

Bible Based Business Ethics

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Luke 12:15-21 - What was the wealthy farmer's moral issue?
 - 1. What it because he had an abundance? Many Christians assume that having abundance is a sin. They believe such things as:
 - 2. Corporations are "bad" because they are large and successful.
 - 3. Prosperity only comes from exploiting workers and giving unfair competition to other businesses.
 - 4. Christians who are wealthy are sinners, because they should give away all of their abundance.
 - 5. It is somewhat hypocritical, because when asked, "Who is a rich man?" An honest answer will be "Anyone who has more money than me."
- B. The wealthy farmer's moral issue wasn't that he had abundance; it was how he viewed his abundance, and how his viewpoint affected what he did with his abundance - Ecc. 5:13 (Don't put words in his mouth, or take words out of it)
 - 1. He wouldn't have abundance if God hadn't given it to him - Ecc. 5:18
 - 2. At best, to charge the wealthy with sin because they are wealthy is hollow rhetoric based on a flawed assumption
 - 3. Very likely, it is someone expressing a blend of ignorance of the truth and a secret envy of the blessings of others
- C. In business and labor, Christians never justify doing wrong with the reasoning that others have done wrong to them.
 - 1. "I can withhold information or even cheat the car dealer, IRS, utilities, etc. because I have been cheated by them so often in the past."
 - 2. "My boss does not pay me well, works me so hard, and doesn't care about me, so I don't care to do my best work in return."
 - 3. "My employees are lazy, demanding, and steal from the workplace; I don't think they deserve better wages and benefits."

I. BIBLE RULES FOR BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS

- A. Products for sale are not to be misrepresented
 - 1. Lev. 19:35-36; Prov. 16:11
 - 2. False weights are an indicator of flawed character - Hosea 12:7
 - 3. Honesty is to be treasured above profit - Prov. 19:1
 - 4. Dishonest wealth does not last - Prov. 21:6
 - 5. Buyers must not dismiss the value of the product for sale - Prov. 20:14
- B. Christians are not to defraud others - 1Thes. 4:6
 - 1. Don't misrepresent your competition - Prov. 24:24-26, 26:24-26
 - 2. Don't use flattery or exaggeration - Prov. 26:28, 29:5; Psalm 12:2
 - a. Enthusiasm, politeness, and kind words are good, but they must be sincere as well
 - 3. Honesty must govern all of our conduct - 2Cor. 8:21

II. BIBLE RULES FOR EMPLOYERS

- A. Workers have the right to be paid well for their efforts - Deut. 25:4; Matt. 10:10
 - 1. Taking advantage of unpaid labor is condemned - Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5
 - 2. Some will take advantage those with limited choices - Prov. 22:22
 - a. This does not mean there cannot be low paying jobs, entry level work, or temporary and farm labor.
 - b. A worker can decide to accept a lower wage, and must take responsibility for his choice - Matt. 20:1-2
- B. Employers may not take advantage, but must pay in a timely manner
 - 1. James 5:4; Deut. 24:14-15; Lev. 19:13
- C. Employers must offer periods of rest to employees
 - 1. God rested from His labors on the seventh day, and later instituted Sabbath law requiring Israel to set aside a day of reverence for Him and rest for them
 - 2. Jesus provided His disciples with opportunities to rest - Mark 6:31-32
- D. Work to provide work for your employees; see yourself as responsible to provide for them as human beings, not as disposable resources
 - 1. Do not use threats as a motivation for productivity - Eph. 6:8-9
 - 2. Treat them as you want to be treated, fairly and impartially - Matt. 7:12
 - 3. Give them justice and fairness - Col. 4:1

III. BIBLE RULES FOR EMPLOYEES

- A. If possible, get paid for doing something you enjoy - Ecc. 2:22-24
 - 1. But don't sit around refusing to work because you don't like the job you have - 2Thes. 3:10
 - 2. Sometimes you have to take an entry level job and patiently work your way into something you enjoy
 - a. Some folks are looking for the perfect job; one that requires little effort and makes them independently wealthy. I'd like to have that job, too!
 - b. Take the first job at hand, and in your spare time look for something better
 - c. A good job is a gift from God - Ecc. 3:13
- B. Respect your employer - 1Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9; 1Peter 2:18
- C. Be honest in your conduct - Titus 2:10
- D. Give sincere obedience - Eph. 6:5-8
- E. Work heartily, enthusiastically - Col. 3:22-24; Ecc. 9:10; Prov. 18:9
- F. "What about unions? Can a Christian be involved in a union?"
 - 1. It is an organization that works together for the benefit of laborers.
 - 2. As with ANY organization of men that does good using honorable means, Christians are permitted to share in it.
 - 3. However, when ANY organization uses dishonorable means and unscriptural methods, We may not be partakers with them.
 - 4. When ANY organization requires its members to participate in activities that violate GOD'S rules for Christians as workers, they must choose God's rules over the organizations rules. That includes unions.

5. You are grownups; you can look at the means and methods of your union, and you know what God requires of you as a Christian. Choose; you don't need me to give you permission or restriction

IV. IS SUCCESS AND WEALTH SINFUL?

- A. Natural result of labor is profit; God designed it that way - Prov. 14:23, 13:11
 1. Hence, a successful business does not necessarily imply that the wealth was gained dishonestly or through exploitation, though such
 - a. The Bible speaks of righteous, wealthy men: Abraham, Job
- B. God's instructions for wealthy Christians implies that He accepts wealthy Christians - 1Tim. 6:17-19
 1. Be certain not to trust in wealth or expect riches to remain - Prov. 23:5
 2. Pursuing wealth is fraught with danger - 1Tim. 6:9-10
 3. But being wealthy does not imply that we have ill-gotten gains or that we are greedy and selfish, or that we don't care about the poor
 4. Sometimes wealth happens by chance - Ecc. 9:11
 5. Rejoice when others are blessed in this manner; do not be judgmental or envious - Rom. 12:15; 1Cor. 12:26
- C. A Christian's focus should not be on this world, on wealth, on fame, or the like.
 1. These things are incidental to life under the sun; they are merely a means to an end. This world is passing - 1Cor. 7:29-31
 2. Worldly desires will not survive - 1John 2:15-17
 - a. Abundance comes and goes; it doesn't matter.
 3. Remember the rich farmer. Where is your treasure? Then, that's where your heart will be, and that's what your destination will become.