

**I TIMOTHY 6:1-2**  
**EXHORTATION TO SERVANTS!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Timothy chapter 6 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's first letter to Timothy.

Keep in mind that Paul is writing to this young pastor who is overseeing the church in Ephesus to deal with some of the problems that had crept into the church.

Remember what Paul said back in I Timothy 3:14-15, "**These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**"

In other words, he is telling Timothy to get back to the basics of the Christian faith and how important that is for us today.

As we have seen in our studies, the church today, in general, is no longer the pillar or proclaimer of the truth. It is no longer the foundation for the truth. Many have become nothing more than entertainment centers, counseling centers, sports centers.

We have moved away from the truths of God found in the Word of God and one of the reasons that is so true is that we are more interested in what we want than what God wants.

So our worship is about ourselves.

Our churches have focused their teachings to tell us things we want to hear.

We have all kinds of things that will meet our fleshly desires in the church.

But the one thing we don't have, many times, is the Word of God being taught or if it is being taught, it is watered down so not to offend anyone!

Remember the warning that Paul gave to Timothy in I Timothy 4:1-2, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.”**

As you move away from the Word of God you are opening yourself up to all kinds of false teaching, false doctrines, or as Paul calls them, **“doctrines of demons.”**

And what is so dangerous with this is that as you continue down this path your conscience becomes insensitive to the things of God, and it is amazing what you can fall prey to.

It is the Word of God opened up to us by the Spirit of God that leads us in the ways of God. Never forget that!

In our study this morning we are going to look at slaves and how they were to work, Christian slaves.

Now I know, when I say **“slaves”** many of you are angry, you don’t want to talk about something like that.

But let’s think about this for a minute. As Christians, are we not bondslaves of Jesus Christ?

Of course we are! And like it or not, in the Roman Empire, slavery was a big part of their lives.

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

It has been estimated that there were between fifty and sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire, and that as many as one third of the populations of large cities such as Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus were slaves.

Some in the Ephesian church were slave owners, as was Philemon in the Colossian church.

Many in the church were either slaves or ex-slaves (called “freedmen”).

And some in the Ephesian church were slaveless citizens who, because of their lack of servants, were often poor.

So we must understand that the culture of slavery affected virtually every aspect of the Ephesian church. . .

Now, in respect to the church in Ephesus, which Paul references in writing to Timothy, it is clear that slaves and freedmen comprised a large portion of the congregation.

It is likely that slaves totaled more than the usual 30 percent.

Indeed, the presence of a large percentage of Christian slaves in Ephesus is apparent because the earlier letter to the Ephesians contains an even longer passage on slaves, as does Colossians, which is in the same geographical area.

This high slave-to-master ratio in the Ephesian church was a natural formula for tension. Many Christian slaves came from homes with non-Christian masters. Others had Christian masters, who would naturally be in the same house church. No doubt some of the elders were slave owners, as was Philemon in the church of Colosse.

Add to this mix the gospel’s great truth that in Christ all become brothers and sisters – that “There is neither . . . slave nor free . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28) – and the possibility of relational stress heightens. . . .

And now, regarding slaves and masters, Paul gives explicit advice as to their conduct – the sake of the gospel. The practical implications of these verses are important for us today too, because we all are subservient to someone.

- R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1-2 Timothy and Titus, pp. 145, 146, 147

As we will see, there is a very practical application to what Paul is speaking of in these two verses here in I Timothy chapter 6.

I have called our study – ***EXHORTATION TO SERVANTS!***

And I will break these two verses down into two main points.

They are,

***SERVE WELL YOUR UNSAVED BOSS – I TIMOTHY 6:1***

***SERVE WELL YOUR SAVED BOSS – I TIMOTHY 6:2***

Let's put this into perspective for us before we get to our text this morning. And please understand that this has everything to do with work ethics.

This is what we are told,

Ours is a society that does not place a high value on work. According to one survey, 70 percent of American workers do not like their jobs. Of those 70 percent, 90 percent said they did not feel like getting up in the morning to go to work.

The average worker is consumed with creature comforts, leisure, and materialism. He views his job as a necessary evil to finance his indulgences. That mentality is summed up in the popular bumper sticker that reads, ***“I Owe, I Owe, So Off to Work I Go.”***

Unfortunately, some of those unhappy workers are Christians, who need to be reminded of their responsibilities as employees. The church today needs to rediscover a biblical theology of work.

That theology begins in Gen 2:15: ***“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”***

In the garden, before the Fall, man was assigned work. Work, therefore, is not a result of the curse, but of God’s creative design for the fulfillment of man.

Work did, however, become more painful and difficult after the Fall.

For the believer, work is a sacred duty. A Christian sees everything he does in reference to his relationship to God.

The Reformers stressed that point. There is no aspect of life or conduct, however apparently insignificant, which should not be directed to the glory of God.

Every legitimate job has intrinsic value because it is the arena in which believers live out their Christian lives. Christianity is not a hothouse religion, but one that survives and triumphs in the real world.

Believers most commonly interact with that world in the work place, as they live out their faith on their jobs.

They are to be a “city set on a hill” (Matt 5:14). Christians must be concerned that their conduct on the job shows others the power of Jesus Christ to transform a life.

Believers’ work performance will bring either praise or blasphemy to the name of God.

All work, whether directly or indirectly, is to advance God’s Kingdom. Even those early Christians who were slaves could glorify God by faithfully fulfilling their duties.

Apparently the congregation under Timothy's charge was struggling to sustain a biblical work ethic in the world of slavery. Paul writes this passage as a corrective for them in this vital area.

To do so, he addresses two simple points: Serving a non-Christian master, and serving a Christian master. The instruction he gives is vital to any Christian employee in any social system.

- John MacArthur, 1 Timothy

And that is what we will be looking at this morning, our work ethics. And, as you will see, they are so important for our witness, for our light to shine brightly in this dark world!

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Timothy chapter 6, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic -

***EXHORTATION TO SERVANTS!***

## **I TIMOTHY 6**

### **VERSE 1**

Remember the focus of this verse – ***SERVE WELL YOUR UNSAVED BOSS!***

And the Greek word that Paul uses here for "**servants**" is DOULOI, and it speaks of a bondservant.

As we have seen, there were some 50 to 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. And now, some of these slaves have turned to Christ and some of their owners have turned to Christ.

So what is the big deal?

Let me share with you what the big deal was, and I believe it is a problem today.

The problem was that some were not doing what they were supposed to be doing, they were slacking off and we will talk about that more as we continue on looking at ***SERVING WELL OUR UNSAVED BOSS!***

Now let me say this before we move on.

Why didn't Paul mount a campaign to wipe out slavery?

Think about that for a minute.

First of all, if he tried, it could have been a disaster. But I don't think that was the main reason.

I think Paul didn't try to campaign to eliminate slavery because the big issue was the heart of man. He could have got all kinds of laws passed and yet, the heart would still be there, and it would be evil and have that same attitude about slavery.

And it is not just slavery, look at all the wickedness that is out there because of man playing God and doing what he wants to do instead of what God has for them. Which is what is best!

Look at how man today even tries to control the lives of others!

Paul's desire was to bring them to Christ and the Holy Spirit would remove those things in the persons life, like pride and greed and selfishness that produces that attitude of enslaving people.

And as more and more people were turned to Christ, slavery would become a thing of the past!

Sadly, it is still around in some nations today and it is just as evil.

Love would overcome this bondage and for those who have come to Christ, it has!

Now, in the text we read this morning, I believe that Paul is addressing two issues here.

First, the slave who works for an unsaved owner.

And then he deals with a slave who works with an owner that is a Christian.

Why is this such a big deal?

Again, this is a big deal because we saw the number of slaves in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. And now that Christianity has been introduced into the world, some of these slaves had become Christians and some of these slave owners had also become Christians, as I have said.

So Paul deals with the unsaved slave owner first. And the point is simple.

***If your owner is not saved, do your best to serve your master faithfully, be respectful to him.***

Now we can come up with a million reasons why they don't deserve to be treated kindly, for us to work hard for them. But Paul lays it out and he tells us that if you don't, then the name of God will be dragged through the mud, God will be dishonored.

You see, you represent the Lord in all that you do and thus, at work, if you are lazy, disrespectful to your boss, it sheds a bad light on God.

Paul, in Colossians 3:22-25 tells us, **“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”**

In other words, you serve your master as unto the Lord. Don't just work hard when they are watching you, but all the time because the Lord is watching you and you are serving Him!



And in the early church, this was played out and it impacted the unsaved in a powerful way.

One writer put it like this, *“The history of the early church reveals that Christian slaves generally commanded a higher price on the slave market than unbelievers. If a master knew that a certain slave on the auction block was a Christian, he would generally be willing to pay more for that slave, since he knew that the slave would serve him faithfully and well. This is high tribute to the Christian faith.”* (William MacDonald)

That is a powerful witness to the unsaved, the way we work. They are watching. And for today, we are not slaves, we get paid for what we do, but we are a witness to our boss, let us shine brightly so they may see Jesus in all that we do! And really, not only our boss but those that are working with us!

Let me share this with you and then I will share a few examples from the Scriptures to show you how we are to work.

We are told,

Sometimes Christians imagine that the new freedom Christ brings elevates us above the obligations that fall on others.

A gnostic air of superiority invades our souls. Menial tasks are for others. Prayer and soul-winning take precedence, we argue.

British New Testament scholar Philip Towner tells how this happened to him after becoming a Christian while serving in the military in England:

*“There were several of us who had just set out on the Christian adventure. In our enthusiasm to serve Christ we somehow concluded that we didn’t need to concern ourselves with mundane rules about shined boots and clean, pressed uniforms.”*

He concludes:

***“Our superiors quickly made the connection between our new faith and our sloppy appearance. And in that small corner of the world, Christianity was in danger of being linked with insubordination.”***

I once had an employer tell me he had become skeptical about Christians because of his experience with two theological students who seemed to be always standing around talking about God during work hours.

But what really did it was when the boss observed one go into the washroom for twenty minutes. When the employee emerged, he heard him whisper to his fellow-student, ***“I just had the most wonderful time. I read three chapters of the Gospel of John.”*** Three chapters of John in the john (on the boss’s time) pleases neither God nor man!

Something like this was going on in Ephesus.

Non-Christian masters found that formerly profitable slaves had become brooding, disrespectful, and unprofitable.

So their pagan masters blasphemed both the name of God and Paul’s teaching of the gospel – ***“These Christians are a waste. Lazy, otherworldly, and in their pious way disrespectful! Mine doesn’t hold a candle to the other slaves. Some teaching in the gospel! It takes a good man and makes him worthless.”***

- R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1-2 Timothy and Titus, pp. 147-148

Can you see how easy it is to fall prey to these things. We can justify all kinds of things but when what we are doing is held up to the light of God's Word, it shows our error. We are to work hard, not use our time at work to witness. We are not being paid for that. If someone asks us a question and you can answer it quickly, fine. Otherwise, do it when you are not working. We are to shine for Jesus in what we do.

I believe that will open up far more doors for you than you getting paid by your boss and not doing the work you are supposed to do because you are sharing the Gospel.

We need to be careful.

Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 6:5-8, "**Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.**"

Here's the thing. Are we to let others dictate how we respond in situations? Absolutely not.

One author put it like this in response to our struggle in the workplace. He wrote, *In our day the struggle between employers and employees has reached monumental levels. Conflicts rage constantly between workers and management, with each side accusing the other of selfishness and unreasonableness.*

*Employees want smaller workloads, fewer hours, more vacation, and more pay and benefits.*

*Employers want more productivity, more profits, and greater control of management policies and practices.*

- Source Unknown

Again, this is hard because we can come up with all kinds of reasons why we don't have to work hard, but in the end, you are trying to justify why you are not doing what God wants you to do.

Look at what Paul tells us. He tells us that slaves were to **"be obedient"** to their masters and it is in the present tense in the Greek, which indicates uninterrupted obedience.

They were to obey their master's no matter what, unless of course what they were told to do went totally against what God has said in His Word.

How does this relate to us today?

We are to be obedient in all we do as we work for others.

When our boss is around, when he is not around, our work should not change because we are ultimately serving the Lord.

We don't put a show on for our boss and when he is gone, we goof off!

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:23-24, **"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."**

The word **"heartily"** means to put your *"life, mind, soul"* into the work, give it your all no matter how unfair you are being treated, no matter how your boss talks to you, you serve the Lord and He will take care of you!

It is as one writer put it as he wrote,

*Being a Christian should always make a person a better, more productive, and more agreeable worker. People will not be inclined to listen to the testimony of a Christian who does shoddy, careless work or who is constantly complaining.*

*If a Christian finds an employment situation to be intolerable, he should quit and look for something else. But as long as he is employed, he should do the work to the best of his ability.*

- Source Unknown

Now here's the thing. Make sure that it is the Lord that wants you to leave your job and not just what you want to do.

Back at Calvary Chapel Elk Grove I had a gentleman come up to me and he was complaining about his job, and he said that he wanted to quit. Not just wanted to, he was going to do it!

I told him that he needed to pray about it and make sure that this is what God wanted him to do. I told him that he had a family and before he quits any job, he had better make sure that he is going to be able to support his family.

He didn't like what I said and went to the other assistant pastors to see what they would have to say because he wanted to quit. They told him the same thing and he left mad!

I do understand work can be very frustrating, but don't let your emotions drive you, let God guide you in all that you do!

And think about this for a minute. Do you really think the unsaved world is going to treat us fairly?

They won't and we need to remember that and remember who we serve, ***THE LORD!***

Now I am not saying all bosses are bad or evil, but understand where they are coming from, understand who you are working with and then, as Paul said in Philippians 2:14-15, **“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”**

How many things are we to do without complaining, disputing?

We are to do – ***ALL THINGS WITHOUT COMPLAINING AND DISPUTING!***

Why do we need work like that?

Because as we do, we will – ***SHINE AS THE LIGHT OF GOD IN THIS DARK WORLD!***

Please understand that this is not about us, but it is about our witness.

Why is that important?

Because they are coming up with conclusions about the God we say we love and serve by the things we say and do!

Paul said in I Corinthians 10:31, ***“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”***

When are we to give glory to God?

***ALL THE TIME – IN WHATEVER WE DO BE IT EATING OR DRINKING OR WORKING OR WHATEVER!***

Our actions show how our walk with God is doing. If we are walking with God then the things that we say and the things that we do will glorify God and will be a witness to the lost, even in the workplace with those who do not know Jesus!

VERSE 2

What we see here in I Timothy 6:2 is Paul is speaking of the saved slave owner and how we are to work or serve them as a slave.

Should that relationship change anything?

No, it should not change anything!

But here is the problem. Because some of the Christian slaves saw that their master was saved, they felt that they should not have to work as hard, they should be able to take it easy. In fact, they should be able to just relax a little!

One writer expounds on this problem there in Ephesus and in other churches as well. He wrote,

This seems to be where the real rub had developed in Ephesus. The mutual brotherhood of slave and master had led to an attitude of disrespect.

But in relating to believing masters, Christian slaves were *“not to look down on them”* (Knight).

*“You’re a brother in Christ! So who are you to give me orders? What are you going to do – fire me?”*

They were not to succumb to such a mind-set.

It is this kind of attitude that is the scourge of Christian organizations and the mission field.

Such brooding, disrespectful, egalitarian [moderate] lethargy brings disgrace to Christ.

There is no place in the Christian employee’s life for subtle insubordination toward his employer or for cleverly concealed contempt or mocking humor about his superiors. . .

Here again what is at stake is the spread of the gospel, our mission to a lost world.

The enhancement and elevation of relationships in the church, the harmony of households with slaves and masters, would testify to the world about Christ's reality. The unity of purpose of both slave and master would enable whole houses and churches to reach out to the lost in a dynamic accord.

- R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1-2 Timothy and Titus, pp. 149

Again, it is about our witness to a lost world. Yes, your boss may be saved but what about your co-workers who are watching how you work, the things that you say, are they saved?

We may laugh at this and think that it is not important but if it is not important, why would the Holy Spirit encourage Paul to write about them.

Others may say that this was something for them back then, they don't see it applying to our lives today.

Again, you mean to tell me how you behave at your workplace, if your boss is a Christian or not, does not affect your witness to the unsaved that are around you?

Of course it does.

In fact, Paul closes this section by saying how important it is. He said, "**Teach and exhort these things.**"

In other words, don't stop letting the brethren know how they are to act in the workplace!

Think of what Paul has said here like this in regard to the idea of slacking off because your boss is a Christian like you. Paul is basically saying, "***Not so, if your master/employer is a Christian, you are to serve him just as hard, be just as faithful, bless him by your work ethics.***"

I have seen this with one brother who helped several Christian men out, getting them a job at his business and most of them were let go because of their poor work ethic.



What do I mean by that?

I mean that they didn't show up for work on time or didn't show up at all!

That should not be!

We should not expect special treatment or favors because our boss is a Christian, we should work hard, do our best and bless the brother because of our work ethic!

And once again, we are serving the Lord, so if your work ethic is bad, that is not a good thing!

Now what about slavery, how come the Bible does not condemn it?

I did touch on this but since it is such a sensitive issue, we do need to understand what this was all about.

First of all, in the Old Testament, it was a way to pay back a debt you owned without going to jail.

The problem comes with man and his heart is evil and he can do the most outrageous things to his fellow man because he has power over them.

That is not right, but it is what happens often.

Why didn't Paul call for a violent uprising against slavery?

Because that would not have worked!

What worked was the influence of Christianity upon a society that put an end to slavery, greed, racism, hatred!

We see these things coming back into the world and it is because we are not an influence upon the world anymore, our faith is not making a difference, we are not a light!

One author put it like this, *“Paul and others in the New Testament did not call for a violent revolution against the institution of slavery (which would have failed miserably). Yet through the gospel, they did effectively destroy the foundations of slavery - racism, greed, class hatred - and made a civilization without slavery possible.”*

Another writer put it like this, *“The church itself was a place where slavery was destroyed. It was not uncommon for a master and a slave to go to church together, where the slave would be an elder in the church, and the master was expected to submit to the slave’s spiritual leadership! Such radical thinking was an offense to many, but glorified God and eventually destroyed slavery.”* (David Guzik)

This must have been a problem in Ephesus because Paul was addressing this issue.

In fact, here in I Timothy 6:2, as I have said, he says to Timothy, **“Teach and exhort these things.”**

These things need to be passed down from generation to generation. For me and I think as well as for you, our parents taught us the importance of work. We were taught to do our best, not to be lazy or slack off on the job.

We really didn’t get focused on our rights; we were blessed to have a job. I started working when I was 15 at a movie theater!

But it seems like we have lost that focus of what good work ethics are and it is a problem in America today. Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

What's wrong with work ethic in America? . . .

The decline of work ethic is not uniquely an American problem, but one that is affecting all Western nations and a growing number of those in the East. However, if we examine the American workplace today with a comparable example from the 1930s, 1960's, or even the 1990's, it's easy to see that America has lost sight of the virtues that comprise work ethic - the very things that helped build our country.

The pursuit of happiness and the American Dream drove progress and innovation, but they came with unintended side effects. In many cases, for instance, healthy ambition has morphed into avarice [greed]. Urbanization and an emphasis on large-scale businesses means fewer and fewer kids are learning about work in the natural course of family life.

Technological advances that make life faster, more fun, more entertaining, and easier to navigate are also consuming our time and energy while eliminating avenues for learning vital concepts about work.

And pop psychologists have pushed parents to focus on building self-esteem in their children, creating at least two generations of me-centric workers.

No wonder so many employers are using terms like entitled, disengaged, unmotivated, and disloyal when describing their current workforce and potential labor pool.

Are leaders really struggling with work ethic-deficient employees?

Pull any employer to the side and ask them to describe, in general, the work ethic that they see represented throughout their ranks and you're apt to hear some colorful language. Even the eternally optimistic warm and fuzzy managers wince a bit when the term work ethic enters the dialogue.

I interact with thousands of leaders, managers, business owners and execs each year and I've yet to find any who believe that the work ethic represented in the current labor pool stands up to that of the labor pool twenty, ten - or even five years ago.

These same employers, however, will openly lament the prevailing entitlement mentality of the emerging workforce that many decry is contagious, now rampant among X'ers and even baby boomers.

Which generation of workers is having the most trouble with their work habits and why?

America's emerging workforce - those in the sixteen-to-twenty-four age bracket - bring some amazing skill sets and personality traits into the labor pool. The challenge is that Millennials don't always want to work, and when they do, their terms don't always line up with those of their employers.

All too often, the young worker shows up ten minutes late wearing flip-flops, pajama bottoms, and a T-shirt that says "My inner child is a nasty . . ." Then she fidgets through her shift until things slow down enough that she can text her friends or update her Facebook page from her smartphone.

- <http://bit.ly/2QdPuGq>

As Christians, employers should want to hire us because of our good work ethic. We work hard, we are honest, we go above and beyond what we are supposed to do. And it is not necessarily because they deserve it, it is what the Lord has called us to do!

If any of you have poor work ethics, think you can lay back because your boss is a Christian, or even if they are not a Christian, you are wrong. You need to repent and serve your boss faithfully for the reality is, you serve the Lord!

Jesus said in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

And believe me, no one deserved anything that the Lord did for them, He freely gave to them!

Remember what I said, that in Paul’s day, Christian slaves would go for more money because, for the most part, they worked harder, were more reliable than non-Christian slaves.

But, in Ephesus, things were not going well, probably because of the poor leadership there and now Timothy was to lead them in the right direction once again.

Let me share with you this true story.

Warren Wiersbe relates the story of a young lady who had left a secular job to work for a Christian organization. She had been there about a month and was really disillusioned.

***“I thought it was going to be heaven on earth,”*** she complained. ***“Instead, there are nothing but problems.”***

Wiersbe asked her if she was working just as hard for her new boss as she did in the secular job.

The look on her face said, ***“No!”***

So, Wiersbe told her, ***“Try working harder, and show your boss real respect. Just because all of you in the office are saved doesn’t mean you can do less than your best.”***

She took his advice and the problems cleared up.

Now let me say this. Just because you work hard, do your best, you may not get the pats on the back. You may get nothing, or they may make fun of you or come against you for making them look bad.

Don’t let that stop your light from shining!

Let me give you an example from the Scriptures of someone who had good work ethics.

His name was Joseph. He was a son of Jacob, and he was a favorite son of Jacob.

Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors or a long-sleeved robe and it would seem that he was in charge of his brothers, he was to keep an eye on them even though he was the youngest of his ten other brothers. I don't think Jacob, their father, trusted them but he did trust Joseph.

Thus, Joseph was their boss you might say.

As we read of Joseph in the book of Genesis, we see that he had two dreams that showed that his brothers would bow down to him and not just his brothers but his mother and father as well. That did not go over too well!

One day Jacob sends his sons out to feed Jacob's flock out in Shechem. Now I don't think Jacob trusted his other sons and thus, he sends Joseph out to see how they are doing or if they are doing what they were supposed to be doing!

We are told in Genesis 37:13-14, "**And Israel said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.' So he said to him, 'Here I am.' Then he said to him, 'Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.' So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem."**

Again, I don't think Jacob trusted them and Joseph was the boss, he had the coat of many colors, and thus, Jacob tells him, "***Son, go check on your brothers. Make sure they are not goofing off!***"

I think what we are seeing is that Joseph had good work ethics, his brothers on the other hand, did not.

Now make no mistake about it, these dreams that Joseph had and told his brothers, to say that they did not appreciate this dream is putting it mildly.

And this anger leads them to conspire to do away with this dreamer of dreams.

When Joseph caught up with them, in Dothan, not in Shechem, which tells me that they were not doing what they were supposed to be doing, they took Joseph and through him into a pit!

Think about it, he was only doing his job, doing what his dad told him to do and now they want to destroy him.

And when the time came, they sold him into the hands of Midianite slave traders who then sold Joseph to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard down in Egypt as a slave.

And things were going well for Joseph, even though he was a slave. He was over all of Potiphar's house and through Joseph, Potiphar was blessed, and Potiphar knew it.

We are told of this in Genesis 39:2-6 where we read, **“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.”**

Joseph is not complaining about what his brothers did to him, but he just serves his master, Potiphar and more importantly the Lord faithfully. And God blesses the work that he was doing.

What I want you to notice here is the witness of Joseph before Potiphar.

How do I know that?

Listen again to what we read of Potiphar. We are told that Potiphar “**saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.**”

Joseph is doing a great job; he is very blessed as well as Potiphar is being blessed by how Joseph was working. Everything is great, but then.

Potiphar’s wife tried to get Joseph to sleep with her, and it was not just a one-time request. She kept at it until he finally ran out of the house.

I think Potiphar’s wife usually got what she wanted and now she didn’t, and she was mad. So mad that she accused Joseph of raping her.

Not a good situation at work for Joseph.

When Potiphar heard what had taken place, I don’t believe that he trusted his wife with her story. He knew his wife and I think this was not the first time she engaged in this kind of activity. And he knew Joseph and he had a hard time believing that he would do something like this.

The reason I say that is because Potiphar didn’t put Joseph to death, but he put him in prison because he had to do something, he could not just ignore what Joseph was accused of.

So Joseph is faithfully serving the Lord, not complaining and now Joseph was in prison, falsely accused of attempting to rape his master’s wife.



And in prison Joseph is once again working hard, serving where he could, and the keeper of the prison noticed his work ethics.

We are told in Genesis 39:22-23, “**And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.**”

Now while Joseph was in prison God brought to him two servants of Pharaoh, the butler and the baker.

You see, Pharaoh uncovered an assassination attempt on his life, he was going to be poisoned, but he was not sure which servant was going to carry out this plot, so he put them both in prison until he could figure it out.

In prison these two men have dreams and Joseph gives them the interpretation of their dreams. And you can see the heart of Joseph as he does not take credit for this, he gives glory to God for revealing them to him.

For the butler, in three days he would be restored before Pharaoh and for the baker, in three days he would be put to death for his plan to kill Pharaoh!

And Joseph asked the butler to remember him when he is released, to remember him before Pharaoh and tell Pharaoh that he did not belong in prison, he did nothing wrong.

Just as Joseph said would happen, it came to pass. The butler was restored, and the baker was put to death and as Genesis chapter 40 closed, we read; “**Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.**” Genesis 40:23.

Again, how unfair. Joseph was a good worker with good work ethics. He loved the Lord and now the butler forgets about him for two whole years!

I hope you are seeing that the hand of God is all over this story. God is working and yet, how in the world could this butler forget what Joseph had done for him?

It does not seem fair unless you read the rest of the story and see once again the hand of God, the timing of God being perfect.

And we know that Pharaoh has a dream, and no one can interpret it and that is when the butler remembers Joseph and Joseph interprets the dream for Pharaoh. And out of that, Pharaoh places Joseph second in charge over all of Egypt! From the pit to the prison to a leader in Egypt!

Keep in mind that Joseph did not know the end of the story as he was going through it all. He just worked hard, and God honored that and blessed him.

Think about all that he went through and for what reason? Well, listen carefully.

If Joseph's brothers never sell him to the Midianites, then Joseph never goes to Egypt.

If Joseph never goes to Egypt, he never is sold to Potiphar.

If he is never sold to Potiphar, Potiphar's wife never falsely accuses him of rape.

If Potiphar's wife never falsely accuses him of rape, then he is never put in prison.

If he is never put in prison, he never meets the baker and butler of Pharaoh.

If he never meets the baker and butler of Pharaoh, he never interprets their dreams.

If he never interprets their dreams, he never gets to interpret Pharaoh's dream.

If he never gets to interpret Pharaoh's dream, he never is made prime minister in Egypt.

If he is never made prime minister in Egypt, he never wisely administrates for the severe famine coming upon the region.

If he never wisely administrates for the severe famine coming upon the region, then his family back in Canaan perishes from the famine.

If his family back in Canaan perishes from the famine, then the Messiah can't come forth from a dead family.

If the Messiah can't come forth, then Jesus never came.

If Jesus never came, then you are dead in your sins and without hope in this world.

What is my point?

My point is this. Work hard, serve your boss honestly, honor the Lord in the work you are doing, and you don't know the light that you shine and the heart that will be touched by it.

You may be yelled at, given more work to do, made fun of, and the response of the flesh is to fight back. But you don't know the end of the story and you don't know who will be touched by what you do and what you say through all that turmoil! Never forget that.

Keep in mind that true servitude is Christ-centered, and it makes us more like Jesus and it draws the unsaved to Jesus!

And I will end with this. Each Christian should ask if they are leading people *to* Jesus by how they work, or if they are leading people *away* from Jesus by their bad work and testimony at their job and for that matter, in life in general.

***MAY OUR WORK GLORIFY THOSE WE ARE WORKING FOR AND BRING  
GLORY TO THE LORD!***