

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

I. INTRODUCTION:

Work occupies significant place in our lives. We divide our day into three more or less equal periods - eight hours sleep, eight hours work and eight hours leisure. So our work occupies 1/3 of our day or 1/2 of our waking hours. So, what we do during our working hours becomes important. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them. (Eph.2: 10) Believers are called in Christ Jesus for a life of good works and in so doing we are commanded to do it heartily as unto the Lord and not to men (Col.3: 23). The Christian attitude to work is that working together with God, taking full part in the building up of the nation, people, and individuals in the likeness of our Creator the Lord God. The Bible lays various ethics to be followed in our profession.

HOW DO WE LOOK AT THE PROFESSION?

1. As a necessary nuisance to earn our living. Some have a negative attitude towards the job. They consider profession as a curse imposed on man as a punishment for his sins.
2. As a useful sphere for witness. Some go to the other extreme and use the profession /office as a platform to witness to Jesus Christ.
3. As God's call. The third group of people would consider their profession in response to God's call to serve God and His people.

The biblical view of work does not deny any of the above purposes. However, the third group keeps the first two in balance. A story is told of a man walking at a construction site talking to the workers as to what they were doing. One of them replied irritably "Can't you see, I am picking up bricks?" The second one replied, "I'm earning my living." The third worker looking at the man proudly replied "I'm building a Church." So, it is a matter of how we see things in life. The first two workers did not see beyond their tools and pay packets, whereas the third looked beyond this to the ultimate end he was serving. He was co-operating with the architect in building the Church, however small his particular contribution might be. Probably, we must also look into our profession co-operating with the architect of this world, Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION AS GOD'S CALL:

The Christian must consider his call to profession as a calling from God and not just as a means of livelihood or a simple platform for witnessing to Christ. It is in this context that choice of a career becomes critical for the Christian. He is advised to follow certain criteria given below in making his choice.

- a. The morality of the profession itself is important. Some graduates have strongly felt that it would not be possible to work in any capacity for a tobacco company or a distillery, which encourages questionable habit.
- b. A profession which will match one's natural gifts and qualifications. One's natural inclinations, gifts and training can be a guide to the choice of one's profession.
- c. It will be good to think through the issue of how one's own profession can contribute to the good of the society at large. Pioneering areas of ministry like North India should always be of challenge when we can legitimately pursue our calling.
- d. God's calling or pleasing God through our profession should take priority to more salary, comfort and prominence.
- e. Call of God is noble, whether full-time or secular. Professional ethics are similar.

ETHICS IN THE PROFESSION:

- What job we do is not the criteria in life, but how we do is important. There is dignity of labour. E.g.: Mordecai was only a gatekeeper who encouraged the Queen Esther. (Esther 4:13 & 14)
- Hard work and not laziness is the rule for a Christian (II Thes. 3:10-12)
- We must be punctual in reaching office as well as leaving. We should neither steel the time or energy of the office. Those who are working in IT companies may not bother about the punctuality but should take care to complete the task in time.
- We must be sincere and honest and trust worthy to the organization we are working for. E.g.: Nehemiah's sincerity, Joseph's honesty and Daniel's trustworthiness were rewarded.
- We must make use of the time and redeem it. We should not simply relax or chitchat or take too many tea breaks during office hours. Of course, this is not applicable for those who are in task-oriented offices.
- Using office time for Bible reading or witnessing, except in the leisure time may also not be correct what is due to Caesar, we must give. No justification in participating in religious programmes during the office hours, without proper permission or leave.
- We are not only accountable to God; we are also accountable to our bosses. (Eph. 6:6) Give respect to them. (Col: 3:22) But don't simply flatter them. Be willing to express your view if necessary. (Daniel 4:27)
- Treat the sub-ordinates with dignity; but keep them accountable. (Col. 4:1 & Eph. 6:9) Don't give up on those who are considered to be useless by others. Who knows, you may be able to counsel them and make them to feel at home at the work place?
- Mix up with the colleagues and love them. Be willing to adjust with them. But don't compromise in your faith and attitudes.
- Be sympathetic with the poor and downtrodden. Do justice to them at any cost.
- Do not misuse the power God has given for personal glory or to go out of the way to help Christians. We can be good Samaritans within the framework of the rules of the organization.
- We should not misuse the privileges and facilities provided in the office such as telephone, computer or vehicle. We must use them within the means.
- We must take care of the moveable and immovable property of the office as our own.
- We must keep our hands clean from corruption. Giving or taking bribe in any form is sin.
- We can have ambition for legitimate promotion. This is a God-given motivation. It can be the striving force to be excellent in our work. But we should not become greedy or use illegal/shortcut methods to climb the ladder.
- We should update our knowledge in the work place. Quite often inefficiency thrives since the people do not take strain to improve their knowledge.
- We should contribute positively to the organization, which can be creative, and we will have our job satisfaction too.
- We should be prepared to suffer for our stand, as long as our stand is Biblical.

A WORD ON WORKING WOMEN:

Initially women preferred jobs like teaching, nursing, typing, clerical and telephone operation. Slowly they have moved into other professions. For a long time the working women considered her job as a supplementing income to the family. Although she held a job, she considered her role at home as a primary one. While her husband was busy preparing towards a career by upgrading his qualification, the working women was content with her

position. This scenario is changing now with more and more women actively pursuing a career and getting into every field.

When a woman desires to pursue a career, she is faced with the question of spending less and less time at home. The situation can be improved by careful planning. Some useful suggestions for such women and their husbands are:

1. Reduce manual labour
2. Use support system
3. Use time saving devices
4. Communicate better
5. Decide jointly
6. Share the daily chores of the house
7. Delegate the responsibilities

STRIKING A BALANCE:

Life is not full of watertight compartments. Life is total. Jesus Christ was a carpenter by profession, teacher in the ministry and a son at the home of Joseph and Mary. He balanced in all the areas of life. We too should learn to balance. Over steering is more dangerous than not driving at all. The priority in the areas of our relationship with God, family members, colleagues, brethren in the church/fellowship and society in which God has placed should be clearly set and balanced. Our time with God, family, office, fellowship and society should be balanced. Although Evangelism is our first aim in UESI, it does not stand without the foundation of fellowship and testimony. If I cannot practice love at home or fellowship, there is no point in preaching about love outside the home or fellowship. If my testimony is not clear in the office, the message I proclaim to the college students does not get any credibility. Let us glorify God in all areas of life.

CONCLUSION

There is a call from God for excellence. Since we live in a competitive world we should excel in what we do. When we consider our profession as a vocation from God, we contribute to the efficiency in our work. We need to recognize that God shall judge us all for our efficiency. Let us be creative and be willing to undertake any job, if God calls us.
