

## I. ME

### A. Re-introduction of myself:

- a. Day job = 8th grade Science teacher
- b. Here at Crosscreek
  - i. Elder
  - ii. Director of Connect Groups
    1. We are a church designed for people who don't normally go to church; if you don't, welcome- this service is for you!
    2. Connect Groups are a part of our process- we are working with God in leading people into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. Life is about relationships- the quality of our life is determined by the quality of relationships

### 1. What is a framework we can use for relationships?

- a. Eph 5:21- Rule for every Christian relationship- every Christian submits in every relationship. What does "submission" mean? Our working definition: willingly giving all of ME for what benefits YOU the most. What does that look like in specific relationships?
  - i. Marriage: Christian marriage is a submission competition
  - ii. Family: Christian families choose to love by choosing to submit; happy families accept the mission of submission
  - iii. Conflict: Extinguish conflict with honor

### B. What about work? I get to talk with you today about how to navigate work situations, because, as the video read, "relationships don't have to suck". And that includes work.

1. So let me start with a sucky work environment example about the suckiest job I ever had.
  - a. Summer 1993, summer after my Junior year of high school. My Mom, who worked for the county where I grew up in Wisconsin, talked with a co-worker and helped me get a job working at the county fairgrounds and expo center in Waukesha

County, near Milwaukee. So I'm grateful to her for helping me get my worst job ever.

- b. I spent the beginning of the summer mostly shoveling horse manure. Inside barns. There are biting flies. It smells bad. It's repetitive. And it's Wisconsin in July. So it's humid. And you are inside a giant barn, so it's kind of toasty.
- c. But that wasn't the worst part. The county fair came around and it was our job to clean the fairgrounds. So I rode my 10-speed there to work 3rd shift after the crowds went home. In the dark. The fairgrounds were covered with trash. Everywhere.
- d. But that wasn't the worst part. I also had to clean the restrooms. The men's room was nasty. It smelled like the zoo and I wondered if any of the guys who used it had any aim at all.
- e. But that wasn't the worst part. If you are a young man, you wonder what happens in young women's lives and the women's restroom is just about the one place you can't go, so it's a place of mystery. Ladies here today, I am sorry, but I have to say this. The women's room was the grossest single place I've ever been. There were feminine hygiene products, it seemed like everywhere, almost like a truck loaded with said products had exploded. I never saw anything like it before. Or since. A minefield of garbage on the floor of the women's restroom. Some people have survived the bombing of London in WWII, other people have survived cancer. My survival story is that I made it through those 2 weeks cleaning the women's restroom at the county fairgrounds.
- f. But that wasn't the worst part. The worst part was a work relationship I had with a co-worker. He was a college guy. I don't remember much about him except that he was football player. I was a punk, purple-haired, scrawny high school x-c runner so he was way bigger than I was and I was an easy target. In my memory, his number one priority was to make fun of me. I didn't appreciate it, but my boss

went along with it and didn't put a stop to it, either. So I made it through that summer with the worst part being break-time with this guy who at least thought I was in on the joke and at worst knew he was bullying me. I got to look forward to being uncomfortably teased during 3 breaks a day.

- g. There were some great people at that job and I learned a lot about myself that summer and developed my work ethic. That one work relationship, though, was the worst part of that summer job. That leads me to today's key question, does work really need to be this way; do work relationships need to suck like this one did for me?

## II. WE

- A. Are you with me so far?
- Has your work environment ever been like this? Worse?
  - Have you ever found it hard to relate well to others at work? Had to bail out a co-worker on a project? Do something ridiculous for your boss that was a waste of your time?
  - Have you been in a situation where you lied? Or the opposite, gotten in trouble for something you DIDN'T do?
  - Ever wished you worked somewhere else because of the PEOPLE or a PERSON you work with or for?
  - Have you ever been passed over for a promotion or recognition that someone else got who didn't deserve it? Work a job you were miserable in just to provide for your family or yourself?
  - Shouldn't we all just quit our stupid jobs and start a commune, instead?
- B. Or maybe you tuned me out and think you are off the hook because you don't have a paid job right now and are a student, or retired, or a stay-at-home Mom, or choosing not to work or unemployed or self-employed? If this is you, don't tune me out yet, I have some advice applicable for you in any relationship where you work for or with other people. This could include volunteering, watching your annoying grandkids, taking care of your own children, an ailing grandparent, etc. So

this will include pretty much all of you. From now on, when I say the word "work", just use the "working" definition [get it?] **"Work" includes ANY type of work you do with or for others, paid or unpaid.**

## III. GOD

- A. I have fantastic news for you! You don't have to wonder about how you should act at "work" or what your attitude towards "work" should be! The apostle Paul gives us a way to "work" with or for other people in any circumstance. If you have a Bible, turn to **Ephesians 6:5-9**.
- Paul in this letter- writing to Xians. Before this, he WAS the most anti-Christian fanatic of his generation going around and killing and throwing Xtians in jail.
  - Until he was confronted with Jesus during his travels and he realized he was persecuting the very God he was trying so hard to defend. He went on to start churches all around the Mediterranean and help new Xtians in all their relationships.
  - Today, we will read what he wrote to fledgling churches in Ephesus and Colosse, where people were just figuring out how to be Xtians and love each other well in their relationships and practically live out following Jesus. If you have never read Ephesians, you should! It's full of stuff about how how X-tians are together, unified in Jesus and also practical things you could do to live life better.
  - Not a Xian, I have great news- you're off the hook!** You might want to try the HW I give you, but you get a free HW pass if you want (something I think my 8th graders would do just about anything for, right now...)

**B. To slaves, V 5-8: 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.**

- More context: 8-10% of the Roman Empire were slaves.

- a. Wasn't based on race like the American slavery we are probably more historically familiar with. Instead, slaves were:
  - a. People having financial problems or prisoners of war
  - b. Seen as tools and property, not people.
- b. BUT could earn and buy their freedom!
- 2. THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THIS PASSAGE COULD BE MISUSED OR MISUNDERSTOOD! Paul is **NOT** condoning slavery.
  - a. He is facing the reality of his world and telling people how to practically walk in Christ's love in whatever situation they find themselves, including the relatively common institution of Roman slavery
  - b. Paul was NOT an advocate of slavery. Many examples in his letters, here's one for example:
    - 1) **1 Cor 7:21**- To slaves: gain your freedom if you can; so it's not something you volunteer for just for funnies
- 3. **Obey your masters with "Respect and Fear"** - Same phrase as working out your salvation with fear and trembling [Phil 2:12]
  - a. NOT saying that you can only be saved by your behavior; that's the opposite of what Jesus taught
  - b. INSTEAD, Paul IS saying to act towards your boss or supervisor like you would act towards Jesus. Treat your boss like you treat God, as someone WORTHY of your respect.
- 4. **Obey your masters with "Sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ"**-
  - a. NOT just lip service and pretending you are all in but Paul IS calling us to truly resp and honor those whom the Lord has allowed to have authority over us, even when we don't agree with them or maybe ESPECIALLY when we don't agree with them.
  - b. Obey your boss as a from-the-heart expression of your reverence for and obedience to Christ, Himself. NOT "WWJD", "what would Jesus do", like on the bracelets of years ago, but "HWYOC", "how would you obey Christ"? It's no wonder these never caught on during that bracelet craze...

- c. What Paul IS saying to slaves or employees, anyone with somebody else in authority over them, someone who works, is this: **"Obey your earthly masters, because" you don't just work for another person. You work for Jesus.**
- 5. **"Obey whether you are being watched or supervised or not"**
  - a. A bit more historical context; a slave had no incentive to go the extra mile and work hard. They didn't get paid on commission and they didn't get overtime. And they weren't constantly under the eyes of their owner. Paul is telling them to go above and beyond, to serve wholeheartedly as if they were serving the Lord, Himself, who sees everything. There is a word for that, "integrity"; doing the right thing, even when no-one is watching you!
  - b. Paul is saying when you work, you aren't working for a person, you are working for Jesus who sees everything. That might inspire you to act more excellently, as Bill and Ted so well said, in "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure", 1989. **"Be excellent to each other"**. In this case, be excellently OBEDIENT, like God is watching over you, which He is!
- 6. **"Doing the will of God from your heart"**
  - a. What is the will of God? Jesus, through his life and willing death on the cross that God's will is for us to love Him and one another. Jesus said this is the most important command from God, so if even practice this one thing, we are doing what God wants us to do.
  - b. So love the person you work for or with like God wants you to! Love your boss like God loves you and like He loves them, too!
- 7. **"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men"**
  - a. Similar to what I said before; serve with all of your heart, all of your self. "Wholeheartedly" means "wholeheartedly", NOT "mostheartedly" or "little-bit-heartedly" or "kind-of-heartedly" or "sort-of-heartedly", or "somewhat-heartedly".

- b. It might help to pretend the person you are serving or working with or for is Jesus, Himself! Maybe you would treat or see this person differently, in that case?
8. **“Because you know the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free”**
- a. It is Jesus we are working for and it is His approval and reward that we are looking for.
  - a. **2 Cor 5:10**- We will all be judged by Jesus someday for the good or bad we do, no matter who we are
    - a. It is a reward from the One Who judges fairly
    - b. It is a reward that no one can take from us.
  - b. Encouragement: Know that if you “work” for or with someone, you are not worse than anyone else in God’s eyes. Even if you are downtrodden; working a menial, dead-end job; not getting paid or treated like you are worth; God notices how you have been treated and is going to reward you accordingly later.

9. Verses 5-8 can be summed up this way, **Employees choose illogical love by submitting to and obeying their bosses.**

**C. To masters V. 9: And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.**

1. **“Treat your slaves in the same way”-**
  - a. First off, ALL of the ways slaves are to treat masters apply the other way around. All of what I just talked about for “slaves” applies to “masters”. That’s what “the same way” means; it means “the same way”.
  - b. Masters or employers are called to treat those who work under them the same way... with submission and respect. Do what’s right, whether you are watched by someone else or not. Work as if you are serving Jesus, Himself, because you are.
    - a. DO NOT being harsh and overbearing, making threats and expecting everyone to bow to your whims.
    - b. DO treat employees with respect. Put your employee’s needs above your own.
2. [Paraphrase] **“You know who everyone’s boss is”-**

- a. Masters/Bosses... work with the goal of pleasing the true Master, God, in how you treat those He has placed under you.
  - b. No matter what role or position God has put you in... we all work for the same Master.
3. **“There is no favoritism with [God]”-**
- a. If you are a boss, you are not better than anyone else in God’s eyes. Even if you become a multi-billion \$ CEO directing an entire company with thousands of employees under you, God notices how you treat others and is going to deal with you accordingly later. Fair warning: He will not treat you favorably just because you had an important job here on Earth.
4. Verse 9 can be summed up this way, **Employers choose illogical love by submitting to their employees and putting others’ needs first**

**IV. YOU**

- a. And that brings us to our MAIN POINT: **Your ONE job is to work like God is at work in your life.**
    - i. You might be thinking, “that SOUNDS like a great idea, but maybe it ISN’T; just like flying a prototype jet pack, or eating a hot pocket, or crowd surfing, or getting a new puppy. (Actually, I really like our puppy and that was a good idea, so strike that one from the list.) Anyway, you are probably wondering or thinking:
      1. HOW am I supposed to show that God is at work in my life? How does it work in practice? In real life?
      2. I have TRIED before to have a positive attitude at work and treat others well and it just hasn’t stuck!”
  - 1. You want to truly submit like we’ve been talking about for the past few weeks? Obey? Submit? “Give all of ME for what benefits YOU the most?
    - a. Allow God to fill you with His Holy Spirit! **This is the key.** You CAN’T do it yourself! You need Jesus’ help!
1. **John 15:5**- We have to be connected to Jesus to bear fruit, to produce fruit, be productive, in our work relationships.

- a. We must humbly, intimately and wholeheartedly rely on and be connected to Jesus to love illogically the way Jesus calls us to. It's that simple. Not "easy", but "simple". Rely on God; stay connected to Jesus.
- b. Can we really rely on God to get us through a sucky work situation; to work through us in our work environment?
  - 1. He is the one that gives us the Holy Spirit.
  - 2. He is the Husband that laid down his life for us so we can truly live.
  - 3. He the loving Father who nurtures and patiently guides us.
  - 4. And He is the master who controls the universe but chose to humble himself, come to earth and serve and die for those He created, US.

10. **HW:** (Not a Xtian, you get a free HW pass this week; welcome to try it anyways) **"Work" for God, not yourself this week. Ask Him to help you do this. Watch what happens to your relationships!** My 8th graders need to write down HW for themselves, but since you are not in my classroom, I did it for you because I love you illogically. You're welcome.

- a. Examples of showing God is at work in your life?
  - i. When your supervisor/boss tells you to do something, obey them, even if and especially if you don't want to!
  - ii. When you are cleaning your toddler's pee around the toilet for the 8,000th time, see it as working for God. Know you are getting a reward for it. As an aside, I'm not for certain, but pretty sure cleaning toilets gets a good reward from God.
  - iii. When you are doing a menial task at your volunteer gig and no-one is there to watch or thank you, do an excellent job anyway!
  - iv. When your employee has a different idea about how to do something, actually listen or even try it out!

- v. And for the love of all things good, when your teacher tells you to do something, as Nike would say, "Just Do It"!

## V. WE

### A. WHAT IF:

- a. We trusted God and left the rewarding to Him instead of clawing our way upward at work at someone else's expense?
- b. Everyone put the needs of everyone else first at work or school or home. What would happen to our work relationships? Our families, neighborhoods, and community, as a result?
- c. We remembered Who we were truly working for and worked like that was our reality?
- d. We had a different attitude about work and worked less for ourselves and more for others? What would our fulfillment level be with our current "work" situation even if it's not our ideal "work" situation? How would that affect our attitude in our non-work time and the overall quality of our lives?
- e. Xians were known for being the BEST employees and bosses even if their beliefs were a little weird?
- f. People said, "I don't know about this JEsus thing... but it's sure makes a difference in my boss/employee/coworker?"

B. NEXT WEEK: Last week of Illogical Love- Come back, because Jon is going to talk with us about the relationship that matters the MOST and answer the question "What does it mean to actually have a relationship with God?"