

“The Approach and Aim of the Marketplace”

Penetrating a Dark World

Titus 2:9-10

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men. How are you doing today?

Men: Very good.

Bruce: Good to be with you. There’s an event going on today called The Prayer Breakfast downtown at the Convention Center. I understand that there are about a thousand people gathering. Let’s just pray for that, that the Lord might be pleased to plant some seeds, that it may be more than just a nice social event, that it would be something that is enhancing the Kingdom. So let’s pray for the prayer breakfast this morning and ask the Lord to teach us today. Let’s pray. Don, do you want to—

Don: Yes. *(Music)*

Bruce: Gracious and merciful Lord, we know that through Your Holy Spirit you are active worldwide. We pray, Lord, as there is a meeting down in Pittsburgh today at the Convention Center, a thousand people or so gathering together, what they call a prayer breakfast. Father, I just pray that Your Holy Spirit would descend upon that group, that those who speak would speak with clarity and truth, that truth would be proclaimed. May this be more than just some social event for the city of Pittsburgh. May it be something where you will plant seeds to redeem people who are lost. And Father, may You be glorified by their presentation. Father, we ask today that You would be with us, that You would guide us in these thoughts about ministry in the marketplace. Give us wise counsel, that we might be ones who would transform the workplace by the transformation of the gospel in our own lives. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Continuing in our study of the book of Titus, Paul’s little memo to his pastoral protégé Titus, on the island of Crete, we’ll pick it up in Chapter 2, verses 9 and 10 today. Chapter 2 of Titus, beginning at verse 9.

“Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. In chapter 1 of Titus we saw that orderliness in the church was the primary focus that Titus was beginning to correct on the island of Crete. And part of that was so that the right people would have the right qualifications at the right time to give the right reason for leadership. And one of the qualifications was to be able to teach sound doctrine.

And the theme of chapter 2 is the application of that sound doctrine that they taught in chapter 1. And so logically it goes like this. If you don’t have the right leadership, you don’t have the right preaching. If you don’t have the right preaching, you don’t have the right doctrine. If you don’t have the right doctrine, you don’t have the right application. It all starts with orderliness in the church, as we saw in chapter 1.

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In previous verses Paul covered what needed to be taught by these elders, those qualified for leadership, with what he called *sound doctrine*. And he taught us about different groups, about the older men, the older women, younger men, younger women.

And now he takes on a social group. He is dealing with masters in the marketplace and servants in the workplace.

Now when you take a look at the books of Ephesians and Colossians, Paul gives some very detailed instructions to Christian slaves and to Christian masters, specifically dividing up the two—Christian masters and Christian slaves or servants. But he doesn't do the same thing here in Titus. He doesn't make that distinction. Paul gives detailed instructions in those two books, but in Titus he talks in generalities.

Now the ancient society was estimated to have something like sixty million slaves in the culture of that time. And slavery was part of life. In fact, it was the primary feature of the Mediterranean economic order. And so slavery and mastership of slaves was just one of the common ordinary events of life. Part of the economic status and stature was based upon the economic order of slavery.

We also know from history that a lot of families also had slaves in the membership of their families. Take a look at 1 Timothy. Paul distinguishes between slaves who had believing masters and those who did not have believing masters. You can read about that in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 1 and 2.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Timothy 6:1-2. *“Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers. Rather they must serve all the better, since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.”*

Bruce: But here in Titus he doesn't make that distinction. The command is to be transmitted to all slaves who hear the gospel, and even to those who believe Christ. But he was saying that this is a message you preach to everyone. You don't divide it up and say, “You have a Christian master. You don't have a Christian master.” He says, “Now to the church of Crete, you preach this message of sound doctrine to all the slaves all over Crete.”

From history we would know that there were about four slaves for every family. If there were sixty thousand slaves on the island of Crete, that means there were about fifteen thousand Roman citizens. So the slaves outnumbered the ownership four to one on the island of Crete.

And so the attitude of slavery in the Scripture in my mind would say this. It's certainly an affront to God. And that's because God has made us in His image. One of the things that we have to realize is this. The problem of slavery, when you get down to it, is that it is an improper image of who God is. It's an improper view of God. And when you have an improper view of God, you have bad conduct. If we don't think correctly about God, we will not think correctly about man.

The example would be the Fall in Genesis chapter 3. You have violence toward man in chapter 4. When the view of God changed in chapter 3, the conduct towards man changed in chapter 4.

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So the real issue that most of us are dealing with is an improper view of who God is. And that’s very, very important for us to take into the marketplace. And for Paul, the apostle of grace, the gospel was the ultimate answer to slavery. It wasn’t a rebellion. It was a quiet rebellion, because he understood this. It was the transforming power of the gospel in an individual’s life, either a slave or a master, that could change society from a very quiet rebellion point of view. And that’s why he spends some time in this social order giving instructions to the elders of the church on how they should teach the slaves to be obedient to their masters.

So let’s take a look at some of this. Look at verse 10. Here’s the reason: *“so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”*

That they may adorn the doctrine of God. He gives these instructions, and here’s the reason why. In other words, make the teaching about God attractive. You want to make the teaching about God attractive. And how are you going to do that? You’re going to do that by your conduct.

Doctrine precedes practice. And it is the transforming power of the gospel which makes the master and the slave brothers in Christ. That’s what makes it unique. They become brothers in Christ. They’ve created a brotherhood.

Now how would you like to have a society of masters and slaves who viewed themselves as brothers, as a brotherhood? Take a look at Colossians 4:1. And the reason this is so true and so powerful for us to consider is this. *“Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”* “Both the master and the slave were servants of the same Master, and that’s Christ Himself. That’s what makes it a brotherhood.

And so the instructions, as we take them into the marketplace, are these. It is the transforming power of the gospel in the lives of masters, and it is the transforming power of the gospel in the lives of servants or slaves, that can bring about a quiet rebellion and change society socially in the marketplace. And so Paul is going to give us some very key instructions on how to have ministry in the marketplace.

Now I think we should apply these principles to ourselves in the current age, in our contemporary society, because both employer and employee have to serve the same Master. In fact, we ought to view ourselves as slaves, shouldn’t we? We ought to view ourselves as slaves of who?

Men: Christ.

Bruce: Christ, the Master. So let’s take a look at this. What attitude do I have towards Christ? You see, He is my Master. I am His slave. In fact, when you look at the original translations of the Scripture, the word *slave* is used more than *servant*. The word *servant* is used more in our contemporary society, but the real issue is that we’re slaves of Christ. That’s who we are. When we were *“transformed from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son He loves”*, we now have a new Master, and that Master is Christ Himself. We need to view ourselves as slaves to the Master.

And can you imagine what would happen if there was a Christian slave and a Christian master, how they would transform their workplace because they were brothers and they

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formed a brotherhood? That’s the power of the gospel. And sometimes a quiet revolution is far more important than a visible one, or a violent one.

And though our situation may have changed, and it’s different from the island of Crete, yet surely our aim in the workplace should remain the same. And that is this: to make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. And how do you make the teaching about God our Savior attractive? By your conduct.

Paul’s instructions may be summarized by three character issues—by *deportment*, by *disposition*, and by *dependability*. Deportment means your conduct. What conduct are you taking into the workplace, be you a master or be you a slave? It’s the same issue.

Secondly, your disposition. That’s the condition of your heart. What is the disposition of your heart? You take that into the marketplace as a master or as a slave.

And thirdly, dependability. That’s the final character quality. So Paul is going to teach us how to be the master or how to be the slave in today’s contemporary society, how we can adorn the gospel of God and make the teaching of Christ attractive. And we do that through our conduct. We do that through our deportment, through our disposition, and through our dependability. So let’s take a look at what Paul is going to teach us in verses 9 and 10.

First of all, he teaches us this, for slaves *“to be submissive to their own masters.”* Now I would describe that this way. It’s a humble willingness to be subject to the master. It’s a humble willingness to be subject. You cannot be submissive to your master in all things unless you have a sense of humble willingness to do so.

And remember, where do we get the humble willingness to do so? Because we realize that Christ is our Master and we are His slaves. And so it all begins with having this humble willingness to be subject to our masters in the workplace.

And the real issue for me is this. How do you view God when you go to work? How do you view God in the workplace? You see, you take your view of God into the workplace. Do you really believe that God is bigger than your boss? You see, if you understand that, that God is bigger than your boss, that’s going to radically change your conduct. It’s going to change your disposition. It’s going to change your character. It will change your deportment, because you’ll have a whole different condition of your heart. You have a different disposition because you understand this. I’m going into an environment where God is bigger than my boss.

That changes my conduct. That’s a description of the transforming power of the gospel in your own life. Do I understand that God is bigger than my boss? That means you have a willingness to be submissive to them.

Now being submissive doesn’t mean that your namby-pamby or wishy-washy. It doesn’t mean that at all. It means you have the right disposition to honor their position. So the condition of your heart is critical. But the real issue is this, men. Do I honestly believe that God is bigger than my boss? Yes, please?

Participant: Could you repeat that definition of being submissive?

Bruce: It’s a humble willingness to be subject to the master. Men, that only comes if you have the right view of God. If you don’t have the right view of God, you’re not going to have a willing submission. You’re never going to have that attitude. Sometimes we

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have to be respectful of the persons in their position, even though they may not be respectful in their conduct. How they treat us is never the issue. The issue is how we respond to them. And we respond with a submissive willingness to honor them because of their position, because I know this. God is bigger than my boss.

In Romans 13 all authority is God-given. Now your boss may not know that. Most of them don't know that. But you know that. And you take that to work. And that changes your deportment. It changes your disposition. It changes your dependability because you have the right view of God and you take that into the marketplace. That begins to shape the whole conduct that we have in response to our authorities. It's a humble willingness to be subject to the master, to your employer.

Now notice that the slave must comply with the wishes of the master in every respect. That means from morning to evening, and in every category of work, we must be submissive to the master. Some cross references for you would be Colossians 3:22 and Ephesians 3:24.

Transcriber's Note: Colossians 3:22, NKJV. *“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.”*

Ephesians 5:24. *“Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”*

Bruce: Now the word *everything* must not be taken in the absolute sense, because if the apostle meant it so, that when a master demanded that somebody be a liar, committing adultery, thievery or murder, that the slave must obey, that's not what he's saying, because there is a purpose clause at the end of verse 10. Notice that. For surely, if somebody violated this portion of verse 10, he would not be adorning the gospel of God. Notice. *“Adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”* So if somebody did that stuff, he would not be adorning the doctrine of God our Savior because it would be contrary to the Scripture.

So you've got to understand that God is bigger than your boss. We need to be responsible in everything and to be submissive in everything, except in those things where the Scripture is violated. We cannot do that. We must obey God and not man.

That's going to be the exception. That's not going to happen very often. In my twenty-eight years with my employer I only had that happen once. That's the exception. You don't run your life by exceptions. You run your life by the rule. The rule is this. Be willing to be responsible and submissive to your authority. That's the rule. When the exception comes along, God will give you the grace to know what to do.

I once had a situation where I was not told what to do. But it was a decision I had to make. And I made the decision and got called in because it was not the decision that the higher-ups wanted me to make. But they never told me to do something illegal. But they did say this. “Who would know if you made that decision?”

And I said, “I would.”

And they said, “What the f--- does that mean?”

I said, “It means I have a clear conscience.”

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And the gentleman to whom I was speaking got out of his chair and came over, beat me on the chest and said, “Would you rather keep your job or have a clear conscience?”

Thank You, Jesus! (*Laughter.*) Oh, this is super! (*Laughter*)

My response was this. “I will take my clear conscience to my next job.”

Participant: Amen. Wow! Praise God!

Bruce: Now I didn’t even know where that came from. (*Laughter*) I was sweating bullets while he was talking to me. (*Laughter*) But God gives you the grace, men, when you need it, not at the moment of contemplation but at the moment of application.

And so when we talk about being submissive to our bosses in everything there comes a time—and this is the exception now; you don’t rule your life by the exception; you rule it by the standard, not the exception. And the standard is that we have a willing submission to our bosses in everything. When something like that comes up, the Lord will give you the grace. And you’ll know the difference between what you need to do and what you should not do. God will give you the grace at that moment. But the principle here is this: a willing submission to be submissive to our bosses in everything.

Next we see this. Paul says in addition to that, he takes it to the next level. He says that *you must please the masters in all things*. Please your masters in all things.

I would describe that as this: a genuine intent to give satisfaction or to be pleasant. You want to give satisfaction to your boss. You want to be pleasant to your boss.

First of all, pleasing the master would mean carrying out his or her instructions completely, satisfactorily, and doing the best for him or her.

Years ago I was given the task from my employer to begin to develop a department of eleven people who were all on probation. In the first day that I started my job, my boss said, “Here are your eleven people. Oh by the way, they’re all on probation. You have ninety days to figure out what you want to do with them. You can fire them. We don’t know what to do with them, but you can’t get rid of them. You’ve got to give them at least ninety days. But it’s your job. You can decide what you want. Welcome aboard.”

What are you going to do with a group of eleven people who first of all wondered how in the world they hired some minister to come in here and head up our department? Did he fail in the pulpit? (*Laughter*) That was their thought process. That’s exactly what they were thinking.

So one of the things I had to do was to build a cohesive unit of team members. To make a long story short, the thing I needed to do was this: to provide an environment for them in which to excel; to provide an environment for them not to be successful, but to excel.

There’s a difference between success and excellence. I don’t want people to be successful. I want them to be excellent. So I needed the manager to create an environment for them in which to excel.

Secondly, I needed to remove all the hindrances to their personal excellence. What are the things that are going to hinder their excellence and their productivity?

And thirdly, promote their well-being. Provide, protect and promote; that’s the role of a manager. Provide, protect and promote.

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Now *promote* does not mean going up and up the ladder of success and getting a greater salary. It means promoting the well-being of their lives. And so the very first thing we did was that we came up with a list of what I called *standards of excellence*—how we were going to manage ourselves as a group.

You want a self-managed team. A manager does not manage their work. You manage the people. They manage their work. I never managed anybody’s work. I managed the person, because I wanted to put them in a position for them to excel. And my job was to create an environment for them in which to excel, to remove all the hindrances to excellence, and thirdly to promote their well-being.

So here are the standards of excellence we came up with. The very first day we all got together. We got into a room and after we introduced ourselves and gave a little bit of a history of everybody, I said, “We’re going to manage ourselves with a self-managed team concept of one standard of excellence, whatever that is. So what do you think needs to be done for us to manage ourselves to be excellent?”

So we wrote down about fifteen different things. And I said, “Now how many of you can vote on #1?”

Well, three people did and seven people didn’t. So we scratched that one. To make a long story short, we came up with one thing that we all agreed upon. I just wanted them to agree upon one thing. And that was this. *Relationships are important.*

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That was it. All twelve of us agreed upon that one thing. I thought, “Good! We can start with that. That’s the basis of our standard of excellence.”

Now who are our relationships with? With each other, with our clients, and with our families. Now those are the three areas; that’s the environment where I need to promote their well-being in those three relationships—with each other, with our clients, and with our families. So here are the standards of excellence that we all agreed upon after two days.

Remember, eleven people didn’t even like each other. They had no idea who I was. They were all fearful that I was going to fire them in the next ninety days. We came up with these standards of excellence.

There was this. No one works after five o’clock. No one takes work home. No one works on weekends. And no one gossips.

Now those were the four standards we came up with. I added the last one. No one gossips, because gossip is an insidious cancer that will destroy a team.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It will just eat you alive. So I had to tell them how not to be gossips. And that was this. There are two kinds of gossips. There’s an active and a passive. The passive listens and the active repeats.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You’re a passive gossip by listening. “Hey! Did you hear about Sig?”

Sig: What? (*Laughter*)

Bruce: Now if you say, “No. Tell me.”, you’re a passive gossip. So I had to teach the eleven members not to be passive gossips.

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Don’t listen! If somebody comes to you and says, “Hey, did you hear about Sig?”, you say something like this. “Have you talked to Sig about it first?” Or “are you asking my help to resolve the situation?”

“Why would I do that?” You see, you’re stopping them from being a passive gossip. Now they don’t have anything to repeat. You can’t repeat if you don’t listen. So I had to teach them how not to gossip.

Long story short. The day that we started that department they pulled all the assets in the charitable arena, and we had \$500 million under management. Within a year we had \$1.6 billion.

Participant: Wow!

Bruce: And in twelve years we had \$6.7 billion. We started with \$500 million. Within one year we doubled that and went to \$1.6 billion.

My boss called me in for my evaluation my very first year. And he said, “Bruce, I love what you’re doing. I don’t know how you’re doing it. But I love what you’re doing. But I’ve got one problem.”

I said, “What’s that, sir?”

“You leave early.”

I said, “I beg your pardon?”

He said, “Your group leaves at five o’clock en masse.”

I said, “Yes, sir. That’s our standard of excellence.” I said, “What’s the problem, sir?”

He said, “It doesn’t look like you’re working hard.” (*Laughter*)

Now here’s where you make your appeal. Here’s the point of this principle that we’re talking about, to be pleasing in all things. My question was this. “May I ask you a question, sir?”

He said, “What’s that?”

I said, “Are you dissatisfied with my production?”

Now what does he want from me?

Participant: Production.

Bruce: He wants production! I asked him the question. “Are you dissatisfied with my production?” You make your appeal based on what he wants from you, not what you want to get from him. That’s how you make your appeal. So I said, “Are you dissatisfied with my production of our department?”

He said, “Oh, no! Of the seventy-five departments I manage, you’re the most productive per capita.”

I said, “May I make an appeal, sir?”

He said, “What’s that?”

I said, “Would you let me manage my people the same way I’m doing it for one more year? And if you’re not satisfied with my production and our production as a department, then I’ll change.”

He said, “Okay, you’ve got a deal.”

I came into my second year. We got up to \$3.6 billion, in two years.

I came in for my second evaluation. He said, “I don’t know what you’re doing. Just keep it up. Let’s talk about the Pirates.” (*Laughter*)

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You see, you’ve got to be pleasing to your boss. And when you make an appeal, you’ve got to figure out what it is that he or she wants from you. What he wanted from me was productivity. That’s what he wanted. That’s how I pleased him, by being productive. And the way I managed my people was different from anything else they were doing. But the point is this. He wanted productivity from me. That’s what was pleasing to him. You’ve got to figure out what’s pleasing to your boss and do that. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Of course, the down side of this story is that he made all the previous managers look bad. *(Laughter)*

Bruce: Well, that’s their issue. *(Laughter)* Yes, please?

Participant: You said that you manage people, not their work. Whenever you manage people, are you managing their character? Can you expand upon that?

Bruce: Yes. You manage their character as much as you do their productivity. I knew what each of the people were managing, what their responsibilities were. And every year, when I did an evaluation of them, I created a character quality that I built into their job description.

Now to my executive secretary who was given to me, she had the wonderful gift of gossiping. So I put into her job description, “You will not gossip.” I evaluated her on that just as much as I did knowing Word or XL or Windows 10, or whatever it would be.

I evaluated them on that, but I also evaluated them on their character, because you manage your people. You don’t manage their work. And you see, when you create an environment of excellence, they are motivated by what? They want to do what to me?

Participant: They want to excel.

Bruce: They want to please me, right? You create an environment for them to do that. And you do that by creating an environment for them in which to excel. What motivates them is their personal excellence. And who begins to manage them? They manage themselves.

I did a lot of traveling. And I never called back to my office because I didn’t want them to think that I was checking upon them. I didn’t need to do that, because I knew what? That they were thinking correctly.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now my dear Cindy, my executive secretary for all those years! I was just reminded this week that this was the week that she passed away. But I never called Cindy on the phone. I said, “Cindy, you have the freedom to call me. But I’m never going to check up on you. I don’t need to do that.”

Once I was traveling and she called me on the phone. And she said, “Bruce, there’s a situation that has arisen here at work. I want to know if I’m thinking correctly.”

Now notice what she didn’t ask. She didn’t say what?

Participant: What do I do?

Bruce: :”What do I do?” She didn’t ask that. She had been trained in her excellence to think correctly. Think, act and feel. She said, “Bruce, would you see if I’m thinking correctly?”

I said, “What are you thinking about? How do you handle this?”

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She walked me through this and I said, “Cindy, that’s exactly right.”

She said, “Okay. Now I know what to do. Thank you.” Click! You don’t manage their work. You manage the person. That’s how you please them. That’s what you do for your boss. And that’s what they’ll do for you when you create an environment of excellence. Yes, sir?

Participant: With this particular group that you worked with, how did you get them to buy it?

Bruce: It was not easy. I spent a lot of time with them personally. Here’s what I did the very first day that I started. I went down to the HR office and I said, “May I have the eleven performance jackets of those eleven people I’m going to manage?” And I spent eight hours knowing everything I could about them.

And so when I met them on the very first day, I said, “Hello, Bill.” I memorized their pictures. I could look him in the eye and say, “Hi, Bill. I understand that your son is a soccer player at North Allegheny High School. How is he doing?” I said something about every person I met. But I looked them in the eye.

Radically, that led into something that was different, because nobody had ever done anything like that. I showed personal interest in them. I spent time with them. When you spend time with your people, they will give you a lot of their efforts. You have to spend time with them.

Most of the managers at PNC criticized me about spending so much time with my people. They said, “All you do is spend time with your people! What do you do to get them to work?”

I said, “I manage them to work because I’m managing the people. I spend time with the people. They’re going to do the work. I don’t manage them. They do their own work.”

That’s a training environment for excellence. You see, it works up the chain. I wanted to please my boss in everything. You want to do that by being productive. Being productive, they want to please me. It works up and down the line.

Men, I’ll tell you what. With the transforming power of the gospel you can change the workplace overnight. It takes some time, but you can change it, because it’s so different from the world’s system. Yes, please?

Participant: Bruce, isn’t that what Jesus does with us? He works on our character qualities.

Bruce: Oh, absolutely. He works on three things—our deportment, our disposition and our dependability. That’s exactly what Paul is teaching us to do in the workplace. That’s exactly what Jesus does with us. That’s why we’re slaves! We’re slaves to whom?

Participant: Jesus.

Bruce: Our Master. We need to understand that. We’re the slaves. He’s the Master. Am I in willing submission to Him? Do I have a desire to please Him in everything I do? I take the same thing to Him that I take to the workplace and to my boss.

So there’s no difference. We are the slaves of Christ! Men, we’ve been “*rescued from the dominion of darkness, and transformed into the kingdom of the Son He loves.*” He’s now our Master. I need to view myself as a slave! I’m a slave to the Master. And I must try to do things that are pleasing to Him.

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Participant: What were the three d’s?

Bruce: Department, disposition and dependability.

Participant: You know, Bruce?

Bruce: Sir?

Participant: Let me just ask about this. You talked about quiet rebellion.

Bruce: Uh-huh.

Participant: The Civil War was not a quiet rebellion.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: The civil rights movement was not a quiet rebellion.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: I don’t know if those two, and another example would be the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, whether those would be examples where you’ve got your standard, but you also have human depravity. I’m raising the question. Just having good theology does not guarantee that you’re not going to be a slave owner. Jonathan Edwards owned slaves.

Bruce: Sure. I understand.

Participant: And nobody’s theology is better than his is.

Bruce: Right. All I’m saying is this. I notice what Paul did not tell Titus to do. He didn’t tell him to go get rid of slavery.

Participant: Yes, I notice that.

Bruce: He didn’t tell him to do that. He said, “Go change the world.” Change the environment through the transforming power of the gospel. You see, that’s the power we have. That’s what I’m calling a quiet rebellion. And sometimes that quiet rebellion can be more powerful. But he did not tell Titus to go and disrupt the whole status of the Mediterranean economic system by getting rid of slavery. He didn’t say that. He said, “Go and be pleasing to your master,” because you have the right view of God. God is bigger than your boss.

So I understand that the situation can occur where a quiet rebellion is not the right approach. But I notice what he did not tell Titus. He didn’t tell him to go and start a rebellion. He said to take the transforming power of the gospel into the workplace. Yes, please?

Participant: When you look at the Bible, Christianity doesn’t change by force. It changes by the hearts of men.

Bruce: That’s your disposition, the condition of the heart, absolutely. Thank you. Somebody else? Yes, Jim?

Jim: I was going to say that I think that because America hadn’t done the right thing up till the n that the Civil War, in effect, was like a judgment, because we had just put off doing right.

Bruce: It could have been. So the second point is this: to be pleasing their masters in all things. That’s the genuine intent, to give satisfaction.

First of all, pleasing the master would mean carrying out his or her instructions satisfactorily, and doing their best for that manager. Now this means that we work hard. But it also means this. Slaves were generally motivated to work well because of the

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promise that perhaps they would be set free one day. And although the Christian was not to pass up the opportunity for freedom, notice what Paul told Titus to tell him. He was to have a different motivation when he went to work. He didn't tell him what not to do. He didn't tell him to destroy slavery. He said to take the power of the gospel into the workplace and plant the seed and watch it grow. That's what we do. And men, it is the transforming power of the gospel that has tremendous power in our workplace. We just overlook it, because I don't think we have the right view of God as it relates to our employers and our employees.

The next thing is that *there is a specific refusal to be argumentative*. Notice that. There is a specific refusal to be argumentative. External compliance with the will of the master is not enough. The disposition of the heart must come into play. Growling and grumbling underneath is also forbidden. We're not complainers, we're not gripers, we're not blamers. You see, there's a desire in the heart not to be argumentative.

A sullen disposition has never yet won a soul for Christ. Slaves accordingly must be eager to please and be well-pleasing. Do not be argumentative.

Now there's a negative aspect to this act of being well-pleasing, and that is not talking back. That's literally what the passage means in the Scripture—not talking back, not being argumentative. Although the basic meaning here in the Scripture is not talking back, it also contains the overtones of disobedience, resistance, rebellion and strife. Sometimes, when you look past the words of griping, complaining, and moaning and blaming, and being argumentative, it's really symptomatic of the disposition of the heart that is disobedient, the disposition of the heart that is resistant, the disposition of the heart that is rebellious, and the disposition of the heart that is fostering strife. That's why it's so important to have the right disposition of the heart. We don't talk back because we know this. God is bigger than our boss.

I could give you illustration after illustration of situations like that from the past twenty-eight years in the marketplace, where the most important thing I could do was to quote the most important Bible verse next to Genesis 1:1.

Transcriber's Note: Genesis 1:1. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Bruce: It's Exodus 14:14, my life verse. *(Laughter)* *“I will fight for you while you remain silent.”* I'll tell you, that has changed my life more than anything else. I just have to learn to keep my mouth shut, because I know this. God is bigger than your boss. Men, that's where you get power!

Try to do that sometime and see how powerless you are to do it in your own resources. But when you can do it, the power of God's grace and the meekness comes in. *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* We control the earth through our meekness, power under control. And for me in the marketplace that was my life's verse. *“I will fight for you, Bruce. But you keep your mouth shut.”* You don't need to be argumentative, because an argumentative disposition might really say that you are rebellious. You're disobedient. You're producing strife, anger. That is not helpful in transforming the marketplace.

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Next is number four, and it would be *not to be pilfering*. It’s a clear stand for absolute honesty. It includes time as much as possessions. I define not pilfering as a clear stand for absolute honesty, including time as much as your possessions.

Now the eighth commandment and the tenth commandment still applies in the workplace, just as anyplace else. You don’t steal. And one of the ways you steal is by your time.

If you have an hour for lunch , you don’t take an hour-and-a-half, unless you have what?

Participant: Permission.

Bruce: Permission. Information beforehand is a reason. Information afterward is an excuse and nobody likes excuses. The last thing your boss wants is an excuse.

Every time I saw myself saying that I was going to have an hour-long break that was longer than an hour I went to my boss and said, “Sir, may I have your permission to take an hour-and-a-half because I’m going to be doing this?”

After a while, after the first year, he said, “Bruce, you don’t need to ask anymore. I trust you.” Part of managing our time is that we don’t steal our time. We don’t steal time as much as we don’t steal the possessions they have. That’s part of not pilfering. You’re trustworthy, because you have the disposition of the heart to be what? Pleasing in everything, because you understand what’s happening. I’m releasing the transforming power of the gospel when I do that, because that is so radically different from everybody else in the marketplace. They don’t have that disposition of heart. They don’t have that deportment. And therefore they don’t have that dependability. That’s what we bring to the marketplace.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Please?

Participant: It sounds like this is something that you developed before you got to PNC. Or was it developed on the job? I’m just curious. This is a wonderful piece of thinking and bringing the gospel into your work. I just wonder if you can comment at all on how you got to this.

Bruce: Revelation is progressive, not instantaneous. I started with one thing. The Lord was pleased and I became an aggressive responder to what happened all along the way. I just became an aggressive responder to all I saw the Lord doing around me. I responded to that. And it grew.

This developed over twenty-eight years. It’s easy for me to stand up and teach it now because it’s twenty-eight years of history. But it was a learning process all the way. There were failures, mistakes that I made. God corrected those. I had to take time and go to my staff and say, “Would you forgive me? I was wrong. Tom, you were right. And Tom, would you forgive me?” I did that publicly after I did it personally. And when I went public, the whole staff would see my humility in public, in front of my staff.

Those are the things you do. That’s creating an environment of excellence. They need to see excellence on my part just as much as I’m expecting excellence on their part. So Sig, it was a whole learning process. It was just very, very progressive. Yes, sir?

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Participant: Romans 7 says—basically you can sum up Romans to say something like where Paul is saying that he knows what he’s supposed to do, but he doesn’t always do it.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: He knows the truth, but he has a problem acting it out. And I can relate to that, because there are certain situations where I know what I’m supposed to do in my mind.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Participant: But when a situation pops up, I always act in a dark way that’s not Biblical.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: And I struggle to cultivate that action in myself, where I can truly hang on to the word of God and actually have a character that the Bible actually describes.

Let me give you an example, like someone you interact with at work. They’re always getting under your skin and you always act inappropriately when you have those interactions. How do you cultivate that, knowing that situation where you know that they’re going to get under your skin. How do you cultivate that type of attitude?

Bruce: Beg for mercy. Beg for God’s mercy, because I don’t have the resources to do that. I just don’t have the resources to do that.

Where does our adequacy come from? Our adequacy comes from God, not from ourselves. The question is a matter of resources. You and I have all the resources we’ll ever need. That’s why the verse for me, Exodus 14:14, was so powerful, because the first thing it taught me to do, my friend, was this. Keep my mouth shut and don’t say anything yet. It would give me time to react and to think about it, and to ask the Lord to intervene in my spirit and affect my disposition. The first thing I had to do was govern me, because I can’t govern anybody else unless I govern myself. The only way to govern myself was to keep my mouth shut and not give them what they stimulated within me. That gave me time to sit back and to think, act, feel. *“Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* It gave me time to go back and think. What is the right disposition of heart that I need to have in this situation? And Lord, You give me the grace to do that. I beg You to do that, because if You don’t do that for me and give me the grace to do it, I’m going to be in deep doo-doo. It’s the recognition of my own personal depravity and how you have to trust Him. It’s a process men; it doesn’t happen overnight. It doesn’t happen immediately. It happens over time.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: Here’s a quick application that might be helpful. It’s two things. One is to *pray for that person*. Two, *find one thing out about that person that you can like*. It’s what Bruce says—think, act, feel. If you could change the way you think about that person, even if it’s only that they are made in the image of God, that’s what I like about them. It might not change the way you feel about them, but it might change your interaction because of this practical application.

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Bruce: It all starts with how we begin to think. But you’ve got to give yourself time to think. Sometimes you need to walk away before you engage. That’s one of the things I learned about air-to-air combat. Sometimes you have to be smart enough to know when you need to get out of the way, because you don’t have the right fuel system or the right ammo on board. You need to know and not to engage. Come back for another day. You need to get out of there. There’s nothing wrong with leaving. Come back for another day.

That’s the same thing we have to do in our spiritual lives. Sometimes I just need to keep my mouth shut, because the moment I open my mouth, I’m going to get in trouble. Walk away and think about it. Pray about it. Get some advice, whatever I need to do. I give myself time to think right so I can act right and feel right.

And lastly, there is one more thing he tells us to do, and that is *to be faithful*. I define that as a visible commitment to complete fidelity in every area so that I can be trusted. We as slaves must show the utmost trustworthiness and fidelity.

Paul gave a good reason why Christian workers should be trustworthy, and that is this: that they will embellish the word of God with honor. When we behave faithfully we beautify the gospel. We beautify the Bible and make the Christian message attractive to unbelievers. That’s part of our motivation.

And I will give you the best example that I can give you. It’s the example of Joseph. He’s set before us in the Old Testament Scripture as a slave who is both wonderfully competent and absolutely trustworthy.

Men, that’s what we want to be—wonderfully competent and absolutely trustworthy. When he worked for Potiphar he so commended himself to his master that he left in Joseph’s care everything he had. And notice that when Joseph was in charge of everything, we’re told in Genesis 39:6 that the only thing Potiphar gave himself to was what he ate. The only thing he was concerned about was what he was going to eat, because he knew that Joseph was so absolutely trustworthy. The only thing I have to worry about is the next thing I’m going to eat.

Now what a beautiful picture of the trustworthiness of a slave to his master! The master at your work can say this. “You don’t need to ask me that anymore because I trust you. If you have to take two hours that’s okay, because I know that you’re going to be productive for me. I trust you.” You see, we need to bring that mindset of being wonderfully competent and absolutely trustworthy. That’s the model that we see in Joseph.

So what’s the aim for that, men? That’s just a quick synopsis. I could give you many more illustrations. Sometime, if you want to talk about it, we could do that. I’ll give you more illustrations and I’ll tell you about my failures, because it’s not all successful. I trust that over twenty-eight years that it was successful and that it was excellent. But there were periods where there were times of great difficulty.

And that’s also part of the message of the transforming power of the gospel. When you fail, you get back up. Men, the real test of your Christian character is not whether or not you fail. You are going to fail. The real test of our character is this: how quickly you get up when you do fail. That’s what makes us different. That’s the transforming power of the gospel.

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So men, we want to beautify the gospel of God, to make it attractive to people in the workplace. And we do that first of all by having the right view of God. God is bigger than my boss. Therefore I am protected. She can't fire me unless God permits it. I can be rescued from that job. But I can't be fired unless God permits it.

I can tell you some stories about that, where I was called in and about ready to have that happen. And I almost wanted to say, “Na na na na na! You can't fire me!” (*Laughter*) But fortunately, I kept my mouth shut. (*Laughter*) But you see, men, that's taking the right view of God into the marketplace. That's your protection. It's our great protection.

And the beauty and the aim for us, and the motivation, is to make my character, my deportment, my disposition and my dependability attractive to the cause of Christ. And when you do that, men, we start a quiet rebellion in the marketplace because the transforming power of the gospel can change things, because it changed who? It changed me.

Let's pray. Father, this is so practical, so powerful, and yet humanly beyond our grasp. Apart from the energizing work of the Holy Spirit we would not be able to do what Paul instructed his young friend Titus to do. Father, give us the grace as we go to the marketplace, that we would adorn the gospel of God, embellish the gospel of Christ and make it beautiful because of our deportment, because of our disposition and because of our dependability. At the end of the day, Father, may You be glorified by how we have ministry in the marketplace. Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)