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**Who do you work for?  
Ephesians 6:5-9**

Who do you work for? Have you ever had anybody ask you that question? Some of you who work for a company or business might reply with a name or corporation. I work for the school district. Or I work for the Utility. But is that who you really work for? Some of you don't have any place that gives you a paycheck for your weekly time and efforts. Maybe you are a stay at home mom. When asked the question, "Who do you work for?"...You might be tempted to say, "I don't work for anyone or I work for myself". But is that whom you really work for? Some of you head up your own businesses. When asked the question, "Who do you work for? You might reply, "People work for me...I don't work for them." Is that right? You might be a little more accurate to say "I work for my clients", but is that really whom you work for?

Some here might reply and say the only reason I work is for the paycheck. I'm working to provide for my family. Who are you working for? If you are a believer and are able to answer that question correctly, it will make a huge difference in your attitude while your at work, productivity and relationships, getting along with your co-workers and your boss.

Many people experience a huge amount of tension and frustration at work. A recent poll revealed that 65% of American workers are not happy at work. From my conversations with people here in Yacolt that figure does not surprise me. There are bosses frustrated with employees who are lazy and steal time and materials only appearing to work hard when the boss walks by. There are employees frustrated with their bosses lack of integrity and honesty who promise them one thing and fail to deliver. People are frustrated with bosses who play favorites and

oppress and show little care or provide for their people. There is dissension and conflict between coworkers who pull power plays, kiss up to bosses and compete in the office politic game not caring whose head they step on in climbing up the ladder. There are others who simply don't care about their job. Any joy or purpose they might have had is long gone. They view their job as devoid of anything significant, menial and trivial. The only reason they show up and do their time is to be able to pay the rent and put food on the table. What motivates you to work? Why do we work? For whom do we work, and whom do we seek to please. If we were to actually take seriously the Bibles teaching on our work relationships it would revolutionize the way we think, act, treat others, and produce on Monday through Friday 9-5.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians chapter 6. This is the last sermon in our series on the most vital relationships of life. All of these relationships have poured out of a truth we learned in Ephesians chapter 5:18 As believers we are to be filled with the spirit and walk under His controlling influence. One of the marks of being spirit filled is that we will be mutually submissive to each other in all of our vital relationships. That means we will take the initiative to love and serve each other...even though it make flesh out in different ways. The wife is to submit to the husband by encouraging his spiritual leadership in the home. The husband is to submit to the wife by loving her sacrificially. The child is to submit to the parents by doing what they ask. The Father is to submit to the child by loving and serving them in discipline and instruction. Refusing to use his superior power as a means to exasperate and oppress the child. Now in Ephesians 6:5-9 we read how the Christian slave and master are to demonstrate how they are filled with the spirit by the way they submit to each other. Each group is called to ultimately submit to God. One is not better then the other, but each has a different role to play. That is God's plan for the vital relationships in our life. Lets read READ ( Eph. 6:5-9)

The first thing to make clear is that the Bible does not say employees. It says slaves. When Paul wrote this letter slavery was culturally entrenched in society. Some estimate that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the major cities population were comprised of slaves. Some were slaves because of becoming captives of a war. Some were born into slavery. Still others entered into slavery to obtain Roman citizenship, or a position in society. Others were sold into slavery, by their parents or themselves, in order to pay off debts. There was not a slave and free class. Many of the slaves were more highly educated and skilled than their owners. But the Christian gospel did not first spread from the upper classes. Its message hit home and lit fire among the working class. Yet, in any early church, just like here, there were slaves and owners both worshipping God together. They are stood on the same level ground before the cross, but when they went to work on Monday morning...how were the Christian slaves called to relate to the saved and unsaved bosses? How were the Christian masters called to relate to those slaves in their care?

We don't have slavery anymore in our country. And while the Bible doesn't not endorse slavery here, one might wonder why the Bible doesn't jump all over to condemn slavery. One might wonder why the Bible does not call for slaves to rise up and revolt against their masters. Yet, it has been the principle of freedom, and truth and equal value for every individual found in the Bible, that Christianity has used to largely eliminate slavery throughout the centuries. Simply restructuring an accepted human system has never done much good until the core problem has changed. Human institutions are not the root problem. That is why the Bible focuses on changing the heart. For until a man's heart is changed, he will continue to find ways to oppress others regardless of whether there is actual slavery or not. The Christian faith is not forcing harmony by erasing social and cultural distinctions, The servants who come to Christ are still servants and the masters are still masters. The Christian faith desires to bring about harmony by working on the heart

and dealing with the core. What we need for harmony is not primarily a new organization, but a new motivation.

So while the Bible here talks about slavery, it's not too difficult to see that the same principles would apply to a work environment. Employees may feel they are treated like it, but they are not slaves. It is true though, that people seeking employment are selling their mind knowledge, strength, bodies, time and freedom to someone else for a certain agreed period of time. So this passage is very applicable to today's modern work world. The question this morning is, How are we to interact with those whom we are working for and with? To those whom we have responsibility to obey and perform work for? We need to allow God's truth to invade us and transform the way we think, our attitudes and actions at work.

It's pretty easy to be a Christian on Sunday morning, but then on Monday we go to work. Some of the people we work with have a different set of vocabulary. They play by a different set of rules. They have a different definition of honesty and integrity. It's tempting to go back to playing by those rules when we get beat on. It's tempting for us to separate the sacred from the secular. But God never wants us to do that. He sees what happens on Tuesday morning is just as sacred as what happens on Sunday mornings. He doesn't want us to separate our religion off from 9/10<sup>th</sup> of the rest of our life at work. If you are a believer, then your faith ought to have a profound effect on your work. If you are a believer it is all sacred work...because we all have the same boss. Whether you are an ordained minister or a plumber or a teacher or a mom training the kids at home, you are all working for the Lord. No job is merely work, it is simply a context and opportunity for serving Christ. So who are you working for? A believer is ultimately working for His lord and savior Jesus Christ and that truth ought to make a profound difference in the way we work, our action, attitudes and interactions.

Look at v.5 it says “Slaves. Be obedient to those who are your human in the flesh masters.” That word obey is the exact same command given to the children in 6:1 It’s a military term that means to listen under. Listen to understand with an intent desire to do what is asked. Stopping short of sin and displeasing God we must do what our boss wants us to. We are to obey “as to Christ....as to the Lord”. We obey them why because really when we do we are doing what Jesus wants us to be doing. That is God’s will v.6 that we work and do what the boss says.

The next line says that we are obey with fear and trembling. I do think that we ought to have a healthy respect and humility and even honor for those whom we are working for, but I do not think this means that we are to cower in fear and trembling toward the big mean ogre boss, obeying out of fear of getting sacked. I think the fear and trembling is not because of the boss, but its more directed to ourselves. We need to be a great, effective and obedient employee because if we aren’t we may destroy the possibility of God working through us in our work place. We ought to be the best possible employee because we don’t want to miss out on the opportunity to see the power of God being released through us into a situation. We ought to obey in fear and trembling because we want to be a great witness in our workplace.

Why do I say that is what “fear and trembling” means here? Its because of what that phrase “fear and trembling” means elsewhere in the Bible. In I Corinthians 2:3 its says “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ an Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling. And my message and my preaching was not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Sprit and of power that you faith should not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God.” Paul, trembled with fear that he might only preach with the wisdom of man and Greek philosophy just to tickle minds and by doing so would rob them of the great and transforming

power of God at work. Paul also wrote in Philippians 2:13 “just as you have obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you.” Be in fear, should you be tempted to fail to trust in anything but the power of the living God. Obey as though you are working for Christ and as you do look forward to seeing the power of God released in you.

Obey with sincerity of your heart. That word sincerity means singleness of mind. Obey without mixed motives. Be in reality what you are appearing to be to your employer. No fakes. No eye-service. As Paul mentioned in the Philippians passage, obey not only in his presence, but much more in his absence. Give your best effort. Sincerity stresses having a focused right attitude on the job because you are working not for your boss. You are working for Christ...as to Christ. If you were to approach your job regarding God as your true employer, would you begin to do some things differently? Would you take on a different attitude? Christians don't work for men, they are working for God. If you try to please two different bosses, you will be torn apart with a conflicting tension. That is why we need to obey with singleness of mind as to the Lord. You will never have a dull and boring day when you begin to see that your working for Jesus and looking to His eye for approval.

Then you don't have to look for other humans to give the approval you long for. You don't have to play the eye service game. Eye service is only working hard when the boss comes into the room. I remember at Lewis Junior High PE class when Jackson in his football shorts and paddle in the back pocket would strut back and forth on the wood gym floor counting out the push-ups, up and down. When he was watching, everyone would be struggling up and down, but when his back was turned or someone came up to talk to him, a large portion of the class would stay in the down position and only go back when they saw him

turning back around. That is eye-service. How hard do you work when no one is around to watch?

We are also to avoid man pleasing. That is the kissing up to the teacher or boss or other terms we can't use here on a Sunday morning that have one flattering the boss or buttering them up to get a better position or pay. Favor in exchange for flattery. That is not what God wants from us. Eye-service and men pleasing are mans attempts to gain power and control and position and favor. We should live in fear and trembling if that is what we must resort to. If we go those routes we will never see the power of God released through us in our work places and we be guaranteed to experience a whole lot of conflict and frustration in the relationship at work.

Don't go there instead do God's will which is to work. Your work is God's sacred will for you. Work in fear of trusting in the flesh. Work in faith in doing all things to the glory of God. That is God's will.

The bible gets radical in v.8 and takes it to a deeper level. It calls for us not only to obey and work as if we had Jesus Christ for a boss. It says we are to be doing this with goodwill or literally, we pleasant and kind feelings we are to render service.

One of my professors in seminary, Howard Hendricks, tells a story about a flight he was on. It was an American Airlines flight. He said the guy sitting in front of him was an absolute jerk. He was just being grumpy, and irritable, and rude; and rude to the stewardess and then he got drunk and became even more rude. Hendricks observed this stewardess was handling this guy with complete class and poise, confidence, and she was polite and gentle and patient. He was just incredibly impressed how kind this stewardess was with this jerk. After about 20 minutes of this, she went back to the back of the plane, so Hendricks got up and went back to the galley to talk to her. And he said, "I just want you to know I'm a regular flyer on American Airlines, I'm just so impressed at how you handled that irritable, rude guy. I would like to

write a letter to those in authority at American Airlines to just thank them for your great service, if you'd just tell me your name." And she said, "Well, I thank you for that, sir, but you need to understand; I don't work for American Airlines." Well that comment kind of stumped him, and so he said, "You don't?" She said, "No, sir, I work for Jesus Christ-- and He's the one who helps me be patient with people." Hendricks said, "after I picked myself up off the floor, she started witnessing to me."

Now there is a woman who knew who she worked for and it wasn't American Airlines. Look around this church. Just think of the number of contacts that are made each day this next week when we release all of you to go work for Jesus. Just think of the hurting, lonely, hopeless people that could find life because we finally realize who it is that we really do work for. Is it possible that a housewife could cook a meal as if Jesus Christ were going to eat it? Or clean a house as if Jesus were going to be the honored guest? Is it possible for teachers to educate children, nurses to care for patients shopkeepers to serve customers as if they were serving Jesus Christ? What a transformation in our relationship, attitude and action and productivity if we could get a handle of that truth.

When we render our service with kind and pleasant feelings and do good things knowing that it is ultimately Jesus that we are serving, verse 8 says that we will be rewarded from the Lord and will receive back from the Lord. There is a reward motivation for being the best most effective employee at work and then doing it with a pleasant great attitude even when those you are serving are nasty grumps. You may not get a nice attaboy or way to go letter in your file. Your employer may never even notice your kindness in the face of ugly. He may even see your good deeds and fail to appreciate and thank you for your service. Your boss might never reward you for it...but there is good news. God sees and will never miss extending to you an eternal reward. It has nothing to do with

your position, slave, free, boss or employee. God sees good deeds and kindness will never go unrewarded from God.

There's an old story about a missionary who spent his entire life working in Africa. He retired and returned home on the very same ship that President Roosevelt was on coming back from a hunting Safari. At the dock in New York while cheering thousands greeted the president, the missionary and his wife walked off unnoticed carrying their own bags to a cheap hotel to spend the night before traveling west. The missionary wife was a bit steamed, "It just doesn't seem right. We give our lives in Africa to win souls for Christ and when we arrive home there is nobody to meet us. The president goes off and shoots some animals and gets a royal welcome. As they knelt before their beds in prayer that night it seemed the Lord spoke to them, saying "Do you know why you haven't received your reward yet? Its because you aren't home yet." It is impossible to work for God and not be generously compensated.

Let me spend just a few remaining moments talking to the masters, the employers. Even if you don't have any formal subordinates, you probably oversee people like baby sitters, repairmen, house keepers. What attitudes ought to be shown to those who work for us? V.9 says 'do the same things to them.' It's the managers golden rule. Treat your slaves in the same way you want to be treated. If you want respect, show respect. If you want sincerity, then be sincere. If you want pleasantness then be pleasant. If you want them to be honest, then be honest. Treat them fairly and just. Listen to them and adjust to their complaints. They do not exist just for your wealth or power. Stop playing favorites. Be a great boss not for you or to impress your clients or flex your power around employees. Remember that you are working for Jesus. You are a boss for Jesus. Live in fear and trembling that you might resort to man's ways to control, by threatening to cut their pay or fire them. Don't be a boss that hangs a sword over their head and intimidates. Don't use fear as a means of forcing obedience. Do the same things means be kind and

generous in doing good will for them. Have your goal to be a blessing in their lives and not a cursing. You don't want to miss out on having the power of God be released through you as you lead your people well. What a terrible thing I've heard of some Christian employers, "My boss is supposed to be a Christian, but you would never know it." Ouch. That one should live in fear and trembling because he has missed out in being a blessing to others and seeing the power of God released in his life. Remember, God is not impressed with your position. God calls some to be employees and some employers with different God given responsibilities, but all are on an equal standing before the cross on the things in life that matter most.

Who do we all work for? I work for Jesus Christ. That motivates me. That directs me to whom I seek to please. That regulates how I use the power I've been given. That adjusts my attitude and realigns my actions and increases my productivity because there is no such thing as sacred and secular work. For the believer...its all sacred, All our work takes on meaning. As we do all for Jesus there are no unimportant people and no unimportant jobs. Do it all for God and watch Him move.