

20D BIBLICAL RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

INTRODUCTION

Issues will arise at any workplace—guaranteed. Some will be work-related and others will be “people-problems.” Biblical guidelines can be applied to most of these. Even if the problem isn’t completely resolved, we can know that we’ve tried to honor God in our approach.

WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY

Challies approaches productivity from a Biblical framework. Instead of simply maximizing work output, productivity is more like stewardship: [1] [2]

Productivity is effectively stewarding your gifts, talents, time, energy, and enthusiasm for the good of others and the glory of God.

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).

The questions we ask then become these:

- What must I do this week? What are the things I must do in the week ahead to serve faithfully in each of my areas of responsibility?
- What can I do this week? What can I do to better serve others in each of my areas of responsibility? What can I do to excel in each of the responsibilities God has given me?

Do More Better is Challies’ book on productivity based upon these foundations. [3]

Starting points:

- Clearly define all your areas of responsibility (including family, work, church,...)
- Define your roles (expectations) within each area.
- Determine how to maximize your efforts in each role.
- Work primarily from a mission statement rather than a to-do list.
- Get organized and use good electronic tools.

Simply writing things down can be a major tool for productivity.

These lists can help one function and grow:

- People and events to pray for (note answers)
- Verses to learn (write out)
- Key things to do
- Calendar of major events

- How time was spent
- Lessons God is teaching
- Notes from sermons and Bible reading
- Key things to learn
- Budget plan
- How money was spent
- Recommended books, articles, and videos

DEALING WITH WORKPLACE DIFFICULTIES

Don't be surprised when difficulties arise at work. Sarah Landrum suggests these steps for dealing with issues: [4]

1. Realize that not everyone may be receptive to your advice.
2. Be willing to overlook an offense to yourself. (Prov. 19:11)
3. Pray particularly about stressful situations (Ps. 55).
4. Confront wrongdoing, but in a compassionate spirit.
5. Don't get caught up in office gossip.
6. Be consistent -Make sure your actions and words match.

BEATITUDES AND THE WORKPLACE

Eight Traits of an Ethically-Healthy Culture (David Gill): [5]

1. Openness & Humility ("Blessed are the poor in spirit") Teachability from top to bottom of organization; no arrogant know-it-alls
2. Accountability & Responsibility ("Blessed are those who mourn") All individuals & teams stand up; no blaming, no excuses
3. Freedom ("Blessed are the meek") Creative risk-taking encouraged; no micro-managing control freaks
4. Ethics & Excellence ("Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness") Insatiable hunger for both "doing the right thing" & "doing things right"
5. Mistake-tolerance ("Blesses are the merciful") Learn and try again; avoid punitive, fearful, repressive reactions
6. Honesty, Integrity, & Transparency. ("Blessed are the pure in heart") Consistency of thought, talk, and walk; no hidden agendas or evasions
7. Collaboration & integration. ("Blessed are the peacemakers") Bringing people together...bringing ideas together

8. Courage & persistence (“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness”) Guts in the face of difficulty

The value of the Beatitudes for workplace interaction

The Beatitudes have been seen as steps that lead us to Christ- We are broken before Him (poor in spirit). We realize our sin and need for a Savior (mourn). We seek His righteousness (hunger and thirst for righteousness). We verify receiving His mercy by showing mercy to others (merciful).

The Beatitudes are also key to interpersonal interactions, particularly in the workplace:

Poor in spirit	Not arrogant. Focusing on others, not simply on ourselves.
Mourn	Unhappy with our own failures and desiring to change.
Meek (teachable)	Not a know-it-all. Willing to learn from others.
Seek righteousness	Desiring truth and uprightness.
Merciful	Giving others a second chance if at all possible.
Pure in heart	No hint of improper relationships.
Peacemakers	Actively seeking to bring harmony to the workplace.
Persecuted for righteousness’ sake	Willing to suffer for doing what’s right.

LEADERSHIP

Sooner or later, most engineers will be involved in leadership, whether it is corporate leadership, project leadership, or basic leadership within one’s family. A leader differs from a manager, in that a manager is appointed to oversee the accomplishment of a task, directing planning, resources, and people. A leader develops goals and moves everyone forward.

Effective Leaders: [6]

– *Believe that by engaging the Holy Spirit at work, people, businesses, markets, and cities will be transformed.*

– *Their goal is to change the spiritual landscape of whole organizations in favor of the kingdom of heaven.*

- *Their strategy is led by the Holy Spirit. Actions speak louder than words. Timing is everything, and leaders diligently pray for value and impact.*
- *Others trust leaders and listen carefully to what they say.*
- *Their impact is transformational.*

Aspects of Leadership for Engineering –

Concepts of Leadership (Peter Northouse) [7]

- Leadership is a process
 - Leadership involves influence
 - Leadership occurs within a group context
 - Leadership involves defining and attaining goals
1. Developing Vision –articulating a clearly defined mission statement and inspiring goals
 2. Strategic decision-making – weighing all options in the light of mission and goals
 3. Forming, motivating, and directing a project team
 4. Project management – choosing approach, timeline, and budget for success
 5. Deliberately developing/equipping the next generation of leaders
 6. Servant Leadership (Blanchard- *Lead Like Jesus*): [8]

Focus on Humility and Confidence in God instead of Pride (Promoting oneself) and Fear (Protecting Oneself), which always lead to division or conflict
 7. Problem-solving in multiple dimensions (Ronald Heifetz -don't over-simplify a truly complex problem) [9]
 8. Leadership and ethics –Leaders set the tone for an organization's ethical atmosphere
 9. Leadership and Creativity (Puccio)—[10]
 10. Leadership and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) – ability to understand and control oneself and to “read” and be sensitive to the emotional state of others (books by Goleman [11])
 12. Recommended: *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (John Maxwell) [12]

Servant Leadership in Business

“Servant leadership” has become a buzzword in many business circles, but the true origins of the concept are Biblical: In John 13, Jesus, Creator and Lord, washed the feet of His disciples, a task that only the lowliest servant did. Servant leadership means putting others first. Don’t ask others to do what you’re unwilling to do.

In his thesis [13], Terry Michmerhuizen examines a number of Biblical examples of leaders (Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Nehemiah) and notes their various characteristics:

- Vision of needs
- Wisdom and discernment
- Honesty and integrity
- Planning and creativity
- Concern/compassion for people
- Communication
- Faithfulness
- Servanthood
- Mentoring
- Humility
- Perseverance in the face of opposition

Jesus, while coming to be our Savior, exhibited all of the characteristics of a leader. While Blanchard, Bennis, Drucker, and Peters give us insights into leadership, “Biblical principles of leadership are relevant in the business world today.” [14]

References

1. Challies, T., “Who Will You Serve and Surprise This Week?”
<https://www.challies.com/articles/who-will-you-serve-and-surprise-this-week/>
2. Challies, T., *Do More Better*, Challies, 2015.
3. Ibid.
4. Landrum, S., “Dealing with difficulties in the workplace,”
<http://www.crosswalk.com/family/career/how-christians-should-deal-with-difficulties-in-the-workplace.html>
5. Gill, D., “Eight Traits of an Ethically Healthy Culture,”
<https://www.marketsandmorality.com/index.php/mandm/article/viewFile/933/847>
6. Welchel, H., “Four Ways Christians Live and Work in the Marketplace,”
<https://tifwe.org/four-ways-christians-live-and-work-in-the-marketplace/>
7. Northouse, P., *Leadership*, SAGE Publ. 2015.
8. Blanchard, K., and Hodges, P., *Lead Like Jesus*, Thomas Nelson, 2006.
9. Flower, J., “A conversation with Ronald Heifetz,”
<https://people.well.com/user/bbear/heifetz.html>
10. Puccio, G., “Creative Leadership,”

<https://www.slideshare.net/Tudor/creative-leadership-by-gerard-puccio-presentation>

11. Goleman, D., *Emotional Intelligence*, Random House, 2005.
12. Maxwell, J., *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, Thomas Nelson, 1998.
13. Michmerhuizen, T., *Biblical Principles of Leadership are Relevant in the Business World Today*, Master's Thesis, Nazareth College, 1992.
14. Ibid.