

Simplify – Unto the Lord

1/30/22

Colossians 3:22-4:1

Sunday AM

**Riddle me this** – what is it the vast majority of people will do **8.5** hrs a day, **260** days in a year, for an avg. of **48** yrs – even though **85** % of Americans say they hate doing it – while **69%** of Americans will stop doing this by the age **66**? You guessed it... **WORK!**

**W/out question** – work is a huge part of our lives – often becoming a critical component to our sense of identity/accomplishment. Think about it – as adults, when we meet a stranger we inevitably ask – *what do you do for a living?* W/ kids, we ask – *what do you want to do when you grow up?* We ask college students – *what are you majoring in?* And we ask retirees – *what did you do for a career?* **WORK!**

Today, we're closing out a New Year's series entitled, ***Simplify***. *To simplify is to make something less complicated and more straightforward by reducing it to the basic essentials.* Thru-out our series, we've been seeking to extricate the whole of our lives from the unnecessary/complicated.

This AM, I want to conclude our series by turning our attention to simplifying the one area of our lives that can get too complex and out of whack quick, fast, and in a hurry – and this is our *work lives*. Whether you're an employee or employer – most need to simplify b/c our ***occupation has become our preoccupation***.

*Slaves, obey your earthly masters, in everything; and do it, not only when their eyes are on you or to curry their favor, but w/ sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it w/ all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Masters provide your slaves w/ what is right and fair, b/c you know that you also have a Master in heaven.* Colossians 3:22-4:1

I think sometimes, we view the Bible as an ancient, outdated book of fables/myth; yet God's Word is living/active – and more importantly, inspired and applicable to address any/every detail of our lives. And here is another one of those texts where God meets us at the point of our need to give us practical advice on how to thrive and be alive for Him on the job.

Before we jump into the principles to simplify our work lives, let me address this starting word – **Slave!**

**NOW** – when you see the word **SLAVE** – you might be tempted to think this doesn't apply to me, but it does! B/c in the days of Roman conquest, the vast majority of people would've been considered slaves, although they lived in their own homes and worked in what we'd consider to be respectable, affluent jobs.

**Truth is** – in the age of the early church, there were as many as 60 mil. slaves accounting for over ½ of the population in the Roman Empire. These slaves performed a number of important roles in society including doctors, teachers, engineers, actors, and more. **Slaves were the workforce**. And contrary to speculation, while many slaves were grossly mistreated, most slaves were loved/trusted members of the family – although, under Roman law, a slave wasn't a person but a thing, w/ no legal rights.

So, although this text addresses slaves, these principles can be applied to us today as employees/employers.

**Where do we start?** Like last week we start, w/ (1) principle. Are you ready for it? No matter where you work or who you work for... no matter how much you make or how many hours you're required to put in...

Only **WORK** for an Audience of One

**IOW** – Make Jesus your boss and work to please Him.

*Slaves, obey your earthly masters w/ respect, fear, and w/ sincerity of heart, **as to Christ.** Ephesians 6:5*

**as to Christ** – as if Jesus was present watching you

*Thus, whether you're a pilot or a painter, a garbage collector or a grass cutter, a student or a teacher – in everything you do – **do it as unto the Lord.***

**WHY?** B/c w/ God, there's no distinction b/w the *sacred* and the *secular*. Meaning even the most menial and commonplace of tasks are dignified/important when they're done for the glory of God.

What would happen if tomorrow you arrived at work and Jesus was your Boss – and you worked to honor Him to put a smile on His face? Would it make a difference in how you view/do your job? It SHOULD!

Let me tell you what'd happen if we all worked for an audience of ONE?

I It will Alter Our **PERSPECTIVE**

We'd no longer see our jobs as a means to make *dollar*, but as a means to make a *difference*. We'd begin to see that our workplace is our mission field and a place to fulfill God's calling on our lives.

*Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Ephesians 6:6*

**Let me make this simple.** God never intended for the G.C. to only occur inside the church walls, but in the highways/byways of life – where we live, work, and play. And there's no greater mission field in our lives than the place where we work. Whether we can speak frankly of our faith or not – all of us must speak boldly thru our diligent, faithful service to those watching.

Jesus never commanded us to engage in theological debates w/ strangers, flaunt 4-inch crosses and Jesus stickers, or throw out Christian catch phrases. But He did tell us to work/live in such a way that when the H.S. orchestrates opportunities to speak about God, we will have earned the right to do so. *Hybels*

Working for an audience of ONE should change our perspective of work – that it's our mission field for which the quality of our work testifies to our faith.

II It will Change Our **ATTITUDE**

*obey your earthly masters, in everything; and do it, not only when their eyes are on you or to curry their favor, but w/ sincerity of heart/reverence for the Lord*

Zig Ziglar – *Your attitude determines your altitude.* That is, how we feel/view things, whether positive or negative, will affect how high we go and what kind of impact we have. Peter spoke of this in our work...

*You servants must submit yourselves to your masters and show them complete respect, not only to those who are kind and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. God will bless you for this if you endure the pain of undeserved suffering b/c you are conscious of his will. 1 Peter 2:18-20*

In **Philippians 2**, Paul charges us to have the same attitude in us that was in Christ.

When Peter penned these words, he knew that at times slaves might suffer unjustly – while at other times, their punishment was deserved. In the same way, we too are likely to have some unpleasant experiences at work. And when such times occur, we can't let it spoil us but remind us to keep a positive, God-honoring attitude that never compromises our witness/influence.

III It will Influence Our **EFFORT**

*Don't just do the minimum that'll get you by. Do your best. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being Christian doesn't cover up bad work. (Message)*

*Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord*

**POINT** – if we're doing our jobs for Jesus, we'll do it *w/ all our heart* – we'll give it everything we have. Whereas someone who approaches their job w/ apathy or indifference is doing it *half-heartedly*.

**Example** – As you know, in the time of Jesus, the Jews were under the total domination of the Romans. What you might not know is a Roman soldier had the legal authority to demand that any Jew carry his equipment for exactly one mile. Of course, the Jews hated to do this, and bitterly counted each step – and at exactly one mile, they'd dropped the load and in w/ disgust would say, "There! I've done what is required!"

But, in **Matthew 5:41**, Jesus offered a higher standard for His followers. He said – *If someone forces you to go one mile, go w/ him two miles.*

**Jesus' point is simple** – just as a Roman soldier would not soon forget the person who cheerfully carried his equipment a 2<sup>nd</sup> mile – neither will others – including our employers/employees, easily forget our effort.

**Question** – Are you a 1-mile or 2-mile worker, student, boss, or athlete? Do you only do the bare minimum or do you go the 2<sup>nd</sup> mile to bear witness of your faith thru the witness of your effort.

**Let me say it in a different way** – if you're going to do shoddy work w/ minimal effort and a complaining spirit – please don't tell anyone you're a follower of Jesus b/c you're only giving the rest of us a bad name!

Well... as I consider what's necessary to simplify our careers – I think it begins w/ (1) thing – making Jesus our boss and working for an audience of ONE.

In thinking about a Biblical example, I'm reminded of Joseph – the kid w/ the amazing techni-colored coat? DYK that in his life, Joseph held down (3) jobs.

If you remember from Genesis, when Joseph was a kid, his jealous brothers beat him up, took his coat, and tossed him in a pit to be sold off to slave traders in route to Egypt – all for 8 oz of silver.

Once in Egypt, the traders sold him to a man named Potiphar, who'd put him to work on his farm. But b/c Joseph worked *as unto the Lord* w/ a right perspective, attitude, and effort – he caught the eye of Potiphar who promoted him to head of the household. Problem was, he also caught the eye of Potiphar's wife, who'd soon try to seduce him. Yet b/c of his integrity and desire to honor God, after he turned her down – he found himself on a new mission field – in jail. Which offered Joe his 2<sup>nd</sup> job.

Just as in Potiphar's household, b/c Joseph worked as unto the Lord, performing his prison duties w/ such honesty/dependability, he was promoted to be the chief prisoner, in charge of all the other prisoners. In fact, in Genesis 39:23, the Bible speaks of his job performance – *the warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, b/c the Lord was w/ Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.*

Of course, in prison, Joseph began dreaming and interpreting dreams which ultimately provided him w/ a *get-out-of-jail card* – and his 3<sup>rd</sup> job in Pharaoh's court where he'd eventually become the Prime Minister of Egypt – just as God had planned it.

I find it interesting that Joseph never became bitter, seldom if ever complained – but always recognized that in whatever He did – he was to do it unto the Lord. How do I know this...

B/c years later, during a severe famine, his brothers came to Egypt for help, never recognizing who he was. He had the power/opportunity to extract revenge against the guys who beat him and sold him into slavery. But instead, he showed them grace and forgiveness. In fact, shortly before he died, Joseph made this observation about his life to his brothers – *you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.* Genesis 50:20

Folks, **our work matters** – and for more than just a paycheck. Yet if we don't simplify our lives by working for an audience of ONE, then our work will likely always be about us and consume us.

Make your career about honoring God, and God will make your career a joy/blessing. He will give you meaning/fulfill in what He has called and enabled you to do in your job – no matter your earthly job.

*In everything you do, in word and in deed, do it to the glory of God.* Colossians 3:17

As I was preparing for this message, I stumbled across a man at work whose joy for his job made me smile. And I hope his joy will be of encouragement to you as you consider the calling God has on your life.

Twitter Clip – of **Airplane Marshaller**

## **TAKEAWAYS**

The key element to simplifying our careers is deciding to work for an audience of ONE.

When a person makes God their audience at work – it will directly impact their perspective, attitude, and effort throughout their job.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1 Spend time this week in your quiet time or with another person discussing these GROW questions.

**G** – What do you enjoy most/least about your job?

**R** – Read Colossians 3:22-4:1. What does God expect of His followers in the workplace? Why?

**O** – What does the life of Joseph teach us about perspective, attitude, and effort in our work?

**W** – Write down (3) things you can do this week to make Jesus the Lord of your career?

2 Take time this week to pray for your employer or employees and for your attitude, effort, and witness in your workplace.