

WORKING GOD'S WAY

The Believer's Employee Manual¹

PRINCIPLE 1: Our work is service to God.

1. Christ is our boss. Colossians 3:24; Ephesians 6:5–7
2. Our work represents Christ to the world. I Thessalonians 4:11–12
3. God's will is that we render good service to our employer. Ephesians 6:5–8

PRINCIPLE 2: Our work is service to others.

1. We serve God by serving others. Philippians 2:3–4
 - a. We serve our society by meeting the needs of individuals in society.
 - b. We serve our company by contributing to the success of its enterprise.
 - c. We serve other employees by our contribution toward providing a source of income.
 - d. We serve our boss by making them look good and working for their promotion.

PRINCIPLE 3: God has established intermediate authorities.

1. We are to respect our bosses regardless of their character.
 - a. The good - Christian bosses. I Timothy 6:1
 - b. The bad - Non-Christian bosses. I Timothy 6:2
 - c. The ugly - Unreasonable (harsh) bosses. I Peter 2:18
2. We are to respond to our boss in humility, knowing that the Lord is watching. We are to:
 - a. Obey our boss – response to their instructions. Colossians 3:22
 - b. Honor our boss – response to their position. I Timothy 6:1–2
 - c. Respect our boss – response to their abilities. I Peter 2:18
 - d. Submit to our boss – response to their goals and objectives. I Peter 2:18

PRINCIPLE 4: God controls our workplace.

1. God uses the actions of those in authority for His own purposes.
 - a. Sarah treated Hagar unjustly, but God provided for Hagar and blessed her son. Genesis 16:6–13
 - b. Potiphar treated Joseph unjustly, but God used it to accomplish his purposes for Joseph. Genesis 39:19–23
 - c. Pilate condemned Jesus unjustly, but God used his injustice for our benefit. Matthew 27:11–26

2. God controls how much we are paid.
 - a. We are to be content with our pay. Luke 3:14
 - b. We should not compare our pay with that of others. Matthew 20:1–15

3. God controls promotions and demotions.
 - a. God controls the hearts of those who are in control. Proverbs 21:1
 - b. God places us at the level of authority He desires. Psalm 75:6–7; 1 Peter 5:6
 - c. Promotions may have little to do with personal ability. Ecclesiastes 9:11

4. God controls circumstances.
 - a. God uses all circumstances for good when we are serving Him. Romans 8:28
 - b. God uses the evil of others for good. Genesis 50:20

5. God rewards us for work done rightly.
 - a. God rewards temporally with fulfillment, significance, and satisfaction. Ecclesiastes 5:12,18–20
 - b. God rewards eternally with exaltation, treasure, and rulership. Hebrews 11:6, Colossians 3:23; Romans 2:10; Matthew 6:20; Revelation 22:12

PRINCIPLE 5: God judges our work and rewards us accordingly.

1. The quality of our work will be reviewed. 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:12
2. The criteria of God's judgement and reward:
 - a. The quality of our service. I Corinthians 3:8–15; Ephesians 6:5–8
 God finds pleasure in work done:
 - (1) excellently - doing the best job we can. Proverbs 22:29
 - (2) sincerely - without complaining or grumbling. Philippians 2:14-15
 - (3) heartily - with enthusiasm and commitment. Colossians 3:23, Ecclesiastes 9:10
 - (4) with integrity - doing the right things in God's eyes. Psalm 84:11; Proverbs 2:7
 - b. The patience exhibited in our service. I Peter 2:18–23
 - (1) when being wronged while performing well.
 - (2) by entrusting ourselves to God who judges righteously.
 - c. The Christlike character exhibited in our service. I Peter 2:12

PRINCIPLE 6: Our work is a part time job.

1. Our ambitions should be spiritually focused.
 - a. We should not seek career goals as the highest priority of our lives. Matthew 6:33; Jeremiah 45:5

- b. Our guiding ambition is to please Christ and the advancement of his kingdom. 2 Corinthians 5:9; Matthew 6:33
 - c. Our ambition should also be to lead a quiet life, take care of the issues of our life, and work in our vocation. 1 Thessalonians 4:11
 - d. Our ambition should also be to fulfill our personal ministry. Ephesians 2:10, cf. Romans 15:20
2. Our work life should reflect a biblical rhythm with rest and recreation.
- a. Our work should be interspersed with a weekly day of rest. Genesis 2:1–3
 - b. We should enjoy those material blessings which God provides through our work. Ecclesiastes 5:19
 - c. We should have leisure activities that refresh and recharge. 1 Timothy 6:17

PRINCIPLE 7: Our work is a witness to our faith.

- 1. Our workstyle should be of such quality that it earns the respect of non-Christians. 1 Thessalonians 4:10–12
- 2. Our actions should reflect wisdom and our speech should be gracious and well chosen. Colossians 4:5–6

PRINCIPLE 8: Money is a by-product of work.

- 1. What God accomplishes through work.
 - a. meets our own needs. Matthew 6:25–34
 - b. meets our family needs. 1 Timothy 5:8
 - c. meets the needs of others. Ephesians 4:28

¹SLAVERY VS. EMPLOYMENT

Four of the NT references from which these principles are drawn are from passages in which the apostle Paul gave instruction to slaves or servants. In three of the references (Ephesians 6:5–8; 1 Timothy 6:1–2; Colossians 3:22), the Greek word is *douloi*, translated bondservant or slave. The reference in 1 Peter 2:18–21 is the less common word *oiketai*, which refers to household or domestic servants. The question that may be raised is whether the instructions can validly be applied to the employee/employer relationship in our social setting. First, it must be recognized that slavery in NT times cannot be equated to the horrible travesty of 19th century slavery in the Americas. Slaves in Roman world of the NT did have limitations on their personal freedom, although Roman legislation controlled the treatment of slaves. While the mistreatment of slaves likely occurred, slaves were generally well treated, paid for their services, well provided for, and in many cases, could eventually gain their freedom. This form of slavery was the prevalent type of employee/employer relationship in the NT world. While NT period slaves performed their work under compulsion, the workers of our age voluntarily trade their working time for the compensation earned. In both cases, the slave/servant/employee has obligatory responsibilities to

their workplace authority. Thus, it is appropriate to apply the biblical instruction of these passages to our current employee/employer relationship.

SUGGESTED READING

Sherman, Doug and Hendricks, William. *Your Work Matters to God*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1987.

Bernbaum, John A. and Steer, Simon M. *Why Work?: Careers and Employment in Biblical Perspective*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1986.

White, Jerry and Mary. *On the Job: Survival or Satisfaction*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1988.