word "Gung" is the Chinese word for "work." And "Ho" means "harmony."

We Christians should bring a little "Gung Ho" to the workplace. Let's do our job *happily and harmoniously*.

We need to know for *whom* we work, *how* to work, and thirdly, **why** we work. Paul says in verse 24, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

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

My heart breaks when I hear someone state, "That salesman is suppose to be a Christian, *but...*", "That mechanic says he loves God, *but...*", "He says he runs a Christian company, *but when we've done business..*"

A lot of people flaunt the fact they're Christian to draw business, but they don't realize that designation holds them to a higher standard. Say you're *a Christian company...* I should expect more from you, not less.

In the second century, one of the early church fathers, Justin Martyr, penned a description of his fellow Christians, "*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 testimony! Sinners converted and drawn to Jesus - not by preaching, but by how we *take care of business!* Imagine, customers, vendors, and managers coming to Jesus by our conduct in the marketplace?

I've talked to a lot of Christian businessmen over the years, and some have been quick to remind me, "*Pastor Sandy, yes, we attempt to run our business according to biblical principles, but we can't forget that the main point of a business is to make money.*" *And what I'm trying to say is that's the wrong assumption!*

10,000 years from now you'll look back and realize the real reason for your business was **not** to make money. The

reason you went to work every day - and your company existed - *had nothing to do with money.*

The point of your business was to be an influence for Jesus. God wanted you to be a workplace witness!

In the process, you may've made some money that was a blessing to you and others - but making money was not the point at all! The real reward for your labor was the Lord's eternal approval of your faithful witness.

Up until now, I've been speaking to employees - 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... **how** do you carry it out... and ultimately. **why** do you do what you do...

For Colossians 4:1 speaks to the bosses, "**Masters, give your servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**" If you're a boss, remember you have a boss! Every *boss on earth* has a *boss in heaven!* Nobody truly works for themselves.

Even the CEO - the owner - has God as their boss!

Ephesians 6:9, a similar passage dealing with work, instructs employers to "**give up threatening.**" In other words, the *boss* shouldn't be *bossy*. Don't intimidate or manipulate your employees – rather motivate them with love and appreciation. *Be a servant to servants.*

Recall you have a Boss and while He was on Earth He became a servant. Don't expect your employees to do more than you'd be willing to do yourself!

Serve your employees with sincerity. Treat them with integrity. Care for them heartily. Instill in them the belief that they're not just working for you but with you.

It's said, "Better to have three men working *with you* than a dozen working *for you*." A boss can create that kind of atmosphere if he honestly serves his servants.

Paul says in 4:1, "Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair." Today, experts in the corporate world are recognizing what the Bible has taught all along. *What's always been biblical is also successful.*

Biblical principles make for good business practices.

Companies that are people-oriented – that share profits with employees – that genuinely care for their workers' welfare – are the most successful companies.

The story is told of an 11th century king who ruled Germany. His name was Henry III. Henry was a devout Christian who had grown tired of life in the palace. He wanted to enroll in the local monastery, and serve God for the rest of his life in prayer and quiet meditation.

When King Henry met the superior 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 for you to do 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.*"

The wise old priest responded to him, "Then I will tell you what to do. Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has placed you."

Often when 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!

The great need today is for *Christian nurses, accountants, carpenters, programmers, policemen, etc. etc.* - people to take the Gospel into the workplace!

Since becoming a pastor I now realize how limited pastors are in reaching folks on a personal level. When someone finds out I'm a pastor they tend to clam up, and stop talking honestly. *They don't relate to a pastor.*

This is why the people who win the mechanics to Christ are the Christian mechanics who let their light shine... The people winning the architects to Christ are the Christian architects who are living out their faith...

Without a doubt the most pressing need today is for Christians to do their work **"as to Lord."** We attract attention *through the excellence of our work* - then use that platform to lead thirsty hearts to the living water.

God's plan is to use *everyday work* to introduce folks to the *eternal life* that's in our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Ole Johnny Paycheck is no longer with us, but what if someone came out with a new song, **"Take this job and love it. I'm now working for the Lord."**

Let that be the challenge to us all. You can love your job, if you learn **to turn your work into worship!**