

Dealing With Toxic People

Air Dates: March 28 – April 1, 2022

Day One

Are there any toxic people in your life? Toxic people are those who live and behave in such a way that they spread poison throughout a home, an office, a factory, a church—wherever they spend much time.

I want to talk about the toxic people that may be in your life—specifically on your job—and how you should deal with them. The Bible warns us about such people, referring to them in many cases as fools or foolish people. Sometimes we need to confront these people, sometimes we simply should avoid them, but we should also try to understand them and if possible, help them.

Dealing with the Lazy Co-worker

One of the more common types of difficulties we encounter with co-workers is the person who is lazy and doesn't pull his or her share of the workload. Have you ever worked with someone who fits this description? If so, you probably felt a lot of resentment and anger toward that person, and you were tempted to talk about that person in derogatory ways, make sarcastic remarks to him or her—and in general find that person a real thorn in your flesh!

You've probably noticed that the Bible doesn't have a chapter on "dealing with difficult co-workers or managers," but there are biblical principles which can be directly applied to this lazy co-worker or to anyone who is difficult.

Please realize that God's principles may be far more than you would ever do on your own, and even more than your employer requires of you. God's principles are higher, and we are held to a more righteous standard. The good news is that he empowers us to do what he requires us to do, by the Holy Spirit within us.

There are times you need to speak the truth in love to that lazy co-worker. That is far better than talking behind her back or harboring anger toward her. Before you can speak the truth in love, your motive has to be right.

I have written a Bible study on relationships, and one chapter goes into depth on how to deal with toxic or difficult people. We will be glad for you to have that chapter as our gift, if you will be willing to work through it and truly ask God to teach you how to deal with the difficult and toxic people in your life, even the lazy co-worker. Please find it at christianworkingwoman.org – resources – radio offers.

Day Two

I'm addressing how to deal with difficult and toxic relationships on your job taken from my Bible study, *Improving Your Relationships*. In the thirty-seven years of this ministry, the one issue which surfaces again and again is problem relationships. If we just didn't have to deal with people, life would be easy! Linus put it so well when he said, "I love mankind; it's people I can't stand!"

We've talked about dealing with the lazy co-worker. Now I would like to address:

Dealing with a Condescending, Arrogant Co-worker

If you have ever worked with this type of person, you'll recognize their characteristics. They talk down to people, they are unteachable because they know it all, they have an attitude of superiority and no matter what you've done or where you've been, they can top you with their story. Frequently their body language and facial expressions indicate aloofness, disgust, disapproval, and they treat others as though they are dumb or stupid.

When people have a continual attitude of arrogance and condescension, it is a telltale sign that underneath that intimidating outward appearance lies a great deal of insecurity and pain, and it reveals a lack of confidence, a need for recognition, and a fear of rejection.

There are times when the extra-mile principle is the one God would have you practice, just bearing with that arrogant person, not being intimidated by their behavior, but trying to ignore it as much as possible. Then you may need to speak the truth in love to that condescending co-worker, when God gives you the green light to do so. Certainly, God could use this person in your life to teach you to humble yourself, for they can be humbling.

My Bible study goes into these various toxic and difficult people you may have to deal with in more detail. You'll find this chapter available on our website, christianworkingwoman.org. It's my prayer that you'll work through it and God will use it to help you improve your relationships.

Day Three

Have you ever worked with or for someone who had delusions of greatness? I'm talking about dealing with toxic and difficult people on the job. Most of us have run into the person who was domineering and controlling—or trying to be.

Dealing with a Domineering Co-worker

These domineering types seem to assume that they have a right to manage other people, even though they had not earned the position of manager. How should a Christian respond to this person when you're face-to-face with him or her every day?

We always want to look for biblical principles that apply to our relationship issues. The Bible gives us important foundational guidelines that should govern our responses to difficult people. And one of those principles is to humble ourselves. Sometimes God brings people into our lives for the purpose of teaching us to practice his principles, and there's no question that a domineering person can really bring out the worst in us.

In responding to a domineering person who is trying to run your life, tell you what to do, and generally control you, here are some responses that would be a way for you to humble yourself:

- Refrain from any verbal response. Just hold your tongue and don't say the angry words you started to say.
- Be willing to do what they ask/demand, even though you may not be required to do so. I don't mean that you always jump through their hoops, but on occasion God may direct you to be in submission to them and do it their way.
- Respond in a quiet, controlled manner. This is always a Christ-like response.

There may be times when you simply explain that you're not able to do what they ask, in cases where they have no authority over you but simply want to boss you around. But one thing for sure, and that is don't join in any gossip or character assassination of this co-worker.

Day Four

If you've ever had to work with a person who was vindictive or hostile—or both—then I don't have to tell you how difficult that can be. I'm talking about relationship problems on the job, where we sometimes encounter people who are challenging, to say the least. And the vindictive, hostile co-worker is a huge challenge. This type of person can be malicious, even vicious, and he or she may try to cause us problems and do us harm.

Jesus came to bring true light to the world, and when we become believers, he says that we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). We become the bearers of his light into a very dark world. That is a great privilege, but it comes with its "downside," if you please.

In John 3:19-20, Jesus says:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

And again, in John 15:18-19:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

Jesus gives us clear warning of relationship problems that we will incur simply because we are believers in him and carry his light into our dark worlds. Therefore, we should not be shocked to discover that on occasion our Christian "light" will generate a hostile response from a co-worker. The reason for this unpleasant reaction is the fear of exposure.

However, not always is a hostile person reacting to our Christian "light"; some people are simply hostile and vindictive in general toward most everyone. You have to realize that something has happened to that person to make them so miserable, and that's when you ask God to help you see them the way he sees them, so that you can have compassion and mercy on them.

Day Five

Have you ever worked with someone who was always totally negative? If ever there was a toxic personality type, it is the person who never sees anything good in anyone or anything. How are we supposed to deal with the really negative co-worker?

Well first, you will have to pray for the desire and the power to put on compassion toward that person. It will have to be God working in you to make you want to be kind to them and have compassion on them, but that is certainly important.

Some kind words spoken to that negative person might be the key to getting him or her to get past that negativity and become more positive. However, consider this verse as given to us by wise Solomon:

Proverbs 23:9:

Do not speak to fool, for he will scorn your prudent words.

There are people who are committed to being negative, and nothing is going to move them from that position. To try to change them is futile and indeed that person will treat you with scorn. So, there are times that you cannot have a positive effect on a negative person, regardless of how kind your words may be or how good your motives are.

Whatever you do, don't allow that negative person to drag you down to negative territory. Change the subject, walk away if possible, avoid the negative person where you can, but don't catch their toxic disease!

As we examine our relationships with difficult people, we have to recognize that the problem may not always be the other person's. There are times that we Christians can be lazy, arrogant, domineering, vindictive, and/or negative. It would do us all good to take a close look at each of these and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us if we're guilty of any of these difficult characteristics in our relationships with our co-workers.

First Peter 2:12 reminds us to:

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Remember: this chapter on dealing with difficult people from my Bible study, *Improving Your Relationships*, is available for you at christianworkingwoman.org – resources – radio offers.