

Responding to Disappointment and Betrayal at Work

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Abstract

Researchers and educators have studied and taught on the employer and employee relationship, but usually from the perspective of the employer, and less on how employees are affected psychologically by leadership and management. This paper examines the employee's expectations of their employment relationship, consequences of missed or violated expectations, and how disappointments may be perceived as betrayal. This can lead to holding a grudge, an offense, or unforgiveness against an employer, manager, or co-worker. Unforgiveness fosters sin and opens the door to bitterness and resentment. Christians are commanded to forgive, but often proves to be difficult when one has been betrayed. As part of the Holy Spirit Symposium collection of papers, addressing the Holy Spirit, healing, and psychology, this paper will examine how relational disappointments and unmet expectations occur, how they may be perceived as betrayal, and how to heal and forgive in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Keywords

employee engagement, leadership, emotional intelligence, moral injury, workplace, forgiveness

The relationship between employer and employee has been broadly studied. Much of the existing literature and teaching in business schools comes from the perspective of the organization in managing its employees, their behaviors, and their contribution to

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the outcomes of the organization's mission and objectives. What is not often taught or discussed is the psychological aspect to leadership and management, and its influence on the employees and employee engagement. The employee also has a perspective on their employment relationship, which is also not often discussed. What an employee believes and perceives about their employer, the organizational culture, their experience, and how they are treated will influence their perspective on the employment relationship, and engagement at work. Workplace disappointment, unmet expectations, and experiencing betrayal by the employee's manager or the organization as a whole directly affects employee engagement and work satisfaction. These factors may result in bitter feelings or unforgiveness on the part of the employee. Managers can improve their personal interactions with their employees. Regardless of managerial style, employees have a choice on how to respond to disappointment and betrayal.

Relationship Expectations

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a measure of a healthy employer and employee relationship. Employee engagement reflects an employee's sense of belonging, trust in their employer, and sense of being appreciated. [Gallup, Inc. \(n.d.a\)](#), "How to Improve Employee Engagement in the Workplace - Gallup" defines employee engagement as "the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace." Decades of research across all industries, organizational sizes, nationalities, and economic conditions, has led Gallup to conclude that engaged employees produce better business outcomes, have a higher wellbeing, lower absenteeism, less turnover, and higher productivity.

[Gallup, Inc \(n.d.b\)](#), "Indicator: Employee Engagement - Gallup" global engagement data has been relatively flat over the past 22 years. In 2022, Gallup determined that only 32% of the U.S. workforce and 23% of the global workforce was actively engaged. That is in comparison to an active employee engagement of 72% in best-practice organizations as defined by Gallup, more than double the U.S. engagement. With an intentional focus on employee engagement, in 2022, best practice organizations increased employee engagement 38% from 2006, the first year best-practice organizations were measured. In 2006, best-practice organizations were already outperforming the general U.S. workforce with employees 73% more engaged at best-practice organizations.

Gallup's four levels of employee engagement include the following: basic needs, individual contribution, teamwork, and growth. Individual contribution and teamwork are two levels where disappointment and betrayal could likely be experienced by the employee. Individual contribution asks the question 'What do I give?' Gallup measures an employee's attitude and perception of their work relationship as to how well the manager and employer help them grow, demonstrate care for the employee, help the employee see the value they bring, and know the employee beyond the work they produce. Teamwork asks the question of 'Do I belong?' Gallup measures the

employee's perception on how well the manager and employer helps build mutual trust in the organization, helps the employee feel proud of their contributions, helps the employee see their importance, and believes they are heard.

That demonstration of care for employees, the building of mutual trust, and fostering a sense of belonging may be challenged when financial decisions need to be made that include employee layoffs. The decision on layoffs is an initial challenge, but equally important is how it is managed, and the treatment of both terminated employees and those who remain. Employees' experiences profoundly influence their perception of the organization's commitment not only to organizational success, but also to the employee's personal and professional growth, their care and well-being, and for the value that they bring.

Employee engagement is the outcome of a healthy employer and employee relationship. "When someone is engaged at work, it means that they are emotionally committed to the organization and its work goals" (Rafiq et al. 2019, 617). Co-worker relationships, effective leadership, interesting work, resources to do the job and rewards are drivers of employee engagement (Rafiq et al. 2019, 617). Research found that an employee's trust with the organization affects employee work engagement and retention (Rafiq et al. 2019, 622). According to Morrow et al, trust is "the extent to which one believes that others will not expect to exploit one's vulnerabilities" (Morrow et al. 2004, 49–50).

Empathy as a key part of emotional intelligence is critical to being an effective leader of engaged employees. However, traditionally, organizations are designed, led, and managed with the objective of contributing to the bottom line rather than to employee flourishing. Burnout, violation of personal boundaries, and sleep deprivation have become the norm in workplaces and are a global problem (Roy 2022, 24).

Psychological Contract

Employees have certain unwritten expectations of behavior for their employer, which is known as their psychological contract. "The psychological contract held by an employee consists of beliefs about the reciprocal obligations between that employee and his or her organization" (Morrison and Robinson 1997, 226). Promises made as part of the psychological contract do not need to be written, spoken, or otherwise made explicit; rather they can be inferred (Rousseau 1989, 122). These psychological contracts are the expectations or obligations that employees believe their employer organization owes to them and in turn, the obligations the employees believe that they owe to their organization (Turnley et al. 2003, 188). This is not a transactional relationship such as fair pay for employment, but a deep-seated motivation and willingness that extends beyond job expectations because the employee feels cared for and valued. "Relational contracts, however, are presented as open-ended, less specific agreements that establish and maintain a relationship, being based on emotional involvement as well as financial reward" (Atkinson, 2007, 228).

The psychological contract is increasingly perceived as a critical framework for understanding employer-employee relationships (Kiewitz et al. 2009, 807). Attracting and retaining high quality employees gives an organization a competitive advantage. It is strategic to understand how negative employment experiences affect employees' attitudes, work contributions, and employment retention.

In connecting employee engagement to an employee's expectations of their employment relationship, Rousseau states, "The concept of a psychological contract is tied to the individual's commitment to the organization" (Rousseau 1989, 125). She characterizes commitment as having the following three factors: "Acceptance of the organization's values, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and desire to remain an employee" (Rousseau 1989, 125). For example, an employee may take on extra work or extend extra effort without additional compensation out of loyalty and for the good of the organization, with the expectation that the organization and manager will acknowledge their value and make the employee proud of themselves, both of which address the Gallup engagement levels of individual contribution and teamwork.

If the employee perceives that their contributions or sacrifices for the good of the organization are not adequately reciprocated, they will likely perceive that as a breach, or violation of the psychological contract. Such discrepancies create inequality in the employment relationship. If the employee perceives that they have met their job responsibilities and citizenship behavior obligations to their employer, they will likely feel shortchanged by their employer's failure to meet their obligations and the employee will take actions to rebalance the employment relationship by reducing their contributions to the organization. As a result, they may emotionally withdraw, reduce their motivation, eliminate extra contributions, or resign (Turnley et al. 2003, 190). The employee adjusts their output in response to what their employer does. Morrison and Robinson further explained the consequences of a psychological contract breach, "Violation refers to the feelings of anger and betrayal that are often experienced when an employee believes that the organization has failed to fulfill one or more of those obligations" (Morrison and Robinson 1997, 226). Psychological contract breaches occur when the organization has failed to meet one or more obligations within one's psychological contract (Morrison and Robinson 1997, 226). It is acknowledged to have unfavorable consequences on a range of employee attitudes and behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, customer orientation and turnover intention (Hartmann and Rutherford 2015, 1). Reduced trust in the organization and its leaders, and increased cynicism. Breaching relational obligations likely will have a stronger effect than breaching a transactional obligation and may destroy the relationship itself (Atkinson, 2007, 230). Whether the breach is real or perceived, the potential effects are the same, leading to intense employee reactions towards the employer (Robinson and Morrison 2000, 526).

Moral Injury

While psychological contract breach is a failure of the organization to meet one or more of the employee's unwritten expectations, a moral injury can also occur if the employer violates an employee's deeply held moral value or belief. A moral injury is a violation of deeply held values of right and wrong. A moral injury is a betrayal of a moral contract that violates trust and a shared moral code (Nash and Litz 2013, 368). Marsh refers to moral injury as "wounds of conscience" (Marsh 2023, 34–35). "These mental scars are often caused by conflicted tensions within one's occupation or acts of seeming betrayal within a group, resulting in struggles of personal identity and compromised moral values" (Marsh 2023, 35). A moral injury in a Christian-led organization likely is a greater violation due to the shared faith and beliefs.

Moral injury is the result of broken contracts; however, in this case the contract is moral rather than psychological. Those involved typically experience a moral injury at a fundamentally deeper level than a psychological contract breach. Humans are born with innate understandings of right and wrong, and when violated, moral injury can lead to serious consequences. Moral contracts are the prerequisite for moral trust, without which we cannot cooperate effectively as social beings (W. Nash, M.D., personal communication, June 7, 2022). Moral injury is "the psychological consequence of a betrayal of what's right by someone who holds legitimate authority in a high-stakes situation" (Nash and Litz 2013, 368). Nash and Litz go on to say that "moral injury is not merely a state of cognitive dissonance, but a state of loss of trust in previously deeply held beliefs about one's own or other's ability to keep our shared moral covenant" (Nash and Litz 2013, 368).

Since moral injury relates more broadly to human behavior, common themes and behaviors emerge. When a moral injury has occurred in the workplace, it may result in social withdrawal, behavioral problems, aggression, trust issues, loss of meaning, spiritual and existential issues. Possible psychological symptoms may include depression, anxiety, anger, and a sense of rejection (Drescher et al. 2011 as cited in Nash and Litz 2013, 369). A moral injury occurs at the bedrock of one's ethical principles, morals, and values. Perceived betrayals by those most trusted, such as family members, or in this case, the employee's supervisor, and organization, are among the most egregious (Nash and Litz 2013, 370). By understanding the behaviors that ensue from a moral injury, an employee can articulate their emotions and take steps toward addressing the betrayal.

If an employee who has taken on extra work for the good of the employer has a life altering event, yet the employer does not demonstrate empathy, care, compassion, and concern, the employee will likely see this as a moral injury and betrayal. Memories and fixation on the moral injury can entangle a person in a cycle of anger, despair, or depression. "Morally injurious events cannot be undone—the bell cannot be unrung" (Nash and Litz 2013, 372). Ruminative thinking, or the repetitively focusing on an injurious event and its causes, meaning, and consequences, is believed to exacerbate the psychological distress following that injurious event. The extent to which a person

engages in ruminative self-focus after an injurious event strongly determines the degree of distress experienced after such an event (Moberly and Watkins 2008, 1034–1035). A fixation on memories of grievances at work can lead to emotional distress, a lack of engagement, unforgiveness and holding a grudge. However, reconciliation and healing are possible by seeking and asking for forgiveness when each person or entity takes their assigned share of the blame. Reconciliation and reparation that are merely symbolic will not be effective, as both must be meaningful to the morally injured person. Depending on the nature of the moral injury, amends may take years or even a lifetime (Nash and Litz 2013, 372).

Moral Injury in Scripture

Scripture records and describes morally injurious events. Judas betrayed Jesus. “Jesus asked him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’” (Luke 22:48).¹ Peter suffered an internal injury of conscience following his denial of Jesus three times (Marsh, 2023, 37). Jesus said regarding the end times, “At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other” (Matthew 24:10). The psalmist records in Psalm 55:12-13 the morally injurious experience of being betrayed by a friend. “If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend.” The Psalmist continues in verse 20 to say the friend violated his covenant. In verse 15, the Psalmist expresses his reactions of anger toward his friend and feelings of betrayal: “Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the realm of the dead, for evil finds lodging among them.”

Practically, it is impossible to eliminate the possibility of any psychological contract breach or moral injury. However, leaders can keep these incidents to a minimum by being self-aware, having a high emotional intelligence, and working to quickly remedy a breach or injury. Self-awareness helps us to realize when we are victims of moral injury.

Equity Theory

A third relationship expectation that employees have of their manager is equity and fairness. When that expectation is unmet, it can cause bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness. If the employee perceives inequity, it may result in reduced engagement or resignation. Equity theory describes an exchange relationship which centers on perceived fairness of rewards and compensation received in the employer relationship in comparison to other workers. A perceived lack of equity could cause an employee to withdraw, pull back on contributions, or become cynical. If an employee perceives that they do not have the same professional development opportunities as co-workers, this

1. All Scripture references are taken from the New International Version (2011).

will likely be perceived as inequitable, a psychological contract breach, and possibly a moral injury.

Equity theory of motivation was introduced in 1963 by J. Stacey Abrams. Workers may experience dissonance in perceived fairness in the organization as it relates to their peers. Employees adjust their motivation and contributions to the organization based on what is received in exchange for work completed as compared to a co-worker with similar duties and job title. It is the employee's perception of fairness for rewards received as compared to perceived equal contributions of co-workers. When an employee believes they have equal opportunities as their colleagues and perceives fairness in rewards and compensation, they are likely to be more engaged, contribute to organizational success, and demonstrate increased commitment. One example is in the recognition of employees. Managers may inadvertently fail to demonstrate equal enthusiasm and connection with all employees, which can be perceived as unfair to some. Conversely, when a manager intentionally treats each employee with equal recognition, response and acknowledgement, it is perceived as fair and objective.

An employee's inputs or contributions to the organization and to their employer would include their time, loyalty, effort, abilities, integrity, excellence, reliability, innovation, ideas, personal sacrifice, skill, enthusiasm, and trust. The employee would expect in exchange from their employer any of the following: wages, job security, recognition, appreciation, promotions, training and development, responsibility, tools, resources, and perks equal to what their peers receive for similar work. Giving one employee preferential treatment or excess recognition over another or giving one employee an advantage not offered to another would be perceived as inequity in the workplace and would likely contribute to a loss of employee engagement or even resignation.

A common concern for equity is rewards, recognition, and professional development. When an employee perceives that the employer is not acknowledging them comparably to their peers, they likely will perceive that as inequitable. For example, if the manager recognizes each team member one by one, talking about what they bring to the organization and how they contribute, but for one employee, the manager says very little, or the comments are not as meaningful and personal as their peers, the employee may perceive inequity. In these situations, the more developed a supervisor is in emotional intelligence, the greater the psychological connection between supervisor and employee. The greater the ability of the manager to acknowledge and recognize the employee's effort and sacrifice, and to connect their activity to impact, the more the employee will feel understood and valued.

Trust in the Employer

Prior trust in the employer and employee relationship is crucial to the employee's perceptions of the employer's motivation and actions, and interpretation of a perceived psychological contract breach. Hurley defined trust as "Confident reliance on someone when you are in a position of vulnerability" (Hurley 2006, 2). Robinson explains, "If

employers can earn the trust of their employees early on, employees will be less likely to perceive a contract breach in the first place and more likely to retain their trust despite possible changes or breaches” (Robinson 1996, 593). Companies that foster a trust culture will have a competitive advantage.

The literature suggests that when a breach incident occurs, the existing foundation of trust as experienced between the employee and their manager or organization will greatly determine how that breach is perceived. An employee who previously held high trust with their supervisor and organization will tend to view the current breach more positively considering prior experienced trust. The employee may rationalize the breach as an unintentional event, a misunderstanding, a one-time occurrence, or not the fault of the supervisor or organization. As a result, the employee will be able to maintain a relatively high level of trust in the employer, despite the perceived transgression. In contrast, an employee with prior experience of low trust with the manager or organization will tend to identify the breach as consistent with prior low trust experiences and interpret it more negatively. The employee may believe the breach was a deliberate or dishonest act, intentional, or even ascribe incompetence. Employees with low initial trust will experience a greater decline in their trust following a perceived breach than employees who had a high initial trust in their employer (Robinson 1996, 576–77). Managers past actions and behavior serve as a blueprint and predictor for future behavior. Consistent decision making and behavior from managers can promote trust with employees and demonstrates reliability and predictability that fosters confidence and reassurance in their relationships and interactions.

A manager builds trust in understanding peoples’ problems, being relied upon for good guidance, and demonstrating an understanding of the people who work for them (Patterson, et al. 2005, 385). The lack or breach of trust is an antecedent to psychological contract breach. Trust influences the mental model or psychology of the employee and maintains the psychological contract (Erkutlu and Chafra 2013, 841).

When high levels of trust exist, employees exhibit higher levels of motivation, empowerment, and engagement. Without a foundation of trust in the organization, employees are more likely to comply with their leader’s directives while remaining inwardly less committed to the organizational values, culture, and mission. In organizations with low trust, a pervasive attitude is ‘every employee for himself.’ Employees become reluctant to help each other and the organization eventually loses, as it does not gain the collective and shared wisdom of its employees (Cuddy, Kohut, and Neffinger 2013, under “When Strength Comes First”).

Trust affects employee engagement, employee wellbeing, and a sense of belonging and thereby affects the bottom line. In his research to connect trust to business performance, Zak found that “Compared with people at low trust companies, people at high trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout (Zak 2017, 4).

The research of Zenger and Folkman identified foundational elements that underlie trust and how others feel toward them from 360-degree assessments of 87 000 leaders.

The three elements are positive relationships, good judgment/expertise, and consistency. Their research concluded that relationships had the greatest impact on trust. When a leader scored high on both consistency and expertise, but low on relationships, measurable trust decreased 33 points. The relational abilities of the manager will affect the employee's psychological contract, employment turnover, and create bitterness and resentment with an employee, or active engagement (Zenger and Folkman, 2019).

Glaser and Glaser researched the impact that management conversations have on neurochemistry and its impact on employee trust. Conversations and employee interactions can either produce oxytocin or cortisol. Oxytocin is a feel-good hormone that elevates one's ability to communicate, collaborate, and trust others by activating networks in the prefrontal cortex. When managers demonstrate concern for others, are truthful about what's on their minds, stimulate discussion with employees and are curious about what they think, paint a picture of mutual success between the employee and the organization, and are open to difficult conversations with the employee, managers have a positive effect on the neurochemistry of the employee. These trust-producing behaviors produce oxytocin in the employee and are behaviors that reduce psychological contract breach (Glaser and Glaser 2014, under "Managers' Positive and Negative Conversational Behaviors").

In contrast, behaviors that are less relational and more transactional produce cortisol in the employee and stimulates distrust of the manager. When an employee perceives certain negative management behaviors, trust breaks down. These negative behaviors include: not trusting the employee's intentions, a focus on convincing the employee without listening, a lack of openness to contributions, not seeking to understand the employee, failure to be mentally present or pretending to listen, or a display of emotions that detract from their ability to listen (Glaser and Glaser 2014, under "Managers' Positive and Negative Conversational Behaviors").

Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Empathy as one aspect of emotional intelligence is a critical element of effective leadership. "Leaders who display empathic emotion from the perspective of their subordinates are rated as better performers by their bosses (Sadri, Weber and Gentry 2011, 828). The Center for Creative Leadership identifies empathetic leadership as "Having the ability to understand the needs of others and being aware of their feelings and thoughts" (Center for Creative Leadership 2023). Arena describes empathy as "Our ability to understand other people's experiences deeply-it requires us to walk in someone else's shoes, or to suspend our own judgements long enough to be able to see through another person's eyes" (Arena 2018, 180). The Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) research found that employees want their employers to be empathetic toward their professional and personal needs. The top five qualities that employees are looking for in an empathetic leader are (1) trustworthiness in handling difficult conversations, (2) transparency, (3) follow through on action, (4) fairness, (5) and welcoming towards others' opinions (Americas, 2022).

Empathy, or the lack thereof, has a direct connection to employee engagement and the perception of disappointment and betrayal at work. Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) released their EY Empathy in Business Survey in October 2021. The survey tracks how empathy affects leaders, employees, and innovation in the workplace. This survey found that 90% of U.S. workers believe that empathetic leaders increase employee's job satisfaction, and 79% believe it decreases employee turnover. The EY survey of more than 1000 Americans showed that many had left a previous job because their boss wasn't empathetic to their struggles at work (54%) or in their personal lives (49%). Employees see a disconnect between what their manager and employer say regarding empathy and support, with 46% of employees saying company efforts at empathy are dishonest, and 42% of employees claiming their company doesn't follow through on promises.

EY US further found that 89% of employees believed that empathy yields better leadership. Inspiring change within the workplace is more effective with empathetic leaders as reported 88% of the employees, and 87% said empathy fosters trust among employees and leaders. Empathy is good for business, as 85% reported that empathetic leaders increase employee productivity ([McWilliams 2021](#)). To respond to this increasing need for empathy, managers and organizations must change their conditioned thinking and responses about measures of success, performance, and how organizational growth is achieved ([Roy 2022](#), 24).

More than strategy, vision or ideas, great leadership works through emotions. In their book, *Primal Leadership*, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee propose that "emotions in the workplace sets the best leaders apart from the rest - not just in tangibles such as better business results and the retention of talent, but also in the all-important intangibles, such as higher morale, motivation, and commitment" ([Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee 2002](#), 4-5). A manager can demonstrate empathy through several behaviors and actions, such as active listening. This entails granting uninterrupted time to listen to the employee without judgement, asking questions to gain deeper insights, and expressing genuine curiosity to ensure the employee feels truly heard. Additionally, acknowledging the employee's emotions and recognizing how they are affected by what they are sharing, creates an opportunity to empathize and understand the situation from their perspective.

Application to Management and Leadership

Managers and employers share a mutual need to understand psychological contracts and how to uphold them, prevent moral injury, ensure equity, and retain productive employees. Avoiding psychological contract breach not only decreases employee turnover, but also increases employee engagement and commitment to the organization. "An engaged employee is defined as one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about his or her work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests" ([Cianfrani et al. 2019](#), 67).

In their book, *Blue Ocean Shift*, Kim and Mauborgne proposed that carrots and sticks do little to inspire and build employee's confidence which is critical to transformative change. They went on further to say, "you need to focus on the emotions and psychology of your people, instead of putting most of your energy into manipulating the mechanistic levers of structure, punishments, and rewards" (Kim and Mauborgne 2017, 21–22). Psychological contracts are not merely about avoiding broken promises but also working to fulfill promises and expectations. Employees will experience broken promises and unfulfilled expectations on a regular basis; some are unavoidable, but how the manager and organization handle it will determine if the employee interprets the event as a breach. An organization's leadership ought to address these psychological aspects of motivating employees.

Engagement and psychological connection with an employer are emotional rather than transactional connections. "Engagement describes an individual's emotional attachment to the organization, to fellow colleagues, and to the job" (Cianfrani et al. 2019, 67). Research by Sirota Survey Intelligence from 2001 through 2004 with 52 Fortune 1000 companies, and 1.2 million employees, found that most employees are enthusiastic and committed upon starting a new job. However, in 85% of the companies surveyed, the employees' morale sharply declined after 6 months and continued to deteriorate. The researchers concluded that the decline depended on how companies approached the management of employees. Instead of focusing on motivating the employees, the managers should focus on not demotivating them (Cianfrani et al. 2019, 71). How employees show up in their work reflects how they have processed their work experience.

Biblical Application to Forgiveness

Modern management training largely focuses on activities and results, and less on the people producing those results and activities. The psychological impact of management and leadership can increase employee engagement or create bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness through disappointment and betrayal. The average person experiences multiple interpersonal conflicts over their lifespan; if unresolved, these can have a detrimental affect on health (Seawell, Toussaint, and Cheadle. 2014, 375). In these personal or workplace transgressions, a perception could be that the other person has caused harm or offense. When the offending person is a manager or someone in a place of authority, an employee can perceive the harm as a betrayal. "Though unproductive in many respects, individuals often respond to interpersonal transgressions with unforgiveness, the motivation to think, feel and act negatively towards a transgressor" (Seawell, Toussaint, and Cheadle. 2014, 375). Research indicates that unforgiveness is related to declines in self-reported health (Seawell, Toussaint, and Cheadle. 2014, 376).

Jesus commanded his followers to forgive. Mark wrote (Mark 11:25) that if someone has something against anyone, they should stop praying and forgive, so that they will be forgiven by God. When Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone, "Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'" (Matthew 18:

21-22). Jesus also said in Luke 6:27, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.” The apostle Paul urged the church in Ephesus to put off their old self; in particular, he said to “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (Ephesians 4:31). Jesus prayed for his betrayers on the cross and asked God to forgive them (Luke 23:34). Anyone who has experienced a psychological contract breach, a moral injury, a situation of inequity, or a violation of trust will likely report that obeying these commands is not easy. At work, an employee can experience disappointment and perceive betrayal for numerous reasons. When a deeply held moral value or belief is violated, forgiveness is more difficult (May et al., 2004).

Understanding what happened, and giving perspective to the violation helps frame understanding. Identifying the nature and impact of the disappointment and betrayal gives one permission to hurt, and to understand why forgiveness is so difficult. One can pray words of forgiveness, but the emotional pain runs deep when one has been overlooked, disregarded in one’s time of need, hurt by an organizational decision, not valued, or not given fair opportunities to succeed. Forgiveness leads to inner healing as the disappointment and betrayal lose their power. Forgiveness of the offending person is the first step. Finding healing after forgiveness will require the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Exodus 15:26, God reveals himself as Yahweh Rapha, “for I, the Lord, am your healer.” Yahweh Rapha brings physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing. As the third person of the Trinity, The Holy Spirit was sent by God the Father in Jesus’ name to be the Advocate and Comforter for the body of Christ (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to perform miracles (Matthew 12:28 and Luke 4:18). The Holy Spirit is the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. Through his indwelling, he will give life to the believer’s mortal body (Romans 8:11). The Holy Spirit regenerates and renews the believer’s spirit (Titus 3:5). Psalm 147:3 promises, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” As individuals surrender each wave of pain to the Lord, inviting the Holy Spirit into the healing, and forgiving the offender once again, the Lord will turn mourning into dancing (Psalm 30:11).

Healing is a choice. The Holy Spirit will meet anyone willing to give up their right to be angry and desiring healing. In meeting the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus asks the man if he wants to be healed (John 5:6). Healing from disappointment and betrayal is a choice. Experiencing disappointment and betrayal at work is not an excuse to behave poorly or not do one’s work with excellence even though that is a natural reaction. As Paul exhorted, “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). A follower of Christ should always deliver excellent work, even if the employer demonstrates poor management and leadership. In Paul’s words, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters” (Colossians 3:23).

By reframing the situation, we can minimize ruminating on negative events. This is not to excuse, rationalize, or approve of what was experienced, but it does help to extend grace to the manager and employer. In their book, *Trust and betrayal in the*

workplace: Building effective relationships in your organization, Reina and Reina suggest,

Betrayal occurs with each and every instance of broken trust—regardless of its size. That is the simple truth. It's also true that every single one of us has been betrayed and has betrayed others, even if we haven't meant to. There is betrayal among colleagues, bosses, and employees—within families, neighborhoods, and churches. You and your friends betray one another, and we all at times betray ourselves. Betrayal is universal and a natural outcome of interacting with other people. (Reina and Reina 2015,122)

Reina and Reina propose that breach of trust and betrayal fall on a continuum. Identifying if the breach was a major or minor issue and if it was intentional or unintentional helps to give perspective to the disappointment and betrayal (Reina and Reina 2015, 123). If an employer poorly handles the restructuring of the organization and the lay off of employees, that can cause a major unintentional offense. It may be perceived as a psychological contract breach and moral injury, but the cause could be due to their lack of leadership skills, including empathy, rather than an active intent to do harm.

Part of the emotional healing during the forgiveness process comes from releasing the offenders. Only in the light of the Holy Spirit can we find clarity. Jesus commanded in Luke 6:27-28, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." One's character, joy, excellence in work, and ability to forgive at work are ways to testify to the redeeming power of the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist who wrote about a friend's betrayal in Psalm 55 knew that only the Lord can heal such deep pain and that it takes time: "As for me, I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. He rescues me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me. God, who is enthroned from of old, who does not change—he will hear them and humble them, because they have no fear of God" (Ps 55:16-19).

Confronting a Manager

Encountering an offense or betrayal from a manager at work requires thoughtful evaluation of several factors and potential outcomes before deciding to address it directly or to overlook it. The first consideration is to determine if the severity of the offense is minor, or if it is a significant breach of trust. Another factor to consider is whether their actions exhibit a pattern. It may be easier to overlook a minor one-time event, but it is increasingly more difficult to dismiss events that form a pattern of behavior. Deciding to confront the manager may depend upon their capability to be open and receptive to feedback, listen attentively, and have the potential for resolution or improvement in the working relationship. Another factor in deciding to address the offense or betrayal directly is to assess its impact on employee engagement, productivity, work relationships, and morale. Lastly, one's personal conscience should be

considered. If the offense or betrayal conflicts with one's innate sense of right and wrong and ethical decision-making and behavior, confronting the manager may be beneficial. The decision to confront a manager requires thoughtful consideration of various factors, potential outcomes, and the implications on relationships and personal values.

Once the decision to confront has been made, principles of conflict resolution and reconciliation from Matthew 18:15-17 can be applied in the workplace. The first step would be to address the matter privately and directly with the manager to express concerns respectfully and constructively without having to include others. If the matter is not resolved initially, or if there are wider organizational or legal implications, it may be necessary to bring a co-worker as a witness to help ensure fairness and accountability. If the issue cannot be resolved privately or with the help of a witness, it may be necessary to involve human resources, another manager, or organizational leader. The goal would be a fair and reasonable resolution for all parties involved.

Applying the principles from Matthew 18:15-17 within the workplace can help promote a culture of open communication, effective conflict resolution, reconciliation, and foster a healthy and productive work environment. Irrespective of the manager's response, by acknowledging the offense and its impact, and forgiving the offender empowers the employee in managing disappointment and betrayal at work. Relational disappointments and unmet expectations will occur, and they may be perceived as betrayal, but healing and forgiveness can be found in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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