

Employee Health & Well-being as Stewardship

The Biblical Case & The Business Case



The Biblical Case

Everything we do starts with what we believe. What do you believe about supporting employee health and well-being within your organization?

Please consider the following three questions as you ponder this topic:

Should personal health and well-being matter to the servants of God?

Let's examine one Bible passage—*1 Corinthians 6:18-20*—that is often quoted in inspiring Christians to live healthfully for the glory of God.

What is the context? This portion of scripture is part of a letter that Paul wrote to the believers in the city of Corinth, who were trying to live out their faith in a pagan world.

What is the command? In this passage of scripture, the command given to the Corinthian believers is to “flee from sexual immorality.”

What is the biblical principle behind the command? This passage of scripture presents a fundamental principle as the basis for the command to flee from sexual immorality. That fundamental principle is

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that, as believers, our bodies are no longer under our ownership. Rather, they were bought (redeemed) at a price (*Colossians 1:15-23*). As Christians, our bodies now serve as temples for the Holy Spirit in the service of God.

What is the application? Our bodies are not ours to do with as we please, but instead now serve as temples of the Holy Spirit. Paul states the application of this principle very simply: *"Therefore, honor God with your bodies."* The term *honor* means to "regard with great respect." *

What are the implications? The context of this passage centers around the topic of sexual immorality. But the fundamental biblical principle in this passage has implications beyond the sin of sexual immorality alone. If a believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in the service of God, would not practicing good health habits to maintain a functional and available temple be a reasonable response to the truths presented in this passage?

Why do we resist acting on these truths? Some may resist giving serious thought to the role of healthy living in the Christian life by making the argument that if God receives glory by doing His work through our temporary, earthly bodies, then the condition of that earthly body is irrelevant. In fact, the more weaknesses, the better, so that God can receive the most glory. Putting this in human terms, neglecting our health may be seen as an opportunity for God to be glorified by displaying His strength through our weakened state.

This argument is like the one made by Paul regarding the contrast between sin and grace in *Romans 6*. If the presence of sin magnifies the abundance of God's grace, then why not continue to sin so that God's grace can be displayed? But Paul emphatically answers, *"By no means!"* God's grace and glory shine through our weaknesses of every type, but this is no excuse for sin and neglect.

What is stewardship and is health something that we are to be good stewards of?

The term *steward* refers to one who is charged with the responsibility to "manage or look after another's property." *

Let's examine one Bible passage - *Matthew 25:14-30* - that tells us that being a good and faithful servant of God requires that we be good stewards.

What is the context? This is one of the parables of Jesus shared with His disciples regarding how we are to live in anticipation of His return.

What is the command? The implied command is for believers to keep watch and live wisely as we await our Master's return.

What is the biblical principle behind the command? This passage of scripture presents a fundamental principle as the basis for the reaction of the Master to the actions of his three servants. That fundamental principle is that being a good and faithful servant involves good stewardship - managing and maximizing the resources entrusted to us by our Master for the benefit of His kingdom.

What is the application? Because good and faithful servants are good stewards of their master's resources, we are to be careful to not be negligent with the resources God has entrusted to us. Rather, we should make the most of the resources God has entrusted to us for the benefit of His kingdom.

What are the implications? The context of this passage centers around the contrast of how three servants managed their master's money that was entrusted to them while he was away. But the fundamental biblical principle in this passage has implications beyond the management of money alone. A good steward manages well the resources that have been entrusted to him in the master's best interests. Your health, just like time or money, is a resource to be leveraged and managed well because it enables you to do the work assigned to you by your Master for the benefit of His kingdom.

Why do we resist acting on these truths? Some may resist the idea of the stewardship of health because they neglect to consider the purpose of healthy living - to enable us to survive, thrive, and do what God calls us to do. Instead, some adopt the patterns of the world that sees healthy living as a key to longevity or aesthetics, rather than a resource entrusted to us in the service of our Master.

What does the stewardship of health have to do with employees in the workplace?

Let's examine one Bible passage - *Colossians 3:22-4:1* - that relates to the responsibilities of employers and employees in the workplace.

What is the context? This portion of scripture is written by Paul for the Colossians to outline the responsibilities Christians have as they live and work together.

What is the command? This passage of scripture gives commands to servants and masters as they manage their work. Servants are commanded to work wholeheartedly as if they are working for their Master in heaven. Masters are commanded to provide their servants with what is right and fair, just as their heavenly Master provides for them.

What is the biblical principle behind the command? This passage of scripture presents a fundamental principle as the basis for the specific commands given to servants and masters. That fundamental principle is that, because God is the Master over all, all believers should do their work as if they are working for God, recognizing the responsibilities associated with their role and remembering that, in God's economy, worldly favoritism does not exist.

What is the application? Servants (employees) are to work wholeheartedly and not shirk responsibilities when their boss is away. Masters (employers) are to provide employees with what is right and fair to enable them to work wholeheartedly, remembering that they, too, are supervised and rewarded by One in authority over them.

What are the implications? The context of this passage centers around the responsibility of employees to work wholeheartedly and employers to provide them with what is right and fair for them to carry out that command. Working wholeheartedly requires more than a fair salary. Given that an employee's health and well-being greatly impacts their ability to work wholeheartedly, would not taking steps to support employee health and well-being be a reasonable response to these biblical instructions?

Why do we resist acting on these truths? Some may resist the idea of taking steps to support the health and well-being of employees thinking that an employee's personal health is the employee's responsibility alone. But an employee's personal health is influenced by many factors other than their personal health choices. Many employees spend over half of their waking hours at work during a typical work week. Their health and health choices are influenced by their workplace environment, culture, customs, policies, and benefits.

What does the stewardship of employee health have to do with the fulfillment of our organization's God-given mission?

Let's examine one Bible passage - *Proverbs 27:23-24* - that warns us to be vigilant to pay attention to the welfare of what God has entrusted to us for our livelihood and the fulfillment of our mission.

What is the context? This portion of scripture contains wisdom shared by King Solomon.

What is the command? This passage of scripture gives instructions to overseers of a business operation. Overseers are to be sure to pay attention to their herds and know the condition of their flocks and respond accordingly.

What is the biblical principle behind the command? This passage of scripture presents a fundamental principle as the basis for the specific instructions given to overseers. That fundamental principle is that, because current success does not guarantee future success, it is wise to pay attention to what drives the success of your endeavor.

What is the application? It is wise for overseers of any endeavor to pay attention to and take steps to support what drives their success and to be good stewards of those resources.

What are the implications? The context of this passage centers around providing wise instruction for overseers. Many things contribute to and serve the mission of every organization. Given that the work done by employees is an important driver of the success and fulfillment of the mission of any

organization, would not taking steps to pay attention to and support employee health and well-being be a reasonable response to these biblical instructions as well as a good business practice?

Why do we resist acting on these truths? Some may resist the idea of making employee health and well-being an organizational priority because they have lost sight of what drives the fulfillment of their mission. God does His work through people and, therefore, employee health and well-being is a valuable asset that requires careful oversight and stewardship of this important God-given resource.

From a Biblical perspective, is employee health a stewardship issue?

As believers, practicing good health habits to maintain a functional and available temple is a reasonable response to the biblical principle that we are to honor God with our bodies as the residence of the Holy Spirit for the service of God.

Does your workplace make it easy or hard for employees to honor God with their bodies by practicing good health habits?

As believers, practicing good health habits is a reasonable response to the biblical principle that good and faithful servants are good stewards of the resources entrusted to them by God for the benefit of His kingdom.

Does your workplace make it easy or hard for employees to manage well and maximize whatever degree of health God has given them to effectively use their gifts for the benefit of His kingdom?

As believers, taking steps to support personal and employee health is a reasonable response to the biblical principle that employees are to work wholeheartedly, and employers are to provide what is right and fair to enable them to do that.

Does your workplace make it easy or hard for employees to practice the good health habits that will enable them to work wholeheartedly, rather than being distracted and derailed by not being or feeling well?

As leaders, vigilant oversight of employee health and well-being is a reasonable response to the biblical principle that, because current success does not guarantee future success, it's important to oversee and support what drives the fulfillment of the mission of your organization.

Do you, as a leader, know what challenges your employees are facing to stay well as they serve well? When was the last time you asked?

*Word definitions are from the Oxford Dictionary (www.oxforddictionaries.com)

The Business Case

*One person gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly but comes to poverty.
Proverbs 11:24 (NIV)*

Good things happen for employers that are good to employees and invest in their well-being! Consider the following statistics related to the impact of employee well-being on the stewardship of your ministry's greatest asset - your people!

Retention/Recruitment

- About 87% of employees said they consider health and wellness offerings when choosing an employer.
- Employees are more likely to recommend a company that supports well-being efforts as a good place to work
- 87% of employees are expecting supportive employers for achieving work-life balance
- Over half of employees representing the GenZ and Millennial generations consider employee wellness programs as an important factor in job decisions
- 67% of employees with wellness access like their jobs more and are very likely to recommend their workplace to others
- Large companies with access to multi-faceted wellness are 2x more likely to retain current employees
- In small companies, 45% of employees say that they would stay at their job longer because of perks such as a wellness program.

Productivity/Presenteeism

- Participation in employee wellness programs has been shown to increase average worker productivity by over 5%. That's the equivalent of one additional productive day of work per month for the average employee.
- Employees that eat an unhealthy diet and don't exercise much are 66% and 50% more likely to be high in presenteeism, respectively.

Engagement

- Employees who feel their physical/psychological health is positively impacted by their work are more engaged in their work than employees who feel that their work lives have a negative impact on their health.
- Gallup research has shown that employee engagement and employee well-being (includes career, social, financial, community, and physical) are reciprocal. Engagement impacts an employee's future well-being. Well-being impacts an employee's future engagement with work.
- Gallup research has shown that employee engagement and employee well-being are additive. They complement each other and together they catalyze a productive and thriving workplace. When comparing highly engaged employees who measure high in well-being versus low in well-being, those with a high level of well-being were found to:
 - Miss fewer workdays due to poor health over the course of a year
 - Experience less burnout
 - Be more productive
 - Be more likely to report high levels of adaptability in the presence of change

Sources:

Retention/Recruitment:

[Win with Wellness- Attract and Retain Talent - Forbes, 2018](#)

[Work and Well-being Survey - American Psychological Association, 2016](#)

[Two-Thirds of American Workers Would Be Better Employees If They Got More Sleep, According to Glassdoor Survey, PR Newswire, 2017](#)

[Millennials Most Receptive to Wellness Outreach, SHRM, 2014](#)

[Wellness programs retain talent — even if workers don't use them, ebn, 2019](#)

Productivity:

[Wellness Impacts Employee Presenteeism, UBF](#)

[Increasing productivity by one day each month, Science Daily, 2017](#)

Engagement:

[Engagement Keeps the Doctor Away, Gallup, 2005](#)

[The Wellbeing-Engagement Paradox of 2020, Gallup, 2021](#)

[Well-Being Enhances Benefits of Employee Engagement, Gallup, 2015](#)