



AT WORK WITH GOD

10 guidelines from the
Bible concerning our work

Introduction

The Bible was written in another day and age, yet it speaks clearly about many issues which concern us to this day including the workplace. It speaks to employers and employees alike, to those in management or to those on the shop floor. It speaks to the jobless as well as the worker who is worth his salt.

In reading this booklet you will be surprised to discover how apt these verses from the Bible are today. Read them, apply them in your work situation and discover that you can enjoy your work as well as the Lord's blessing on your life's work.

What does the Bible tell us about the workplace?

In the Bible work was seen as a blessing from the very beginning. We read in Genesis that God took great joy in his work of creating and sustaining the universe. Throughout the various stages of creation, we read:

And God was pleased with what he saw.
_____ GENESIS 1:10b,12b,18b,21b

Working in God's creation

When God created men and women he blessed them and put them in charge of all that he had created. He wanted them to work in obedience to him and with his blessing. What is more, they were given a very clear job description.

So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them, and said, "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals."
_____ GENESIS 1:27-28

Then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. He said to him, "You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."
_____ GENESIS 2:15-17

However, when the first man and woman disobeyed God, work became a punishment. God told Adam and Eve that they would have to work hard all their lives to make a living.

And he said to the man, "You listened to your wife and ate the fruit which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you. It will produce weeds and thorns, and you will have to eat wild plants. You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again."
_____ GENESIS 3:17-19

Yet man finds joy in work as a gift from God:

The best thing anyone can do is to eat and drink and enjoy what he has earned. And yet, I realised that even this comes from God. How else could you have anything to eat or enjoy yourself at all?
_____ ECCLESIASTES 2:24-25

If God gives a man wealth and property and lets him enjoy them, he should be grateful and enjoy what he has worked for. It is a gift from God. Since God has allowed him to be happy, he will not worry too much about how short life is.
_____ ECCLESIASTES 5:19-20

You will have all you want to eat, and you will give thanks to the LORD your God for the fertile land that he has given you.
_____ DEUTERONOMY 8:10

Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.
_____ MATTHEW 6:33

Here are 10 guidelines which will help you to do your job in a way that is pleasing to God and which assures you of his blessing:

1 Rely on God

We often hear of “self-made” men or women to describe those who pride themselves on their own talents and abilities in the workplace. The Bible teaches us that we cannot achieve anything without God’s help. We are warned against planning as if we are in complete control of the future and also against boasting and taking all the credit for the successes we achieve.

So then, you must never think that you have made yourselves wealthy by your own power and strength. Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because he is still faithful today to the covenant that he made with your ancestors.

DEUTERONOMY 8:17-18

Now listen to me, you that say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to a certain city, where we will stay a year and go into business and make a lot of money.” You don’t even know what your life tomorrow will be! You are like a puff of smoke, which appears for a moment and then disappears. What you should say is this: “If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that.” But now you are proud, and you boast; all such boasting is wrong.

So then, those who do not do the good they know they should do are guilty of sin.

JAMES 4:13-17

Ask the LORD to bless your plans, and you will be successful in carrying them out.

PROVERBS 16:3

2 Work hard

The Bible teaches that those who work hard are wise and reap the fruit of their labour while those who are lazy are foolish and get nowhere. It is important to provide for our own daily needs by doing an honest day’s work.

Lazy people should learn a lesson from the way ants live. They have no leader, chief, or ruler, but they store up their food during the summer, getting ready for winter. How long is the lazy man going to lie in bed? When is he ever going to get up?

PROVERBS 6:6-9

Lazy people turn over in bed. They get no farther than a door swinging on its hinges.

Some people are too lazy to put food in their own mouths.

PROVERBS 26:14-15

Our people must learn to spend their time doing good, in order to provide for real needs; they should not live useless lives.

TITUS 3:14

Our brothers and sisters, we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to keep away from all believers who are living a lazy life and who do not follow the instructions that we gave them. You yourselves know very well that you should do just what we did. We were not lazy when we were with you. We did not accept anyone’s support without paying for it. Instead, we worked and toiled; we kept working day and night so as not to be an expense to any of you. We did this, not because we have no right to demand our support; we did it to be an example for you to follow. While we were with you, we used to say to you, “Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat.”

We say this because we hear that there are some people among you who live lazy lives and who do nothing except meddle in other people’s business. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command these people and warn them to lead orderly lives and work to earn their own living.

But you, brothers and sisters, must not get tired of doing good.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-13

But if anyone does not take care of his relatives, especially the members of his own family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 TIMOTHY 5:8

3 Be honest

The Bible has something to say about many of the problems encountered in the workplace today.

Stealing and lying

Stealing is a serious problem in business today, whether it is taking small items for your own use, or defrauding the company by embezzling large amounts of money. We need to honour God by being totally honest in all that we do and say in the workplace. The word of God from the Ten Commandments to the New Testament clearly warns us against stealing.

“Do not steal.”

_____ EXODUS 20:15; DEUTERONOMY 5:19

“Do not steal or cheat or lie.”

_____ LEVITICUS 19:11

People don't despise a thief if he steals food when he is hungry; yet if he is caught, he must pay back seven times more — he must give up everything he has.

_____ PROVERBS 6:30-31

Then he said to me, “On it is written the curse that is to go out over the whole land. On one side of the scroll it says that every thief will be removed from the land; and on the other side it says that everyone who tells lies under oath will also be taken away.

The LORD Almighty says that he will send this curse out, and it will enter the house of every thief and the house of everyone who tells lies under oath. It will remain in their houses and leave them in ruins.”

_____ ZECHARIAH 5:3-4

The LORD Almighty says,

“I will appear among you to judge, and I will testify at once against those who practise magic, against adulterers, against those who give false testimony, those who cheat employees out of their wages, and those who take advantage of widows, orphans, and foreigners — against all who do not respect me.”

_____ MALACHI 3:5

Those who used to rob must stop robbing and start working, in order to earn an honest living for themselves and to be able to help the poor.

_____ EPHESIANS 4:28

Slaves are to submit to their masters and please them in all things. They must not answer them back or steal from them. Instead, they must show that they are always good and faithful, so as to bring credit to the teaching about God our Saviour in all they do.

_____ TITUS 2:9-10

Bribery and corruption

Bribery and corruption have become rife in the workplace. The Bible teaches that bribery is wrong and will lead to your downfall.

Many people believe:

Some people think a bribe works like magic; they believe it can do anything.

_____ PROVERBS 17:8

However:

If you try to make a profit dishonestly, you will get your family into trouble. Don't take bribes and you will live longer.

_____ PROVERBS 15:27

They always do what they promise, no matter how much it may cost. They make loans without charging interest and cannot be bribed to testify against the innocent.

Whoever does these things will always be secure.

_____ PSALM 15:4b-5

Prejudice is wrong. But some judges will do wrong to get even the smallest bribe.

Selfish people are in such a hurry to get rich that they do not know when poverty is about to strike.

_____ PROVERBS 28:21-22

You may be wise, but if you cheat someone, you are acting like a fool. If you take a bribe, you ruin your character.

_____ ECCLESIASTES 7:7

Fraud and cheating

Often we hear about people who charge for services they haven't delivered or goods they have not supplied. In Biblical times, scales, weights and measures were important components in determining the price of goods. That is what prompted the demand for honest weights and honest trading. Yet, we often hear about businesses that charge for goods they have not delivered or charge dishonest prices to the poor.

“Do not cheat when you use weights and measures. Use true and honest weights and measures, so that you may live a long time in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. The LORD hates people who cheat.”

DEUTERONOMY 25:13-16

The LORD hates people who use dishonest scales. He is happy with honest weights.

PROVERBS 11:1

*Wicked people do not really gain anything,
but if you do what is right, you are certain
to be rewarded*

*Anyone who is determined
to do right will live,
but anyone who insists
on doing wrong will die.*

PROVERBS 11:18-19

“Do not cheat anyone by using false measures of length, weight, or quantity. Use honest scales, honest weights, and honest measures.

I am the LORD your God, and I brought you out of Egypt. Obey all my laws and commands. I am the LORD.”

LEVITICUS 19:35-37

Listen to this, you that trample on the needy and try to destroy the poor of the country. You say to yourselves, “We can hardly wait for the holy days to be over so that we can sell our corn. When will the Sabbath end, so that we can start selling again? Then we can overcharge, use false measures, and tamper with the scales to cheat our customers. We can sell worthless wheat at a high price. We’ll find a poor person who can’t pay his debts, not even the price of a pair of sandals, and we’ll buy him as a slave.”

The LORD, the God of Israel, has sworn, “I will never forget their evil deeds

AMOS 8:4-7

It is wise to fear the Lord. He calls to the city, “Listen, you people who assemble in the city! In the houses of evil people are treasures which they got dishonestly. They use false measures, a thing that I hate. How can I forgive those who use false scales and weights? Your rich people exploit the poor, and all of you are liars. So I have already begun your ruin and destruction because of your sins. You will eat, but not be satisfied — in fact you will still be hungry. You will carry things off, but you will not be able to save them; anything you do save I will destroy in war.”

MICAH 6:9-14

4 Be content

One of the easiest traps to fall into is to compare yourself to those who are better off than you are. As a result, you become discontented and constantly strive for more. Very soon you will be so enslaved by greed that you will no longer be satisfied with anything. The Bible warns us against envy:

“Do not desire another man’s house; do not desire his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns.”

EXODUS 20:17

I ask you, God, to let me have two things before I die: keep me from lying, and let me be neither rich nor poor. So give me only as much food as I need. If I have more, I might say that I do not need you. But if I am poor, I might steal and bring disgrace on my God.

PROVERBS 30:7-9

They think that religion is a way to become rich.

Well, religion does make a person very rich, if he is satisfied with what he has. What did we bring into the world? Nothing! What can we take out of the world? Nothing! So then, if we have food and clothes, that should be enough for us. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull them down to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil. Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.

1 TIMOTHY 6:5b-10

Everything that belongs to the world — what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of — none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live for ever.

1 JOHN 2:16-17

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.” Let us be bold, then, and say,

*“The Lord is my helper,
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?”*

HEBREWS 13:5-6

I have learnt to be satisfied with what I have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:11b

5 Promote good relations

It is common knowledge that a company's employees are its greatest asset. Therefore good labour relations are of the utmost importance in creating a stable and profitable organisation. Labour unrest and poorly motivated employees cost the economy millions every year.

Healthy labour relations are based on mutual trust and respect with the understanding that employers as well as employees (master and slave in Biblical times), are under the Lord's authority. He expects employees to put in an honest day's work and to be paid an honest wage.

"Do not take advantage of anyone or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of someone you have hired, not even for one night."

LEVITICUS 19:13

"Do not cheat poor and needy hired servants, whether fellow Israelites or foreigners living in one of your towns. Each day before sunset pay them for that day's work; they need the money and have counted on getting it. If you do not pay them, they will cry out against you to the LORD, and you will be guilty of sin."

DEUTERONOMY 24:14-15

Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling; and do it with a sincere heart, as though you were serving Christ. Do this not only when they are watching you, because you want to gain their approval; but with all your heart do what God wants, as slaves of Christ. Do your work as slaves cheerfully, as though you served the Lord, and not merely human beings. Remember that the Lord will reward everyone, whether slave or free, for the good work they do. Masters, behave in the same way towards your slaves and stop using threats. Remember that you and your slaves belong to the same Master in heaven, who judges everyone by the same standard.

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

Take care of a fig tree and you will have figs to eat. Servants who take care of their master will be honoured.

PROVERBS 27:18

6 Take time to rest

In today's competitive work environment there is the temptation to work too hard and to become part of the never-ending rat race. Eventually you deny yourself rest and begin to feel guilty when you are not working.

The rhythm of work with regular intervals for resting was established when God created the earth. By allowing yourself to rest, you acknowledge that you are not a slave to work.

Those who ignore this principle will not be able to keep up a high level of productivity. God set the example for us to follow.

And so the whole universe was completed. By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation and stopped working.

GENESIS 2:1-3

"Work six days a week, but do no work on the seventh day, so that your slaves and the foreigners who work for you and even your animals can rest."

EXODUS 23:12

"You have six days in which to do your work, but do not work on the seventh day, not even during ploughing time or harvest."

EXODUS 34:21

"Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. You have six days in which to do your work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work — neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. In six days I, the LORD, made the earth, the sky, the sea, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That is why I, the LORD, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy."

EXODUS 20:8-11

7 Serve God with your income

The money and possessions we accumulate are ours by the grace of God and therefore belong to him. In the Old Testament God's people are under an obligation to set aside one tenth of their earnings for God's work. In the New Testament we are urged to give our offerings freely and with a glad heart.

“Set aside a tithe — a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Then go to the one place where the LORD your God has chosen to be worshipped; and there in his presence eat the tithes of your corn, wine, and olive oil, and the first-born of your cattle and sheep. Do this so that you may learn to honour the LORD your God always.”

DEUTERONOMY 14:22-23

“How terrible for you Pharisees! You give God a tenth of the seasoning herbs, such as mint and rue and all the other herbs, but you neglect justice and love for God. These you should practise, without neglecting the others.”

LUKE 11:42

As Jesus sat near the temple treasury, he watched the people as they dropped in their money. Many rich men dropped in a lot of money; then a poor widow came along and dropped in two little copper coins, worth about a penny. He called his disciples together and said to them, “I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than all the others. For the others put in what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had — she gave all she had to live on.”

MARK 12:41-44

Remember that the person who sows few seeds will have a small crop; the one who sows many seeds will have a large crop. You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. As the scripture says:

“He gives generously to the needy; his kindness lasts for ever.”

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-9

8 Accept your social responsibility

The pursuit of wealth and prosperity should not be our most important goals. According to the Bible, God blesses us so that we can take care of those who are unable to care for themselves. God has placed the poor, the sick, the orphans, the widows and the foreigners under our care. He will judge our faith according to how we treat them. Social responsibility is more than a public relations exercise. It should be a reflection of a true and honest service to God.

Do not forget to do good and to help one another, because these are the sacrifices that please God.

HEBREWS 13:16

“When you gather your crops and fail to bring in some of the corn that you have cut, do not go back for it; it is to be left for the foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do. When you have picked your olives once, do not go back and get those that are left; they are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. When you have gathered your grapes once, do not go back over the vines a second time; the grapes that are left are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Never forget that you were slaves in Egypt; that is why I have given you this command.”

DEUTERONOMY 24:19-22

“Then the King will say to the people on his right, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.’

“The righteous will then answer him, ‘When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these members of my family, you did it for me!’ ”

MATTHEW 25:34-40

What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.

JAMES 1:27

9 Pay your taxes

When you give to the poor, it is like lending to the LORD, and the LORD will pay you back.

PROVERBS 19:17

If you refuse to listen to the cry of the poor, your own cry for help will not be heard.

PROVERBS 21:13

This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers and sisters! Rich people who see a brother or sister in need, yet close their hearts against them, cannot claim that they love God.

1 JOHN 3:16-17

The Bible is very clear on the matter of paying tax. Because the Jews were under Roman rule, the question of tax in New Testament times was a very sensitive political issue. However, even in this instance the right of the government to levy tax is acknowledged by Christ while reminding us at the same time that we also have an obligation towards God.

So they looked for an opportunity. They bribed some men to pretend they were sincere, and they sent them to trap Jesus with questions, so that they could hand him over to the authority and power of the Roman Governor. These spies said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that what you say and teach is right. We know that you pay no attention to anyone's status, but teach the truth about God's will for people. Tell us, is it against our Law for us to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, or not?"

But Jesus saw through their trick and said to them, "Show me a silver coin. Whose face and name are these on it?"

"The Emperor's," they answered.

So Jesus said, "Well, then, pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay God what belongs to God."

LUKE 20:20-25

That is also why you pay taxes, because the authorities are working for God when they fulfil their duties. Pay, then, what you owe them; pay them your personal and property taxes, and show respect and honour for them all.

ROMANS 13:6-7

10 Work for true wealth

Many people see the accumulation of wealth and possessions as their main purpose in life. However, the Bible clearly teaches us that such wealth is transient. The danger is that the desire for material goods could take over our lives if we are not careful. We cannot serve two masters, God and wealth. We need to work as God intended us to and so obtain true wealth which is lasting. The Bible calls this storing up treasures in heaven. If we put God first in all we do, our daily needs will be taken care of.

“No one can be a slave of two masters; he will hate one and love the other; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

_____ MATTHEW 6:24

“Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are.”

_____ MATTHEW 6:19-21

“So do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?’ (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.”

_____ MATTHEW 6:31-33

Happy is anyone who becomes wise — who gains understanding. There is more profit in it than there is in silver; it is worth more to you than gold. Wisdom is more valuable than jewels; nothing you could want can compare with it.

_____ PROVERBS 3:13-15

Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others. In this way they will store up for themselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then they will be able to win the life which is true life.

_____ I TIMOTHY 6:17-19

Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.

_____ 1 PETER 5:7

Don’t worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God’s peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

In conclusion, my brothers and sisters, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable. Put into practice what you learnt and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

_____ PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

Guidelines for our day to day work

In the Bible we find guidelines for living with integrity, as God intends us to do. It tells us how we can experience God's blessing in every aspect of our life.

This booklet of Scripture selections provides 10 guidelines which enable us to do our day to day work in a way which is pleasing to God and assures us of his blessing:

1. *Rely on God*
2. *Work hard*
3. *Be honest*
4. *Be content*
5. *Promote good relations*
6. *Take time to rest*
7. *Serve God with your income*
8. *Accept your social responsibility*
9. *Pay your taxes*
10. *Work for true wealth*

May the Lord richly bless you as you seek to honour him in whatever position you hold and whatever job you do. Like the faithful servants in the parable, may you also have the joy of hearing the words of the Master:

“Well done, you good and faithful servant!” said his master. “You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts. Come on in and share my happiness!”

_____ MATTHEW 25:21

My commitment

I.....
thank God that I am privileged to have a job. I want to do my daily work in a way which is both pleasing to God and assures me of his blessing. With God's help I therefore commit myself to following these 10 guidelines from the Bible set out in this booklet.

Signed:

Date:



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