

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

July 5, 2026

Summer Wildfires
“Faith in the Workplace”
Ephesians 6:5-9
Rev. Mike Fordham

When is your birthday? How old are you? Do you know the date of the birthday of America? Did you do anything special yesterday for the 4th of July? Did you watch Fireworks? Do you know how old America is?

There are many amazing things that make being an American extra special, but I would use one word for our country that stands out that is *“Freedom.”* One of the most important blessings we have of being Americans is that of Freedom. Declaration of Independence states, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are **Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.**”* America gives all people the freedom to live a full, abundant, happy life. We have all kinds of freedoms that can give us a happy life: to go to school, to get a job, to earn a living or make money, to spend money, freedom of speech to say whatever you like, to believe what you like, to live your life however you want, to believe in God and live for Him. People gave their lives and still do today to give us that freedom. Where all this freedom really comes from is Jesus. Jesus came and died on a cross so that we could be forgiven of all our sins and then set free to be one of God’s children and experience the abundant life He has for us.

As members of this great nation of the United States of America and even more importantly, as members of the Kingdom of God which is the only eternal kingdom and the best one of all, we do have inalienable rights. Through Jesus we now have the freedom to live our lives for Jesus and one very important place that we do so is in the workplace. In this sermon series of our Summer Wildfires, we are looking at what the Global Methodist Church calls “Our Social Witness.” Our Social Witness refers to what it means to be a faithful disciple of Jesus in the world especially as it relates to various social issues we are facing in the world.

Today, we learn what the Global Methodist Church’s Social Witness says about how we are to act as faithful disciples of Jesus in a place where we spend a lot of our lives, in the workplace. “Our Social Witness” says, *“We believe that all should have the right to work in safe conditions with fair compensation and free of grinding toil or exploitation by others. We respect the right of workers to engage in collective bargaining to protect their welfare. We pray that all should be allowed to freely follow their vocations, especially*

those who work on the frontiers of truth and knowledge and those who may enrich the lives of others with beauty and joy. We acknowledge that science and technology are gifts of God intended to improve human life and we encourage dialogue between faith and science as mutual witnesses to God's creative power."

Let us now listen to the direction that God's gives us about how we are to conduct ourselves in the workplace.

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. ⁶ Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ⁷ Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ⁸ Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

⁹ Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

EMPLOYEES KINGDOM OF GOD CODE OF CONDUCT

The Apostle Paul first gives us direction concerning ***Employees Kingdom of God Code of Conduct***. In the reading of this passage about slaves and their masters some might wonder how this relates to us today. Slavery is obviously an embarrassing part of our American history that all in the church today decries. It is important to understand that slavery in the Greco-Roman cultures of the New Testament was more like indentured servanthood where someone put themselves in a place to be a servant until they paid off their debt or they did so in exchange for some other service. Being a servant in the 1st Century Greco-Roman world was not what we think of as slavery in our American history. Historian Murray Harris wrote a book about what slavery was like in the 1st century Greco-Roman world. He says that in Greco-Roman times, slavery had nothing to do with race, speech, or clothing. They looked and lived like everyone else and were never segregated off from the rest of society in any way. Slaves were often more educated than their owners and many times held high managerial positions. From a financial standpoint, slaves made the same wages as free laborers and therefore were not themselves usually poor and often accrued enough personal capital to buy themselves out of indentured servitude. Therefore, very few people were slaves for life in the 1st century. Most expected to be released from their slavery after a certain amount of time at work.

Slavery in the 1st Century Greco-Roman world was predominantly the workforce of that day. The Bible does not condone slavery and Paul and others Christian leaders discouraged it. In this writing to the church in Ephesus, Paul is then giving direction to

Christians that were both slaves and masters, or in other words, speaking about how we as Christians are to conduct ourselves in the workplace.

What Paul teaches for the 1st Century Graeco-Roman world in Ephesus easily applies to 21st Century workplaces today. God says to all of us who are Christians in our various workplaces that we are to be the best employees we can be for whatever company for which we are working. We make ourselves accountable to our employers and as such we simply do what we agreed to do when we were hired and come every day to work early, which is on time, and ready to serve with enthusiasm, giving our absolute best for that organization. The best employees in any business should be the Christians. We may not be the most talented or the most intelligent, but we should be the most reliable, hardworking, the most trusted as we always work with the utmost integrity and honesty whether the boss is looking or not. We are the ones who serve with a contagious enthusiasm and joy in whatever we do as we always give our best, not just for the good of ourselves, but for the good of our company.

In a sense you could say that as Christians, our employers can rely on us to work like parachute packers. The Texas Army National Guard has a group of special workers called riggers. Their job is to fold and pack the parachutes soldiers use when jumping from an airplane at 5,000 feet. These people are intensely dedicated to their task. The Rigger's Creed states, "I will be sure, always!" They know jumpers need assurance that everything regarding their chutes is perfect. In the 20 minutes it takes to meticulously pack an MC1-1 military parachute, 30 folds are required. A jumper has nothing to do with the chute until they put it on before a jump. Trust in the error-free performance of the riggers is all a jumper has to rely on. The Rigger's Creed further states: "I will never let the idea that a piece of work is 'good enough' make me a potential murderer through a careless mistake or oversight, for I know there can be no compromise with perfection." Riggers know that the parachute business is a life-or-death enterprise. Mistakes cost lives. There is no room for complacency. Do we approach our work as employees with the same level of commitment to giving our absolute best for the good of our fellow employees and employers?

EMPLOYERS KINGDOM OF GOD CODE OF CONDUCT

The Apostle Paul not only speaks to employees, he also turns to the employers and what we could call the ***Employers Kingdom of God Code of Conduct***. In essence, Paul was calling on all Christian masters to be servant-leaders. Paul says that the employers are not to treat employees harshly. A great guiding principle in the Bible for all employers is found in *Philippians 2:3-5* that says we are to follow Jesus' example as a servant-leader in this manner, ³ *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.* ⁴ *Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.* ⁵ *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.* Christian employers run their business, treat their employees by not being selfish or by pridefully trying to impress other. Instead, Christian employers are humble, unselfish leaders who are always thinking of ways to take care of their employees and in so doing will have the absolute best business possible. That is the

way that Jesus, the CEO of the entire Kingdom of God, lead His eternal Kingdom as a servant-leader.

As “*Our Social Witness*” of the Global Methodist Church says, “*We believe that all should have the right to work in safe conditions with fair compensation and free of grinding toil or exploitation by others.*” Christian business owners, employers, bosses, supervisors are to create these kinds of healthy work environments where their employees work under safe conditions, can thrive in their work, and are fairly compensated. Christian employers understand that by being servant-leaders who create healthy work environments, their organization will result in being much more productive, and prosperous because they are treating their employees as unselfish servant-leaders.

A really great example of this for all business owners, employers, and supervisors is found in the story of Dan Price whom CNN reported back in 2019, seemed to have it all. Dan Price was the CEO of a successful business with a million-dollar salary and a gorgeous home overlooking Puget Sound outside Seattle, Washington. But then he noticed two things: first, more money wasn't making him any happier. Dan said, “There's some number where, when you hit it, the money over that just doesn't make your life much better.” Secondly, Dan's employees were struggling. Cost-of-living in Seattle is one of the highest in the nation. So, Dan did something unthinkable: in 2015, he cut his million-dollar salary down 90% in order to raise the minimum wage of his workers to \$70,000. The effect was immediate: More than 10% of employees purchased a house for the first time. Personal individual 401k contributions more than doubled, and more than 70% of employees with debt had been able to pay some of it down. Other surprising things happened as well: The number of babies born to employees in the company increased from 0-1 per year to roughly 6-7 per year.

One of Dan's company's employee said when asked how the company's wage policy affected their life, “The worries of not being able to pay for something have disappeared. I don't have to make a choice between fuel or groceries. I don't have to worry about an unexpected emergency.” And what happened to Dan's company? It grew from 120 employees to more than 200. They even opened a second location in Boise, Idaho and instituted the same minimum wage there as well. Dan said, “I'm the same age as Mark Zuckerberg and I have dark moments where I think, ‘I want to be just as rich as Mark Zuckerberg and I want to compete with him to be on the Forbes list. And I want to be on the cover of Time magazine, making lots of money.’ All these greedy things are tempting. But my life is so much better.”

GOD IS THE ULTIMATE BOSS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Apostle Paul not only gives us the employees and employers Kingdom of God code of conduct, but he also threads throughout this teaching the most important, guiding principle for all Christians in the workplace and that ***God is the Ultimate Boss in the Workplace for Members of the Kingdom of God***. When we leave this church every Sunday, we are sent out into our world as servants of God with our own unique ministry

in our workplaces. That workplace may be a paid job for a company, or it may be serving at home and the community as a volunteer now in retirement, or another very challenging calling from God is to be a stay-at-home parent raising God's children. The principle that we live wherever our workplace might be in the world is found in verse 7 that says that you are to work *"as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."* Colossians 3:17 makes the same point as it says, *"And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father."* When we work for God first and foremost, our work then becomes a sacred ministry wherever it may be in the world. We then want to first and foremost please God and do God's will in everything we do. This will then lead us to closely follow God's code of conduct whether we are employees or employers. It will also give greater meaning to our work and enable us to press on to give our best on those days that are so overwhelming that we just want to quit.

Lee Eclöv shared in his sermon on this same passage in Ephesians 6 about Dallas Theological Seminary professor Howard Hendricks who shared about a time when his flight was delayed. His fellow passengers were getting more and more irritated, and some of them began to take out their frustrations on the flight attendants. Hendricks noticed how gracious and poised one of the flight attendants was, and when they finally took off and she had a minute, he called her over and commended her. He told her that he wanted to write a letter of commendation to the airline to tell them what a good job she had done. She pleasantly surprised him when she said, "I don't work for the airline; I work for Jesus Christ. And this morning before I left for work, my husband and I prayed that I would be able to serve Christ in my job." The key to being the best employee or employer, to enduring those days of work that are beyond overwhelming is by understanding that our workplace is our ministry. Paul reminds us that when we truly work for the Lord as we are called to do, we know that God will give us an eternal reward that is far better than any paycheck or benefits this world can give.

Jesus was our example of coming into this world and humbly serving God in everything that He did. In doing so God empowered Him to face the absolutely toughest day at work that led to Jesus selflessly giving His life for the sake of God's kingdom all for our good so that we will be set free to give our lives to God in our workplaces.

Hebrews 13:20-21, *"²⁰ Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—²¹ may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen."*

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Every Good endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*, Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf
- *The Spirit of Disciplines*, Dallas Willard

Icebreaker Questions

1. What was your very first job, and what is one lesson you learned from it that has stayed with you?
2. Who has been the best boss, supervisor, or mentor you've ever had, and what made them stand out?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Mike emphasized that Christians should be the most reliable, trustworthy, and enthusiastic employees. Which of those qualities do you find most challenging to demonstrate consistently, and why?
2. Ephesians 6:7 tells us to "work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." How would your attitude toward your work—or your service at home, church, or in retirement—change if you consciously viewed it as ministry to Christ?
3. The sermon described two "Kingdom of God Codes of Conduct"—one for employees and one for employers. Whether you supervise others or simply influence those around you, what servant-leadership principles from Philippians 2:3–5 can you begin practicing this week?
4. The sermon reminded us that integrity is demonstrated not only when someone is watching, but especially when no one is watching. Can you share a time when choosing integrity came at a personal cost? How did God use that experience?
5. The sermon concluded by reminding us that God is the ultimate Boss in every workplace. What practical step can you take this week to make your workplace, volunteer role, home, or daily responsibilities a more visible witness for Christ?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?