

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

Lesson 16: “Be Just and Faithful in Service”

Scripture: I *Thessalonians 4*; *Ephesians 4*; II *Thessalonians 3*

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand that our conduct at work reveals to the unsaved world whether or not having a saving faith in Jesus Christ has the power to change our lives for the good.

Covenant Segment:

We engage...to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others.”

Overview

As a community of believers in Christ Jesus, we are compelled to exemplify godly character in all that we do. By our profession of faith, we are called to a higher standard whereby our lives should reflect the image of Christ. *To be just and faithful in our services* should reveal that our good deeds extend beyond the church walls. This gives testimony of our relationship with Christ. Moreover, when Christians are diligent, kind and just in the workplace, this can produce a spiritually healthy environment that could afford an opportunity to present Christ to others.¹ Oh what a joy it is when a co-worker accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior and receives the gift of salvation. Paul admonishes us to live and act worthy of the calling, God’s sovereign call to salvation, and to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. Our conduct should image Christ.

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received... diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds [us]. (Holman Christian Standard Bible) [HCSB] *Ephesians 4:1, 3*

Focus Statement

1. The focus of the Covenant is on kindness, justice, and honest work (“faithful in the service we promise others”).²

This is clearly amplified in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians.

¹Turner, William C. (2002). *A Journey through the Church Covenant*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 85

²Turner, William C. (2002). *A Journey through the Church Covenant*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 36

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

^{10b}But we encourage you brothers, to do so even more, ¹¹ to seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, ¹² so that you may walk properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone. (HCSB) I Thessalonians 4:10b-12

Our personal work ethic presents a compelling composite of our inner life in Jesus Christ. When we demonstrate that we have integrity in our work, we give a powerful witness of virtue that flows from God’s standards. We have many opportunities to show that God dwells in our hearts by our work habits. Do you put in an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay? It’s in the little things such as: being punctual, not shaving time off from our regular schedules, being productive and not slothful at work, or using work time for personal matters. We might not get caught by our employers, but we are accountable to God. Even more so, when we engage in unethical habits continually, we become ethically, morally, and spiritually dulled to sin in our lives. We stand the terrible chance of growing “*spiritually distant*” from God. Nothing would please the devil more than to see us dishonor God by our work habits.

The Apostle Paul presents a powerful model for us.

⁸We did not eat anyone’s bread free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ It is not that we don’t have the right [to support], but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us. ¹⁰ In fact when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: “If anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat.” ¹¹ For we hear that there are some among you who walk irresponsibly, not working at all, but interfering with the work of [of others]. ¹² Now we command and exhort such people, by the LORD Jesus Christ, that quietly working, they may eat their own bread. (HCSB) II Thessalonians 3:8-12

Another aspect of godly behavior concerns how we get along with others with whom we work. Are you the source of confusion, gossip, backbiting, envy, and strife in your work setting? If God were to review your social behavior in the workplace, would He find that you are a person whose conduct is righteousness or unrighteous?

2. Our Covenant tells us we must have a wholesome Christian attitude toward work.³ What is a “wholesome” “Christian” attitude toward work?

Gratitude to God is the beginning of a “wholesome” attitude toward work. God is the one who affords us the opportunity to work; we must never take it for granted. There are many people who wished they had the privilege of going to work every

³Turner, William C. (2002). *A Journey through the Church Covenant*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. pg. 85

day. When we understand that God has graciously provided work for us, we begin to understand that there is honor in all work.

Poor attitudes and poor work conduct can interfere with the productivity of others.

⁷ *For you yourselves know how you must imitate us: we were not irresponsible among you....* ¹¹ *For we hear that there are some among you who walk irresponsibly, not working at all, but interfering with the work of others.*

(HCSB) II Thessalonians 3:7, 11

A common quote states: “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.”

- 3. As followers of Christ, we are to model kindness and fairness in every way since we are created in the image of God.⁴**

The Bible tells us that God is not the author of confusion, nor should a believer be the author of confusion in the workplace. What are your co-workers’ expectations of you? Can they count on you to be an example of a person who is a diligent worker or a busybody who keeps confusion going? Contrary to the latter, we are to live out the fruit of the Spirit...

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith,*
²³ *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Gal 5:22-23 (HCSB)*

It pleases God when we bear fruit. Jesus said that we glorify God when we do.

⁸ *My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples. (HCSB) John 15:8*

When we live and serve according to God’s Word in the workplace and among the saints, not only is God magnified, but He takes note and remembers.

¹⁰ *For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you showed for His name when you served the saints – and you continue to serve them. (HCSB) Hebrews 6:10*

Reflection and Discussion:

What is an honest day’s work and does it have any value in today’s work place?

What can employers do to show their care and concern for their employees?

Can you describe a person who models Godly behavior in your work place?

⁴Turner, William C. (2002). *A Journey through the Church Covenant*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. pg 86

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

Where we are in the Church Covenant... *

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; ***to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others;*** endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

Addendum to Lesson 16

Lesson 16: “Be Just and Faithful in Service”

Scripture: I *Thessalonians 4*; *Ephesians 4*; II *Thessalonians 3*

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand that our conduct at work reveals to the unsaved world whether or not having a saving faith in Jesus Christ has the power to change our lives for the good.

Covenant Segment:

We engage...to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others.”

Whether we are business owners, employers, supervisors, leaders, or Christians who employ persons to do work for us such as the lawn, snow removal, house work, or carpentry, we covenant “*to be kind and just to those in our employ*”. In such roles, kindness and justice or fairness should govern our treatment of them, our response to them, and our attitude towards them. Our character and conduct should represent Christ. People expect to see something different about us because we are Christians. As Christian employers and leaders in the workplace, we have a certain responsibility in how we handle and approach others. When we do not exhibit Christian behavior, offended persons are quick to say, “He/she is supposed to be a Christian. I don’t see the evidence.” To be kind and just is not to withhold a man’s wages unfairly or to put someone on a difficult work task or to overload someone with work or to offer little pay for too much work. Workers may not always perform to our liking; however our approach and expression to them should be with kindness and fairness. It is not to shame them publicly or treat them harshly without respect. The standard is always to reflect Christ not only in our treatment of others, but also in our manner of speech, payment for work, and general attitude toward them. Living out the Fruit of the Spirit; love joy, peace, gentleness, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, and self-control is an extension of the covenant but a sure way to reflect Christ in our deportment and to be a true witness of what it means to be a Christian.

Jeremiah 22:13 depicts God’s attitude toward laborers; He condemns injustice.
Woe for the one who builds his palace through unrighteousness, his upper rooms through injustice, who makes his fellow man serve without pay and will not give him his wages....
Jeremiah 22:13 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)