

Work and Evangelism

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12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works. (Tit. 2:9-14)

When we began this series, we said that by one calculation, you will spend something like a quarter of your life on the job. One quarter of your existence on earth will be spent pursuing your vocation, or jobs which support your vocation. That is not only an enormous amount of time away from home, it is an enormous amount of time with other people. Most often, those other people are not believers, and you will be working shoulder-to-shoulder with them for years. In some ways, these work relationships may be some of your best evangelistic opportunities.

And yet, all too often, we look past our co-workers when it comes to evangelism. We think about doing evangelism in the streets, we think about evangelism with strangers. We think about supporting missions, but all too often, we think very little about evangelism at work.

There are a few common reasons why believers don't evangelise more at work.

First, there's just the fear of man. We don't want conflict at that place where we go every day, and upon which we depend for money and food and shelter. We can simply be afraid. It might be the fear of losing your reputation at work, or the fear of ruining a friendship. In some cases, there is the real fear that someone might report you to HR for religious harassment, or for hate-speech, and your job itself might be on the line.

Second, we are sometimes so swamped in our work, we just don't give a lot of thought to the people we work with and their personal lives. We become used to the rush and the press and the pressure, focused on tasks, and our co-workers become less and less personal to us. If we have to admit it, we would have to say that few of the unbelievers we work with have ever become our friends, and our relationship has just never broached a topic like religion.

Third, we are often ill-prepared. We just aren't ready for that conversation. Mike Tyson once said, "Everybody's got a plan until they get hit in the mouth." We might imagine ourselves soaring to evangelistic heights, until someone blind-sides us with a criticism of religion or Christianity.

But in spite of the fear of man, in spite of over-busyness, and in spite of ill-preparedness, every Christian would agree that we have a responsibility to evangelise, and that includes to those neighbours we work with. Outside of our immediate families, we have a higher chance of influencing a co-worker to accept Christ than any other group of people.

But how do we do that? Are we supposed to share the Gospel every time we go to the coffee machine? Are we supposed to slip tracts into our co-workers' bags or mail-boxes? Are we supposed to forward sermons to everyone? Should we be in stealth mode, waiting for the day that the unbeliever begs us to share the secret of our perpetually grinning countenance?

Fortunately, Paul's instructions to Titus about servants give us a concentrated dose of truth as to how to evangelise in the workplace. Two simple and memorable actions explain how we evangelise in the workplace.

I. We Must Adorn the Gospel With Our Work

9 *Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Everything in verse 9, and part of verse 10 is said to be done so that Christian workers may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let's explain that last phrase for a moment. Doctrine means teaching, and it is the teaching about God our Saviour. In other words, the teaching that God desires that all men be saved, saved from their sin, and from His wrath. The teaching that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to be the substitute for all who believe in Him, and all who embrace Him and turn to Him will have everlasting life, and all who do not will perish. In other words, the gospel.

Paul says, working in a certain way, in the way he describes in verse 9 and 10, will adorn the Gospel.

What does *adorn* mean?

This is a Greek word which is the ancestor of our English word *cosmetics*. It means to decorate, to put in order. It is sometimes used to speak of a bride adorned for her husband, or the New Jerusalem adorned with jewels. It is making something outwardly attractive, drawing attention by how neat and beautiful it is outwardly.

The saying is, "You can't judge a book by its cover", and that's partially true, but it's equally true that people usually don't start investigating a book with an ugly cover. A beautiful cover might not mean the book is good, but a beautiful cover draws the attention.

The Bible is saying that Christian workers first have the task of decorating the cover of the book called The Gospel of God Our Saviour. They have the task of first drawing attention, or neatening, putting in order, beautifying the outside of this thing called the Christian faith. We don't have to do this because the gospel is ugly and needs make-up. We do this because unbelievers *think* it is ugly, and hearts in rebellion to God don't like its message. So before we give them the bad news of their sin and the bitter taste of God's judgement unless they repent, there is some sweetness and light that must be present. We do some public relations for the gospel. We do some pre-evangelism. We need to show them what the gospel does in our lives.

But note what that adorning is not. It is not trying to be as worldly as your colleagues, so they think that Christianity makes little difference to your life. It is not laughing at the same dirty jokes, joining in on unethical behaviour, or joining your colleagues for bouts of drunkenness or revelry. It is not trying to fit in so successfully that people are shocked, years later, to find out that you actually are a Christian.

No, notice the things Paul says: 9 *Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity.

Here are five ways to adorn the Gospel, things we have seen in this series on work.

First, be submissive. "*Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters".

We saw in Ephesians that Christian workers submit sincerely, because they practise the invisible man trick. They make their immediate boss or manager invisible, and see Christ as the authority behind all authority. And if the instruction is not sinful, then they obey unto Christ. They can do

unreasonable things, silly things, pointless things, inefficient things, and take them as tests coming from Christ.

When unbelievers see that you are a reasonable, sensible person, but that you have a deep reverence for authority, you are adorning the Gospel. You are doing pre-evangelism. Nothing in their lives will look like a Christian submitting to authority without grumbling, so you show the beauty of God's order.

Second, do excellent work. “to be well pleasing in all *things*”

Ephesians taught us not to work with eyeservice. That means, we don't do the bare minimum, when someone is watching. We try to reflect God in our work. That means we should bring more order to our work, not more chaos. We should bring creativity to our work.

If you want people to be interested in your God, you should work in a way that makes people interested in your work. Christians should develop a reputation for getting the job done, and doing it well, and finding a better way.

Third, respond to difficulty with meekness. “not answering back”

We said the world speaks the language of grumbling at work. Whether you roll your eyes inwardly or outwardly, whether you answer back out loud or in your heart, it still shows the heart is rebelling against what God has ordained for you.

Let me tell you what has a 100% rate of causing conviction: it is when unbelievers see Christians absorbing suffering without retaliating. It happened when the Romans watched Christians suffer. It happened when medievals watched Inquisitions. It happened when heathens watched missionaries accept death without revenge. Nothing convicts a sinful heart more than a Christian loving his enemies. Nothing adorns the gospel like behaving like Jesus did on the cross.

Fourth, be honest at all times. “not pilfering”

Pilfering here means to skim off the top for yourself, to embezzle, to take what belongs to others or the company and steal it. It can be money. It can be petrol. It can be assets. It can be goods. Most often, it's time. Being a Christian means we don't live by “what can we get away with”. We live by, “What does God say when He sees me do this?”. When you insist upon honesty when the unbeliever wants to cut corners, take shortcuts, hide, deceive, and he knows that no one will find out, he is puzzled. Isn't honesty just a rule that the government makes for its own enrichment? No, you say, honesty is based upon Proverb 15:3 The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good. This adorns the Gospel.

Fifth, be faithfully reliable. “but showing all good fidelity”

God's people are to be those who, when they set themselves to work somewhere, they are the loyal, reliable, and trustworthy ones. Faithfulness marks the believer. A Potiphar knows he can trust a Joseph. A Darius knows he can trust a Daniel. A Cyrus knows he can trust a Nehemiah. These men always do what they say, finish the task, are at their post every day, are transparently loyal, and do what's needed. Proverbs 20:6 reports the sad reality: “ Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man? An unsaved manager should know one thing about his Christian employees: they are the most reliable, the most steady, the least likely to suddenly jump ship, the plodders who will be found doing their job.

The Bible says, Christians, at work, be submissive, do excellent work, respond to difficulty with meekness, be honest at all times, and be faithfully reliable. When you do these five things, you have not preached the gospel. You have not yet done evangelism. But you have prepared the way for the gospel. You have adorned the gospel. You have perhaps drawn interest to the gospel. You have perhaps removed a few objections to the gospel. You have perhaps followed up the ground to

receive the seed. You have made something about the Christian faith seem attractive, interesting, reliable, sincere, and helpful.

According to 2 Corinthians 2:16, for some people, your Christian testimony will be the aroma of life. They will be drawn, attracted. For others, it will be the stench of death, and they will be repelled. Your job is not to decide their response. Your job is to provide the Christian version of a worker, the Christian alternative to the world. You are salt that brings a difference. You are light that gives clarity and points to another way.

Now that's the one part of our witness: we must adorn the Gospel with our work. But it is incomplete without the second action.

II. We Must Announce the Gospel With Our Words

the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works. (Tit. 2:9-14)

Once we have adorned the gospel, it is not enough. The Bible calls the Gospel here the doctrine of God our Saviour. Doctrine is teaching, and teaching is taught. Teaching is truth imparted verbally from one person to another. At some point, the Christian is going to teach his or her co-workers the doctrine of God Our Saviour.

You see, some Christians tell us, “Well, I don't shove the gospel down everyone's throat, and I don't feel I need to bring up the gospel in every conversation.” And that's fine. But all too often, you find the people saying those things actually never bring up the gospel in any conversation. They don't shove the gospel down anyone's throat, because they never even have it on a fork. They say they believe in friendship evangelism, but it turns out to be 100% friendship and 0% evangelism. Usually, the people who defend their silence this way are so far from being aggressive, obnoxious and pestiferous with the gospel, that they need to start heading in that direction before they'll do any evangelism at all.

Let's not excuse our fear, or our man-pleasing with claims of being strategic, or non-offensive. But having said that, we know that we are not being paid to evangelise. We are being paid to work. We should neither be silent about the gospel, nor should we harass people with it at every possible moment.

So how do we become people who at the right moments, and in the right ways announce the gospel, actually share the truth with others?

First, be familiar with the gospel. Paul gives us a mini-summary in verses 11 through 14.

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works

God's gracious salvation has appeared to all men, verse 11. Verse 14 tells us that this salvation is Jesus who gave Himself for us to redeem us from lawless deeds and purify for Himself His own special people. Once we are redeemed, verse 12 tells us we deny ungodliness and worldly desires,

and now live soberly, righteously and godly. And we live in expectation of the return of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

That's one summary. But every Christian should have some kind of summary of the gospel, that contains the four elements: God, Sin, Christ, Faith. God is the Holy Creator who made all things. Sin – we rebelled against God, and live in a fallen world, and can expect future judgement if we keep living in rebellion. Christ, the Son of God became man and died in our place, so that we should not be punished, but be accepted based on His righteousness. Faith, we must believe this is so, and transfer our trust from self to God.

1 Peter 3:15 say we should always be ready to give an answer to any who ask a reason for the hope that lies within.

Second, accept the cost of being a public Christian. You cannot teach without going public. You cannot teach the gospel unless you are willing to embrace the cost of being publicly known as a Christian. Yes, there is risk here. We are now in a difficult age, where the same person who smiles at you when asking about your religion, goes and lodges a complaint against you at HR for hate speech. Jesus told us that we are being sent out like sheep among wolves, which means we are in danger of being devoured. His command to us in that passage was to be as wise as serpents, and as gentle as doves. Be shrewd, but also be simple. Don't walk into traps, don't court disaster, don't deliberately antagonise. But then look for clever ways to put Christ on the table.

Maybe tell your co-workers what you did on the weekend. Share what you learnt in church. Put a Christian book or Bible study on your desk where your co-workers can see it. Add a Scripture verse to your email signature.

You can't adorn the gospel, if you're ashamed of the gospel. Take the plunge, nail your colours to the mast, and make it public that you are a Christian.

Third, build relationships with your co-workers, sometimes outside of work. We should not view our co-workers as mere evangelistic projects or targets. But we should think of loving ways to get to know them, understand them, and possibly gain an opportunity to speak the gospel to them. It's difficult to do this, in some workplaces. You are either so busy, or in some cases, there are even rules about not sharing your religion in the office.

Now sometimes we take a stab at this by inviting a colleague from work to come to church. But what we have to understand is for many secular people, attending church is very intimidating, very unfamiliar. They are probably several steps away from being willing to come to church. But they will come to a restaurant with you. They may come to your home. They may even be willing to come to a Bible study in your lounge. They are willing to talk more freely if you have to travel with them some distance.

There are some groups and subcultures who might never wander into a church, but God has placed you in their lives so you can build a friendship, and get the opportunity to speak the gospel to them.

Fourth, ask good questions. As you get to know your colleagues, questions are a great way to show you are not self-absorbed, and self-focused, nor that you think you have all the answers to all the questions.

Here are some useful questions:

□ What are you reading right now?

□ If I were to pop in on you on a Saturday or Sunday, what might I find you doing?

□ Did you grow up in a religious family?

Which often leads to deeper questions, like...

- What does it mean to be Jewish/Hindu/Muslim/etc.?
- Tell me what Judaism/Hinduism/etc. teach about who God is?
- Christianity talks a lot about sin – the idea that all of us have gone our own way – that we’ve rejected God’s way for our lives. Is sin part of your faith?

The person who is willing to discuss these will often either ask you or give you an opening to then announce that gospel that you are familiar with. Maybe you'll only get one chance, before you get shut down. Maybe you'll get several chances. But those brief moments are part of the reason you spend so much time adorning the gospel with submission, excellence, meekness, honesty, faithfulness.

God put you in the job you are in, partly to provide for yourself and others, partly to bring good into the world and restrain evil, and partly to be an ambassador for Christ .

It is not our responsibility to accept Christ for others. It is our responsibility to adorn the gospel of Christ, and announce the gospel of Christ.