

Strategies@Work
LLC

solutions that transform

April 1, 2008

Gleanings

Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.



Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.
President

Strategies@Work, LLC

solutions that transform

Services

Management Consulting
Strategic Planning
Executive Coaching
Training

Web Site

<http://StrategiesWork.com>

Calling Evil Good in the Workplace

For twenty years, Chinese researchers sought to understand why the United States was the most powerful and prosperous nation in the world. They analyzed all aspects of the United States, including its political, economic, monetary, and social systems. The researchers concluded that the United States was the most powerful and prosperous nation in the world because of its Christian values. (See *Gleanings* from April 2007; <http://strategieswork.com/publications/gleanings/2007/2007-04.htm>.)

As stunning as this conclusion is, it is even more impressive when you realize that the conclusion was reached by atheists.

If these atheistic researchers are correct, then why is the United States, as a people and culture, seeking to pervert the biblical values that made it so great?

Recently someone sent me the following prayer attributed to Paul Harvey, which poignantly expresses this perversion of values.

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, oh God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!

The prayer is built around Isaiah 5:20 which reads as follows:

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. (NIV)

To understand this text, we need to define *good* and *evil*. To help us with this, consider an interaction that Jesus had with a wealthy man. The wealthy man initiated the conversation with the appellation "good master." Jesus responded by saying that there is only One who is good—that is God. Therefore "good" is a divine attribute (Matthew 19:16–17). Given that good is a divine attribute, then the opposite of good, namely evil, is anything inconsistent with God's nature.

Using this definition to understand the Isaiah text suggests that calling evil good is saying that evil is consistent with the nature of God, which is clearly false. Hence, Isaiah declares that the person that calls evil good is under judgment because that person is asserting a lie about God.

As I reflected on the reality of how we are declaring evil good in our public policy, which is the main focus of the above prayer, I began to consider how we are declaring evil good in the workplace. Consider the following seven examples:

1. *Greed is good.* This is a famous statement from the movie *Wall Street*. The sentiment expressed is that money is the bottom line and therefore the driving agenda of business. Even though we should be good stewards and make a profit, ultimately success—from a biblical

worldview—is not denominated in monetary terms, but in the degree of alignment with the will of God (John 17:4; James 4:13–17).

2. Lying is an acceptable tactical tool. A study found that 93 percent of workers use lying as a tactical tool to accomplish their objectives. This means that truth is subordinated to results or, as is commonly stated, that the end justifies the means. John 8:32 states that the truth sets us free from the bondage of sin. Given this reality, the opposite must be true, namely, that lies put us into bondage to sin. A person in bondage to sin will not prosper (Psalms 1).

3. Pride is a sign of strength. A popularly regarded teaching is to never apologize because that would be a sign of weakness. Pride was the original sin of Satan and of Adam and Eve in the Garden. The opposite of pride is humility. When the question was posed, What does the Lord require of man? one of the key virtues was humility (Micah 6:8).

4. Cheating on expense reports is a perk. Most companies reimburse employees for expenses incurred during the course of business. Many employees discern how closely these reports are monitored and take the liberty to fudge and pocket a little extra cash. This practice is an injustice to companies and is an example of unjust weights and measures that God detests (Proverbs 20:10).

5. Deception is a competitive advantage. In an aggressive workplace, it seems that everyone is looking for a competitive advantage. For those who believe that values can be compromised for the sake of profit, truth is frequently sacrificed. Solomon exhorts us to buy truth and to not sell it, which means that truth is to be highly valued and not to be compromised. (Proverbs 23:23)

6. Stealing is an entitlement. Most workers view companies as wealthy and stingy. In other words, workers many times assume that companies make a lot of money but fail to properly compensate their workers. Hence, these workers feel entitled to rectify this inequity by stealing. Worker theft includes stealing company resources, failing to properly use time, and failing to develop and utilize talents. In addition, workers steal whenever they place personal agendas ahead of the organization's interests (Titus 2:9–10).

7. Self-centeredness is self-protection. Another common assumption of workers today is that “no one is looking out for me so I have to look out for myself.” This creates a narcissistic environment in companies, which is counterproductive. To perform well, a company must function as a team, which requires selflessness, not self-centeredness, on the part of the workers (Matthew 16:24; 1 Corinthians 12).

If the prophet Isaiah were alive today, he would no doubt pronounce woe on the modern day workplace for calling evil good. Among other sins, he would surely note that greed, lying, pride, cheating, deception, stealing, and self-centeredness are not good, as they are inconsistent with God's nature. Perhaps he would offer a prayer similar to the one above which is attributed to Paul Harvey. Isaiah's prayer of woe for the modern workplace might read as follows:

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, “Woe to those who call evil good,” but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We are greedy for money and call it the measure of success. We lie and call it necessary to accomplish our purposes. We live in pride and call it a mark of strength. We cheat on our expense reports and call it a perk. We deceive others and call it essential to gain a competitive advantage. We steal time and money from our companies and call it an entitlement for being underpaid. We are narcissistic and call it self-protection. Search us, Oh God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!

If you want to be free from the judgment of God, the solution is simple. The answer to sin is always the same—repent and turn to God by embracing Jesus Christ as your Savior. Accept His virtues and reject the world's ideas, which are inconsistent with God's nature. Only then can you enjoy deliverance from judgment and blessings from your Creator.

E-mail

info@StrategiesWork.com

Phone

972 473-8655 USA