

Success At Work for Teenagers
(appropriate for High Schoolers and older)
Michael R. Daily 10/29/07

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

(Portions taken from Rev. John S. Mahon, Grace Community International, Houston, TX)

(Reference 1: The Extraordinary Leader, John H. Zenger & Joseph Folkman, ISBN 0-07-138747-1)

(Reference 2: Zig Ziglar, Top Performance: How to develop excellence in yourself and others, Revell Publishing, May 2006)

Tonight we are going to look at how to be successful at work.

According to research by the Stanford Research Institute, Harvard University, and the Carnegie Foundation, 15% of the reason you get a job, keep that job, and move ahead in that job has to do with your technical skills, 85% of the reason you get a job, keep that job, and move ahead in that job has to do with your people skills and people knowledge. (reference 2)

Romans 13:1-2

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

What is authority? It is the legal right and the power or ability to punish or reward people within certain limits or boundaries. You have to have both. If you have the power but not the right you are a bully. If you have the legal right but not the ability you are a joke. So, you have to have both.

What is the source of all human authority? God. If you resist authority what can you expect? Condemnation.

Romans 13:3-4

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

If you do evil what can you expect from authority? Punishment. If you do good what can you expect? Praise. What does God say human authority is? They are His ministers. Do authorities know that they are God's ministers? No. Does the fact that they don't know they are God's ministers mean that they are not? No. Even though they are not aware of how God is using them God says that he uses them as his ministers. To rebel against authority is to rebel against God.

1 Peter 2:13-14

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

What is submission? Yielding to the authority of another. It is something you choose to do in obedience to God.

The question often comes up about authorities that overstep their boundaries of legal rights. For example, if a communist dictator issues a law making it illegal to be a Christian, that would be a direct violation of scripture.

These types of situations are easy to figure out – if the authority issues a command that is a direct violation of scripture (you can point to the verses in the Bible) then we will not obey those particular commands – but we will obey their other commands that are within their legal right - as defined by the Bible.

But here's the real issue. Most of us will rebel against authority long before they go beyond the boundary of their legal rights – that's the real issue.

You live in a culture that is rebellious to authority. But the truths of God's word never change. They apply regardless of what culture you live in.

The scriptures we have read so far were written when the prevailing authority was the Roman empire – one of the most brutal governments in history, so we can't say that Paul didn't understand today's situation, can we?

Tonight we are going to focus on authority at work

The year is 2030. You are sitting at your desk at Nano-Tunes International. As Director of New Product Development you have 25 people working for you. Your company has been in a life or death battle with McApple Corporation for domination of the teen electronics market. The winner will take all - the loser will close its doors and everyone will lose their jobs. It is the beginning of a new fiscal year and you have just received your once-a-year money from your boss to give raises to your employees. Your immediate task is to decide who you will fire, who you will keep but give no raise to, who you will give a small raise to, and who you will give a large raise to. Do well and you will keep productivity high and payroll costs low, and your company will stay in business. Do poorly and your best people will be lured away by McApple and you will be saddled with an unproductive but costly workforce - thus dooming your company to extinction.

As you begin this task your first step is to identify those characteristics that make a good employee. What are they? (list them on the board - you can add ones that are not mentioned as you go through the study).

Obeys commands

Does what needs to be done at the right level of detail and on time

Anticipates problems and takes the initiative to solve them

Strengthens company not himself

Accepts reproof / correction

Treats boss with respect

Doesn't try to hide mistakes

Submits to the boss's will with a positive attitude

Trustworthy & faithful in little things

Works well with others

Sense of responsibility for their work

Matthew 8:8-10 (Obeys commands)

But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹"For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ¹⁰Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.

If you can't do anything else on the board you have to do this at a minimum - obey commands.

Hebrews 12:11 (Does what needs to be done at right level of detail and on time)

"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

1 Kings 20:38-41

So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. ³⁹As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.'

⁴⁰"While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." And the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." ⁴¹Then he hastily took the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him that he was of the prophets.

The employee needs to do the job that needs to get done – on time, and at the right level of detail regardless of how they feel about it. They may personally desire to add more or less detail than is needed, but the issue is doing what needs to be done – not what they prefer to do. It is an issue of self-discipline. Some employees can't do it because they don't have the self-discipline.

Genesis 39:1-6 (Anticipates problems and takes the initiative to solve them)

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. ²The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. ³Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. ⁵It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. ⁶**So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything** except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Genesis 39:21-23

But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. ²²The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. ²³**The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.**

My boss once said the best employees he ever had could “read his mind”. These people know their boss so well that when they see a situation, they know what their boss would think about it and what he would tell them to do, so they just go ahead and do it.

These people are your gold mine. You have to take care of them and give them large raises so McApple doesn't lure them away.

Philippians 2:3-4 (Strengthens company not himself)

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

We live in the information age. The most valuable employees share information broadly with others. Some employees have a different view. They believe that if they hoard information it makes it more difficult to replace or get rid of them. What they don't realize is, this limits their impact and their value to the organization. If you share information broadly there will be times, on occasion, when others will steal or take credit for it, but God is in control and, ultimately, the bosses figure out what is going on and who is strengthening the company. Besides, if someone is difficult to replace that means they are also difficult to promote!

Proverbs 6:23 (Accepts reproof / correction)

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life.

What is a reproof? A reproof is when your boss says: “I like what you did here. I don't like what you did there – do it this way next time.” That's life. Reproof and correction are things you will receive from your bosses your whole life. Its not personal, they do it to everyone. Expect it and view it as an opportunity to improve. The day they stop reproofing you is the day they think you have no more potential to improve.

Proverbs 12:1 - Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

What does God say about someone who will not accept correction? They are stupid.

Everyone can always improve. Therefore, I always put an area of improvement on documentation for my employees so they will know what they need to do to move to the next level.

Some employees appreciate it, some get angry – which one will you be?

What does the Bible say I am thinking when my employees respond to correction with anger? I am thinking, “This is a stupid employee”.

Do bosses give big raises to people they think are stupid? Do they promote people they think are stupid? No.

I Peter 2:17 (Treats boss with respect)

“Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”

Romans 13:7 - Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

We are to treat those in authority over us with honor and respect. This is a big one, yet many employees are oblivious to it.

If your boss walks into your office and wants to talk with you and the phone rings - what should you do? Let it ring – that’s what voicemail is for. What if you are on the phone when he walks in? You hang up, don’t keep talking. Even if the boss says its OK to answer the phone or keep talking – its not.

If you are running a meeting and your boss shows up at the meeting, either at the beginning or in the middle, what do you do? In the military if a major is running a meeting and the general walks in what do they do? The meeting immediately stops, everyone stands at attention, and they wait for the general to say something.

The same thing happens in the civilian world but it is more subtle. If you are running a meeting and your boss walks in – immediately stop the meeting, say, “this is my boss, John Soandso, John, we would appreciate any guidance you have for us”. At this point your boss can say whatever he would like to say.

Proverbs 28:13 (Doesn’t try to hide mistakes)

He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

Never surprise your boss. Bosses don’t like surprises because it makes them feel that they don’t have control of things. If you make an error tell them right away – that same day if possible. Don’t let them find out from someone else.

I Peter 2:18-20 (Submits to the boss’s will with a positive attitude)

“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”

The boss walks in where 10 of his employees are and tells them that we need to figure out a way to do something that is really difficult. Nine of the employees will complain and give reasons why it can’t be done and why it would be a waste of resources to attempt.

The boss will comment that those are all good points and will leave. The nine employees will then congratulate each other that they were able to talk the boss out of it.

But remember, I said there were 10 employees there. You see, there was one sitting quietly, not saying anything. What do you think that person is going to do? They are going to go off and find a way to do what the boss asked. You need to make sure that you are that person.

Out of those 10 people, who do you think is going to get the big raise or the promotion? The other nine will spend their careers wondering why the bosses never seem to appreciate their hard work.

Luke 16:10-11 (Trustworthy & faithful in little things)

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?

I had a highly educated employee once who did not believe little things mattered. He and I were in a meeting with a customer once where my employee was talking in great detail about some issue. While he was talking the customer started to talk. What do you do in a situation like that? You stop talking. Why? Because the customer has the money. Instead of stopping and listening to the person who gives us the money my employee raised his voice and kept talking. I had to yell "quiet". The customer stopped talking but my employee kept on talking. So I leaned into his ear and yelled "quiet" again. Then he stopped. I then turned to the customer and said, "please continue". This is a small thing that he could not get a handle on. The amount of lost business due to this little thing is hard to estimate.

Romans 12:16-21 (Works well with others)

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. ²⁰"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

According to the research (reference 1) you will not do well in your career unless you consistently do the following things: Be friendly, humble, kind, thoughtful, remember other people's names, look people in the eye when talking to them, communicate that you are listening and you understand (ex: nod your head), ask about other people's ideas and activities, laugh at other's jokes, give others credit for their work, don't dominate conversations, and smile.

I had an employee once, very smart, had a PhD, wrote good reports and proposals but the customer did not want to work with him. When I asked why he said, "How do I say this - He laughs at the wrong times".

You see, if you never laugh at people's jokes, people are not going to like you and people don't work with people they don't like. They will usually justify it some other way but they won't want to work with you.

Proverbs 25:13 (Sense of responsibility for work)

Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters.

These people do what they say and say what they do. Instead of making excuses for why they failed, they use their skills and creativity to find a way to fulfill their promises.

Conclusion: Applying Biblical principles to work relationships is the most effective way to have success at work.

Appendix - What makes submission to authority so difficult?

Fear. The fear of abuse, of being taken advantage of. A fear of being unprotected.

What is required for us to be able to overcome this fear & submit as God tells us to?
We must have confidence that God will protect us.

Proverbs 21:1

“The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

Proverbs 29:26

Many seek the ruler's favor, But justice for man comes from the LORD.

Rarely will an authority ask you to do something illegal or immoral. If they do you should, of course, reluctantly decline but you should be able to point to the specific biblical verse whose principle they are asking you to violate. If you cannot do this you should try to obey.

However, what authorities will ask us to do a lot is, stuff we don't want to do. Learning how to obey when we don't feel like it, develops our faith and character. You can't do it unless you fully trust God to be in control and take care of you and that is what it comes down to. Do you have enough faith to believe that God really is in control of the people who have authority over you?

In summary, we are to submit to the authorities God has put in our life. If the authority is unreasonable or harsh we are to still submit. In His time and in His way God will then intervene on our behalf. He will be our protector, He will be the one who brings us justice. He can do this by redirecting the heart of the authority concerning us and in other ways.

We need to make sure we do not resist authority unless the specific verse of biblical principle can be identified since God often uses authority to teach us things we may not want to learn (see the book of Daniel for examples of how to interact with godless authority).

If we choose to resist authority or to dishonor or disrespect them then God will not intervene on our behalf and we are on our own.

Exception: if our government or boss is unethical we may choose to go to war or quit our job but this is a temporary situation since once the turmoil has ended we will have a new government or boss to submit to.

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD
JEREMIAH 15:16
THEME: Success At Work For Teenagers

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 13:1-4*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 2:13-14*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 8:8-10*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD
JEREMIAH 15:16
THEME: *Success At Work For Teenagers*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 12:11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Kings 20:38-41*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Genesis 39*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD
JEREMIAH 15:16
THEME: *Success At Work For Teenagers*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Philippians 2:3-4*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 6:23, Proverbs 12:1*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 2:17, Romans 13:7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD
JEREMIAH 15:16
THEME: *Success At Work For Teenagers*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 28:13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 2:18-20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 16:10-11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD
JEREMIAH 15:16
THEME: Success At Work For Teenagers

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 12:16-21*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 25:13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 21:1, Proverbs 29:26*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?