

The Christian and His Influence on the Job

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DEFINITIONS

The Christian – The child of God in Christ; a disciple or follower of Jesus who has obeyed the gospel Christ.

His Influence – The impact of this person, import/sway/imprint based on his words (oral or written), deeds and reputation. It connotes how s/he affects others based on how one is perceived.

On the Job – In the workplace or job environment, at ones professional or routine business which includes office, schooling, home-keeping, apprenticeship, etc. Note, some spend more time at work than at home.

PREAMBLE

A job is needed for reasons such as:

1. To fulfill divine imperatives (before and after the fall) – Gen. 2:15 & 3:19
2. To confront idleness and godlessness – Eccl. 3:12-13 & 9:10
3. For provision of basic necessities and life needs – 2 Thess. 3:10-12 *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”*

We work not only to provide for self or household but also in order to be able to give unto others and the Lord’s work -1 Tim 5:8, Eph 4:28, 1 Cor 16:1-2. This requires honest gains such that both the nature of the job and our conduct in doing it will not offend our conscience or bring disdain to the name of the Lord. As much as possible, one should pursue a career in areas of interest that aligns with his or her natural talent as that will facilitate personal fulfillment and make jobs bearable.

The Old Testament has some useful lessons on how some conducted themselves at work, were perceived as well as their inevitable influence upon others. Joseph and Daniel are good examples, being sources of knowledge and prosperity for their masters even in foreign lands of captivity. The righteous and diligent is assured of positive rewards while the slothful and wicked will not go unpunished, even if later rather than sooner. In the New Testament, **many parables** of Jesus depicted servants who had a good understanding of what was expected of them and behaved in such manner or otherwise got punished. These include the parable of the unmerciful servant, of the talents, of the wise steward, of the wicked husbandmen, etc. -Mt 18:23-35; 25:14-30, Lk 16:1-8, Mk 12:1-9.

As Christians, our character and influence should conform to the Master’s words in **Matthew 5:13-16**
“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Salt seasons and preserves thus we ought to enrich and help preserve society in good ways, ministering grace unto our contacts, un-mistakenly shedding light along our individual courses/paths in life to leave indelible marks worthy of commendation.

INTRODUCTION

The society consists of our neighbors, institutions (educational, economic, socio-political and religious), and virtual environment. It connotes those other humans with whom we relate and interact. Man in his natural state seeks pleasure and glory for self in society including at his job. People struggle for material success and dominance “by any means necessary” believing it is ‘the survival of

the fittest.’ Profiting and advancing in many work-places is very competitive and there is temptation “to cut corners, to beat them at their own game or to join them if you cannot beat them.” However, Christians are redeemed out of the evil world and must strive to abstain from its corrupting influences. It takes a deliberate effort of ‘walking in the Spirit’ to mortify or mitigate the desires of the flesh –Gal 5:16-26. It is ‘not by power nor by might, but by my Spirit says the Lord.’ It is not for fun that the good book says “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness... for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out” –Mt 6:33, 1 Tim 6:7. The essence of this lesson is therefore to encourage Christians to live up to their professed identity even in the work place; we appeal with scriptural injunctions and examples. It is meant for those who are God-conscious. If you are not yet a Christian, you ought to become one (Rm 6:17). That is done via faith, repentance, confession of His name and baptism into His body, the church –Acts 2:36-41.

THESIS

The fruit of the Spirit and attributes listed in Gal. 5:22-23 & 2 Pet 1:5-7 outlines the core Christian values:

1. **Spirituality** - Faith, Godliness, Joy
2. **Godly Sense of Judgment** - Knowledge, Wisdom
3. **Self Control** - Peace, Gentleness, Patience, Temperance, Longsuffering
4. **Love** - Brotherly Kindness, Goodness, Virtue

These values moderate our belief system, perception, attitude and behavior in society, at home and on the job. It is relatively easy to be pious at the assembly of the saints. Do we wear the ‘Christian’ tag only at church programs or even when we associate with the generally evil world? We are still in the world (Jn 17:15) and must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation –Phil 2:15. It is not every job that a Christian should do –a mature or discerning Christian will seek a job that will allow him/her time for God, family and not dishonour Christ’s name e.g. it is incongruous/indiscreet for a Christian to take-up or continue in a job such as a worker in a motel where fornicators & adulterers book for “short-time” accommodation services. (Not that being an hotelier is itself evil -Lk 2:7.) With prayer and networking, such should quit/seek another job and not expose his/her faith to ridicule or self to temptations. The brethren (individually & collectively) ought to encourage such people and give **all** necessary support for them to overcome the challenge.

Even when we are doing legal and honourable jobs, we need to know that we are representatives of our family name; both physical and spiritual! As living epistles of Christ read my others, are we indeed ‘the salt and the light of our individual small world’:

1. *If we are undependable in showing up for work?*
2. *If we are frequently late?*
3. *If we do lousy work and hardly give value for our wages or fees?*
4. *If we steal/pilfer from our employer?*
5. *If we only do the things that will bring us to the attention of someone who can promote us or do favors for us?*
6. *If as a boss/supervisor, we show favoritism?*
7. *If we place unreasonable demands on our workers?*
8. *If we do not recognize those who work hard?*
9. *If we spend work hours accomplishing personal things at the expense of our employer?*
10. *If we collude with others for insubordination/sabotage against our superiors/firm?*

An individual’s conduct, speech and dressing speak volumes about his/her personality. Romans 2:21-22 warns against hypocrisy which could induce others to blaspheme. Some virtues we need on the job include integrity instead of dubiousness (Prov 11:3, Mt 5:37), humility rather than pride or haughtiness (Prov 16:18), vigilance rather than carelessness (1 Pet 5:7-8), courage rather than fear (2 Tim 1:7). There are several Christians whose influences on their jobs are reported in the scriptures, e.g.

- Preachers such as Barnabas (Acts 11:22-26), Silas (Acts 15:25-34) as was required in 1 Tim 4:6-16 compared to Diotrephes (3 John 9-11)
- Priscilla a virtuous woman (Acts 18-19, Prov 31:10-31) and sister Phebe (Rm 16:1-4)
- Cornelius surely was a man of good report who would get even better upon becoming a Christian –Acts 10:1-2 vs Lk 3:14
- Erastus a city's chamberlain (Rm 16:23) and 'His Excellency' Theophilus (Lk 1:3, Acts 1:1)
- Any man who may become an officer in the Lord's church must have a good reputation within and without and must have influenced his own family for good (Acts 6:3, 1 Tim 3) in his job of a family-head. The wife too would equally impact his qualification or otherwise. ***No amount of success at work will compensate for failure at home!***

CONCLUSION

We should be dutiful, do our best on the job and rely on God rather than depend on work-place politics or other means in order to move ahead. *Real promotion comes from God and... He adds no sorrow unto His blessings.* Thus we need to be cognizant of how we behave and impact others even on our jobs for people do notice and will talk about their observations. Some will emulate us ignorantly or deliberately; particularly our subordinates and we have the responsibility of being a positive influence. When our dept. secretary was transferred and sent-forth, she commented she learnt '*ethics and doing the right thing at the right time*' from me as HOD and that was gratifying. Every job has its challenges and we need to hone our skills, manage our relationships with fellow workers/clients/students and demonstrate commitment. ***In your society especially on the job, are you a seasoning with good aroma or a little leaven that corrupts?*** The word of the Lord admonishes:

- **Luke 6:31** And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.
- **Romans 12:18** If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
- **Proverbs 18:9** He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.
- **Romans 12:11** Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
- **Ephesians 6:6-7** "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:"
- **Proverbs 18:16** A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.
- **Proverbs 22:29** Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.
- **1 Peter 2:18-19** "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.
- **Titus 2:10** Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.
- **1 Peter 4:15-16** "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."
- **Luke 12:47-48** And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.
- **2 Corinthians 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:
- **Colossians 1:10** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- **Hebrews 13:21** Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.