

How Does Change Jesus Work?

May 24, 2015

Good morning CrossWinds. Today we continue our series called Work Matters to God. In this series we are discovering what the Bible says about life in the factory, office or field. We are learning what the Bible says about work.

In the first message of this series we learned God created work for more than a paycheck. Our God is a worker. Look at creation. Our work in creation is the way we reflect God's image as a worker. Part of being created in the image of God means we are created to work.

Just as God experienced joy from his creative works, God also created us to experience joy from our works.

Two weeks ago we moved from answering the question, "Why do we work?" to "What went wrong with work?" We saw that sin twisted work from a source of joy to a source of pain and filled it with pain and problems. Sin also inclines us to put work in the wrong place. We either want to make an idol out of our work, we worship our jobs and let our jobs become the source of our identities or we let sin incline us toward slothfulness. We do not work hard.

Last week, Pastor Stephen did a great job in a stand-alone message.

This week we are moving from, "Why we work?" and "How sin warped our work" to "How does Jesus change work?"

When someone comes to Jesus, everything changes. One of the ways Christ changes us is how we handle our work. Jesus changes the way we pour concrete. Jesus changes the way we spread manure. Jesus changes the way we weld on the assembly line at Polaris. Jesus even changes the way a mother

does her work of laundry at home. How does Jesus change the way we work?

Let's dive in and discover some answers.

1. A Christian employee serves a greater boss.

Bondservants... 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... Ephesians 6:5–7 (ESV)

Bondservants... Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men... Colossians 3:22–23 (ESV)

Every Christian that asks Jesus to be their savior also asks him to be their ultimate boss. We no longer just work for an earthly boss. We now work for Jesus, the greater boss.

How does having Jesus as our boss change the way we work? If your job is cutting the lawn, we cut the lawn like Jesus is coming to inspect the work, not just your boss. If you cook in a restaurant, that means every plate your serve is served as if it were given it to Jesus and as if it were checked by Jesus. You make good meals. Meals that your earthly boss may accept may not be meals your greater boss would accept. We do our work with excellence for Jesus.

If you are a waitress, you have a great attitude for your customers and offer to refill their coffee as if you were serving Jesus. If you are a secretary, this means you don't burn your time; when you are done with your work you don't start painting your nails, but when you have free time you get creative and find ways to add value to the company. Remember we are not just working for a paycheck. We are working for Jesus. Jesus loves productivity. Jesus loves work that is well done. Earlier in this series we learned the way we do our work is one of the ways we worship. A job well done is an act of worship to Jesus.

If you are a high school student studying for a test, remember that what matters is not the grade on the paper. What matters is you did your absolute best in that class as an act of worship to Jesus. Remember, Jesus is your boss.

Having Jesus as our boss means we don't try to do the minimum amount of work but you try to go above and beyond the call of duty. We do whatever work it takes to do a job well and in a way that Jesus is proud of when he looks at it. If you are a coach, you coach with excellence, caring for your players, going above and beyond the bare minimum needed to coach. You are not coaching for a paycheck. You are coaching for a boss named Jesus.

This week ask yourself, how would I do my job differently if Jesus was my boss? Sometimes we wouldn't change a thing. Sometimes we need to change. Maybe the Holy Spirit has already laid on your heart something you need to change. If he has, write it down in your sermon notes so you remember to follow through.

2. A Christian employee shows respect for his earthly boss.

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling... Ephesians 6:5a

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Colossians 3:22 (ESV)

It is often said we live in a culture of disrespect. Children are not taught to respect their parents. Women are not encouraged to respect the authority of their husbands. Politicians often slander one another and do not respect one another. Recently we have even seen a surge in disrespect for police, especially after the death of Freddie Gray.

One of the places we often see disrespect is the workplace. When Jesus comes into our lives, not only do we work for Jesus, but the Holy Spirit cultivates within us a new respect for our bosses at work. Respect for the authority of Christ in our lives cultivates a respect for the authority of others in our lives. How we treat our earthly bosses is often akin to how we treat Jesus, our greater boss.

I would go so far as to say that if you have a problem respecting the earthly authorities over you, whether they be your boss at work or your parents, the root of the problem is probably not your boss or your parents. It is probably you. There is a spirit of rebellion in your life. A spirit of rebellion against authority is not something the Holy Spirit fosters in your heart. A spirit of rebellion comes from Satan. A spirit of rebellion is most likely rooted in the sinfulness and stubbornness in your heart. Your boss may not be fair to you but how you respond to your unfair boss reveals the sinfulness that is in your heart. Your boss didn't put the sinful responses in your heart. Harshness may be your boss' problem but a disrespectful and rebellious attitude toward a harsh boss is your problem. It is something we need to confess to Jesus and ask him to change our hearts.

What if I disagree with my boss?

If you disagree with your boss, you should talk with him or her about it. You should be clear and loving in your speech. If your boss is not asking you to do anything illegal or against the Word of God, when you are done talking with your boss, if he or she still doesn't agree with you, submit to your boss, support

him or her and don't fight him or her. You are the employee. He or she is the boss.

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)

Christians are to please their bosses by not arguing with them or stealing from them. The idea is that our submissiveness to our bosses and our attitudes toward our bosses is to adorn the gospel. Our attitudes to our bosses it to make the gospel attractive to our bosses as they see our submissive and respectful attitudes at work.

A disagreement with a boss can be a great thing. It is an opportunity to demonstrate Christ-like character. This means that after you have a disagreement with your boss, after speaking your peace, you don't keep bringing it up again. You work hard for them, even if you don't agree with them. Even if our boss' decision turns out to be a poor decision you protect your boss and help your boss. You never undermine your boss. This is how Jesus changes the way we work. We are loyal employees to our bosses.

Sometimes this is really hard. It is easy to join others in side conversations that slander the boss. I see this all the time where parents or students are speaking against teachers or coaches. Sometimes it feels natural to jump in rather than defend a teacher or coach, especially if you think they may be right in their criticism. It is easy to talk smack at the lunch table. Jesus changes us. Christians have notable respect for those in authority over them.

How do you handle disagreements with those in authority over you? In those situations you can say you may not understand why a boss or a teacher or coach did what they did but you trust they had a good reason. You will support them and help them. That is how Christians treat those in authority over them. We may not always agree with those in authority over us but we submit to their authority. We support them and in so doing we make the gospel attractive to them.

What if your boss is a nut-case?

This happens. I worked for a few nut-cases. I worked for bosses that are slave drivers and had little concern for their employees. I know what it is like to work 80-100 hours a week. If your boss is a total nut-case, you can always look for another job or try to get transferred. While you are still working for a nut-case boss, how do you handle them?

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. 1 Peter 2:18–19 (ESV)

We continue working for our nutty bosses and we respect them as our bosses. Respecting an unfair boss honors God and makes the gospel attractive to him or her. Chances are your boss knows he is unfair. He is watching to see how you respond to his unfairness. Make the gospel attractive by responding with a Christ-honoring attitude under pressure. If we never had unfair nutty bosses, we would never have a chance to show Christian character under pressure.

Peter also reminded us that God knows your boss is unfair. He knows what is being done to you is wrong, and God is taking note of it. God cares about you. God will ultimately do something to right the wrong. When you suffer from an unfair boss, God notices unjust treatment. God will use the injustice being done to you as a way to mature your character and grow you to be more like Christ. Jesus understands injustice. He was unfairly condemned and killed. God may be using an unjust boss now to teach us how to handle much greater injustices that will be done to us later.

What if my boss is a Christian?

How does it change the way I work for a boss if he or she is a believer? Sometimes working for a Christian boss can breed a subtle attitude of disrespect in the heart of employees. You start to think that since you go to the same church and sing the same worship songs and may even serve on some of the same boards, that means your boss is your peer.

Sometimes Christian employees can develop a laissez-faire attitude toward their Christian bosses. They start assuming their bosses must extend extra grace toward them.

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)

The Bible says that if you are a Christian and your boss is a Christian that simply means you should not be slack in your work or respect. Rather you should work extra hard for him. You are serving a fellow Christian brother. Even if you disagree with them, you work harder for him.

So, the first way Jesus changes my work is Jesus is now my greater boss. Everything I do at work I do as an act of worship to honor him. I do things with an excellence that is beyond what my earthly boss asks for. The second way Jesus changes my work is I have a new level of respect for my earthly boss that I didn't have before. As I submit to God's leadership in my life I learn to submit to other God-appointed leaders in my life.

What if you are the top dog? What if you own the business? How does Jesus change the way we work then?

3. A Christian boss treats his employees so he can stand before God with a clear conscience.

If everyone reports to us we must remember that we will ultimately stand before Jesus Christ. The boss will answer to Jesus for how he treated his employees. The Bible tells us to whom much is given much is required. This means bosses have a lot of responsibility before God for how they treat their employees. The more employees a boss has, the more responsibility before God you have as an employer.

Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. Ephesians 6:9 (ESV)

Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Colossians 4:1 (ESV)

There are two distinctive qualities of Christian bosses. That is the way they motivate their employees and the fairness of the way they treat their employees.

Don't motivate my employees through threats.

When we get frustrated with people it is easy to motivate with threats. Sometimes the easiest thing to do for motivation is to raise your voice. In the ancient world it was legitimate to whip a slave. Standard forms of motivation included whipping.

While there is a place for setting boundaries and having consequences at work, the Bible doesn't want Christian bosses to be known for their threats. I believe the Bible calls Christian bosses to motivate by rewards. That is the way God motivates holy living in our lives. God delights to reward us in eternity for how we live now. Christian bosses should endeavor to motivate by rewards for a job well done.

This might be giving bonus pay for those who have done exceptionally well. A nice way to motivate is to wait for an employee to go on vacation and if they have done a good job, just before vacation, give them a bonus check and a note of appreciation. That money will be well-spent because they will work much harder from that reward than they would a threat.

Treat employees fairly and equally.

It is easy to play favorites based on how well you connect with some people and based on appearances. It is easy to play favorites with family members or long-term employees. The Bible tells Christian bosses not to play favorites with their employees. We are to be known for evaluating employees and compensating them fairly. Is there room for graciousness at work? Of course. Grace is one thing. Unfair treatment is another. A Christian boss can

never steer clear of inequities but we should strive to steer clear of as many as we can.

4. A Christian employee steers clear of office politics.

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ... Ephesians 6:5 (ESV)

How many of you remember the Survivor television series? One of the things that made it unpredictable was the off-camera alliances that took place between contestants to try to protect themselves from being voted off the island or to get rid of a tough competitor.

Sometimes the workplace feels like the Survivor television series. Work can have a lot of politics where people try to gossip and manipulate to their advantage. They try and control the flow of information and create alliances for self-preservation.

The Bible is clear that Christian employers and employees are to steer clear of catty office politics. Both Ephesians and Colossians say Christ changes the way we work by giving us a desire for a sincere heart. The word sincere means having pure motives or intentions. It means no duplicity. That means we don't help our bosses by staying late in the office intending to manipulate them toward giving us a raise. We don't try to develop friendships with powerful people so we can use that to our advantage. When we coach a sports team we play the best players, not just the children of the most influential families. If you are a woman in the workplace you don't use your sexuality to manipulate your boss to your advantage.

This means we avoid gossiping. When we have a problem with someone, we talk to them and not about them. We don't build camps. Building a camp is when we tell everybody our little whiny problem and build a little group of people that agree with us and there is a group for our opponents. We divide the office down the middle instead of getting work done. That is unbecoming to God. As Christians we keep our mouth shut and we work hard. We do everything we can to keep the entire office or factory united and working together. We don't split it into camps.

5. A Christian employee is known as a hard worker.

Whatever you do, work heartily... Colossians 3:23

Two weeks ago we learned how the curse of sin inclines us toward idleness. It inclines us to be sluggish; if you want to use the street term, you can say the curse of sin leads us toward laziness. When Jesus comes into our life one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in our life is we change from unmotivated minimalist workers that only want to do the bare minimum. Jesus makes us hard workers. Christian employees will make others uncomfortable because they work harder than other people. The Holy Spirit helps the Christian to work hard. That is a distinguishing factor of the Christian employee.

Sometimes we call it the protestant work ethic.

If you find yourself struggling with sluggishness, outside of a medical problem or old age, it is good to bring your sluggishness before God in prayer. Confess it as sinfulness and ask God to help you stay motivated at work. Ask God to help you be a productive worker to his glory. Simply realizing that God is

cultivating within us an attitude of hard work and productivity is the first step toward pleasing God in this area of our lives.

6. A Christian employee looks forward to an extra paycheck.

There is nothing wrong when it comes to working for a paycheck. A paycheck is biblical. The amazing part is Christians get an extra paycheck. God promises to pay Christians a huge life-end bonus.

As Christians we are saved by what Jesus did on the cross. We are guaranteed heaven based on the sufficiency of what Jesus did for us, not on all the hard work we do for him. Now that we have the free gift of salvation through Jesus as a gift by faith, that doesn't mean God intends for us to sit around until we die. Ephesians 2:10 tells us God has good works he planned for us. Many of those good works will take place from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The really Kcool part is God doesn't just want us to do good works. He can't wait to reward us for our good works. God promises to reward us for the honesty of our work, even if it means we lose money. God promises to reward us for the extra effort we put in at the office, even if we are not properly compensated. God will reward your integrity that nobody else knew about. Our God is not just a God who saves us but is a God that delights in rewarding us for how we do our work.

...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 6:7–8 (ESV)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23–24 (ESV)

7. A Christian employee can move beyond the injustices they suffer at work.

...knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Colossians 3:24–25 (ESV)

Paul told us that just as we will one day be rewarded for how we worked, those who sin against us in the office will also one day be paid back by Jesus for the injustices done to us. Jesus won't show favorites. Nobody will get off the hook because they have connections with the boss. There will be no partiality.

Some of us are consumed with the injustices done against us at work. We have a burning desire to get even with someone that unfairly shafted us at work. Some of us are rightfully furious. What someone did to you at work could be just plain evil. It is easy to lose a lot of sleep over the things people say about us on the job that are untrue. Sometimes the dirty underhanded way we are treated makes us want to scream.

Here is the good news. As a Christian, you can leave these frustrations at the Lord's feet and know God will make sure justice is done. Sometimes God hands out a measure of his justice in this life toward those that sin against us. If not in this life, we can rest assured that one day, when everyone stands before Christ, those who sinned against you will be dealt with justly and fairly by Christ. Unless Christ has paid for someone's sin, it won't be pretty.

I understand there is a need for lawyers, courts and justice in our lives but rest assured that God will make sure justice will be taken care of in the next life. Leave it in God's hands.

We don't need to worry about making sure others have been fair toward us. We need to concern ourselves with making sure we have done everything we can to be fair and honest toward others. We will one day also stand before Christ, and we will have to give an answer for how we treated them at work. We may not be able to change what was done to us, but we can change what has been done by us.

As Christians, we can move on with life even if there was extreme injustice done to us in the work place. Justice will be served by Jesus. Nobody gets away with anything when they stand before Jesus, including us.

8. A Christian employee has peace in underemployment or job loss.

Some of us have faced turbulent times at work. You lost your job or were laid off. I talk with people each week that are underemployed. They are not doing what they planned with their lives. It can be very unsettling to take a career step backward.

How do Christians handle job loss or demotion? The Bible tells us how to handle these in the story of the apostle Paul. Did you know he took a major step back in his career? He planned to be gainfully employed sharing the gospel but he found himself underemployed in a job he didn't expect.

Paul was arrested and locked in a Roman prison. Rather than traveling the world starting churches, he was cooling his heels in a Roman prison. That was not part of his career plan. Life felt like it was out of control and his plan to tell about Jesus was derailed.

God had a good reason for Paul's demotion. From a Roman jail Paul wrote four letters that are part of our Bible. They are known as the prison epistles. They are the letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Those are some of the most-loved books in the Bible. If God did not force Paul to sit down, he may have not written those letters.

Paul had no idea that God derailed his job plans to put him in a Roman prison so he could write what would become four potent books in our Bible that God has used for 2,000 years.

God had a good purpose for the job turmoil in Paul's life. In the same way, when we face job turmoil, because of Jesus, and we find ourselves being under-used, as Christians, we don't worry because God is large and in charge of it all. Look what Paul said about his time in prison.

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. Philippians 1:12–13 (ESV)

Conclusion

Christ completely changes the way we work. He becomes a new boss so we work with a new level of excellence to please him. Christ changes the way we respect our earthly bosses, even if we disagree with their leadership. We make the gospel attractive by the respectful way we handle our bosses. As Christians, we avoid the office politics and manipulation. As Christians, we work hard. As Christians, work looking forward to an extra paycheck when we see Christ. As Christians we can face the injustices of the office knowing God will one day set things right. As Christians, we face underemployment and job loss

differently. We know that God has a purpose for our lives. God has a reason for the change in our work. His purposes for our lives will not be thwarted.



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