

1 Timothy 6:1-2 — How Do I Witness At Work?

June 11, 2017

Welcome to the CrossWinds Spirit Lake Campus. This summer, we have special focus on increasing the warmth of our welcome. Our catch phrase for the summer is, “Don’t just attend church, BE the church.” Why do we want to increase the warmth of our welcome? In our study of 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul described the church as a family. Families don’t just care about one another but they warmly welcome those who visit. If you are a guest, I hope you feel warmly welcomed to the CrossWinds family. We are thrilled to have you.

Last week, I introduced to you 10 action steps we are taking as a campus to increase the warmth of our welcome. I promised I would review one or two each week. This week, let me remind you about the first in the list which is, “*Sit by someone you don’t know, not in the same seat.*” I can tell some of you are taking that to heart because you moved pews. I hope that after the service you have a chance to meet some new friends.

As a church, we are studying our way through the book of 1 Timothy. We just finished chapter five where Paul talked about the importance of honor in the church. Since we are a family, we treat others in the church with honor. Those who are older than us, we treat like mothers or fathers. We always give them honor, care and respect. If people in the church are younger, we honor them by treating them with the care we would give our own brothers or sisters. We also learned that in the church family, we honor the lonely and vulnerable, like widows and single mothers. We don’t ignore them. We love them. Last week, we learned how we treat church leaders. We treat them with honor. We refuse to gossip

about them. We refuse to slander them behind their backs. We love our church leaders. We protect them from rumors, false accusations and slander. We don't spread that kind of stuff. We put a stop to negative talk against church leaders.

This morning, Paul continues on this theme of how Christians in the family of God are different because we show honor and respect to others. Today, Paul is moving from how we show honor to others inside the church to how we show honor to those outside the church, in particular how Christians show honor to their bosses at work. Christians are to be legendary for the way they honor their bosses. We are to be legendary in the quality of our work and legendary in the positive attitude we have while at work.

As we prepare to jump into the subject of work and how a Christian works, we need to set work within its proper framework. Our culture tells us to think of work as evil and retirement as a little bit of heaven on earth. That is not biblical. Work is a good thing. God created us to work. Work was in the world before sin was in the world.

[The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15 \(ESV\)](#)

Adam and Eve were farmers before sin, and farming is hard work. God created us to work and to work hard. When sin entered the world through Adam's sin, work went from hard to frustrating. The Bible says that after sin entered the world thorns and thistles began fighting against work and making it much more difficult.

Even in the new creation after heaven gets better, did you realize we will work? It will be productive work. It will be fulfilling work. We will work because

work is not sinful and God created us to work. God created the earth as a storehouse of resources for us to use in our work. When we make things from the earth we bring glory to God through our work.

Since work is so important to our daily lives and we will even spend time in eternity in our work, we need to know how to bring glory to God through our work. This morning, Paul is going to teach us how to do that. He will answer two questions. How do I work for a non-Christian boss to bring glory to Christ? How do I work for a Christian boss to bring glory to Christ?

How do I work for a non-Christian boss?

Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. 1 Timothy 6:1 (ESV)

One of the first things we need to deal with is a little of a side issue but it is never-the-less important. That is the issue of bondservants. The NIV and other translations use the term *slaves*. Why was Paul saying slaves should honor their masters? Slavery was a terrible institution. People were ripped from their beds in the middle of the night in Africa, stuffed into the cargo holds of ships, and in the worst of conditions, taken to another country to be sold, beaten and whipped. Families were torn apart to never see one another again. How could Paul condone the institution of slavery?

Why didn't Paul condemn slavery?

Let me take a few minutes to explain the ancient institution of slavery because it differs from the racially-motivated slavery which characterized our country.

First, let's begin with slavery in the Old Testament. A slave in the Old Testament was not in the worst position. Slaves were usually taken into a family, and they served as managers, cooks, craftsman and even teachers of children. If you trusted a slave to teach your children, you know Old Testament slavery was not a whips-and-chains experience. Slaves in homes were given food, shelter and usually a small salary. The bottom of the social rung in biblical times were day-laborers. Those were people that weren't slaves but they were hired day-by-day by farmers to do the rough farm tasks. They went home with a modest pay but they had no shelter, food, or the protection of a family. Slaves were given all those things.

How did someone become a slave? Some were prisoners of war while others sold themselves into slavery looking for guaranteed food, clothing and shelter. Still others became slaves because they couldn't pay off their debts. They were slaves to their creditors.

In the Old Testament, God protected the rights of slaves. Most of these facts come from Exodus 21. Jewish slaves could not be held for more than six years before they had to be set free. If a slave liked his master so much that he wanted to serve as his master's slave for life he could have his ear pierced with an awl. That deformed ear was a sign to others he was a slave to his master for life because he loved his master and didn't want to leave his master. This tells us that slavery among God's people was nothing like the hateful brutal slavery of colonial America. Slaves that were abused were set free. Slaves were also given a Sabbath rest. Slaves had legal rights, and if you murdered a slave, you

suffered punishment. Jewish slaves were so well-protected by the Mosaic law that rabbinic literature of the day said buying a Jewish slave was like buying a master because there was so much protection given Jewish slaves in the Old Testament law.

Fast forward from the slavery of Old Testament Israel to slavery just prior to the time of Jesus. There is no question that slavery was a huge institution in ancient society. The Roman Empire held between 50 to 60 million slaves. Typically one-third of the population in major cities, like Rome and Ephesus, were slaves. Slaves in the Roman world didn't have rights. They were considered property. They were considered a tool. The annals of ancient history hold stories of outrageous atrocities against slaves, such as when Augustus crucified one of his slaves because the slave accidentally killed Augustus' pet quail.

In spite of that dark past, slavery as an institution in the Roman world was on the decline when the New Testament letters were written. Very few slaves remained slaves until they died. More than 50 percent of slaves were freed by their 30th birthdays. Slave owners were releasing slaves so fast that Caesar Augustus had to introduce legal restrictions to curb the emancipations of slaves. Many ex-slaves, now called freedmen, were quickly rising in wealth and some were even rivaling the old-money Romans in wealth and power.

As for the kind of slavery we think of in America, where someone was kidnapped and taken against their will and to serve in inhumane conditions, that kind of slavery is something the Bible calls one of the greatest sins against God. Paul even condemned it earlier in this book.

...understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine... 1 Timothy 1:9–10 (ESV)

Some translations do not use the word enslavers. They call them slave traders, which is what an enslaver is. Inhumane, American-style slavery is one of the greatest sins against God.

That wasn't the kind of slavery that usually took place in the New Testament times. Slaves served as custodians, CEOs and even as government officials. Due to the high rate of slave emancipation and the generally positive treatment of slaves at this time in history, you don't find Paul and other New Testament writers railing against it. Quite honestly, at this time, the slave-master relationship in the ancient world closely resembled the employer-employee relationship that many of us work under today.

The term bondservant or slavery defines the structure of a relationship, but it does not mean there was necessarily abuse in that relationship. To be a bondservant or slave meant someone had authority over your life. They were your boss. They held your livelihood and your future in their hands.

This isn't necessarily a negative thing; it is simply a statement on the kind of relationship that existed. Jesus even described himself as a bondservant, a slave of his heavenly father, who directed his life.

As Christians, the Bible tells us that we should also think of ourselves as slaves of our heavenly father because God the Father is in charge of our lives.

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 1 Peter 2:16 (ESV)

Now that we understand that ancient slavery isn't a dark evil but it closely represents the employer-employee relationship most of us live under today, let's read the text again to learn what Paul told us about work.

Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. 1 Timothy 6:1 (ESV)

Paul said, "If you are an employee working for a boss, you need to give your boss all honor." In 1 Timothy 5, Paul used the term *honor* to describe how we treat widows and church leaders. When it comes to our earthly bosses we give them *all-honor*. As Christians, we go out of our way to give honor to our bosses. I also want you to notice the word *regard*. Regard means to do something because of an objective criteria, not an internal feeling. It means even if you don't like your boss you honor him or her simply because he or she is your boss. Even if your boss is mean, grumpy and balding, you give him or her honor in every way at every time. It doesn't matter if your boss is harsh, unfair or grumpy, you honor your boss. You never mock your boss, undermine your boss, or take advantage of your boss.

Paul's plan for how we witness at work is that Christian employees are always to be the hardest working. They refuse to talk smack about the boss when he isn't around. You know how everyone works hard when the boss is present but when the boss leaves the job site people go half-pace and become lazy? Christian employees don't do that. I know some Christians who get in trouble on the job because they work too hard and make everybody else look bad. It is OK if you make others look bad when they are lazy and you are not. Remember that our work is our witness.

Why was Paul concerned about our work ethic? As a Christian in the work place, the worst thing that can happen is getting reprimanded by the boss for poor quality work. It is bringing dishonor to the name of Christ by a bad work ethic, being a whiner, or acting lazy. Remember that our work is to be done so well that our work witness is what opens the door to our verbal witness.

Paul said the same thing to Titus.

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. Titus 2:9–10 (ESV)

Whatever job you work at, honor your boss in everything. Stay off your cell phone during work hours. Stay off YouTube. Put your phone away if you are a compulsive social media addict. Do everything you can to please your boss no matter the circumstances. When a job is done, do not just stand around. Find little things that need to get done, such as pick up trash on the job site, and do them. Don't insist on your coffee breaks or smoke breaks. Don't be an employee that is problem-centered and always has excuses. Be an employee that is solution-centered and finds answers to problems.

When your boss asks you to do something, don't talk back. Get the job done. We want to have an attitude that says "Yes" to our boss so our boss is bragging about how well we work. We want our boss so excited about Christians and how they work that the first place he or she thinks to put a help wanted ad is a church bulletin because he or she wants to hire another Christian.

We honor our boss in all things. We are not stealing from the boss. We are not padding expenses. We are not taking expensive lunches on the company

check. We are not staying in the expensive hotels. We are trying to be modest in expenses.

The reason Paul says we do this in Titus and Timothy is because our work is our witness. We are trying to adorn the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ at work so our boss and other employees love the attitude and ethic of Christian workers and the name of Jesus is made famous by the way we work. Our work is our witness.

Now this is all well and good until you have a boss that is difficult to serve. I have experienced those bosses. Sometimes it feels like God put them into our lives just to frustrate us. What do you do in those situations? You continue to honor them, respect them and obey them, even if what they are telling you to do is incredibly frustrating.

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. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 1 Peter 2:18–20 (ESV)

If you suffer in these hard times with a difficult boss, you trust that God will honor you as you seek to honor him. Remember that work is not primarily about a paycheck. Work is primarily about our witness. Honoring a difficult boss when nobody else does that is a powerful witness for Christ to the watching world around us.

The way we witness at work is first and foremost how we work with the quality, productivity, positive attitude and submissive nature we demonstrate on the job. It is from that platform that the gospel is shared.

How do I work for a Christian boss?

Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things. 1 Timothy 6:2 (ESV)

In the church of Ephesus, bosses and employees sat together and listened to the same message. They sang the same songs. Maybe their children even went to the same Wednesday night children's program together. Subtly some of the employees were getting lazy on the job. They were starting to show disrespect.

They would think, what is my boss going to do, fire me? We are brothers in Christ. I can picture an employee being late for work but justifying it because they claimed they were so engrossed in Bible reading. I picture other employees asking for extra vacation time so they could go on longer mission trips. They may have even misunderstood some Scripture. I can picture them reading verses like Galatians 3:28 and misapplying them.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

They would think, "It really doesn't matter the distinctions between those who are slaves and those who are free because all are one in Christ." What they didn't understand is that Galatians 3:28 says we can all come to Christ no matter who we are but the roles we play in this life are not eliminated by Jesus.

Paul said, "If have a boss, you always do you absolute best and honor them in absolutely every way. If your boss is a Christian, you don't take advantage of that relationship but you go way above and beyond to work even harder to please him or her in that relationship."

Pretend you work a modest-wage job and your boss has a big project on the weekend with a lot hanging in the balance. He needs you to work extra long hours. Per your contract, he agrees to pay you time and a half. You are not sure if losing a day on the weekend is worth the extra money. If your boss is a Christian, will you go out of your way to help him? We should. Even if you only make a modest wage increase from the job but your boss makes a huge wage increase from the job, that is OK. Do you know why? You are benefiting the wealth of a Christian brother who will use that wealth to do good in the kingdom.

We want to especially honor and sacrifice for a Christian boss. If my sacrifice benefits him greatly, I say “Amen” because I am benefiting a brother in Christ so he can do more for the kingdom.

Look what Paul said to this same church in Ephesus in his earlier letter of Ephesians. Apparently employees not honoring their bosses was a consistent problem in the city of Ephesus.

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Ephesians 6:5–8 (ESV)

Employees were to obey their employers with fear and trembling. That is a colloquialism that means to give profound respect. As Christians, we are to be known for the respect we give our bosses.

We are to work with a sincere heart. That means we are to work for the genuine benefit of the company and not just for our profit or with ulterior motives. We are to do every job like we are doing it for Jesus.

When we work, we should not do our work with eye-service as people pleasers. That means we work even when the boss isn't looking.

Remember that as we work, we may be servants for our boss, that is our earthly master, but in all truth we work as servants of Jesus Christ, who is our heavenly master. Everything we do, we do like we are working for Jesus.

Also, know that whatever good we do in our work, whether we are paid for it or not by our earthly boss, will be rewarded by Jesus Christ, who is our heavenly boss.

Conclusion

So as Christians, the way we witness at work is through the quality of our work, the intensity of our work, our attitude at work and the honor we seek to give our boss at all times and in all ways through our work. Even if our boss is difficult, demanding or frustrating, we work hard for him or her knowing that our work is about our witness and our witness is more clearly seen in how we work for a difficult boss than in how we work for a good one. For the sake of a bolder witness, we gladly work for a difficult boss.

If our boss is a Christian, we never take advantage of that relationship but we actually work harder for him or her because we know that we will benefit a brother or sister as well as Christ.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you