

TGIF—Having A Spiritual Impact at Work

Intro: TGIF—what does it stand for? Thank God it's Friday! We usually use it because we're glad the work week is over. But what if we changed that to "Today God Is First", and start putting it to work on Monday morning? Think of the impact it could have on the people we work with every day!

Let's talk about the person who lives "TGIF". If I were to ask you to describe the core attributes of a person who exemplifies God's ideal for a Christian in the workplace, what would you say? Let consider four key qualities exhibited by workplace believers who are transforming their workplaces for Christ.

A Quality of Excellence

One thing that has distinguished God's people through the ages and enabled them to be used by God is their commitment to excellence.

Joseph

Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. (Genesis 39:3-4)

Daniel

"It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom" (Dan. 6:1-3).

The principle of excellence stands behind Paul's exhortations to Christian slaves in their households.

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23-24)

One of the easiest ways to discredit Christ in the workplace is for Christians to do inferior work. In order to earn respect, our work should stand apart because we do our work "unto the Lord". Doing quality work will not be the primary means of winning others to Christ, but doing poor-quality work can disqualify us very quickly from ever having the opportunity to present Christ in a positive light. So go the extra mile when necessary. Make the effort to serve those around you. Do your work with excellence.

A Foundation of Ethics and Integrity

Many years ago the Princeton Religion Research Center published a landmark survey conducted for the Wall Street Journal by the Gallup

Organization. The researchers measured a wide range of moral and ethical behaviors in the workplace, such as calling in sick when not sick, cheating on income taxes and pilfering company supplies for personal use. The results were disappointing, to say the least.

What the researchers found most startling was that there was no significant difference between churched and unchurched people in their ethics and values on the job. In other words, churches seemed to be having little impact on the moral fiber of their people, at least in the workplace.

More recently we've been exposed to a barrage of corporate scandals where the climate of integrity was not preserved and greedy workers exploited it for their own benefit and nearly brought down their companies.

Recently Serghei told me that he lost a study opportunity with a young man with Bible interest and some promise because he had to do dishonest things on the job and he didn't want to lose the income!

The Scriptures likewise stress integrity at work.

He does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken. (Psalm 15:5)

And again note the emphasis upon integrity among servants:

Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. (Titus 2:9-10)

It is hard to live a life of servant hood and watch others prosper when we ourselves are in need. When our desires and jealousy become so great that we are willing to violate our ethics and integrity, we have moved to a dangerous place. We walk out from under the canopy of God's protection in our lives, saying that His provision is not enough.

Extravagant Love and Service

Ordinarily we do not think of the workplace as a context for love. Everyone works hard and gets what's coming to them. Surely a bunch of guys on an assembly line or in a machine shop are not supposed to love each other! This is what may make the Christian's love shine brightest. It is not an expected place to show caring and service; and when the Christian does, it is especially noteworthy.

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Think of how we can show love and service in the work place.

Greet our fellow employees

Show an interest in what is going on in their lives

Stand in for them when they are sick or struggling

Offer financial assistance or overtime opportunities when finances appear to be tight
Give them help with a project
Be forgiving when mistreated

Many in the workplace have never known the love of Christ. You might be the only one they ever meet who can introduce them to this love. When you genuinely take an interest in another person in the workplace, you become a credible person in his or her eyes. You stand out among the crowd.

Powerful Intercession and sharing

Perhaps we have not tapped into one of the great forces to impact our workplace—prayer. I don't mean forcing everyone to join you in praying at the lunch counter; but becoming an intercessor for others in times of need.

It's not uncommon at work during breaks and lunches for people to talk about problems and concerns in their lives. What an opportunity for the Christian!

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, (1 Timothy 2:1)

If you really believe in prayer, then you can surely see how that taking the needs of others to God can result in their recognizing God's intervention in their lives and that because of your prayers! Think of the impact that this can have!

But don't just be an intercessor for them to God. Be a "mediator" for God to them.

Think of what God has given you that you can bring also to them. Be ready to always have a word from God for those who need it.

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (1 Peter 3:15)

Especially helpful is information—a good tract or article you've read on a subject they've shown interest in; a tape that discusses a challenge they're facing as a parent; a verse that speaks to a hurt that they may be feeling. Though most people don't like to be "preached to", few can resist a well-intentioned and non-threatening source of help.

Conclusion: You can do your job, and let everyone else do theirs, and everyone will get along fine. But you can do so much more! You can have an impact for Christ on the people you work with. Excellence, ethics and integrity, extravagant love and service, and intercession and sharing—these are the attributes of the worker that God can use in dramatic ways. May the Lord allow you to make these four qualities part of the makeup of your own workplace.

(Sermon resource: Os Hillman article from Christianity Today)