

GAINING THE RESPECT OF COWORKERS
By Robert J. Tamasy

For many years I have held the conviction that the “sacred/secular” distinctions we sometimes hear about are not supported anywhere in the Bible. Clergy and missionaries may have been given specific roles, along with the necessary gifts and abilities to fulfill them. However, in God’s sight, the job of an executive, sales representative, administrative assistant, manager or clerk is just as “holy” and a calling by the Lord as religious professionals working under the umbrella of the Church.

Earlier this year the senior pastor of the church I attend affirmed this truth, presenting a message he called “Gaining the Respect of Coworkers.” I am taking the liberty of using his key points and expanding upon them. Because being respected by coworkers is crucial if we are to be effective as “Christ’s ambassadors,” as described in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

It has often been said that we must “be good news before we can share good news.” In other words, we have little or no positive impact with what we say, regardless of how true we are to the Scriptures, if our workplace behavior is characterized by unethical behavior, dishonesty, self-centeredness, laziness, and lack of compassion, among other things. As Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is to be more desired than great riches.” Here are some biblical principles for gaining and maintaining the respect of people with whom we work every day:

Demonstrating love toward others. The term ‘love’ can mean many things, but to show love toward others reflects God’s work in us. This includes exhibiting genuine concern and compassion toward others, even putting their interests ahead of our own when necessary. “Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).

Minding our own business. People who are constantly meddling in the concerns of others without being asked are, at best, great annoyances. We may have genuine interest others, but that does not mean prying into areas where we have not been invited “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. You should mind your own business” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). “They [young widows] also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies” (1 Timothy 5:13).

Working diligently. Few things generate more resentment than a coworker who does not carry his or her own share of the load. When others observe laziness in an individual, their attitudes toward that person cannot help but take a negative turn. “And work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). “The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor” (Proverbs 21:25).

Being dependable. In the workplace, especially when deadlines are tight and critical steps must be completed, it is refreshing and encouraging to know the ones on whom we can rely.

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Those of us who follow Jesus Christ should be people like that, dependable to do our share – even more than our share – to achieve the desired goals and objectives. “If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18). “A faithful employee is as invigorating as a cool day in the hot summertime. He refreshes the soul of his boss” (Proverbs 25:13, The Living Bible).

© 2024. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you encountered – or even believed – the so-called “sacred/secular” false dichotomy? If so, why? How can work in the business and professional world be a sacred calling, as much as that of a pastor, priest or missionary?
2. Among the people you work with, who do you respect the most – and why? On the other hand, can you think of a coworker who does not command your respect? Why is that?
3. Do you agree with the statement that we must, “be good news before we can share good news”? How have you seen this manifested in the workplace?
4. Which of the steps for earning the respect of coworkers resonates most strongly with you? Can you think of any other biblically based principles for gaining and maintaining the respect of others?

Challenge For This Week

We all have blind spots. We might not be aware of actions or behaviors that could be impediments in trying to build positive relationships with others. This week might be a good time to do an honest self-appraisal.

Are you demonstrating genuine love and concern for people you work with; minding your own business – not meddling in the affairs of others; known for your diligence at work; and proving to be dependable, a member of the team that others can count on?

If you find it necessary, speak with someone (or more than one) who can give you advice on how to make needed improvements.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; 2 Timothy 3:17

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