

SESSION 1: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT AT WORK

Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.

- Matthew 22:37-39

Chances are you spend more time with the people you work alongside than anyone else in your life. Most of us experience conflict, competing interests, communication issues and other challenges with the people we work alongside. We need love at work. While this may have once been a foreign concept, love is gaining traction in the marketplace. It is the common denominator among the top 10 of the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For¹. According to an article by Harvard Business Review, major companies like Southwest Airlines and Whole Foods understand love as a guiding principle that informs every aspect of business operations².

Christians have an even more compelling reason to love at work. Take another look at the verse above. Have you ever considered how this commandment applies to the people at work?

The definition of neighbor includes all of the people we work with and encounter at work. That can be challenging for many of us to think about. Nearly all of us are busy and under pressure to perform that causes stress levels to rise and puts a strain on relationships. We simply do not have a lot of margin to consider how we love others. Loving others at work can be difficult, at best.

But loving others at work is essential. The core of our Christian faith is God's saving love for us through Jesus. And our response to His love should be to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and to "Love your neighbor as yourself."

WHAT LOVE AT WORK LOOKS LIKE

The Bible tells us what loving others looks like in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

We hear these verses a lot at weddings, but they are meant to apply much more broadly to all relationships – including those at work. The love described here is agape. Agape is defined as “selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, the highest of the four types of love in the Bible.”³

Agape is not an emotion or a feeling, but a commitment that results in loving action and behavior in all circumstances. It's unconditional – loving without expectation of anything in return.

¹ Great Place to Work article “Love is all You Need” by Jason Slusher, greatplacetowork.com, accessed July 10, 2017

² Harvard Business Review article by Duncan Coombe hbr.org, accessed July 10, 2017

³ Source: christianity.about.com

EXAMPLES OF APPLYING THESE VERSES AT WORK



**It is not self-seeking, does not envy,
does not boast, is not proud.**

It's not about us and making ourselves look good, but rather about serving one another.



It is kind and patient.

We can work much better together when we treat each other with kindness (compassion and generosity), respond with patience, and give others grace (unmerited favor).



It keeps no record of wrongs.

We all fall short and need to forgive people at work as we've been forgiven and want to be forgiven.



**It rejoices with the truth, always protects, trusts,
hopes, perseveres.**

Gossip and self-serving agendas destroy, but truth promotes growth and teamwork. We can support the growth of others by providing honest, candid encouragement and feedback.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

01

What do you think it means to “love your neighbor as yourself” in a work context?

02

Do you find it difficult to “love your neighbor” at work? Why? What gets in the way?

03

As you reflect on these characteristics, what behavior do you find the most difficult to consistently apply at work? Why? Which one could make the biggest difference for your relationships at work?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

VERSE 1
JOHN 3:34-35

VERSE 2
LUKE 6:35

VERSE 3
JOHN 15:9-12