

## Developing Good Working Relationships

Air Dates: January 16-20, 2023

### Day One

A recent study showed that if you have a good friend at work, you are much more likely to be satisfied with your job. How would you describe your work relationships? Do you just tolerate those coworkers, or would you count at least some of them as good friends? Your answer to those questions could have a lot to do with how you feel about your job.

I want to talk about what you can do to work well with others, to make those working relationships more pleasant, indeed to form some close friendships where you work. Often the workplace brings out the worst in people, but as ambassadors for Jesus Christ, the workplace is our opportunity to shine as lights in a dark place, and even to change the atmosphere by learning how to work well with others. One person can make a difference, you know, so why shouldn't that one person be you?

Here is suggestion number one for working well with others at work: **Don't play the blame game.** Shifting the blame for any situation is a big no-no. I'm not suggesting you take blame for something that was not your responsibility, but don't alienate coworkers by pointing fingers, especially in a meeting or where multiple people are present.

The biblical principle for solving issues between two people is very straight-forward: "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Matthew 18:15-16).

Often problems must be addressed and those responsible must be identified and corrected. But the way you go about this will make all the difference in whether or not you truly help someone to correct a problem or just make a problem worse. It's really smart to always confront privately, one-on-one, after you have had time to think it through, form your words, control your anger, and make sure you're speaking truth in love—meaning you're doing this for the good of the other person, not just to ventilate your frustration. You definitely could win a person over this way.

And then remember, pick your fights. There are some hills that simply aren't worth dying on, so be willing to let some things go.

### Day Two

What can you do to make your workplace a nicer, friendlier place to work? I'm talking about working well at work—going the extra mile if necessary in order to create a better relationship with coworkers and management. I talked about the importance of not playing the blame game. Here's suggestion number two:

**Always bring a solution when you present a problem.** Anybody can complain and find fault, and there's plenty of that going on in most work environments. But the person who brings a solution to a problem is very valuable. So, before you go into gripe mode, ask yourself, *If I were in charge, what would I do to resolve this situation?*

Early in my career in sales with IBM, I remember my manager telling me, “We don’t have problems at IBM, Mary, we have opportunities.” Now, that may sound kind of corny, but truly if everyone approached a problem as an opportunity, it would eliminate most of the negative chatter and complaining that is prevalent in far-too-many workplaces.

What would you identify as the number one problem where you work? What is the one thing you would really love to change, that you feel would truly make your working environment better? Maybe it would be something that would increase efficiency or productivity, or something that would eliminate a headache or a frustration. Identify that one thing, and then come up with a solution.

If you can’t come up with a solution, then you certainly have no right to complain about it, do you? Maybe you’re thinking that no one would take your suggestion. But have you tried? And have you presented your idea in a constructive way? Many people predict failure before they even try, and of course, those become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Proverbs 16:21 says, “*The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction.*” When you present your solution to a problem, be very discerning about how you say it and make your words pleasant. That will help the other person to hear and to give credibility to your suggestion.

But please also be aware that sometimes a problem is far more involved than you may know, and there may be extenuating circumstances of which you have no knowledge.

### Day Three

Would you really like to have better relationships on your job? I’m talking about what you can do—as one person—to improve the atmosphere where you work.

We hear lots of comments about how difficult workplaces are these days. You may feel as though you are trapped in a job you don’t like and you have no hope of escaping because jobs are scarce or you have too much time invested, or whatever. I want to challenge you to try to improve the place you’re in. As a Christian, a true follower of Jesus Christ, your first priority is to represent Christ well where you work, regardless of the circumstances.

I’ve made two suggestions for working well with others. Here’s number three: **Never ambush your coworkers or boss.** For example, if you bring up a problem in a meeting and it’s the first time your boss or the people involved have heard about it, then you have blindsided them and they may well interpret that to mean you’re trying to make them look bad. Always discuss issues first with the people directly involved.

Not only will that prevent you from appearing to ambush them, but you’re likely to learn something that will give you a different perspective of the situation. Proverbs 18:17 (ESV) says, “*The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.*” We’ve all witnessed times when someone forcefully presented their case, expressed their opinion, pointed their fingers, and then when the facts were fully revealed, they were made to look foolish.

In order to have really good working relationships, your coworkers and management must trust you. Trust is built over time, and the little things you do—or don’t do—on a daily basis will create a firm belief in the minds of your coworkers as to whether or not they can trust you. Are there not some people on your job that you simply don’t trust? Well, that should never be the perception our coworkers have of us, if we are disciples of Jesus Christ.

It was said of Daniel that his coworkers “could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent” (Daniel 6:4b). A distinguishing mark of a Christian in a secular workplace should be that we never ambush others, and we are very trustworthy.

## Day Four

How often do you complete a goal or a project with no help from others? My guess is that rarely if ever do we reach our goals on our own. We receive help and cooperation, ideas and support from others, and that makes it possible for us to succeed.

One of the basic things to remember is to **share credit for accomplishments and ideas**.

Have you ever seen someone who won a very coveted award, accomplished something truly outstanding, and as they were recognized, the first thing they said was, “I could never have done this without. . .” and then they started to name others who had contributed to their success. Well, you may never have an Academy Award moment, but there are so many other small moments in your day where you can share the credit and acknowledge the contribution that someone else has made.

Do you ever thank your boss for helping you? Have you taken time to send an email to a coworker who went out of his or her way to give you some advice or share some ideas with you? I think we often just overlook these little things; we get too busy or we simply don’t realize how powerful “thank you” is. Recently I received a text from a friend saying simply, “Mary I wouldn’t be here without you and all those years of helping to mentor me over the radio!” And she expressed her love. Those kinds of extra-mile expressions will go a long way to improving relationships.

One of the things we try to do well here at The Christian Working Woman is to say “thanks.” So many people have partnered with us through the many years of this ministry, and I am very aware that we could never have made it without them—without you! I know that when people support us, they do it out of love for the Lord, but that doesn’t mean they don’t want to know that we are grateful, and we appreciate their support.

Proverbs 25:11 (ESV) says that “*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*” A fitly spoken word is “thanks” and it is beautiful. Believe me when I tell you—“thank you” is powerful and you can’t overdo it. Are you intentional about recognizing and thanking those you work with and for? It will go a long way toward improving your work relationships. Give it a try.

## Day Five

What parent hasn’t said to a small child, “Now, play well with your friends.” We try to motivate them to play with consideration, not to be selfish, to share their toys—to “play nice” as we say. Well, don’t you think we need to “work nice” with our fellow workers?

Here’s one last suggestion for working well at work: **Help others to find their greatness, to develop and use their talents and skills**. This applies not only to those in management, but all of us can look for ways to help others grow in their job and become better at what they do.

For example, if you are particularly skilled in some software program, and you recognize a coworker who is technically gifted, you could offer to coach them in that area. Not only would that benefit the new employee, but the growth of individual employees benefits the whole. The organization would be immeasurably better if we all simply helped others find their greatness, realize their potential.

I think we would be shocked if we knew how much time, productivity and success is lost simply because we don’t share with each other. I remember reading an article about the terrible Columbia

Space Shuttle disaster in 2003. They have determined that some of the technical issues that caused the disaster were a result of lack of proper communication between different specialties, an unwillingness to share knowledge and research. If that is true, it makes the tragedy so much worse, doesn't it?

Jesus gave us the greatest example of equipping others to succeed. He began with twelve unqualified men, he taught them, he role-modeled for them, and then after his resurrection, he sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them and empower them so that they could be all he intended them to be. He equipped them—and he still equips us today. If you're born from above, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you, and he gives you the power to work well with others, to love others, to be a true friend and a peacemaker even on your job.