

Case Study and Biblical Integration

Robert Forto

School of Business, Liberty University

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Dr. John Johnson

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Introduction

Many people today fail to classify their faith as though living by God's command only applies to their personal lives. However, if we look at our working lives, there are myriad examples of how we include God's character when we are away from home. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 and Ephesians 6:5-8 gives us guidance on how to conduct ourselves in the workplace. Ephesians 4:28 (ESV) brings to mind the notion that every Christian should labor, "doing honest work with his own hands, so that they may have something to share with anyone in need."

As we consider the case study of bank employee, Ralph and his supervisor, Ellen we are able to determine if the situation of Ralph's termination was just and how this process relates to God's character. Birchley (2017) argues that there is a familiar distinction between the person known to others and the unmediated person known only to the Almighty. Birchely (2017) relies on Prince Collier's 1892 sermon which says, "There is...a very great difference between a man's reputation and a man's character, for reputation is what men think and say of us, while character is what God and the angels know of us."

In examination of how the situation was handled in the case study we further understand how God's character or command applies to the workplace. The following characteristics; honesty and fairness, humility, compassion, patience and kindness all play a role in understanding what the Bible teaches us about the unique role and responsibilities of employees and their supervisors. These eternal characteristics will allow each of us to simply adhere to God's command and as such will exemplify themselves as a Christian employee or employer.

Honesty and Fairness

Communication among the wrongdoer, the wronged and potentially other community members involves exploring the past and present behavior experiences, along with future needs.

(Borton, 2009, Raye & Roberts, 2007; Umbreit, 2001; Zehr, 2002; as cited in Paul, 2017) This is key in examining the relationship and subsequent termination in the case study. Colossians 4:1 (NIV) is a great example of how Christian employers should deal with their employees justly and fairly by not placing self-interested pursuits. In following God's command, He is explicit about how He abhors the exploitation of workers and how employees should be held accountable. This author argues that Ellen was just in the eventual termination of Ralph and followed God's command of honesty and fairness in her decision. She gave him ample chances to correct his wrongdoing's and when he was unable, she was swift but fair.

Humility

Schutte (2016) asserts that increasing changes in the labor landscape have led to increasing demands for employees facing challenges of the 21st century. Schutte (2016) asserts that employers and employees now bring their soul and spirit to work, which he calls workplace spirituality. Of this workplace spirituality is an example for humility. Humility is the cornerstone of God's command in the workplace. In the case study it clearly showed that Ellen and her power over those in her employ was of great concern to her, she wanted to make sure she gave Ralph ample opportunity to correct his behavior. Ellen humbly considered others more important than that of herself (Philippians 2:3) and gave Ralph ample opportunities to correct his performance as noted in Proverbs (12:1).

Compassion

We all should have compassion for others. Employers are put in a unique position in that it is their role to identify stress and suffering and find ways to alleviate it in their employees. In the case study it is obvious that Ralph wants to do well but he continues to struggle with his position. Ellen gives him chance after chance to correct his wrongdoings. Ralph was unable to do

so, and it eventually cost him his job. It is important that Christian employers see employees as people and show compassion to them in times of need. Ellen showed this compassion toward Ralph by giving him chance after chance.

Patience and Kindness

Along with humility comes patience and kindness. Employers should never treat employee's as a means to an end. In the case study, Ellen shows that she is following God's command by giving Ralph chance after chance. Business managers should never manage through threats or fear but by encouragement and development (Ephesians 6:9). Ellen does this by relaying clear expectations about areas Ralph needed to raise his level of effort and results to be successful in the new role.

Business Ethics

Lastly, we must take a position on whether Ralph's employer was ethical in her decision in terminating him in the case study. Of course, all of us are flawed and we all have character traits in us that drive us to make wrong decisions. We see that happening over and over again with Ralph in the study. This does not justify his actions. Plaisted (2017) argues that we must assume that God has given all people the same set of moral notions and how we act upon them is a determination of our character. We must be ambassadors of Christ wherever we go (Acts 1:8). For a Christian employer the office is not just a place of business but also a place to meet the needs of others. By following this example of God's command and upholding this ethic in business it clearly shows that Ellen's decision was just.

Conclusion

Houlton (2019) contends that the term commandment apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, there where things commence –

physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, there where men and God’s command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given. This construct ties together all of God’s character and how it should be followed in the workplace. By following God’s command, it allows both Ellen, as the employer, and Ralph as the employee to be ambassadors of Christ wherever they go. By following this example, even if they face the difficult huddle of being terminated, Ralph can still succeed. The literature shows that there is a general agreement that people want to (and do) bring their spiritual worldviews and practices to their work context. (Sheep, 2006; Karakasm, 2010a; Houghton et al., 2016; as cited in McGhee, 2019) While we are not clear from the limited scope of the case study, it should be easy to see that transformations can happen if we consider the needs of others above ourselves. That is truly God’s command. It is Ralph’s job to heed that as he moves on into the next chapter of his life.

References

- Birchley, G. (2018) What God and the angels know of us: Character, autonomy, and best interests in minimally conscious state. *Medical Law Review*. 26(3). 392–420, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/medlaw/fwx051>
- Houlton, T. (2019). “Where Men and Gods Command”: the monument, the crypt, and the magic word. *Derrida Today*. 12(1). 80–98. <https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2019.0198>
- McGhee. (2019). Integrating Christian Spirituality at Work: Combining Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches. *Religions*, 10(7), 433. doi:10.3390/rel10070433
- Paul, G. D. (2017). Paradoxes of Restorative Justice in the Workplace. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 31(3), 380–408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318916681512>
- Plaisted, D. (2017). On justifying one's acceptance of divine command theory. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. 81(3). 315-334.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11153-016-9572-3>
- Schutte, P. (2016). Workplace spirituality: A tool or a trend? *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*. 72(4). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3294>

Case Study and Biblical Integration: Annotated Bibliography

Birchley, G. (2018) What God and the angels know of us: Character, autonomy, and best

interests in minimally conscious state. *Medical Law Review*. 26(3). 392–420, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/medlaw/fwx051>

This journal article was the first article searched for this paper and was found in the JFL Library using an advanced search for “God’s character.” The aim of the author’s research was a systematic examination of the way best interests are used in judgements related to [this] population and suggests narratives involving medical patients. (Birchley, 2018)

This article was used to gain a better understanding of what God’s character is in the literature and how that is used in the workplace. This author then compared and contrasted the examples of God’s character as it related to the case study.

Birchley is on faculty at the Centre for Ethics in Medicine at the Bristol Medical School, Population Health Sciences at the University of Bristol in the U.K. The journal, *Medical Law Review*, has an impact factor of 1.577 and a five-year impact factor of 1.392. The journal is established as an authoritative source of reference for academics, lawyers and medical practitioners and has been in publication since 2011.

Houlton, T. (2019). “Where Men and Gods Command”: the monument, the crypt, and the magic

word. *Derrida Today*. 12(1). 80–98. <https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2019.0198>

This journal article was retrieved from the JFL Library using an advanced search for

“God’s character.” The paper examines the relationship between monumental

commemoration and memory. While the focus of the paper did not relate directly to the

case study for the purpose of this paper it did provide an excellent definition of what a commandment is in relation to God's command.

Houlton has only been published once and it was difficult to find out any historical information about his work. The journal, *Derrida Today*, focuses on contemporary debates about politics, society and global affairs and has been in publication since 2008.

McGhee. (2019). Integrating Christian Spirituality at Work: Combining Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches. *Religions*, 10(7), 433. doi:10.3390/rel10070433

This journal article was found on the UAA/APU Consortium Library database using an advanced search for "biblical integration in the workplace." The article combines organizational and theological frameworks to address the integration of Christian spirituality at work. (McGhee, 2019) The research study was a qualitative approach exploring the underlying conditions that working Christians believe are required for enhancing their spiritual work. (McGhee, 2019). The journal article was used in this paper to examine how employees and employers bring this spirituality into the workplace and how that related to the case study.

McGhee is on faculty in the Management Department at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. He has been published in seven publications. This article was in a special issue of the *Integration of Religion in the Workplace* and is very limited in its citespace of just 0.5

Paul, G. D. (2017). Paradoxes of Restorative Justice in the Workplace. *Management*

Communication Quarterly, 31(3), 380–408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318916681512>

This journal article was retrieved from the UAA/APU Consortium Library using an advanced search “biblical integration in the workplace.” The work of Paul (2017) researches the paradoxes that can occur when engaging restorative practices within a traditional bureaucratic organizational structure. This qualitative study used interviews with employees at an organization that codified and promoted restorative practices in the workplace.

The author of this journal article is a professor at Kansas State University, and this is his only published work. The journal however, *Management Communication Quarterly* has been in existence since 1987 and has an impact factor of 1.44 as of 2017. It is a peer reviewed academic journal in the field of communication studies pertaining to management and organizational communication.

Plaisted, D. (2017). On justifying one's acceptance of divine command theory. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. 81(3). 315-334.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11153-016-9572-3>

This journal article was retrieved from the JFL using an advanced search for “God’s command.” The author’s aim was to crucially argue a foundationalist view of theory justification and how that can be adopted into a coherentist stance. (Plaisted, 2017) This journal article was used to examine business ethics and how they relate to the case study, God’s character and command, and a Christian worldview.

Plaisted has authored seven articles and this publication, *The International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* is a well-respected journal. It has been in publication since 1989 and has a low impact factor of just 0.13

Schutte, P. (2016). Workplace spirituality: A tool or a trend? *HTS Theologiese*

Studies/Theological Studies. 72(4). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3294>

This journal article was retrieved from the UAA/APU Consortium Library using an advanced search for “biblical integration in the workplace.” The aim of this article was to gain a better understanding regarding the direction in which the field of workplace spirituality is progressing. (Schutte, 2016) This article was used for this paper to examine how God’s command, and in particular, humility come into play in the workplace and within a Christian worldview.

Schutte is in the Department of New Testament Studies and is on faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Schutte participated in the research project ‘Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics’ and this paper was the culmination of that research.