

# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.

---

## THE TEXT (NASB)

A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.

*A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understands he will not answer. KJV - Proverbs 29:19*

## INTRODUCTION



Billions are spent annually on employee motivation.

Personal motivation is a big business, and when it comes to getting the workers' best—talk is cheap.

We need to use other tactics.



# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.

---

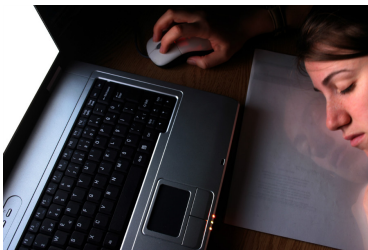
## COMMENTARY

How do you motivate your workers to give their best? According to the text, people tend to be self-serving by nature and it's not easy to get them to serve others. It takes effort. One thing is certain: **Words alone** are not enough. Words have some effect, but we need something more. Crudely put, motivators fall into two categories: Carrots or sticks. The text favours neither the carrot nor the stick, but it tells us that mere words don't suffice!

### Translation: *Slave*

The Hebrew word for **slave**, עֶבֶד (??•???, pronounced “?h-v?d”), is used almost eight-hundred times in the Bible and appears first in Genesis 9:25-27 as Noah curses Canaan to be a slave of slaves or a servant of servants. ??•??? is used both of noble, faithful servants, such as the chief steward of Abraham (Genesis 24:2), and of ignoble forced labour by the Egyptians upon the Israelites (Deuteronomy 5:6). In the text it is translated as “slave” rather than “servant,” perhaps to emphasize someone reluctant to work.

### Lazy Employees



In researching the text, I found that most commentaries describe a lazy, no-good employee. For example Matthew Henry wrote:

Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant, a slave that serves not from conscience, or love, but purely from fear. Let those that have such servants put on patience to bear the vexation...

Other commentators agree with Henry that it refers to what is, at best, a reluctant worker. I was rather surprised to discover that the Hebrew word is also used of good helpers.

### Carrots or Sticks



# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

**A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.**

---



When it comes to employee motivation a wise employer will learn, first of all, about the employee to see what combination of carrot and stick incentives work best.

Carrots include: Salary, wages, financial bonuses, profit sharing, company stock options, vacation time, recreational relaxation trips, health benefits, and other financial compensation.

Sticks include: Decreases to any of the above, the infliction of verbal rebuke/criticism and physical discomfort/pain.

The text does not necessarily describe a poor performer, but certainly an unmotivated one. In other words there is little or no trust between employer and employee. Rather than just thinking along the lines of carrots and sticks let's see how God builds loyalty and trust. Of course the carrot/stick analogy is for horses not for people!!! God does not want us or expect us to be dumb like horses or mules (Psalm 32:8,9).

## Building Trust and Loyalty

If the employee is confident that the employer has the employee's best interests in mind, then the employee will do much for the employer, even just on verbal command. It takes employer-initiated justice, kindness, wisdom, and time to build such trust and loyalty.

## God's Motivators



The text does not list motivators, but we can learn about God's triple reward package from Proverbs 22:4.

- *Riches*: Provision *beyond* basic needs to include luxuries and personal preferences or wants.
- *Honour*: Public praise. A few hundred dollars spent on a newspaper ad extolling the



# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

**A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.**

---

service of a keen employee or even a picture on a wall showing the employee of the month will do more for motivation than by simply giving the same amount of money to the employee, not to mention much of it being lost in taxes.

- *Life*: Good health care, time off work, sabbaticals, enough financial compensation to pay for basic needs of food, basic clothing and shelter.

Of course not every worker is the same. Employers must select workers carefully. Some employees are more teachable and dedicated than others but there's another tool that can be used: Profit sharing and shared corporate ownership. We find a good example of this in the corporate world with Canada's West-jet Airline. It is union-free and encourages its employees to become shareholders. God also uses this method!

## Shared Ownership

When mere mortals become joint heirs with Christ, in effect they cease to be mere slaves/servants, but become brothers with Christ, that is, sons (children) of God, rather than just creatures of God made in His image. In other words, a son responds differently than a slave, since the son has a vested interest. Note how Jesus described the difference between the work of an owner and an employee.

## OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus contrasted two types of shepherds: The hired hand and the owner.

When a wolf attacks, the hired hand flees, but the owner faces the risk and defends the sheep. Jesus called Himself the good shepherd who always protects His sheep even if it cost Him His life. It did (John 10:12-18).

This should make the followers of Jesus feel cherished and inspired to work with all fervor for a Master who motivates, not His servants but His friends (John 15:15) with joint ownership (Romans 8:17) in an everlasting, indestructible kingdom (Hebrews 12:28).

## APPLICATION



# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

**A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.**

---

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Review your methods for motivating your employees.
- Don't underestimate the challenge in keeping employees motivated.
- Consider using reward options—time off, health care, public praise, and financial compensation.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.

---

## KEY WORDS

apathy, compensation, employees, employers, honor, less assets (quantity), life, loyalty, motivation, taxes, trust

## ILLUSTRATION

### Who is Self-Centered Sam?



Self-Centered Sam looks out for number one. Who's that? It's Sam, of course! Sam doesn't consider himself to be self-centered. One of his favourite books is ["The Richest Man in Babylon."](#)

What does Sam do with his income? The cream, the very best goes to his own long-term growth fund. His motto is 'pay yourself first.' Some call him Stingy Sam. But he's not stingy; he's just making careful preparation for his own future, comfort, and well-being. He is part of the "me" generation. He typifies the Maslow's hierarchy of needs with self-actualization as apex of all values. Sam is a dedicated humanist. He doesn't recognize any higher power than himself. He's a tough negotiator.

Sam doesn't ignore charity. But how could he possibly help anyone one else unless there was something in it for him? Therefore any and all charitable donations must have full and public credit given to the donor. The more people are aware of his generosity the better. After all, a little bit of advertising is good for business. When his corporation gives a gift it comes as a percentage of profits, not revenues.

His financial hero is the multi-millionaire, whose assets once exceeded the entire US treasury:

---



# How do you motivate workers? (29:19)

A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.

---

The great Railroad and Steamship Baron [Cornelius Vanderbilt](#).

