

## **Honesty at Work at Work**

What do you think of when you hear the word, “Honest” as in he or she is honest? My first thoughts have usually been about money. If people take money that does not belong to them, they are not honest. As I thought about it, that did not seem enough. People could take things other than money. They could even simply take the use of something that doesn’t belong to them, like a camera, a copy machine, or a tool. They use it without permission but do not take possession of the object. Is that honest? Then another use of honest came to mind, “Let me be honest with you.” Here honesty is about truthfulness in communication.

It seems to me that our faith values honesty in all its forms. Which gives rise to the question, how do we express our faith’s value of honesty in our workplaces?

Easiest to understand, if we handle money at work, is to charge a fair price and give correct change. Somewhat more difficult to remember is to focus on doing our jobs to the best of our abilities during the entire workday. Doing less than we are capable of or working less than the hours for which we are being paid is being dishonest with our employers.

In between these extremes, honesty would be things like accepting only the monies we rightfully have earned under our employment contract/conditions, using paid sick days and other paid days off only as intended, and submitting expense statements that are accurate and within the limits specified by our employer’s policies.

Beyond honesty with money is honesty with our employers’ materials and equipment. We are being honest when we use worksite equipment for personal purposes only with permission or in accordance with the employer’s policies for personal use. We are being honest when we leave the employer’s supplies in the possession of the employer. We don’t take pencils for our home use or make copies of personal documents or use a backhoe without permission.

Perhaps even more important is honesty in communications. Information is essential to the operation of every organization, simple or complex. As employees we must provide the information we possess, accurately and clearly, to all who may have a need to be informed—co-workers, management/supervisors, and/or those who contribute to our work.

One particular type of information vital to all organizations is feedback and evaluation. This can be about the work product or about work performance. In either case honesty is crucial to improvement. Meanness or brutality in delivering the feedback/evaluation is not necessary. We need to be honest and respectful.

Honesty in communication goes beyond speaking truthfully. It also includes speaking up, not keeping silent, when we have information that could affect the performance of the employer or of other employees.

It is being honest to preserve the reputation of our co-workers and our employers, also. Idle gossip, whether with co-workers or with people outside the company, can destroy the reputation of the person being talked about. Gossip and speculation without foundation in fact about our employers likewise can destroy the reputation of the employer with devastating effects to the future of the company.

Where does honesty begin? I have picked up small coins that were lost without a thought of finding the owner. I have picked up \$20 bills and wallets turned them in. Where did honesty begin? I have laughed with colleagues at funny gossip. I have protested about a colleague’s racially stereotyped gossip. Where did honesty begin?

## **HONESTY — A Faith Based Value at Work**

1. What does applying the faith-based value of honesty in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of honesty in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of honesty in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based honesty in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?