

Message: The Difference in *Our Jobs*

Series: Relationships: *The Difference Jesus Makes!*

Text: Ephesians 6:5-9

Introduction: If *Jesus* is who He says He is, and if *we* have Jesus in our lives like we say we do, *then something should be different* about us that stands out *in* and *to* this world.

We've been looking at the change that happens within us, and the potential change that can happen through us. This has been a series about Identity- *our Identity in Jesus Christ*. This is where everything begins- you and me, as sons and daughters of God in Christ. That relationship overflows into every piece that our lives touch- from friendships and marriage, to family, and now to our work world.

This week we are looking at the difference Jesus makes in our jobs. For some, the idea of working is a means to an end. We labor to pay bills, longing for better days of more pay and less demand. We may even bounce from job to job based on the work we do. For others it is our profession- what we pour into personal development to attain and accomplish. We've been in the same line of work for many, many years now. We look forward to retiring in this profession.

Wherever we are at in this mix, most if not all of us work. What is the difference Jesus can make in our jobs? Does our job matter to Him? **The answer is Yes-** but it may not be what you might think. This message in particular is where we see more of who Jesus is in us begin to break out into the world around us.

Again, this is a series meant to encourage, strengthen, challenge, heal, and above all, see the intimacy of God break through into our lives and overflow into the world around us. *But, before God will do a work **through** us, He desires to do a work **within** us!*

I. **Slaves and Masters -> A change in Heart Attitudes (Ephesians 6:5)**

"Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ," -Ephesians 6:5

Wait a minute, does the Bible condone slavery? This is a question that has been on the mind of many who strive to follow Jesus in every generation. Many cultures, world empires, are built on societal structures that enable the overall nation to continue moving in the direction and with the speed of those in power- or stand to make great gain. Often this is with a system of slavery.

Let's look at the historical context here first. Remember, Paul is writing to those living in the first century Roman Empire. In the city of Ephesus alone, slaves would make up 1/3 of the population and be present in the marketplaces where the gospel was being shared. They were

most likely to means by which the Gospel entered the homes of those who would come to believe.

In both Greek and Roman culture, slaves had limited rights and were subject to much abuse. No where in the Bible is slavery blessed by God; God steps into humanities story and brings Kingdom influence. **Sin brought slavery; it is the natural fruit of our enslavement to it.**

Sometimes this is a slow process of redirection; other times it is a complete turnover. But we must understand that God is always leading us to grow in our Kingdom Identity, and in turn having this Kingdom reality flow through us in convicting and transforming ways into this broken world.

Now, let's look at a Theological framework for what God does say regarding slaves and masters (Note: God addresses individuals, not systems. God addresses the people in these systems, not the systems themselves)

In the Old Testament we see God protecting those serving as slaves,

"You shall not give up to his master a slave[a] who has escaped from his master to you. 16 He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him. You shall not wrong him. -[Deuteronomy 23:15-16](#)

Other portions of the Law enabled the families slaved served under to become a part of the family and share in the rights of that family's name as if they were natural born. This was a slow redirection of newly freed Egyptian slaves to put their hand in God's and walk closer with Him into His Kingdom.

In God's Kingdom,

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave[a] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. -[Galatians 3:26-29](#)

This is the clearest it has ever been in Jesus Christ; there is no more veil to hide or distort that our Kingdom Identity is one and the same. Our Nationality, sex, social status- all of that falls below who we are in Jesus Christ. This was an incredible theme last week in the Metro District Conference. Getting back to making the pursuit of our Kingdom Identity our priority. Then everything else will follow- *such as Kingdom Justice and Mercy.*

The *Bible*, the *Gospel*, does not condone slavery but raises the slave to the level of the master and unites them in the heart of Christ. Over time slavery starts to diminish in realms where Christianity would flourish. The Gospel breaks all chains; beginning with the attitudes of our own hearts.

But for the readers of this letter from Paul, the Gospel was lighting the fires of reformation that would soon ravish not just Ephesus, but Rome and generations later, our world today! And for us today, this section bridges into our work ethic as employees and employers.

II. Heart Attitudes -> *People Seeing Jesus in Us (6:5-6)*

“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters[b] with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,”-[Ephesians 6:5-6](#)

Transitioning our mindset now into our working environments we find the appeal to naturally begin with us- *our heart attitudes*. The term **obedience** (*hypakouo*) here is the same regarding children toward their parents. Follow orders or direction with obedience is as natural as hearing a knock on the door and going to answer. Same word; same application here. **The key here is consistency; it has come to define us because it is continually what we do.**

Master here implies one who either by title or position has influence over you. In our context, we volunteer to engage an employment relationship with a person or organization. Often in that organization there are tiers of leadership; more authority comes to higher positions. The implication here is that even if their attitude is wrong, unless they are ordering you to disobey God, our heart attitude is to be one that seeks the opportunities to obey.

But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” -[Acts 4:19-20](#)

How many of us either have or have had bosses we can't stand? (Raise hand) People that just, for whatever reason, do not like us or make it hard to like them? It is important to note that nowhere in this context does Paul talk about whether we like or dislike the person. He's addressing our hearts where supposedly Jesus is present through His Spirit. Note the example of a young girl who portrays this heart attitude so well to someone many of us would consider the least likely deserving as a boss,

“Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy!’” -[2 Kings 5:2-3](#)

The **obedience** is to flow outward from our hearts in the same way that is modeled both in marriages and families- with **fear** and **trembling**. If you missed this, again I want to encourage you to check out *The Difference Jesus Makes in our Marriage* message on Youtube channel. **Fear** here is *phobos* meaning obey in the respect due toward the boss; **trembling** (*tromos*) which is a fear of our inability (anxiety) that we are measuring up. It is meant to be a drive that

compels us to go above and beyond so that our devotion is seen. (Going the extra mile -Jesus)
Both words imply the power our attitude has upon our Gospel witness.

Paul uses this word phrase in another letter that helps us understand what God is saying here to us,

And I, when I came to you, brothers,[a] did not come proclaiming to you the testimony[b] of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men[c] but in the power of God. -1 Corinthians 2:1-5

As with Paul, our Gospel witness comes through the way we communicate it- both our words and our example. We are sharing the Gospel with bosses & coworkers the same as Paul shares the Gospel in the marketplace.

I want to talk a moment on **“front line” ministries**. I’m hearing this often but I fear we miss what this actually is. *Listen*, our frontline ministries are everything we have been going over in this series. Marriage- are you married? That is your front-line ministry! Do you have or live with family? That is your front-line ministry! This is what overflows in the Kingdom witness we share, and the evidence of the Gospel’s power the world needs to see.

Pastoring in my profession; my job. Is it an anointing? Yes. But it is my job and is tiered that way in my life. Before I was in full time ministry I served in various management and district management levels for a variety of companies, as well as in the military. Regardless of the setting, the principles remain the same.

I am who I am as a Pastor ONLY because of who I am as a father; then as a husband, *and even further up and further in*, who I am in Christ. Many want to do things for God, thinking that a failing marriage, disappointment in our personal lives, or broken homes are just the way things are for them. A measure of suffering they must endure. ***This attitude is so far from the heart of God that any in this place are prohibited from serving in leadership at the local church. (See 1 Timothy 3:1-7) Remember, God will always desire to do a work within us before He does a work through us!***

In Fact, I want to drop a word here for those who need this: Our excuses empower the enemy! When he strives to fan the flame of fear and doubt, we empower that effort with excuses that cause us to slow or stop pursuing Jesus for our lives. “Get thee behind me, satan!” is the battle cry we must declare over our lives, marriages, homes, and jobs!

With a sincere heart, as you would Christ. The standard on which we strive to grow into is none other than our relationship with Jesus. Again, this, just like in our families or marriages, implies that our identity individually as sons and daughters of God is the top relationship in our lives.

If there is a problem, if God's love is not flowing into our job environments, then let's back up and check our own relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sincerity (*haplotēs*) implies without hypocrisy. This can be surface level; talking bad about someone behind their back while being compliant to their face. But it also goes deeper on a level God sees. Our Heart. Are we *obeying* and *serving* out of the love we have for Jesus? Of Heart is the central place of our being- *if Jesus is there, this is what comes out of us!*

Our work ethic should be the fruit from our hearts seeking the opportunity to model obedience in the job as unto our Lord, Jesus Christ.

III. Heart Attitudes -> ***Our eyes are focused on Jesus (6:6-8)***

“not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. -Ephesians 6:6-8

Who are we when no one is looking? *Who are we when our spouses, family, or people whose opinions we value are not around? Are you someone your spouse trusts when you or they are away? Are you someone your children or your parents can depend on to always be there for them? Are you someone your employer can trust to do what is expected when they are not around?* These are the cries of brokenness from a world broken by sin. Jesus and His Kingdom is the only true YES! Answer each of these situations needs. And He answers YES! Through our lives.

It is about our focus here! Do we see Jesus in our wives? Do we see Jesus in our Family? Do we see Jesus in our employers, fellow employees? If we don't, *pray pray pray!* Pray until you receive vision of what God desires to do in their lives! *I can't tell you how many times, and it is now almost regularly, that I meet people and get a sense of God's desire over their lives. It's so strong I just need to pray over them in that moment- whether randomly in parking lot here on a weekday, or a Hoedown festival!*

We all desire to hear “job well done”, right? Employee of the month feels Great! Promotions, pay raises, bonus', vacation pay, etc are many of the things we strive to acquire because they bring us satisfaction and overflow back into our families and marriage- and can be confirming in our own relationships with God. Such reward is an encouragement for us to nurture and pursue them.

For believers we strive to hear,

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’
-Matthew 25:23

With what little we may feel we have, strive to be faithful to the Lord with it and it will experience Kingdom multiplication! However, even if we do not receive those good things, their presence or absence does not qualify or disqualify how we as believers are to act as employees. All whom we work with should see the difference Jesus makes in and through us!

IV. Heart Attitudes: *Leading as we are led* (6:9)

“Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.” -Ephesians 6:9

This is the bridge that spans the gulf enabling slavery to know abolishment. As we see the ultimate Master, Jesus Christ, raising us to be seated with Him in Heavenly Places as Co-Heirs, there is that sense of Kingdom Unity that causes the things that divide us to fall to the wayside. If there is not slavery in God’s Kingdom, should there be here if this Kingdom is coming through our lives?

Note this example from Paul’s life regarding a runaway slave (Onesimus) who came to place faith in Jesus under Paul’s ministry, and a master (Philemon) who also came to faith through Paul: (NOTE: Paul could have appealed to the afore mentioned Deuteronomy text; God started a fire and Paul was progressive not regressive!)

I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus,[a] whose father I became in my imprisonment. 11 (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) 12 I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. 13 I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, 14 but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. 15 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, 16 no longer as a bondservant[b] but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. 18 If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. 19 I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. 20 Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.
-Philemon 10-21

Further, this is the heart of what it means to be a leader: leading with the love of Christ. If we can only get those we lead to follow by threats, we are not leading people, we are driving people. As employees have an obligation to the Lord through their work ethic, so do leaders. Without or without the title, someone who leads in God’s Kingdom is one who is actively being led by the Spirit.

*He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. **-1 Timothy 3:6***

Leaders who lead well are often shaped from the trenches having learned to be led well. This is the way Jesus did it with His Disciples. He was able to lead them well because He was led well by the Spirit in the Will of the Father. Jesus both taught and modeled this.