AT WORK WITH GOD

10 guidelines from the Bible concerning our work
Introduction

The Bible was written in another day and age, yet it speaks clearly about many issues which concern us to this day including the workplace. It speaks to employers and employees alike, to those in management or to those on the shop floor. It speaks to the jobless as well as the worker who is worth his salt.

In reading this booklet you will be surprised to discover how apt these verses from the Bible are today. Read them, apply them in your work situation and discover that you can enjoy your work as well as the Lord’s blessing on your life’s work.

What does the Bible tell us about the workplace?

In the Bible work was seen as a blessing from the very beginning. We read in Genesis that God took great joy in his work of creating and sustaining the universe. Throughout the various stages of creation, we read:

God looked at what he had done and saw that it was good.

__________________________ Genesis 1:10b,12b,18b,21b

Working in God’s creation

When God created men and women he blessed them and put them in charge of all that he had created. He wanted them to work in obedience to him and with his blessing. What is more, they were given a very clear job description.

So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said:

Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.

__________________________ Genesis 1:27-28

The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it. But the LORD told him, “You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden, except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!”

__________________________ Genesis 2:15-17

However, when the first man and woman disobeyed God, work became a punishment. God told Adam and Eve that they would have to work hard all their lives to make a living.

The LORD said to the man,

“You listened to your wife and ate the fruit from that tree. And so, the ground will be under a curse because of what you did. As long as you live, you will have to struggle to grow enough food. Your food will be plants, but the ground will produce thorns and thistles. You will have to sweat to earn a living; you were made out of soil, and you will once again turn into soil.”

__________________________ Genesis 3:17-19

Yet man finds joy in work as a gift from God:

The best thing we can do is to enjoy eating, drinking, and working. I believe these are God’s gifts to us, and no one enjoys eating and living more than I do.

__________________________ Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

Suppose you are very rich and able to enjoy everything you own. Then go ahead and enjoy working hard – this is God’s gift to you. God will keep you so happy that you won’t have time to worry about each day.

__________________________ Ecclesiastes 5:19-20

After you eat and are full, give praise to the Lord your God for the good land he gave you.

__________________________ Deuteronomy 8:10

But more than anything else, put God’s work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

__________________________ Matthew 6:33

Here are 10 guidelines which will help you to do your job in a way that is pleasing to God and which assures you of his blessing:
1 Rely on God

We often hear the saying “self-made” men or women to describe those who pride themselves on their own talents and abilities in the workplace. The Bible teaches us that we cannot achieve anything without God’s help. We are warned against planning as if we are in complete control of the future and also against boasting and taking all the credit for the successes we achieve.

When you become successful, don’t say, “I’m rich, and I’ve earned it all myself.” Instead, remember that the LORD your God gives you the strength to make a living. That’s how he keeps the promise he made to your ancestors.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

You should know better than to say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to the city. We will do business there for a year and make a lot of money!” What do you know about tomorrow? How can you be so sure about your life? It is nothing more than mist that appears for only a little while before it disappears. You should say, “If the LORD lets us live, we will do these things.” Yet you are stupid enough to boast, and it is wrong to be so proud. If you don’t do what you know is right, you have sinned.

James 4:13-17

Share your plans with the LORD, and you will succeed.

Proverbs 16:3

2 Work hard

The Bible teaches that those who work hard are wise and reap the fruit of their labour while those who are lazy are foolish and get nowhere. It is important to provide for our own daily needs by doing an honest day’s work.

You lazy people can learn by watching an anthill. Ants don’t have leaders, but they store up food during harvest season. How long will you lie there doing nothing at all? When are you going to get up and stop sleeping?

Proverbs 6:6-9

A door turns on its hinges, but a lazy person just turns over in bed. Some of us are so lazy that we won’t lift a hand to feed ourselves.

Proverbs 26:14-15

Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.

Titus 3:14

My dear friends, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I beg you not to have anything to do with any of your people who waste their time and refuse to obey the instructions we gave you. You know that you should follow our example. We didn’t waste our time being lazy, and we didn’t accept food from anyone without paying for it. We didn’t want to be a burden to any of you, so night and day we worked as hard as we could.

We had the right not to work, but we wanted to set an example for you. We also gave you the rule that if you don’t work, you don’t eat. Now we learn that some of you waste your time and won’t do any work, except the work of a busybody. So, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and beg these people to settle down and start working for a living. Dear friends, you must never become tired of doing right.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

People who don’t take care of their relatives, and especially their own families, have given up their faith. They are worse than someone who doesn’t have faith in the Lord.

1 Timothy 5:8
3 Be honest

The Bible has something to say about many of the problems encountered in the workplace today.

Stealing and lying

Stealing is a serious problem in business today, whether it is taking small items for your own use, or defrauding the company by embezzling large amounts of money. We need to honour God by being totally honest in all that we do and say in the workplace. The word of God from the Ten Commandments to the New Testament clearly warns us against stealing.

Do not steal.

______________ Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19

Do not steal or tell lies or cheat others.

______________ Leviticus 19:11

We don’t put up with thieves, not even with one who steals for something to eat. And thieves who get caught must pay back seven times what was stolen and lose everything.

______________ Proverbs 6:30-31

This scroll puts a curse on everyone in the land who steals or tells lies. The writing on one side tells about the destruction of those who steal, while the writing on the other side tells about the destruction of those who lie.

The LORD All-Powerful has said, “I am sending this scroll into the house of everyone who is a robber or tells lies in my name, and it will remain there until every piece of wood and stone in that house crumbles.”

______________ Zechariah 5:3-4

The LORD All-Powerful said:

“I’m now on my way to judge you. And I will quickly condemn all who practise witchcraft or cheat in marriage or tell lies in court or rob workers of their pay or ill-treat widows and orphans or steal the property of foreigners or refuse to respect me.”

______________ Malachi 3:5

If you are a thief, stop stealing. Be honest and work hard, so you will have something to give to people in need.

______________ Ephesians 4:28

Tell slaves always to please their owners by obeying them in everything. Slaves must not talk back to their owners or steal from them. They must be completely honest and trustworthy. Then everyone will show great respect for what is taught about God our Saviour.

______________ Titus 2:9-10

Bribery and corruption

Bribery and corruption have become rife in the workplace. The Bible teaches that bribery is wrong and will lead to your downfall.

Many people believe:

A bribe works miracles like a magic charm that brings good luck.

______________ Proverbs 17:8

However:

Being greedy causes trouble for your family, but you protect yourself by refusing bribes.

______________ Proverbs 15:27

And they keep their promises, no matter what the cost. They lend their money without charging interest, and they don’t take bribes to hurt the innocent. Those who do these things will always stand firm.

______________ Psalm 15:4b-5

It isn’t right to be unfair, but some people can be bribed with only a piece of bread. Don’t be selfish and eager to get rich – you will end up worse off than you can imagine.

______________ Proverbs 28:21-22
Corruption makes fools of sensible people, and bribes can ruin you.  
\[\text{Ecclesiastes 7:7}\]

Fraud and cheating

Often we hear about people who charge for services they haven’t delivered or goods they have not supplied.

In Biblical times, scales, weights and measures were important components in determining the price of goods. That is what prompted the demand for honest weights and honest trading. Yet, we often hear about businesses that charge for goods they have not delivered or charge dishonest prices to the poor.

Don’t try to cheat people by having two sets of weights or measures, one to get more when you are buying, and the other to give less when you are selling. If you weigh and measure things honestly, the LORD your God will let you enjoy a long life in the land he is giving you. But the LORD is disgusted with anyone who cheats or is dishonest.

\[\text{Deuteronomy 25:13-16}\]

The LORD hates anyone who cheats, but he likes everyone who is honest.

\[\text{Proverbs 11:1}\]

Meanness gets you nowhere, but goodness is rewarded. Always do the right thing, and you will live; keep on doing wrong, and you will die.

\[\text{Proverbs 11:18-19}\]

Use honest scales and don’t cheat when you weigh or measure anything.

I am the LORD your God. I rescued you from Egypt, and I command you to obey my laws.

\[\text{Leviticus 19:35-37}\]

You people crush those in need and wipe out the poor. You say to yourselves, “How much longer before the end of the New Moon Festival? When will the Sabbath be over? Our wheat is ready, and we want to sell it now. We can’t wait to cheat and charge high prices for the grain we sell. We will use dishonest scales and mix dust in the grain. Those who are needy and poor don’t have any money. We will make them our slaves for the price of a pair of sandals.”

I, the LORD, won’t forget any of this, though you take great pride in your ancestor Jacob.

\[\text{Amos 8:4-7}\]

I am the LORD, and it makes sense to respect my power to punish. So listen to my message for the city of Jerusalem: You store up stolen treasures and use dishonest scales. But I, the LORD, will punish you for cheating with weights and with measures. You rich people are violent, and everyone tells lies.

Because of your sins, I will wound you and leave you ruined and defenceless. You will eat, but still be hungry; you will store up goods, but lose everything – I, the LORD, will let it all be captured in war.

\[\text{Micah 6:9-14}\]
4 Be content

One of the easiest traps to fall into is to compare yourself to those who are better off than you are. As a result, you become discontented and constantly strive for more. Very soon you will be so enslaved by greed that you will no longer be satisfied with anything. The Bible warns us against envy:

“Do not desire another man’s house; do not desire his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns.”

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Exodus 20:17 (GNT)

There are two things, LORD, I want you to do for me before I die: make me absolutely honest and don’t let me be too poor or too rich.
Give me just what I need.
If I have too much to eat, I might forget about you;
if I don’t have enough, I might steal and disgrace your name.

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Proverbs 30:7-9

These people think religion is supposed to make you rich. And religion does make your life rich, by making you content with what you have. We didn’t bring anything into this world, and we won’t take anything with us when we leave. So we should be satisfied just to have food and clothes. People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them. The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain.

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1 Timothy 6:5b-10

Our foolish pride comes from this world, and so do our selfish desires and our desire to have everything we see. None of this comes from the Father. The world and the desires it causes are disappearing. But if we obey God, we will live for ever.

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1 John 2:16-17

Don’t fall in love with money. Be satisfied with what you have. The Lord has promised that he will not leave us or desert us. That should make you feel like saying,

“The Lord helps me! Why should I be afraid of what people can do to me?”

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Hebrews 13:5-6

I have learnt to be satisfied with whatever I have.

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Philippians 4:11b
5 Promote good relations

It is common knowledge that a company’s employees are its greatest asset. Therefore good labour relations are of the utmost importance in creating a stable and profitable organisation. Labour unrest and poorly motivated employees cost the economy millions every year.

Healthy labour relations are based on mutual trust and respect with the understanding that employers as well as employees (master and slave in Biblical times), are under the Lord’s authority. He expects employees to put in an honest day’s work and to be paid an honest wage.

Do not steal anything or cheat anyone, and don’t fail to pay your workers at the end of each day.

—- Leviticus 19:13

If you hire poor people to work for you, don’t hold back their pay, whether they are Israelites or foreigners who live in your town. Pay them their wages at the end of each day, because they live in poverty and need the money to survive. If you don’t pay them on time, they will complain about you to the Lord, and he will punish you.

—- Deuteronomy 24:14-15

Slaves, you must obey your earthly masters. Show them great respect and be as loyal to them as you are to Christ. Try to please them at all times, and not just when you think they are watching. You are slaves of Christ, so with your whole heart you must do what God wants you to do. Gladly serve your masters, as though they were the Lord himself, and not simply people. You know that you will be rewarded for any good things you do, whether you are slaves or free.

Slave owners, you must treat your slaves with this same respect. Don’t threaten them. They have the same Master in heaven that you do, and he doesn’t have any favourites.

—- Ephesians 6:5-9

Take care of a tree, and you will eat its fruit; look after your master, and you will be praised.

—- Proverbs 27:18

6 Take time to rest

In today’s competitive work environment there is the temptation to work too hard and to become part of the never-ending rat race. Eventually you deny yourself rest and begin to feel guilty when you are not working.

The rhythm of work with regular intervals for resting was established when God created the earth. By allowing yourself to rest, you acknowledge that you are not a slave to work.

Those who ignore this principle will not be able to keep up a high level of productivity. God set the example for us to follow.

So the heavens and the earth and everything else were created.

By the seventh day God had finished his work, and so he rested. God blessed the seventh day and made it special because on that day he rested from his work.

—- Genesis 2:1-3

Work the first six days of the week, but rest and relax on the seventh day. This law is not only for you, but for your oxen, donkeys, and slaves, as well as for any foreigners among you.

—- Exodus 23:12

Do your work in six days and rest on the seventh day, even during the seasons for ploughing and harvesting.

—- Exodus 34:21

Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me. You have six days when you can do your work, but the seventh day of each week belongs to me, your God. No one is to work on that day – not you, your children, your slaves, your animals, or the foreigners who live in your towns. In six days I made the sky, the earth, the seas, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That’s why I made the Sabbath a special day that belongs to me.

—- Exodus 20:8-11
7 Serve God with your income

The money and possessions we accumulate are ours by the grace of God and therefore belong to him. In the Old Testament God’s people were under an obligation to set aside one tenth of their earnings for God’s work. In the New Testament we are urged to give our offerings freely and with a glad heart.

People of Israel, every year you must set aside ten per cent of your grain harvest. Also set aside ten per cent of your wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of every cow, sheep, and goat. Take these to the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped, and eat them there. This will teach you to always respect the LORD your God.

You Pharisees are in for trouble! You give God a tenth of the spices from your gardens, such as mint and rue. But you cheat people, and you don’t love God. You should be fair and kind to others and still give a tenth to God.

Jesus was sitting in the temple near the offering box and watching people put in their gifts. He noticed that many rich people were giving a lot of money. Finally, a poor widow came up and put in two coins that were worth only a few pennies. Jesus told his disciples to gather around him. Then he said:

I tell you that this poor widow has put in more than all the others. Everyone else gave what they didn’t need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had. Now she doesn’t have a penny to live on.

Remember this saying,

“A few seeds make
a small harvest,
but a lot of seeds make
a big harvest.”

Each of you must make up your own mind about how much to give. But don’t feel sorry that you must give and don’t feel that you are forced to give. God loves people who love to give. God can bless you with everything you need, and you will always have more than enough to do all kinds of good things for others. The Scriptures say,

“God freely gives his gifts
to the poor,
and always does right.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

8 Accept your social responsibility

The pursuit of wealth and prosperity should not be our most important goals. According to the Bible, God blesses us so that we can take care of those who are unable to care for themselves. God has placed the poor, the sick, the orphans, the widows and the foreigners under our care. He will judge our faith according to how we treat them. Social responsibility is more than a public relations exercise. It should be a reflection of a true and honest service to God.

But don’t forget to help others and share your possessions with them. This too is like offering a sacrifice that pleases God.

If you forget to bring in a stack of harvested grain, don’t go back in the field to get it. Leave it for the poor, including foreigners, orphans, and widows, and the LORD will make you successful in everything you do. When you harvest your olives, don’t try to get them all for yourself, but leave some for the poor. And when you pick your grapes, go over the vines only once, then let the poor have what is left. You lived in poverty as slaves in Egypt until the LORD your God rescued you. That’s why I am giving you these laws.

Then the king will say to those on his right, “My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me.”

Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, “When did we give you something to eat or drink? When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear or visit you while you were sick or in jail?”

The king will answer, “Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me.”

Religion that pleases God the Father must be pure and spotless. You must help needy orphans and widows and not let this world make you evil.

Matthew 25:34-40

James 1:27

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Caring for the poor is lending to the LORD, and you will be well repaid.  

Proverbs 19:17

If you won’t help the poor, don’t expect to be heard when you cry out for help.  

Proverbs 21:13

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That’s why we must give our lives for each other. If we have all we need and see one of our own people in need, we must have pity on that person, or else we cannot say we love God.  

1 John 3:16-17

9 Pay your taxes

The Bible is very clear on the matter of paying tax. Because the Jews were under Roman rule, the question of tax in New Testament times was a very sensitive political issue. However, even in this instance the right of the government to levy tax is acknowledged by Christ while reminding us at the same time that we also have an obligation towards God.

Jesus’ enemies kept watching him closely, because they wanted to hand him over to the Roman governor. So they sent some men who pretended to be good. But they were really spies trying to catch Jesus saying something wrong. The spies said to him, “Teacher, we know that you teach the truth about what God wants people to do. And you treat everyone with the same respect, no matter who they are. Tell us, should we pay taxes to the Emperor or not?”

Jesus knew that they were trying to trick him. So he told them, “Show me a coin.” Then he asked, “Whose picture and name are on it?”

“The Emperor’s,” they answered.

Then he told them, “Give the Emperor what belongs to him and give God what belongs to God.”  


You must also pay your taxes. The authorities are God’s servants, and it is their duty to take care of these matters. Pay all that you owe, whether it is taxes and fees or respect and honour.  

Romans 13:6-7
10 Work for true wealth

Many people see the accumulation of wealth and possessions as their main purpose in life. However, the Bible clearly teaches us that such wealth is transient. The danger is that the desire for material goods could take over our lives if we are not careful. We cannot serve two masters, God and wealth. We need to work as God intended us to and so obtain true wealth which is lasting. The Bible calls this storing up treasures in heaven. If we put God first in all we do, our daily needs will be taken care of.

You cannot be the slave of two masters! You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Matthew 6:24

Don’t store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Matthew 6:19-21

Don’t worry and ask yourselves, “Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?” Only people who don’t know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these. But more than anything else, put God’s work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

Matthew 6:31-33

God blesses everyone who has wisdom and common sense. Wisdom is worth more than silver; it makes you much richer than gold. Wisdom is more valuable than precious jewels; nothing you want compares with her.

Proverbs 3:13-15

Warn the rich people of this world not to be proud or to trust in wealth that is easily lost. Tell them to have faith in God, who is rich and blesses us with everything we need to enjoy life. Instruct them to do as many good deeds as they can and to help everyone. Remind the rich to be generous and share what they have. This will lay a solid foundation for the future, so that they will know what true life is like.

I Timothy 6:17-19

God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him.

1 Peter 5:7

Don’t worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.

Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don’t ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do. So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you.

Philippians 4:6-9

God blesses everyone who has wisdom and common sense. Wisdom is worth more than silver; it makes you much richer than gold. Wisdom is more valuable than precious jewels; nothing you want compares with her.

Proverbs 3:13-15

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**Guidelines for our day to day work**

In the Bible we find guidelines for living with integrity, as God intends us to do. It tells us how we can experience God’s blessing in every aspect of our life.

This booklet of Scripture selections provides 10 guidelines which enable us to do our day to day work in a way which is pleasing to God and assures us of his blessing:

1. Rely on God
2. Work hard
3. Be honest
4. Be content
5. Promote good relations
6. Take time to rest
7. Serve God with your income
8. Accept your social responsibility
9. Pay your taxes
10. Work for true wealth

May the Lord richly bless you as you seek to honour him in whatever position you hold and whatever job you do. Like the faithful servants in the parable, may you also have the joy of hearing the words of the Master:

“Wonderful! ... You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!”

Matthew 25:21

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**My Commitment**

I ........................................................................................................................................

thank God that I am privileged to have a job.

I want to do my daily work in a way which is both pleasing to God and assures me of his blessing.

With God’s help I therefore commit myself to following these 10 guidelines from the Bible, set out in this booklet.

Signed: ..................................................................................

Date: .....................................................................................