

Two Bible Questions Answered

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"Dear Mr. Wilson:

I worked for a company of 500 employees for 12 years in the accounting department. For the past five years, I was in charge of accounts payable. I was fired on April 28 and escorted to the door because of time fraud. Emotionally, I am still reeling from this because I was highly conscientious about my responsibilities at work. In short, here is the story: Two years ago my employer's business began to slow down due to the ailing economy.

The company terminated some of the newer employees in the accounting department because there wasn't enough work to keep everyone busy. As the manager of accounts payable, I found that I could get 98% of my work done by 2 p.m. and after dealing with some boredom, I thought I would use my "unproductive time" by starting an internet business on the side. (I had high-speed internet access at my work desk.) At no time did I put my personal business on a higher priority than that of my employer.

I simply used the internet when I was not busy with my employer's work to take care of personal business. I stayed "on top" of my work-related duties and made sure that I met all of my employee responsibilities and deadlines. On Friday, April 25, my computer died. I called the computer support department and they took my computer to the shop for repair.

When I returned Monday morning, there was a note on my desk indicating the CFO [Chief Financial Officer] wanted to see me first thing. I went to his office and he told me that I had been fired for time fraud. The computer repair team had discovered my personal business and a substantial set of records of my personal activities.

I tried to explain that my personal business had not affected my work or my competency as the manager of accounts payable. I reminded him that my employee reviews had been excellent. He agreed that I had been a great employee, but he also said I had lost my dedication to the company and diluted my efforts toward its success with personal pursuits. He said that my personal business during work hours had "robbed" the company of my time, creativity, and energy that it was due.

He said that if I had "non-productive time" that I was obligated to seek out other assignments within the company because the company was paying me a salary to be totally dedicated to the success of the company, not my personal interests. He asked, "Why should my company pay you and other employees to conduct business for yourself?"

He said he was very sorry that I had divided my interests and loyalty. He called Security and a guard escorted me to my desk and after gathering up a few personal items, I was escorted to the door.

Needless to say, I have been devastated. I never thought of myself as thief. I am angry for losing a great job at a time like this. I thought that as long as I was "doing my job," that nothing more was expected of me. I was wrong. I have been sickened by the ordeal and seeking another job with time fraud in my history is painful.

I am writing to ask whether you think I owe my former employer some form of "restitution." I have read your articles on the importance of making things right and I am trying to sort this out. The CFO said I stole time and money from them and in retrospect, I have to agree. What do you think the Lord wants me to do?

Sincerely,

Michelle"

Dear Michelle:

Thank you for your e-mail. I know you are in a painful situation. You have asked a good question and I hope my response will be helpful. Before I address the issue of restitution, I would like to comment on a couple things. First, time fraud is a huge problem in America.

In 2005, a survey was taken on employee practices by Salary.com and America Online. They found that employees spend an average of 2.09 hours per eight-hour workday on something other than their jobs, not including lunch and breaks. Based on these averages, employee time-wasting costs U.S. employers an estimated \$544 billion each year. More than half of the 2,706 people surveyed admitted that their biggest distraction during work hours was surfing the internet for personal uses.

Other distractions included socializing with co-workers, running errands outside the office, personal phone calls, and personal business endeavors. Michelle, think about this. If your salary was \$20 an hour, and you spent approximately three hours a day on personal business, in a week's time you have stolen \$300 in wages from your employer. (Actually, the amount is much greater than \$300 per week because your employer pays taxes based on your earnings, as well as vacation time, health insurance, retirement, etc.)

The second thing I need to say is that your remarks give me the impression that you may not fully realize the extent of your actions. Here is the problem: You defined your job rather than allowing your employer to dynamically define or redefine your job. You wrote, "At no time did I put my personal business on a higher priority than that of my employer."

This is not true. When you concluded that you could finish your duties by 2 p.m., you should have gone to your employer and said, "I don't have enough work to stay busy." You should have been honest, but you were not. Rather, you began doing personal business at your employer's expense. You substituted your employer's job description with personal goals.

It is clear to me that you owe restitution to your former employer. We cannot expect God to forgive us for stealing without first making an effort to restore what we stole. Jesus said, **"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.**

First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. 'Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.' " (Matthew 5:23-26)

You may have been naive when you started doing business for yourself at work. Nevertheless, you were fired because you stole time and money from your employer. Your employer faithfully paid you to work for him, not yourself. I think you should go back to the CFO and tell him that you now realize the seriousness of your actions and that you would like to make amends. Ask him to help you determine what you owe the company and reassure him that you will somehow pay it – even if it takes you many months.

Further, if you are interested, tell him that you have learned a painful lesson and that you would be pleased to work for the company again in whatever position he might deem appropriate. Be courageous, admit your error, and do your best to make it right even if he does not offer you a job.

At least, when he is called for a reference, he will have to admit that yes, you were fired for time fraud, but you have since done everything possible to atone for your actions. This will speak volumes about your integrity and character, and most of all, you will have peace with God knowing that you have done the right thing. Now, get going with restitution, and the guilt that nags at you will quickly disappear!

Best regards,

Larry Wilson

Is Sabbath the Seventh Day?

"Dear Larry Wilson:

Is there a simple way to prove that the seventh day of the week, Saturday, is the same seventh day of Creation? I am asking because my co-worker says time has been lost and we can't possibly know which day of the week is God's seventh day.

Thank you, Glen"

Dear Glen:

Yes, there is a simple way to prove that Saturday, the seventh day of our week, is the seventh day Sabbath Creation. Here is how: About 2,500 years after Creation, Jesus delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery. He took them into the wilderness and gave them manna to eat. For forty years Jesus Himself demonstrated which day was His seventh day Sabbath because no manna fell on that day! Even more compelling, if we jump forward to when Jesus was on Earth, the Bible records how He observed the seventh day which He Himself had made holy at Creation. (Luke 4:16)

In the second century, A.D., Christians in Rome began deviating from observing the seventh day Sabbath. About 45 B.C., Mithraism took root in Rome and many Romans worshiped on Sunday, the holy day of Mithra, the Sun God, before Christianity arrived in Rome.

As the Mithraites converted to Christianity, they wanted to continue observing Sunday as a holy day. This was because Sunday observance was prevalent in Rome by the second century A.D. and Roman Christians wanted to avoid being associated or identified with the Jews. (The Romans despised the Jews.)

As time passed, the church at Rome became the influential center for Christian doctrine, and the Emperor of Rome, Constantine, became a Christian for political reasons. He imposed the first Sunday law in March, A.D. 321 – a law that pleased the Mithraites, as well as the Christians. Today, as you know, most Christians worship on Sunday, the first day of the week.

There is one more item that you need to know. During the sixth century A.D., Mohammed established the sixth day of the week as a day that all Moslems must attend a religious service and participate in prayers at a mosque. Any Moslem will affirm that the sixth day of the week is adjacent to the seventh day of the week which the Jews observe. The Jewish seventh day is also adjacent to the first day of the week which is observed by Christians.

Without realizing it, three antagonistic religions agree on the synchrony of the weekly cycle. **This proves that time has not been lost.** The seventh day of Creation remains synchronous with the seventh day of our week. Mankind typically calls it by its Roman name, Saturday, but God still calls it Sabbath.

I hope this helps!

Larry Wilson