

Attributes of a Workplace Witness

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If I were to ask you to describe the core attributes of a person who exemplifies God's ideal for a Biblical worker, what might you say? Over the last several years I have observed individuals in whom God is doing a special work and using them to impact their sphere of influence. I have discovered four key attributes that are consistent in this person. And, I believe these attributes are God's ideal for the Spirit-led worker today.

So, let's take a look at four qualities exhibited by workplace leaders who are transforming their workplaces for Christ.

1. Called to Excellence - It Makes a Difference

.and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts (Exodus 31:2).

Several years ago I published a magazine devoted to Christians in the workplace. When I gave a copy of the magazine to a friend he looked at it and said, "This doesn't even look like a *Christian* magazine. What was this man saying? He was saying that products many Christians produce tend to be less than the *world's* quality. It was an indictment on the work ethic of a group of people - Christians.

One of the four core ways we can impact the workplace for Christ is by doing our work with excellence. A follower of Jesus should be a worker that exemplifies excellence in how they perform their work. Bezalel was a man hand-picked by God to perform an important work - to design and build the Ark of the Covenant. In fact, Bezalel was the first man in the Old Testament described as being filled with the Spirit of God.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship (Ex 31:1-6).

I can only imagine the type of carpentry that Jesus produced in his carpentry shop. I can imagine people in Nazareth saying that their table was made by Jesus of Nazareth and that craftsmanship was exceptional and would last a lifetime. I cannot conceive that Jesus would produce anything less.

Daniel, the Model Worker

" It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. Now Daniel so distinguished

himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." (Dan 6:1-3).

Notice in this passage that Daniel was an administrator over 120 satraps in the Persian government of King Darius. Daniel was the model civic worker. He did his job well and that is why he was respected by his boss and became the source of jealousy by the other workers.

One of the easiest ways to discredit Christ in the workplace is for us to do our work with less than excellence. In order to gain the right kind of attention and reputation our work should stand apart because we do our work unto the Lord. "*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*" (Col 3:17).

Doing quality work will not be the primary means of winning others to Christ, but it can disqualify us very quickly from ever having the opportunity to present Christ in a positive light. Go the extra mile when necessary. Make the effort to serve those around you. So, when you do your work, do it with excellence.

2. Ethics and Integrity - It's Your Foundation

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom (Ps 51:6).

In December 1983, The Princeton Religion Research Centre published a landmark survey conducted for *The Wall Street Journal* by the Gallup Organization. The researchers measured a wide range of moral and ethical behaviours, such as calling in sick when not sick, cheating on income tax, and pilfering company supplies for personal use. The results were disappointing, to say the least.

But what the researchers found most startling was that there was no significant difference between the churched and the unchurched in their ethics and values on the job. In other words, despite the fact that more and more people attend churches, churches seem to be having less and less of an impact on the moral fibre of their people, at least in the workplace. To quote the researchers:

"These findings...will come as a shock to the religious leaders and underscore the need for religious leaders to channel the new religious interest in America not simply into religious involvement but in deep spiritual commitment."

Thomas Linacre, Henry VIII's doctor and Renaissance thinker, after given the four gospels in Greek made the following statement: "Either these are not the gospels, or we're not Christians." Five years later Martin Luther hammered some church theses to a church door, and the Protestant Reformation began. St. Francis Assisi once said, "Preach the gospel always, and when necessary, use words."

I believe Satan's number one strategy is to defeat Christians in the workplace, make them ineffective in their workplace witness and divide Christians by keeping them apart. His goal is to create disunity and division within the body of Christ. This is why many cite they would rather not do business with a Christian. Satan is winning this

battle. We need a paradigm shift within the body of Christ among workplace believers.

I believe this trend will change as we become better equipped to see our work as a ministry and calling. We have so segmented our work lives from our faith lives that we have allowed the culture to encourage us that ethics and integrity are not important when compared to the bottom line. That is why we got into the problem with the Enron's and Worldcom's of the world. Remember, integrity is defined by what you do when no one is looking.

3. Extravagant Love and Service - It's What Others Will Notice Most

.whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (Mt.20:27).

A friend told a true story about one of his closest friends who experienced great suffering for the soul of his persecutor in his place of work on a cargo ship. His boss was the captain. This man was a committed Christian who shared his faith with others and was a good worker.

One day the friend led the sea captain's girlfriend to Christ. The sea captain already hated and ridiculed the Christian worker because of his faith in Christ. When his girlfriend came to Christ, she stopped sleeping with the captain. The captain blamed the Christian man for the change in his girlfriend. One day he entered the restaurant where the Christian man was having lunch. He walked over to his table and began hurling obscenities and began beating him. The Christian man simply tried to defend himself but did not fight back. The captain kept beating him until eventually the man lay on the floor bleeding.

Two men entered the restaurant and saw what was taking place. They jumped the sea captain and took him outside and began beating him. The sea captain was beaten so badly that he needed immediate medical attention. The Christian worker saw the condition of the sea captain, came to his aid, and began helping him. The sea captain was so moved that this man could do this after he had literally beaten him bloody that he began to weep, not understanding what could move a man to have such love in the face of being beaten. The sea captain accepted Jesus at that moment.

The Bible tells us that while we were yet sinners Christ came and paid our penalty so that we might live eternally. Many in the workplace have never known the love of Christ. You might be the only one they ever meet who can introduce them to this love.

Jesus modeled love and service in the marketplace. His ministry was also in the workplace. Of 52 parables Jesus told, 45 had a workplace context. Of 40 divine interventions recorded in Acts, 39 were in the marketplace. He modeled servant leadership and taught his disciples that serving others was the central focus of his life and should be the central focus of their lives as well.

"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you.

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:25-28).

Someone once said that people do not care what you know; they want to know that you care. When you genuinely take an interest in another person in the workplace, you will become a credible person in their eyes. You will stand out among the crowd. Recently I took a phone call from a CEO of a company. The man shared how he was impacted by the TGIF devotionals a family member began sending him. I recognized the man was not a Christian. We began to talk, even though I was pressed for time as I was leaving town that afternoon. The man ultimately prayed to receive Christ over the phone. Later, the man commented on how impressed he was that I took time with him on the phone when I was pressed to get out of town. As a busy executive, this man equated time with love and service to him. That is what the world is looking for.

I once sat across the table from a man who asked me how he could serve me? Offering to serve others with no motive for what that person can do for us goes a long way in building trust.

Signs and Wonders - It's the Catalyst for Transformation

"The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people" (Acts 5:12).

The fourth attribute of the workplace witness is signs and wonders. The early church made a huge impact on society not because of their knowledge, ethics, or service alone, but they ultimately transformed society through the power of God. Jesus gave his workplace apostles anointing that allowed them to perform miraculous signs. Jesus said greater works than these will you do as a follower of Jesus. However, most Christians in the workplace today do not realize God desires to reveal Himself in miraculous ways in their workplaces.

God is raising up a new kind of workplace believer who is experiencing the power of God in their daily work life. I have been privileged to walk alongside many of these wonderful workplace Christians. One of these is Emeka Nywankpa, who was a barrister in Nigeria. I asked Emeka to speak at a conference a few years ago on the subject of how the spiritual impacts the physical.

He shared a story when he was arguing a Supreme Court case in his country. He was to argue five points in his case. He came to court one day and prayed with his wife and juniors in chambers. During his prayer time the Holy Spirit spoke to him and said, "Do not argue point one through four, only argue point five." Emeka hears the Lord's voice so he immediately obeyed.

He came before the judge to change his plea. The judge was shocked but gave him permission to proceed. He proceeded and sat down. The other attorney got up and could not get a word out for twelve minutes. He stumbled around trying to get his words out. Then, he approached the bench and said, "Your Lordship it is unfortunate

my friend has not prepared for one through four. I wish to yield the case." The other attorney had not prepared for point five, only one through four. Emeka won the case.

You see, God gave Emeka a strategy to win his case supernaturally through obedience. It made no sense to him, but he obeyed and God gave him victory through a very unusual way.

Speak to the Books

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (Mark 11:22-24).

When I published my first book I was required to order 1,000 books. After a few months we had sold only a few books a week. We had no real distribution system yet. We were concerned. I felt the Lord prompting me that we were to do something in faith. I told Angie I felt we should go down to the basement and speak to the books to "leave our basement". We laid our hands on the boxes of books and proclaimed that these books leave our basement. Believe me, we felt very foolish. However, we felt we did this out of obedience.

A few hours later I received a phone call from a ministry in Dallas, Texas who ordered 300 books from us. We had never had more than 3 or 4 books a week sold since we had received them. The Lord built our faith through this experience that we could experience Him in greater levels than we had ever experienced Him.

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 2:4-5).

Paul understood that it was not knowledge that would change the world; it is the power of God working through believers. You and I need to move at this dimension if we are going to transform the workplace.

God has called you to do your work with excellence, integrity, service, signs and wonders. So, I believe these are the four key attributes that Christians in the workplace must begin to exemplify if we are going to see our workplaces and our cities transformed.