

Making The Most Of Your Career

How do we deal with stress at work?

We will spend approximately 40% of our waking hours at work.

This means if I do **not** like my work I will spend a great part of my life frustrated and under pressure and stress, or if I enjoy my work then I will spend a large part of my life feeling fulfilled.

Many Christians ask how can I be a Christian and be successful in my career?

How do I relate what I am taught at church services to what I do at work?

How do I handle all the pressure and stress at work and still be a Christian?

The fact is that for a Christian, fulfilment in our work does not come from the kind of work we do but the way we do our work!

It is **not** what we do but the way we do it.

In God's Christian Bible we have three powerful attitudes that are given that can transform our work situation, whatever our work may be.

1) Do everything as a representative of Jesus Christ

Colossians 3:17 [NIV] *“Whatever you do, whether work or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus...”*

Colossians 3:17 [Living Bible] *“...whatever you do or say let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus...”*

All of our life is part of our Christian life – every part is important.

“Christian work” is **not** just what we do at church, it is anything we do for God.

We often make an artificial division of work.

a) **Secular work:** what we do for a job, salesperson, teacher, secretary, labourer, electrician, etc.

b) **Sacred work:** if we are a minister, missionary, pastor, Christian, musician, etc., or what we do at church or when we study God's Word or pray.

This is not Biblical; there is no such division in God's Word, the Christian Bible.

The Bible tells us that Jesus wants to be involved in all parts of everyone's life.

We cannot separate our life into different compartments, secular or sacred.

There is no such thing as a second class Christian. [That is *“first class Christians – ministers, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and every other Christian second class Christians”*]

Everything we do is to be part of God's Work in us, as representatives of Christ.

What does this mean?

Every part of our life: work, recreation, relationships, must reflect the Mind of Christ.

Acts 11:26 [Living Bible] “... *it was there at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.*”

The word Christian means “*little Christ*”.

The people at Antioch observing the believers in their town said “*these people act so much like Christ they are little Christs.*”

How do I do everything as a representative of Christ?

Simple! When you are in any situation we stop and ask ourselves “*what would Jesus Christ do or say in this situation?*”

If you are a believer, a Christian, you are in full time Christian work, regardless of what job we have.

2) Do everything with all our heart and might as if you were doing it for Jesus Christ

Colossians 3:23 [NIV] “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.*”

Colossians 3:23 [Living Bible] “*Work hard and cheerfully at all you do, just as though you were working for the Lord and not merely for your masters.*”

I ask the question, who do you work for?

When Paul was writing this, many of those who received it were slaves!

In the Roman Empire at that time there were over 60,000,000 slaves which was over half of the population of the area governed by Rome.

Most of work was done by slaves.

There were slaves who were teachers, doctors and other professions, very often the slaves were better educated than their Roman masters.

The slaves were responsible for training the master’s children.

Many of these slaves had become Christians and Paul was telling them to realise that their real master was Christ.

Colossians 3:22-24 [Phillips Translation] “*Slaves, your job is to obey your masters, not with the idea of currying favour, but as a sincere expression of your devotion to the Lord. **Whatever you do, put your whole heart and soul into it, as into work done for the Lord, and not merely for men, knowing that your real reward, a heavenly one, will come from the Lord, since you are actually employed by the Lord Christ, and not just by your earthly master.***”

If you are a Christian you work for Jesus Christ.

When we work for Christ it changes our attitude towards all we do.

It takes menial tasks and changes them into meaningful tasks.

It takes obligations and turns them into opportunities.

I learnt this lesson a long time ago by applying this principle to something I don't like doing, dealing with the garbage of our household.

I now try to think of it as if it was Christ's garbage I am dealing with.

You know what, I didn't spill any, I make sure it is in strong bags so animals don't spread it around before it is collected and well wrapped in the bags so that it doesn't give off a foul smell.

Do it as for Christ and the boring becomes a blessing for our motivation is changed.

The Bible tells us that a Christian should never do anything half-heartedly.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 [NIV] *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”*

I've found out that if you do something in a half-hearted fashion, it takes twice as long to do it.

At the top of every “to do list” we as Christians should put the words “now I work for God.”

When we have this attitude do you know what it will do?

It will generate enthusiasm in our lives.

The word enthusiasm comes from two Greek words “en” meaning “in” or “for” and “theos” meaning God.

Theology is the study of God.

When we work “in” or “for” God we will be enthusiastic.

So we work as to Christ, **not** as to men.

Notice in context with these are two attitudes that Christians should avoid in their jobs.

Talking mainly to slaves who had no choice but these also apply to us who are free to choose, in our employee/employer relationships.

Colossians 3:22 [Living Bible adjusted] *“You employees must always obey your bosses, not only trying to please them when they are watching you but all the time, obey them willingly because of your love for the Lord, and because you want to please Him.”*

a) **Don't just work when the boss is watching**

Sign in factory *“We believe that our employees should work eight hours a day and sleep eight hours a day, but not at the same time.”*

b) **Don't work just to win favour**

Commonly called *“buttering up your boss”* and a few other descriptions that are not suitable for repeating here.

“Saying the right thing to your boss when you don't really mean it.”

Do it for Christ, to please Him.

What is the result?

Colossians 3:24 [Living Bible] *“Remember that it is the Lord Christ who is going to pay you, giving you a full portion of all He owns.”*

Scripture tells us that God is watching.

He sees our attitude and it is God who will in the end reward us.

A major stress in work is the result of a lack of appreciation.

When people do not feel appreciated they don't perform well and get discouraged, tense and stressed.

They feel or say "*what is the use of trying?*"

Guess who are among the least appreciated people?

Homemakers, keeping the house clean and organised.

Others only notice and comment when it is **not** clean or organised.

The worst kind of lack of appreciation is when someone else gets the credit for what we did!

How then do we make the most of our career, our job?

a) We do it as if we were working for Jesus Christ, for it is He who will give us our final reward.

b) We do it as the representative of Jesus Christ.

3) Do everything for the glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31 [Living Bible] "*...you must do everything for the glory of God, even your eating and drinking.*"

Did you realise that you can eat and drink to the glory of God?

I'm glad that is in God's Word, for I love my eating and drinking.

What does "*glory of God*" mean?

It means to do it in such a way as to bring honour to God!

What brings honour and glory to God?

Look at the example of Jesus.

John 17:4 [Living Bible] "*I brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you told me to do.*"

We glorify God by completing the work He has given us to do.

You say "*what is the work God wants me to do?*"

Well, look at your talents and gifts.

Every legitimate task a Christian does is a means of giving God honour, glory, if our attitude is right.

Jesus then continued by saying what He had done while on earth as a human being.

He influenced people for God.

John 17:6 [Living Bible] *“I have told these men all about you.”*

John 17:7 [Living Bible] *“I have passed on to them the commands you gave me.”*

John 17:10 [Living Bible] *“...they are my glory.”*

Jesus had been the teacher and living example to the disciples for the 3½ years they had been in company with Him.

Jesus had shown them what God was really like by personal example and word of mouth.

We are to honour, glorify God by being so like Christ that we really are “Little Christs” Christians.

Philippians 2:5 [Living Bible] *“Your attitude should be the kind that was shown by Jesus Christ.”*

Three ways in which we can influence people for good for God.

1) Pray for those we come in contact with regularly

Colossians 4:2 [Living Bible] *“Don’t be weary in prayer, keep at it, watch for God’s answers and remember to be thankful when they come.”*

Write a list of all the people you come in contact with on a daily or weekly basis and pray for each one individually, that they may come to know Jesus Christ.

Be concerned in prayer about their spiritual life.

2) Be an example. Let people see in your life the difference being a Christian makes

Colossians 4:5 [Living Bible] *“Make the most of your chances to tell others the good news, be wise in all your contacts with them.”*

In our attitudes and our lifestyle, be different.

Remember you may be the only Bible some people will “read”!

If you were arrested and put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

We are to live our lives in such a way that people ask why are we so different [happy, contented, faithful, caring, loving, etc., etc.]

If I am working among a group of non-Christians and nobody asks me about my faith I need to closely examine my lifestyle!

3) Share our understanding of the purpose of life with others

Colossians 4:6 [Living Bible] *“Let your conversation be gracious as well as sensible, for then you will have the right answer for everyone.”*

Tell other people of the difference Christ has made in our lives.

But don’t change this order. **First** – pray; **Second** – be example; **Third** – give testimony.

The last thing Jesus wants is people who share with their mouth without praying and being an example first.

You can be a far more effective sharer of the good news than any preacher will ever be.

How is this?

Because of what people see as the motivation.

When a full time pastor shares something about Christ with others, they see it as part of their job and that is the motivation they have. They are paid to do it.

It is like saying *“pastors are paid for good and laymen are good for nothing.”*

Pause while that sinks in!

I don't like the word *“laymen”*.

It is not found in the Bible [glad we have been re-named “bi-vocational elders”].

There is no distinction in God's Family between the pastor and those in the congregation.

I'm no better than you.

The only thing that is different is the gifts that God has given us to use for the benefit of others.

You have God-given gifts that I haven't and never will have.

We are all ministers, but with different ministries according to our God given gifts.

When a full time pastor shares, they are seen as the paid professional, but when you share you are seen as the satisfied customer; and every businessman knows that the satisfied customer is the best advert he can ever have.

I heard once of an optician who had printed on his eye testing chart the four spiritual laws. When his customers read the chart they will be reading:-

Top line: *“God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”*

He says: *“Well, what do you think about that? Now read next line.”*

“Jesus loves you and wants to forgive all your sins and be the manager of your life.”

This optician has directed many people to Christ just by doing his job.

You can share your faith anywhere in many different ways.

You don't have to be *“pushy”*.

God will prepare others around you by some event in their lives.

Then when they will need spiritual advice you will be the natural person they will turn to.

You the Christian who has been showing love towards them and has the peace of mind they need in their trial.

We **PRAY - CARE - SHARE.**

Colossians 4:6 [NIV] *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

I like that translation.

What does salt do?

It makes you thirsty.

“You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink, but if you put salt in his oats he will drink!”

If our lives are “salty” others will get thirsty for Jesus who says He is the “water of life”.

People will say “I want what you have got!”

Matthew 5:13 [NIV] *“You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”*

Christians are to add taste to this bland life of most in today’s society.

Christianity is NOT a religion, it is a relationship: a way of living with others that involves every part of our lives.

History proves the power of a dedicated minority: it just takes a few to change many.

Lenin said “give me just 100 totally committed men and I will change the world.” And he did.

I’m challenging you to go back to the same old job with a new attitude.

The attitude of being God’s representative wherever you live and work.

To be someone who works for Jesus Christ and does everything to honour your Creator, by influencing others for Christ.

Pray - Care - Share

That is the way to make the most of our career and our life.