

## Working for Unity at Work

*Presented by Mary Lowman*

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### Day One

A study showed 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 your 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 and to have more unity where you work. The workplace can bring 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 change the atmosphere by learning how to work well with others. One person can make a difference, so why shouldn't that one person be you?

Here is my number one suggestion for working well with others: 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.

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 helping correct a problem or making it worse. You should 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 to vent your frustration. You could win a person over this way.

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 create more unity in your workplace—and make it a nicer place to work? I'm examining working well at work—doing what you can to create a better work environment. I already examined 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. Before you go into gripe mode, ask yourself, if I were in charge, what would I do to resolve this situation?

Early in my sales career at IBM, I remember my manager telling me, "We don't have problems at IBM, Mary, we have opportunities." Now, that may sound very simplistic, but if everyone approached a problem as an opportunity, it would eliminate most of the negative chatter and complaining that is prevalent in many workplaces.

What would you identify as the number one problem where you work—the one thing you would really love to change? Maybe fixing it would increase efficiency or productivity or eliminate headaches or frustration. Identify that one thing and then come up with a solution.

If you can't come up with a solution, then you have no right to complain about it. Maybe you're thinking no one would take your suggestion, but have you tried? 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.

*The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction (Proverbs 16:21).*

When you present your solution to a problem, be very discerning about how you say it and make your words pleasant. Please also be aware sometimes a problem is far more involved than you know, and there may be extenuating circumstances of which you have no knowledge.

### Day Three

Would you like to have a better atmosphere where you work—one with more unity? I'm examining what you can do—as one person—to improve the atmosphere at your job. And that mainly means what you can do to work well with others.

We hear lots of comments about how difficult workplaces are these days. With the scarcity of jobs and many companies asking more work from less employees, it can feel like you are trapped in a job you don't like, and you have no hope of escaping. But 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 that may help. Here's number three: Never ambush your coworkers or boss. For example, if you bring up a problem in a departmental meeting and it's the first time your boss or the people involved have heard about it, then you may have blindsided them. They may 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'll likely learn a different perspective of the situation.

*In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines (Proverbs 18:17).*

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.

To have unity where you work, there needs to be trust. Trust is built over time, and the little things you do—or don't do—daily will create a firm belief in the minds of your coworkers as to whether they can trust you. Are there not some people on your job you simply don't trust? This should never be the perception our coworkers have of you as a disciple 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 6:4). A distinguishing mark of a Christian in a secular workplace should be we never ambush others, and we are very trustworthy.

### Day Four

How often do you complete a goal or project with no help from others? My guess is we rarely 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.

I'm examining how to strive for more unity in the workplace, and 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 or 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 named others who helped. Actually, there are so many small moments in our days when we 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.

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 throughout the 40+ years of this ministry, and I am very aware we could never have made it without them—without you!

*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver (Proverbs 25:11).*

An aptly 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 creating more unity. 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. Don't you think we need to "work nice" with our fellow workers?

Here's one last suggestion for creating more unity where you work: Help others to find their greatness and 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.

If you are particularly skilled in an area a new coworker struggles in, you could offer to coach her in it. Not only would that benefit her, but the growth of individual employees benefits the whole. Organizations would be immeasurably better if we all simply helped others find their greatness and realize their potential.

I think we would be shocked if we knew how much time, productivity, and success are lost simply because we don't share with each other. I remember reading an article about the terrible Columbia Space Shuttle disaster in 2003. At the center of it was a lack of proper communication and an unwillingness to share knowledge and research, causing technical problems and ultimately the disaster itself. Knowing this 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, taught them, role-modeled for them, and then after his resurrection, he sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them and empower them so 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.