

Christians as Managers: An Introduction

Written by K B Napier

Saturday, 04 September 2010 18:58

I am a Christian and was a manager. I know Christians who are managers. And I don't like what I see. Some are no different from the hardened unsaved men and women I find all around me, and that is disturbing.

A manager can be driven by many things, including power, authority, status and money, and none of them is a valid excuse for what they do. If anything, the excuses are stumbling blocks to spiritual growth. If you are a manager and a Christian, then I ask you to consider what is said in this very brief paper, for it is a warning. Bear in mind the indictment of a popular but revealing piece of advice – 'never work for a Christian'! (A sad observation of so-called 'Christian' behaviour).

When writing this article, I managed over 30 staff directly employed in a dementia Unit, with over 30 residents, all of whom required intensive and complex nursing. To put it bluntly, it was a place in which every resident was terminal, and where death was an everyday fact of life. Stress levels were always very high.

As a deputy home manager (at no extra pay!) I also had charge of a further 60 or so staff and another 33 residents. That was a mighty big task! My work was at the double, and I worked a 13 hour day. Literally, I did not stop and I usually missed my rest breaks. I also had to liaise with other professionals, doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and many others. And my pay was nothing like my equivalent-status colleagues in either the health service or in commerce.

Yet, I had to take very great care that I acted and spoke as a Christian, even if my working day was set amongst mayhem and high stress! If anyone had an 'excuse' to act badly, then I did! But, I did NOT have an excuse. As a Believer, I have a solemn duty to act properly and with all the attributes of the child of a heavenly Father, or I let Him, the Church, and myself down.

What is a manager? A manager is not necessarily one who does the work himself; he is one

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who co-ordinates the work of others so as to reach a specific goal. He need not have all the answers himself, or even all the technical know-how. He must, however, be able to use all the resources he has to optimum effect and credit those who give the answers.

Sadly, many Christian managers do all this by riding rough-shod over their subordinates. They think shouting, wielding raw power, and generally being 'tough' is the answer. Or, being sly, manipulative and taking all the credit. This is not good practice, and is not acceptable in God's eyes. In ANY situation, and especially when with others, they must **act as Christians**.

This means staying calm and reasonable in stressful situations (I think my own job is a very good example of this!), not abusing or misusing others, respecting them, not flying off the handle, being predictable in mood, being fair, not allowing the errors and deliberate misdeeds of others to sway you into being dishonourable, and always being constant. You must also be open and above-board in everything. Yes, it is very hard to do, but if you make it a habit, it becomes much easier.

To be like this, you must know scripture and live by it. You must *tell* others you are a Believer and that you will act like one in

all circumstances. Unfortunately, many Christian managers act improperly and vainly; most of them have high incomes and this gives them a false sense of their own importance and durability. They shout at employees, treat them with disdain and show lack of respect for feelings. And, if bonuses are paid on results, this should be shared with those who are subordinates.

Quite often in my own work I *know* a person is trying to deceive me, either because others have advised me, or by knowing the person. Yet, I have to let it go and forget about it, because of lack of proper proof. However, I do not then get nasty about it, or mistreat them in turn. That is not how a Believer ought to act! I tell my staff that even if I believe someone is deceiving me, it is their problem, not mine.

So long as employees are completing their allotted tasks for which they get paid, I must forego the sinful luxury of 'getting even' or acting in an unChristian manner. One way to do this is to act within the law. Many do not, and open themselves up to prosecution or to the strictures of an employment tribunal. Reasonable procedures must be set up and used, so that personal grievances do not become the normal basis for one's actions. This is very important and it also prevents favouritism. And even when such procedures exist, they must not be so rigid as to

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prevent sensitivity, wisdom, compassion and mercy.

If, as a manager, you lose your temper, then you are acting outside of Biblical behaviour. It is common for managers to rig things so as to 'get back' at employees, or as a way of getting rid of someone. Do not succumb to such tactics, for they involve you in subterfuge and underhandedness. They are grubby and dubious activities! Instead, be up-front as you can be, and your honour must be like a banner for all to see.

My superior, the Home Manager, was the epitome of bad management. She screamed abuse, shouted, and was very poor in honesty and handling of staff. At least she admitted to it, and she is not a Christian. On a number of occasions she said that I sometimes let others 'walk all over' me or 'abuse my trust'. She is wrong - what she was seeing were Christian principles being acted out in a very stressful situation. I would rather lose a singular battle than to win a war by imposing myself like a tyrant!

Overall, staff preferred to work on my Unit. They were sometimes frustrated because I would not 'jump on people' they knew were not working properly. But, generally, they appreciated my even-handedness and constancy. I spoke carefully with those who were not responding. I would do this several times, because I knew that once I made a matter 'official', it started to take on a whole new meaning. I also knew that my 'jumping on' people could mean loss of a valued income, usually for carers whose income is very poor anyway. In all conscience I could not do that to anyone without cause.

My Unit was a very happy place. Visitors, GP's, social workers, and even my own boss, all said so. By contrast, the other Unit was not so happy, partly because the boss was situated there and she was not known for her fairness or her good temper!

The Christian manager who uses threats, shouting and insensitivity, or secrecy, is acting outside of Biblical bounds. Managers must always be **"... forebearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respecting of persons with Him."** (Ephesians 6:9).

Also,

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Masters, give unto (your) servants that which is just and equal: knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven... Let your speech (be) alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

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(Colossians 4:1,6).

Is your speech toward your subordinates always full of grace? Truly? Do you know what 'grace' actually means? It means that which gives joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, good-will, loving-kindness; showing Christian virtue. The talk itself is graceful, not using the clipped, jarring tones of a man with a grievance, shouting at people, or heaping scorn upon them in front of others. Grace also means acting properly and with dignity and honour, treating others as more worthy than yourself. So, do you *really* display such grace to your subordinates – all of the time?

There are ways and means of dealing with troublemakers, poor workers and the insubordinate. And *none* of those means involve a Christian in unbiblical actions or words. A Christian manager might pride himself on being 'tough'. Fine – but does he shout at his employees as a matter of course? Does he resort to underhandedness when dealing with them? Does he use secret strategies against them? Does he ever remonstrate with them in the hearing of others? Does he treat some fairly and others with contempt? Is he even-tempered with everyone, no matter what they do or who they are? Is he truly 'fair' and without malice toward them? Does he ever hold back people from promotion simply because of selfishness? Does he ever sack or demote someone because of a grudge? The list is endless and I ask the same questions of *anyone* in authority.

If you are a *good* manager, you will notice that I am only referring to what should be '*best practice*'.

The Christian manager must always act properly, without any kind of 'come-back', being honourable, truly fair, and sensitive, even with those he must discipline. He must be these things because he, too, has someone above him – God the Father, Who does not take lightly to Christians who tarnish their reputations by acting like worldly men and women, abusing their power. To do so is to also tarnish

His

Name, and the name of all within the Church.

A Christian manager is not a push-over, nor does he allow evil to proliferate. He is not the company door-mat, but he gets the task done in an honourable way. His dealings with clients, too, are honourable and above-board. If in his dealings he makes errors of judgement, or if clients treat him or his company badly, well – tough! He must get on with it and remain calm and Biblical in manner! There is no excuse for acting without due regard for one's Christian duty.

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