**Introduction**

God the Creator has revealed in His Word the proper work ethics so that His people may conduct themselves as exemplary workers. Christian work ethics are God-ordained rules, standards and principles governing a Christian worker in his role as an employer or employee. It involves instructions on integrity, honesty, commitment, humility, truthfulness, accountability, faithfulness, trustworthiness, good attitude and behaviour, and diligence with the best effort, respect and obedience.

God, in His sovereignty and goodness, provides for all our needs. Nevertheless, it is God’s will that man should exercise his responsibility by working with his own hands to earn his upkeep. In doing so, man is to be faithful and honest so that he need not be dependent upon others, thus bearing a good testimony. “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

The Word of God commands the believers to work and to earn a living. “Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:12). We are to work to provide for our own even as we trust in the Lord to take care of all things in our lives. It would be unthinkable to neglect this command in the light of 1 Timothy 5:8, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

**Diligence at work**

Christians are expected to labour hard at work. We need to be industrious and motivated workers; to be cooperative with our co-workers and have a persevering spirit at work, especially when the work is difficult and tedious. Christian workers ought not to be lazy in doing their work, for God has given many admonitions in His Holy Word against the sin of laziness and procrastination:
“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Proverbs 6:6-11).

“The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not” (Proverbs 21:25-26).

“The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain” (Proverbs 15:19).

“Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger” (Proverbs 19:15).

“The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing” (Proverbs 20:4).

Christians are therefore to be on guard against being idle and unproductive in their jobs or businesses. In 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10, the Apostle Paul cites the example of the apostolic band in order to exhort Christians to be responsible and diligent in their work - “For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

**Obedience at work**

Christian employees are to give due respect and obedience to their employers. They are not to cheat, steal company time, nor take the easy way out in performing their tasks. They ought to arrive at work on time and to be given fully to work during office hours. They must be faithful workers with good work attitudes, working as if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our Employer. The Apostle Paul outlines the importance of obedience of Christian workers in these passages:

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (Ephesians 6:5-8).

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:9-10).

Likewise, Christian employers are to treat their employees fairly and not to short-change them but to pay and reward them accordingly. They are not to impose unreasonable demands or place undue stress on the employees.
Remember that we are all servants of the Lord and He is watching and judging all the things that we have done or left undone. “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (Ephesians 6:9).

**Responsible stewardship at work**
Believers are to faithfully fulfil their responsibilities, whether they are in a subordinate or managerial position at their workplace. They are expected to be submissive to higher authority. They need to be trustworthy and to keep to their promises and commitments. “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). They are accountable in the way they use whatever talents they have in order to do their job well. Remember the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the parable of the ten pounds (Luke 19:11-27) in which the Lord Jesus teaches how we should be good and faithful servants in using the talents that we have been given? Besides, God expects Christian workers to use their talents diligently not only to meet the needs of this earthly life but more importantly, to show forth a good Christian testimony at their workplace.

**A wrong perspective**
It is wrong for believers to work with the goal of becoming wealthy. In Proverbs 23:4-5, we are told, “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” It is not money or becoming rich that is evil but the love of money. A man who loves money and wants to have more and more of it will face many troubles and sorrows. That is the emphatic message from 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

**The right perspective**
God’s will is for us to work to provide for our needs and that of our loved ones. He made man to serve Him through his labours and to enjoy it. It is not for us to labour with the aim to become rich lest “thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17). The right attitude and focus towards working and earning a living is that “thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Always bear in mind to seek to glorify God and to have a thankful spirit in our work and in all that we do. That is the teaching contained in the following Pauline instructions:

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23).

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

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In Singapore, many such abusive employers were caught and jailed. Do not let that happen to you!

Conclusion
As an employer, have you been oppressive to those who are working for you? Have our servants sinned and we have not? Have they fallen short of our expectations and we have not fallen short of the Lord’s expectations? Have they angered us and we have not angered the Lord? Are they imperfect and we are so perfect?

Let all Christian employers search their hearts and ask the Lord for mercy and repent of such sins as being unjust, biased and threatening tyrants. Christian employers, remember that there is a greater, even perfect Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. May we seek to be more like Him as we minister as earthly masters to our employees.

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“...in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Christian work ethics found in the Word of God are given to us as divine principles to be faithfully obeyed so that we may be found blameless as God’s stewards wherever the Lord has ordained us to labour for Him. May God help us to abide by these biblical work ethics by being a good workman approved unto God that we may not be put to shame.

At the end of it all, we must be guided by the words of wisdom written in the Scriptures, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). 

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