

## **The Difference Being a Christian Makes on Your Job**

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“I Believe in the Church” Series

Ephesians 6:5-9

I have been doing a series from the book of Ephesians and in the section we are going to be looking at today, we find the apostle Paul addressing the impact that being a Christian has on our work and on our workplaces. One of the things I am grateful for regarding how God has shaped my own life is that I have not been a professional religious person my entire adult life. In other words, I did not go right from college to seminary and then immediately into church work. As many of you know, before I became the senior pastor here at Vineyard, I used to teach Business Law at OSU, both at the undergraduate level and also in the Executive MBA program for 5 years full time and a couple of years part-time.

Before that I worked for the government deciding cases for victims of violent crime. I spent a couple of years reading about all the horrific things that people in the State of Ohio do to each other – the beatings, the assaults, the rapes, the murders. Before that, I worked for a very brief time at a law firm; and before that I worked for a variety of maintenance departments fixing things. It has become a running joke here at Vineyard by those who know me that I have no mechanical aptitude. That I have to ask my wife, Marlene, to borrow one of her tools and that she stands over me giving me directions while I fix something at home. But actually I spent three years of my life working in various maintenance departments doing basic plumbing and fixing air compressors and flat roofs. I worked for two years in a sheet metal department fabricating ductwork.

But my very first job was one that I got 28 years ago when I just graduated from high school. I graduated early in December so that I could work for 6-7 months before I went to college. My first job, other than working at summer camps and those kinds of things, out of school was as a numbers clerk. I was pretty good with math and so I was hired in the bookkeeping department of a major department store chain in the East called “Spartan Atlantic Stores.” They had a couple hundred stores up the East coast and I think even in the Midwest.

Now, if the Marx Brothers or the Three Stooges or Bill and Ted or the guys who were in Dumb or Dumber – if those guys had managed the department, they would have done a better job at management than the people who ran the bookkeeping department of Spartan Atlantic Stores. I was put to work in this enormous office with maybe 200 desks in it. Half of the staff was Hispanic and spoke very little English. The other half were teenagers like myself. And to this team of highly trained specialists, they gave the task of working on the books for this major corporation.

Now, there were two problems that I noticed after working for about five minutes for this company. The first problem was there was a need to communicate between both halves of the office, but the language barrier between those who spoke Spanish exclusively and those of us who spoke English exclusively prevented us from talking to each other. And the company really had not thought about that.

The second problem was more serious than the first. The second problem was that the work ethic of most teenagers was abysmally low. I mean the word “goof-off” would really be appropriate for me when I was 17. My goal, at the time, was to do as little work as possible and to have as much fun as possible.

Now work kept getting in the way of my fun and the rest of the teens having fun there. Our work consisted of adding columns and columns and columns of really long boring numbers in the days before computers. We had these old mechanical adding machines and our job literally was to add thousands of numbers over the course of the day.

Well, you can just imagine what teenagers did given a project that was exceptionally boring and mind-numbing. I found that I had more time to goof off with the other teens if I just used a short-cut method and guessed at the sum of the numbers. I would look at a column of numbers and come up with a somewhat educated guess as to what that column totaled. My method saved a lot of time and give or take a few decimal points and a few different numbers, I probably nailed it right on the head. We teens in the office were crunching numbers with a mechanical adding machine faster than super computers could do it today. I mean we were able to crunch thousands of numbers in the course of a few seconds. There was no accountability. No one checked the tapes. So we were just handing in these books with numbers in them.

I just worked there a few weeks until I got a much more interesting job that I really did try my best at. About six months later for some reason or other, all of the Spartan Atlantic Stores went bankrupt.

Now there are lots of bad jobs and some of you can tell me about the really bad jobs you’ve had, or maybe you are currently working at. A few years ago on Labor Day I read an article by a columnist who described the worst jobs in the country. You ask what would the worst job in the country be? What kind of job would merit being in the paper on Labor Day as being one of the world’s worst jobs? Cleaning asbestos from a ceiling? Being a mine worker?

These jobs don’t even come close. How about Robert Hill’s job? Robert Hill is responsible for assisting turkeys to mate with each other. I will not tell you exactly how Robert Hill accomplishes that job. It is too awful to describe. But you see, most turkey farms have genetically bred birds and these birds have breast sections that are so big they can’t get near one another to mate. So they

need to be assisted by professional turkey maters. The turkeys get pretty mean. They peck and bite if you rub them the wrong way, so to speak. It is a very bad job.

Or consider the job of Martha Huerta. She works for the ABC Diaper Service in Berkeley, California sifting thousands of dirty baby diapers that come from dirty baby bottoms. She said stuff falls on her shoes and on her shirt and the floors all day long. She said after the first couple of days, you get used to the smell. Over the course of the year, Martha handles over 2 million dirty baby diapers.

There are bad jobs! I saw a show that followed people around who had really bad jobs. This one particular guy worked for the Parks Service as a Naturalist. His job was to climb trees and try to collect the waste of a certain kind of bird in order to check the bird's diet. That's what he did for a year. He climbed trees and collected bird waste.

There are bad jobs. Be thankful for the job you have.

And, of course, there are bad bosses. One of the things that makes work really difficult is that almost anybody who has had a job has a story to tell about a really bad boss they worked for. Bosses who scream or yell or sexually harass their employees, or who are having affairs on the job, or who are just plain incompetent. Not every boss in the world has the sharpest lead in his pencil. Listen to some of these less than brilliant decisions made by major executives. How about these:

- A brilliant investment banker was approached by a young man who was willing to give him a large percentage of a new company he was starting. The banker read his prospectus and refused to even see the young man. Instead, the banker put all of his money into something called "Quadraphonic," which was basically a stereo with two more speakers. Quadraphonic sound flopped. The young man he refused to see? Bill Gates.
- In 1962, an executive at Decca Records rejected a musical quartet saying that, "Groups with guitars are on the way out." The group, of course, was The Beatles.
- In the late 1940's the head of a major electronics manufacturing firm decided not to make television sets. His reasoning was "the problem with television is that people have to sit and keep their eyes glued to a screen. The average American family hasn't the time or interest in something like that. They will never sit indoors long enough. Television will never find a wide acceptance in America."

- The editor of a newspaper where Walt Disney worked as a young man told him that he should forget about a career in anything creative because “he totally lacked any new ideas.”
- Football legend Vince Lombardi was told by one of his earliest coaches that he should forget about a career in coaching because he “possessed only minimal football knowledge and lacked motivational ability.”
- A young woman approached her employer to see if he would like to back her in a new business endeavor. His response was “a cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, market reports say that America likes crispy cookies, not soft, chewy cookies like you make.” The woman, of course, was Debbie Fields, who started Mrs. Field’s Cookies.

Not every boss is a genius. Somebody hires the postal workers that go postal at work.

There are bad jobs. There are bad bosses. There are people who, maybe some of you, who have bad attitudes.

Our family recently moved and one thing I discovered when you move is that your long distance phone service no longer moves with you. With all of the deregulation, you have to sign up again for long distance phone service. Well, we had phone service with a long distance phone company, whose name I won’t mention, but whose initials are MCI. Not because that company is the best long distance carrier, but like most folks, just out of inertia, we’ve had service from that company for a number of years.

Well, my wife, Marlene, said she tried on 4-5 occasions to have them reconnect our long distance service. I said, “Well, let me try.” So, I got the number for the company and I called them up. Of course, like all big companies, I was put on hold for a very long period of time. “We value you...and appreciate you...please hold...song, song, song...we value you and appreciate you, please hold...song, song, song...”

Finally, I got a company representative who valued and appreciated me. I said, “We want to hook up our long distance service again.” I was asked what my name was. I said, “Rich Nathan.”

They said, “Could you spell that?”

I said, “okay – Rich...R-I-C-H...Nathan...N-A-T-H-A-N...”

They said, “Could you spell that again?”

So, I spelled it again. “R—I—C—H...”

They asked me my phone number and my address. And when I was done they said something like, “okay, Tamika Rawlins. We have you hooked up.”

So I said, “My name is not Tamika Rawlins. That’s why I spelled it for you. My name is Rich Nathan.”

So they said, “okay, Tamika...”

I said, “Do you have someone else I could speak with?”

So they transferred me to someone else, who went through the same routine. And at the end of it said, “okay, Tamika Rawlins, you are set up.”

By this time I was twisting the phone. I said, “Forget it.” And I hung up.

After I hung up, I felt bad. I thought, well, you know, it is a large corporation and they shouldn’t be blamed for a few incompetent workers. I’ll call back. I called back....song, song, song...wait, wait, wait...you are a very valued customer and we appreciate you...please stay on the line...song, song, song...

Finally, I got a company representative who appreciated and valued me. I told them what had happened. I said, “Look, I just talked with someone. I want to set up long distance service. Here’s what happened. My name is Rich Nathan. They took it down, but they kept calling me Tamika Rawlins.”

The woman just yelled into the phone, “Well, I didn’t do that to you. Don’t blame me.”

So I said, “I realize you didn’t do that to me. I am just telling you what another representative did to me and how difficult it has been to hook up long distance service.”

She said, “Well, don’t blame me about that. I didn’t do it.”

So I said, “I understand you didn’t do it. But here’s the deal. Don’t send me any notices that you are going to hook up my service. Don’t ever write to me again. Don’t call me. I never want to hear from your [let’s call it the phone company with three initials beginning with an M] again.”

She said, “Fine.” And she hung up.

I thought, “She doesn’t care that her company just lost an account. She doesn’t care. The people there don’t care. The people that I meet in many stores don’t care. They don’t care.”

Every day we run into people at jobs who don't care, who have bad attitudes. Fine, don't shop here. Fine, don't come to this restaurant again. It's not my place – I don't care.

Bad jobs. Bad bosses. Bad attitudes. We've been considering over the last few weeks the conduct of a Christian. In the home, the way that husbands and wives relate to each other. Last week, the way that children relate. And by the way, if you want to know how we approach the issue of marriage, including the very controversial issues of headship and submission, we have tapes available. In fact, all of my messages are immediately available following the service in the Vineyard Bookstore. Many of you don't know that. You can pick up a tape of the message. And many of my prior messages are available. There are tape catalogs and you can look through that. If you think a tape would be helpful for you or a friend, you can pick one up at the bookstore.

But today, the question arises, "Does Christianity make a difference, not only in your home – your marriage, your family, single living – but does Christianity make a difference in your workplace?" Does being a Christian make a difference on your job? That's what I am going to talk about today. Let's take a look together at Ephesians 6:5-9.

#### **Ephesians 6:5-9**

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.

Now we see in this text and in the text immediately above regarding parents and children and in the text immediately preceding that on marriage that biblical Christianity applies to all of life. Unlike what most people think, Christianity is not just confined to the religious sphere of life.

Often when I speak to a Roman Catholic or a someone from a mainline Protestant background, or even folks who don't attend church, when I start talking with them about Christianity, they immediately start thinking that I am talking about something that only refers to the religious portion of life-church attendance and Bible reading, praying, and liturgy. Biblical Christianity, we find in Ephesians 5 and 6, applies to life in all of its details. How you relate to your mother-in-law and your work habits, and your driving habits. What you watch on TV.

When a person becomes a Christian, the Bible teaches that everything in their life changes. Their whole perspective changes. Let me put it differently. When Christianity is just confined to religion, it withers and dies.

Chuck Colson, who was the General Counsel for Richard Nixon during Nixon's presidency, wrote in one of his books that contrary to popular belief, when the communists took over Russia in 1917, religion wasn't banned. Rather, what the communists did was they forbade churches from being involved in areas outside of religion. They said that if you were a church, you couldn't provide food for hungry people, or run a hospital, or run a school or homeless shelter. And you couldn't talk about your religion at work or in school. The communists said, "You can still have your prayer meetings and your church services. You can do religion." But Christianity needed to be confined, they clipped it down, so that it didn't apply to all of life. They took away the impact of Christianity on the rest of society and the result was that by the 1980's the only Russians attending most churches were these old babushkas – these old grandmothers. Christianity had been rendered absolutely irrelevant.

Modern secularists want to do the same thing. Keep your religion in church. That's fine, but don't sing a religious song at our public high school education. Don't call Christmas vacation Christmas vacation, instead, call it Winter Holiday – not even holiday, because that's a reference to religious holy days. Call it Winter Break; Spring Break. Churches should not be involved with the poor or receive public monies for running a drug rehab house. Don't bring your Christianity into the workplace.

Well, we read in Ephesians 5 and 6 that Christianity is not to be locked up in the church or in religion. But that true biblical Christianity touches the whole of life and not just your entire life, but your entire life in its details. Being a Christian makes the difference in the kind of tip you should leave in a restaurant. I've heard waiters say that church people are some of the worst tippers in the world. We ought to be the best – the most generous. We believe that it is better to give than to receive. That's not just an idea. It applies to your tipping.

Being a Christian should affect the way that you and I relate to store clerks at Lazarus or ticket agents at the airport or people who take your toll money at a toll booth. Being a Christian ought to affect the way you approach an open space in a parking lot when you and another car have an equal claim to the space. Do you aggressively push your car in and hope that the driver of the other car receives a testimony from the Christian bumper sticker you have on the back of your car?

Being a Christian affects all of life. And it affects all of life in its detail.

Some people would say that if being a Christian makes such a difference in life, why didn't it affect slavery in a more radical way? We read here in verse 5,

*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. verse 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way.* If being a Christian affects things, then why didn't the Bible attack the institution of slavery more radically, more directly? Why can you search the Bible from beginning to end and not find a crystal clear condemnation of slavery? Why can't you find a statement like, "Slavery is dehumanizing and ought to be opposed by all Christians?" This is one of the questions that skeptics raise in their opposition to the Bible and to Christianity – that there isn't a clear condemnation of slavery.

It is important, friends, that we never divorce the Bible from its cultural context, or read our own modern experiences backward into the Bible. For example, as we look at the institution of slavery, we must distinguish the American and European version of slavery from what was going on in the Roman Empire when Paul wrote these words, "Slaves, obey your masters." The American and European version were almost entirely race-based. And because they were racial, they stigmatized black people. And this racial stigmatizing not only injured Africans physically and economically, but also psychologically. It bred in whites, right up until this very day, a false sense of racial superiority. So that right up until this very day, a person's color remains one of the fundamental issues in the way that people relate to one another in the United States. We still in America look at color as one of the most important things that could be said about an individual.

Roman slavery had nothing to do with race or color. You could not tell if you went to the marketplace who was a slave and who was a free person. The same Greeks, Italians, and Asians who you would bump into in the marketplace were indistinguishable slave or free. There wasn't this stigmatizing. There wasn't a psychological damage done to both slave and master. Slavery in ancient Rome, unlike its perverse American version, was a temporary status. It typically lasted a decade or two. But it didn't last generations. It wasn't a hereditary feature. That grandchildren and great-grandchildren would be born into slavery.

Slavery in the ancient world didn't indicate social class. Slaves just didn't hold the most minimal jobs in society. Slaves were often the philosophers, the doctors, the orators, the managers of households. Slaves could become quite wealthy and often wealthier than free persons. Slaves were not separated from their families. They could marry and have children. Their families were not separated by masters, unlike the perverse American practice that would separate a man from his wife and children. Simply put, ancient Roman slavery was very different than slavery in America.

But there is another reason why we don't read of a direct assault on the practice of slavery. Christians, throughout the ages, have learned to wisely assess the setting they find themselves in because our major priority always is the promotion of the gospel. We Christians understand that the most important thing in life is a person's relationship with God. Not their job status, not their marital status – Our



greatest desire in life is that individuals come into a relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ.

We Christians have always had to learn how to discern the context that we find ourselves in. Sometimes social change can occur through direct confrontation, especially in democracies. So, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was able to directly confront the racism and discrimination that existed in the American South in the 50's and 60's. Gandhi was able to directly confront the English and their domination of India. But direct confrontation didn't work nearly as well in China at Tiananmen Square or in Germany during the period of the Third Reich.

A direct assault slavery, an attempt to lead a slave revolt, or to encourage slaves to rebel against their masters would have certainly in the 1<sup>st</sup> century led to brutal, bloody suppression by those in power in ancient Rome. There was absolutely no possibility of success in ancient Rome for slaves to rebel against their masters.

So...what do you do when you are in China living under a brutal government? Or you are living in the Third Reich during the Nazi period? Or in Eastern Europe during the Soviet period? When you can't directly confront an institution that is unjust, you indirectly confront it. You work for social change in a different way. Not marches; not picketing; not sit-ins – but more indirect methods.

And that's what Paul in the Bible generally advocates.

Paul's approach was radical, even though it was indirect. When you read what the Bible is teaching here over against, say, what the philosophers taught about slavery in the ancient world, this is pretty radical stuff. I mean, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, said that masters had nothing in common with slaves, because slaves were just living tools. He said that slaves had a different nature than free people. He said that slaves and masters could never be friends because they were not peers and had nothing in common.

But the apostle Paul and the Bible addresses slaves as full members of the Christian community. He points to the fundamental equality of slaves and masters in verse 9 when he says, *Masters, treat your slaves in the same way*. In other words, treat slaves the way you want to be treated and practice the Golden Rule with what Aristotle called property. No...these are people with souls. He goes on and says, *Do not threaten and since you know that He [meaning God] is both their master and yours is in heaven and there is no favoritism with him*. Paul points to the fundamental equality of master and slave. It's very radical. And if you read the book of Philemon, he refers to slaves as not only being fellow church members, but being spiritual brothers of masters and of the apostles.

An indirect approach, but it is an effective one, the longer you treat someone as your brother, as your equal, the longer you practice the Golden Rule with someone of doing to them as you would want them to do to you, the more

slavery becomes inconceivable. Christianity eats away at the very foundation of the whole institution of slavery, however humanely slavery is practiced.

But being a Christian changes everything. It changes our life in all of its details. It changed the institution of slavery and eventually brought it down. Virtually all of the abolitionists, both in the US and in England, were thorough-going Christians. But being a Christian just doesn't change slavery, changed life, but it changes your whole view of work. See, the moment you become a Christian, you are a new person. You have a new identity. Paul calls you not only a child of God, but here in verse 6 a *slave of Christ*. Paul writes, *Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ doing the will of God from your heart*.

Slaves of Christ...If you are unhappy with your job, here's the Bible's counsel to you who are unhappy with your jobs. Become a new person at your old job. Again, the moment a person becomes a Christian, they begin to adopt a totally different view of all of life – of their marriages, of their parenting, of their work. Your whole outlook changes.

Unlike the rest of America, Christians of all people recognize that the most important thing that can be said about you is not what you do for work. You have a new identity. Not doctor, teacher or homemaker, but slave of Christ. In fact, you could go so far as to say that the Bible teaches as almost irrelevant, certainly secondary, whether a person is slave or free, whether they are married or single, whether they are parents or childless. What the Bible teaches is that as a Christian you have become a new person, so radically new, that everything else that could ever be said about you is secondary. It's almost irrelevant. How much you make. How big you are. How much you weigh.

See, in America, the first thing people ask each other when they want to size each other up – the first thing people ask is "where do you work? What do you do for a living?" That's how we measure value and status. So someone says, "Oh, I'm a physician, I'm a surgeon." Immediately we think, "Oh, you are a very important person." If you are a corporate CEO, you're very important. Or most important of all in the United States, you are a celebrity. You are a movie actress or a professional athlete. If you are a celebrity in America, WOW, people will just stare at you if you are eating in a restaurant. Or if they see you in an elevator, or if you are shopping in a store – you really matter. But if you are a schoolteacher or a social worker or a homemaker, well, you're not very important.

It is interesting how value is measured differently in different cultures. In central Asia, the first thing someone wants to know about you is how old you are. When I was in Uzbekistan recently that was a very important question – how old are you? Here in the United States we take that as almost being rude. But your status is measured by your age. Older people are obviously more important because you've lived longer, you have more life experience, you obviously

should be listened to and have more to say that would be wiser than a young person would – at least according to a Central Asian.

And family background is really important. Not what you do – they don't really care what you do as an individual – but who is your father? What family do you come from? Is it a family of influence? Of prestige? Of importance?

The Bible teaches that all of this measuring of human beings by job title, by marital status, by age, by family background is utterly beside the point. Paul repeatedly talks about the change that Christ works in a person's life in the area of personal identity. When you become a Christian, your personal identity changes. You become a new person. How you think about yourself, how you think about others ought to change.

For example, in Phil. 3, Paul runs through his resume. He says if you want to look over my resume, I was from the most important people on the face of the earth. I was from God's Chosen People, the Jews. And I came from one of the most important tribes – the tribe that gave Israel its first King. In fact, I was named for the first king of Israel. I was named Saul and I excelled in school. I excelled in church. And I excelled in passion for God. But now that I have become a Christian, the first thing I did was I burned my resume. I reduced it to ash. I could care less now that I've become a Christian, what's on my resume or on anyone else's resume. None of that stuff amounts to a hill of beans to God or to me anymore. The only thing that matters to me right now is a person's relationship to Christ. Where do you stand with Christ?

The apostle Paul says the same thing in 1 Cor. 7. It doesn't matter if you are a Jew. It doesn't matter if you are a Gentile. It doesn't matter if you are a slave. It doesn't matter if you are a free man. It doesn't matter if you are married; it doesn't matter if you are single. What matters is your relationship with Christ.

If you are unhappy on your job, maybe it is because you need to become a new person at your old job. How you see yourself. How you evaluate yourself.

Let me ask you a question, friend. How do you see yourself? Do you really have a new identity as a result of Christ coming into your life? Do you feel proud because you have a high status job that others respect? Or do you feel sometimes a bit ashamed because you don't have a high status job? Is the most important thing that could be said about you your work? Or is the most important thing that could be said about you is your marital status or the number of children you have or don't have; or where you attended school? Be honest. How thoroughly has the change been wrought in your mind regarding your identity – the way you see yourself; the way you measure and see others? In your heart of hearts, is it really the case that the most important thing that could be said about you or another person is that you are a child of God through faith in Jesus

Christ? That you are a slave of Christ. Ephesians 6:6. Someone whose purpose in life is to do your master's bidding.

Preach this to yourself, friend, if you are unhappy in your present situation. Tell yourself, preach to yourself, that what I do at work is completely secondary to who I am. I am a Christian. I am a child of God through my faith in Christ. I am slave of Jesus. Do you live out of that reality a significant percentage of time? When you look in the mirror, do you say "Whatever's going on around me, I know who I am?" Sometimes you can't change your job, but you can change. You can become a new person at your old job. If something has happened inside of you, if Christ has really entered your life, then he ought to affect your identity. And if he doesn't yet, then you don't get it yet.

And if you are unhappy with your boss, becoming a Christian makes a big difference here as well. If you are unhappy on your job because your boss is incompetent or unfair or somewhat abusive, the apostle's advice would be to go to work for a new boss. In every verse here from verse 5- verse 9, Paul reminds us as Christians that the moment we become followers of Christ, we go to work for a new boss. Verse 5, *Obey your earthly masters just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor, but like slaves of Christ. Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord. The Lord will reward you.* Verse 9, *You know that he is both their master and yours. He is in heaven and there is no favoritism with him.*

Over and over again, Paul is saying that whatever your job is, if you are a Christian, your boss is Jesus Christ. Life is so wonderful when you work for a great boss. And no matter how wonderful your boss is, you couldn't work for a better boss than Jesus. Don't just work for your customers. Don't just work for your employer. Don't just work for yourself. Don't simply work for your professor or your family, if you are a homemaker. The best boss you could ever work for, the one who will provide for you the most joy and fulfillment is Jesus. Starting today, go to work for Jesus.

See, let me just bring this down to earth. I talk with a lot of people who say, "Rich, I'm going to church. I was raised in church. I regularly attend Vineyard or go somewhere else." A lot of people will tell me that they believe in Jesus. But I meet, honestly, very few people who could say with all integrity day after day the reality of my life is that Jesus Christ is my boss. That I am working for Christ in all that I do. Life is good because Jesus is my boss.

What does that look like?

It's like when you wake up in the morning, your first thought is "Jesus, you made me alive today. The reason I just drew that breath is because you are allowing me to live another day. Jesus, today I want to work for you. Jesus, today I want to serve you. Enable me to do that in the words that I say to others and the

attitudes I display – my patience and my graciousness. Let everything in my life be submitted to you.”

When you are in the shower and you are mulling over your day – “Jesus, I need to make these dozen decisions, but I want to submit them to you for your blessing, because you are the boss. Because I am a Christian, I’ve given you the right to call all the shots in my life. Here are the people I am going to interact with today. Jesus, you’re the boss. Bless those interactions.”

We get to work all day long and you have the idea that Jesus is your boss. That he is looking over your work. He is examining it. You aren’t shirking it. When you speak, you try to speak with complete honesty and integrity because you are working for Christ. And because you are working for Christ, he gives you a sense of fulfillment, blessing and meaning, no matter what you are doing. You have the same old job, but it is a new you going into work and you have a new boss.

So let me ask you a question: Do you work for Christ when you are at work? Homemakers, do you work for Jesus? Not just for your family, not just for your kids, but do you wake up saying, “Today, I want to do whatever task I’m doing, whether its making a bed or cleaning up a poopy diaper or doing the laundry, I want to do it for Jesus.”

Which leads to the final change that being a Christian makes and that is because you are working for Jesus, being a Christian gives you a whole new standard for your work. Verse 6, *Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the whole will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not man.* You talk about a revolutionary new standard of behavior. All of us change the way we behave when someone in power is watching. You know...you are racing down the highway and you see the cop car sitting on the median. You immediately brake and pretend you have been doing 55 mph right along.

When you hear the boss’ voice, you immediately take your feet off your desk and stop reading the newspaper. You immediately switch out of the website you have been checking for new car prices and you are hard at work.

You’ve learned this lesson from the time you were children. When you hear your parents pulling into the driveway, you shut the TV off. Boy, you’ve been busy cleaning your room the whole time they were away.

Paul says being a Christian should change the standard of your work. Instead of doing the bare minimum and suddenly changing so that you can keep out of trouble because the boss is around, what if you started doing everything unto the Lord? Again, verse 7 *Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord.* Would your standards change if you were serving the Lord? If Jesus was coming

to dinner, would you cook better? Would you take a little extra care? If it was Jesus' lawn that you were mowing? Teenagers, when you are doing the lawn for your dad or your mom, if instead of doing it for them and just missing the edges, if you were working on Jesus' lawn... Those of you who cut hair or style hair for a living, if you were working on Jesus' head, would you try to do a better job?

It always saddens me when I hear of Christian students who basically blow their classes off, especially with the excuse that they are busy serving the Lord on campus. How about serving the Lord by giving a great testimony of excellence in your classrooms?

Now, being a Christian doesn't make you more intelligent or more able. But being a Christian ought to give you a better standard within your abilities. And friends, it is absolutely the case to change your work ethic. For many of us this is a radically new thought. To work as unto the Lord. As you examine your work habits, you may find that there is not an excellence, you are not going full out. Again, I don't believe that being a follower of Christ suddenly makes you the most talented person in your workplace or the best student in your classroom. But within the box of your talents, God wants you to absolutely fill that box for his glory, doing everything unto him.

This Monday morning, if you are a Christian, you can get up and look forward to a glorious workweek. Because a new you, a child of God, slave of Christ can go to work for a new boss – Jesus, and have a new standard – excellence unto the Lord. Being a Christian changes everything. Let's pray.

## **The Difference Being a Christian Makes on Your Job**

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Rich Nathan

June 23-24, 2001

"I Believe in the Church" Series

Ephesians 6:5-9

### **I. How Work is Experienced**

- A. Bad Jobs
- B. Bad Bosses
- C. Bad Attitudes

### **II. How Christ Changes Your Life**

- A. Life
- B. Slavery

### **III. How Christ Changes Your Job**

- A. Become a New Person at Your Old Job (Eph. 6:6, 9; Phil. 3:4-11)
- B. Go to Work for a New Boss (Eph. 6:6)
- C. Adopt a New Standard for Your Job (Eph. 6:7)
- D. Get a New Job (Eph. 6:8)