

Meekness is not Weakness

My hunch as a career coach is that the admirable trait of Christian humility, as defined by meekness, is being exploited by potential employers and job-seeking competitors alike. With this in mind, I hope to clear up the possible misunderstanding amongst believers that goes something like this: Christians should be harmless and submissive, especially during their job-search, in an interview or at the salary negotiation table.

So how did it come about, the penchant to be a “pushover” in the job search process? To some extent, I think believers take scripture out of context. Take Matthew 5:39, which does tell us to turn the other cheek when our enemy strikes. The simplest way to sum this principle up is to say that we are confusing meekness with weakness and we need to stop hurting ourselves as we pursue God’s destiny for our careers. The poster boy for putting our theology in the right context is Moses. In Numbers 12:3, we are told that Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth (the King James Bible puts it this way: “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth”). Yet God used Moses, probably because he likes to take the weak things of the earth and confound the strong, as his chief instrument in confronting the most powerful man in the world at the time, the Pharaoh of Egypt.

God also used the meek Moses to guide the Hebrews for 40 years until they reached the Promised Land. The tendency for believers is to forget that those who entered into Canaan had to conquer the existing inhabitants in bloody battle. This is instructive to the modern Christian who is engaged in a job search. God has a particular career path prepared just for you, but we need to be aware of the spiritual battle that confronts anyone who desires to pursue God’s will.

It is helpful to think of yourself as a warrior in the service of the King. Therefore, a good picture, from the spiritual perspective, is to see the job market as a ground zero battleground for believers. Any wise soldier who is about to engage in battle wants to know his enemy. In this case it is your job-seeking peers who are not saved. Quite often our peers will employ deceit or dirty tricks to beat their competition (that’s you) for a promotion or a job offer. For example, according to a May 2006 Forbes.com article, more than 40% of the resumes on the job market include false information. This indicates people are willing to lie.

In addition to blatant deceit, other common practices usually categorized as office politics include behavior that is unbecoming to the believer such as gossip, illicit romance with a superior or character assassination used to ruin a co-worker’s reputation. The point I want to make is we who desire to pursue God’s destiny for our careers cannot afford to be naïve. We must be disciplined to fight for his will and determined to employ our advantages (the leading of the Holy Spirit, counsel of other believers, our God-given gifts and talents) to achieve his objectives.

It is also worth noting that the call to be meek can also be misconstrued to mean that we should simply be happy with whatever job comes our way. But it is not a great cognitive

leap to see that CEOs have greater influence on their co-workers, the company's clients and strategic partners than do janitors. CEOs, and what is now commonly called C-level executives, can greatly impact hiring decisions, corporate accountability, and marketing budgets, such as where to spend their multimillion dollar advertising dollars. If we believers desire to have greater impact here where we live, we need to see job advancement as a critical component of fighting for God's will on earth. With Christ we can win the victory and thrive in our careers.

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