



Biblical Principles for Compensation



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The Bible has principles about compensation which can be applied in the daily living. These principles provide guidelines for the economic aspect of life, as well as the spiritual. The subject of work and compensation is a major part of this economic aspect and concern to employers and employees alike. Although biblical principles may be identified for both employer and employee, this discussion aims to consider the biblical responsibilities of an employer to his or her employees. Due to this fact, a Christian business should commit its people. This includes the area of fair compensation, performance recognition, and providing growth opportunities, both professionally and personally. It has been determined that organizations that recognize the needs of their people and create opportunities for them to fulfill those needs can bring out the very best in them. The apostle Paul indirectly addressed relationships between employers and employees.

To those who work for someone else, Paul gave this command: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:22-24). Then to employers, Paul commanded, "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair because you know that you also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 4:1). Paul gave this command to employers because, just as their employees report to them, they have someone to report to—their Master in heaven. Employers could hardly expect to be treated fairly by God if they failed to treat their employees fairly. Paul's remarks concerning the employee/employer relationship involve the mutual submission of employees to their employers and vice versa. Employees, too, are to treat their employers with respect and "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" (Ephesians 6:6). In all things, for both employers and employees, Christ should be the model for Christian business, because He was known to be a man of integrity, even among His enemies (Matthew 22:16).

First, I would like to talk about the principle of responsibility. The Bible discusses that every human being has certain responsibilities in his or her life.

These responsibilities are in different areas including, the spiritual (Amos 4:12; John 1:12; 3:3, 36), physical (1 Thessalonians 4:4), marital (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:21-6:4), governmental (Romans 13:1-7), and financial. We want to talk about the financial responsibility here. Before going deep in this, we need to remember that the scriptures affirm that God is the possessor of all that exists and human being is entirely accountable to Him. Christians should always acknowledge God's ownership of what they possess, and to steward those possessions for His glory. In fact, it is God who ultimately is the source of who we are and what we have (Deut. 8:17-18). This relationship of dependence and stewardship increases the importance of the Christian's financial responsibility.

For the Christian, financial responsibility includes provision for himself and his family. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul refers to a principle which he had already taught to the Christian there, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat." Paul says that a man must earn his provision. That this provision extends to the family is shown in 1 Timothy 5:8 – "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Not only a man should provide for his family, but also, he needs to provide for their future. The Bible says, "a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children" (Prov. 13:22). It is true that the best heritage a man can leave his family is the example of a godly life, this verse is speaking of material inheritance. Therefore, a Christian employer should seek to provide a living wage for his or her employees, a wage sufficient for the employee to provide for the needs of his or her family and to prepare for the future.

Second, we should consider the principle of giving. The offering of a portion of man's material substance has always been one of the aspects of worshipping God. In the Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, God gave Israel very clear and direct guidelines for the presentation of tithes and offerings. Although in the New Testament, the amount of one is giving is not so clearly delineated, but the importance of giving is maintained. Mark 12:41-44 talks about the widow who praised God by giving two mites as an offering for Him. The quantity of her gift did not match any one of the rich men's, but the quality of her offering surpassed all the others' offerings. The gifts of the others were only contributions, but her gift was a sacrifice. God is pleased with this kind of giving. 2 Corinthians 9:1-9 provides further insight into New Testament giving. In chapter nine, Paul encourages the believers in the collection which was being taken to help the church in Jerusalem. He commands their zeal in giving (v. 2) and refers to their gifts as "bounty" (v. 5). He also discusses that giving must be free, personal, and deliberate, not compulsory (v. 7). This kind of giving also pleases the Lord.

Moreover, the same offering is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, where Paul lays down several principles for New Testament giving. He teaches that giving should be centered in the local church. He also says, giving should be universally practiced among Christians. He continues with this teaching that giving should be regular and every Christian should be involved in supporting God's work. So how we can relate these teaching to the relationship between employers and employees? Paul's discussion suggests these principles: every Christian should give to support the Lord's work. Such giving should be voluntary, personal, and proportionate. Therefore, a Christian employer should compensate in such a way as to enable his or her employees to fulfill these scriptural guidelines.

The third principle we should consider is the principle of sacrifice. An undeniable part of following and serving the Lord Jesus Christ has always been a willingness to sacrifice materially to do so. It was the very point which kept the rich young man from becoming Christ's disciple (Matt. 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-27). He loved his wealth more than the Lord, and so he

went away in sadness. In 1 Corinthians 4:11-12, Paul refers to the sacrifice of his manual labor: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." For sure, Paul worked hard, laboring to the point of weariness. Paul voluntarily gave up his right to be supported by his labor in service to the Lord. Instead, he provided for his needs by tent-making (Act 18:3). He also refers to this secular employment in 1 Thessalonians 2:9: "Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." At the same time, Paul mentions his right to be supported by other Christians in ministry. In 1 Corinthians 9:6-12, he implies the right that he and Barnabas had to cease manual work: "Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely, he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? However, we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ."

A second significant passage about Paul's right to be supported by the gospel is 2 Thessalonians 3:8-10: "nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." Paul makes essential points in this part of scripture that can be used to teach employers and employees good lessons. Godly Christians may be expected to sacrifice on behalf of the Lord's work. The Christian employers, however, should avoid seeking to impose upon employees a standard of sacrifice that would negate the personal and voluntary aspect.

The fourth principle is about charity. One of the most important characteristics of a true Christian is his or her love for other Christians (1 John 4:7-21). Moreover, real and true love is verified and proved by deeds not only by words (James 2:14-20). This principle is not found only in the New Testament, for the Laws God gave Moses required the Israelites to be charitable: "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land" (Deut. 15:11). We also can see the principle of charity in both Psalms (37:21; 112:5) and Proverbs (3:27, 28; 28:27). Another important passage in the bible about the principle of charity is found in Ephesians 4:28: "Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need." Paul says that the Christians motive for earning is not only to meet their own needs but to share with others in need. A Christian should be satisfied by giving, out of earning of honest and right labor, to help needy brothers and sisters. Accordingly, a Christian employer should seek to compensate his or her employees in such a way that they can reach out in love to help others in need without impoverishing themselves or their dependents.

The fifth principle I would like to talk about is the principle of recompense. The Bible teaches that a worker, no matter what his or her station in life, deserves fair treatment and recompense for work accomplished. We can see these rules, especially in The Old Testament. Leviticus 19:13 says, "Thou shalt

not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." Because the withholding of a day laborer's wages until morning could cause great hardship to a poor man and his family, Israelites employers were encouraged to pay promptly. Kellogg states: "I have not fulfilled the law of love toward the man or woman whom I employ merely by paying fair wages; I must also pay promptly." Also, God's word support this principle when teaches us in Leviticus 25: 35-36: "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you." Moreover, this theme appears again in Deuteronomy 24: 14-15: "Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise, they may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin."

God is concerned that men and women should not be taken advantage of, but should receive their just wages. According to God's word, failure to pay promptly is a sin. God hates injustice in financial relationships. In Deuteronomy 25: 13-16 God says: "Do not have two differing weights in your bag one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. For the Lord, your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly." God is also concerned for the just recompense of his servants. For instance, about the Levites the book of Numbers 18:31 says: "You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the tent of meeting." The Bible teaches that employers must pay their employees promptly. He hates unjust or withheld recompense. Especially for those who are active in ministry, He desires them to be supported fully and adequately by those ministries.

In conclusion, every Christian employer should try to treat their employees in a fair way and pay them promptly, if they want to have a Godly life which pleases the Lord. Since at least we have 67 verses about fair compensation in the Bible, we should pay close attention to this subject. All Christian employers should pray and ask God to help them to be guided by the biblical principles for compensation. If we love God, we never want to break His heart. The Bible says that He hates unfair compensation. Therefore, all Christian employers should have the biblical principles of compensation as their measuring tools to treat and pay their employees. Because they should know that God always looks closely to see if they treat their employees in a fair way. In Malachi 3:5 God says: "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me."

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