

LESSON 6: Business Performance

Ministering to Employees

Employers in today's work environment have choices when it comes to managing employees. First, all employers are required to meet, at a minimum, certain duties of care as established by law. In general, these requirements are to protect the safety and well-being of all employees, keeping them from abuses historically perpetrated by employers. In this case, employers would violate the law by minimizing protections and accommodations for their employees to be more profitable.

DUTY OF CARE

Employers today have a legal duty of care to their employees, which means that they should take all steps reasonably possible to ensure their health, safety and well-being. As a follower of Christ, demonstrating concern for the physical and mental health of your workers should not be viewed as a legal minimum duty. Instead, care for employees should be a key factor in building trust, reinforcing your commitment, improving staff retention, boosting productivity and paving the way for greater employee engagement.

Legally, employers must abide by [relevant health, safety and employment law](#), as well as the common law duty of care. They also have a moral and ethical duty not to cause or fail to prevent physical or psychological injury and must fulfill their responsibilities regarding personal injury and negligence claims.

Requirements under an employer's duty of care are wide-ranging and may manifest themselves in different ways, such as:

- ▶ Clearly defining jobs, undertaking risk assessments, and showing an employee how their job done well is relevant to customers and the success of the company
- ▶ Ensuring a safe work environment
- ▶ Providing adequate training and feedback on performance

- ▶ Ensuring that staff members do not work excessive hours
- ▶ Providing areas for rest and relaxation
- ▶ Protecting staff from bullying or harassment, either from colleagues or third parties
- ▶ Protecting staff from discrimination
- ▶ Providing communication channels for employees to raise concerns
- ▶ Consulting employees on issues which concern them

An employer can be deemed to have breached their duty of care by failing to do everything that was *reasonable* to keep employees safe from harm. In tandem, employees also have the responsibility for their own health and well-being at work. For example, without fear of disciplinary action, they are entitled, by law, to refuse to undertake work that isn't safe.

The legal threshold of meeting the duty of care should not be viewed as either an extravagant perk given to employees or as a *diminutization* of the employer's rights. An employer's duty of care is simply to act reasonably to care for and protect the employee. None of these duties reduce the rights of the employer to produce their product, to discipline the employee or to make changes in the employee's status or working conditions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss your thoughts on the minimum duties of care and the specific list of employer requirements.
 - a. Are there any on the list that cause you concern?

- b. What benefits, to you as an employer, do you believe a minimum duty of care provide?

2. In your opinion, have you ever received unfair treatment from an employer? If so, how did that make you feel?

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3. In what ways do you currently help your employees be more safe and secure in their workplace (e.g., ergonomically correct furniture)? In what areas could you improve?

HOW TO MINISTER TO EMPLOYEES

All businesses in the United States have some level of duty of care to provide safe, secure, accommodating and nondiscriminatory employment. For Christians, this minimum level of care should only be a starting point or foundation on which to build. As Christians, we are called to be set apart—and what can set apart Christian business people is how we treat our employees. We should desire for our employees to flourish, rather than just survive.

What Ministering in the Workplace Looks Like

Three aspects are evident when the Christian employer is ministering to his or her employees.

ONE: Servant Leadership

All professing Christians agree that a Christian leader should be a servant leader. Jesus couldn't be clearer, *"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves."* (Luke 22:25-26)

Where there is a lack of agreement between individuals, here are the responses a servant leader should have in situations they face. Sometimes servant leaders wash others' feet, so to speak (John 13:1-17), but other times they rebuke (Matthew 16:23) and even discipline (Matthew 18:15-20). Sometimes they serve at their own expense (1 Corinthians 9:7), but other times they issue strong imperatives (1 Corinthians 5:2; 11:16). Even so, Scripture reveals an overall profile of a servant leader that can be depicted with these five fundamental indicators:

1. A servant leader seeks the glory of his Master.
2. A servant leader sacrificially seeks the highest joy of those he serves.
3. A servant leader will forgo his rights rather than obscure the gospel.
4. A servant leader is not preoccupied with personal visibility and recognition.

5. A servant leader anticipates and graciously accepts the time for his decrease.

TWO: Christ-Like Environment

To effectively minister to employees, all Christian employers must establish a Christ-like work environment. We see this described in [1 Timothy 6:1-12](#).

First, the employer must establish an environment of mutual respect ([1 Timothy 6:1-2](#)). This is done by establishing and promoting Godly work principles and ways of conducting business. It also involves praising those who demonstrate these Godly principles as well as letting go of people who will not embrace this work ethic ([1 Timothy 6:2-5](#)).

Next, an employer must promote Godliness over personal profit ([1 Timothy 6:6-8](#)). This means that the employer should not take unfair advantage of customers or their employees to **make more money**. This requires the employer to be content with that which God has blessed them.

Finally, and most importantly, the employer should seek to grow closer to Christ in their personal life. In doing so, their reputation as an employer and businessperson will open many doors to share Christ with and through their employees, their customers and their colleagues in the community ([1 Timothy 6:11-12](#)).

THREE: Focus on Employees

While the Bible is replete with references on how we are to treat employees and people in general, four specific elements of employment are commented on in Scripture.

Success ■ Employers should do whatever they can to make their employees successful. They should strive to inspire their employees to want to come to work because they want to be part of a team that works hard and does the right thing. The goal is the formation of a team that strives to please God in all aspects of *their* work. This means that employers must learn to motivate employees by inspiring them, not intimidating them ([Ephesians 6:5-9](#)).

Worthiness ■ Paul says in [Col 4:1](#): “Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair.” Paul did not say that employers may pay their employees what the market will bear. The Bible’s ethics of wages rest on this principle: ‘the laborer is worthy of his hire’ or, as the NIV translates, ‘the worker deserves his wages.’ ([Luke 10:7](#); [1 Tim 5:18](#)),. A modern company’s compensation policies should be based on the understanding that employees are being paid for their services to the business and its customers.

Equality ■ One of the Bible’s most remarkable stories is that of Onesimus, the runaway slave ([Philemon 1](#)). It is remarkable because of Paul’s counsel to Philemon, Onesimus’ employer. Here, Paul introduces an entirely new paradigm that runs counter to the Roman worldview of slaves, which included treating them as sub-human.

Apparently, Paul and Onesimus had met in Rome where Onesimus had fled. Perhaps, through their relationship, Onesimus becomes a follower of Christ. In verse 11, Paul now describes him as a man of "value" and requests that Philemon, also a Christ-follower, welcome him back ...

The 21st-century message from this story is **first**, employees must be seen as human beings, even the under-performers (as Onesimus apparently had been). **Second**, workers are to be regarded as equal in human value to company owners/top executives and treated accordingly. **Finally**, when an employee fails, if possible, management should seek to restore the worker and provide him or her with another chance.

Responsibility ■ Paul writes, "Whoever does not work should not eat" ([2 Thessalonians 3:10](#)). The attitude expressed in modern culture is the misunderstanding of the difference between deserving an **opportunity** and deserving an **outcome**. Everyone should be provided with an opportunity to succeed. However, no one is guaranteed the same outcome regardless of how they respond to the opportunity.

Ministering to employees requires a devotion by the employer to Scripture. Being a servant leader, creating a Christ-like environment and having a Biblical focus on employees will create a work environment that will be caring, productive, and loving.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Do you focus on your employees above and beyond what is required by law?

Are you concerned with their success, worthiness, equality, and responsibility in the fashion the Bible describes?

2. How does caring and ministering for your employees make you feel.

3. Brainstorm as a group some practical ways you can care for your employees in a way that allows them to flourish. What are some steps you will take personally to assure your employees flourish?
