

7 Things Every Christian Should Know About Faith in the Workplace

Amid growing hostility toward religion, more questions than ever before have arisen concerning what kinds of religious expression are allowed in the workplace—and to what extent. Adapted from a talk given by Liberty Institute General Counsel Jeff Mateer, here are seven things every business person should know about faith in the workplace.

- 1. You cannot discriminate on the basis of religion.** This means religion cannot be used as a factor in hiring decisions, promotions, treating employees unequally, or harassment.
- 2. You do not lose your religious-liberty rights by engaging in business.** The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in the Hobby Lobby case quashes the notion that Americans lose their religious rights by engaging in business. The case affirmed that all Americans—including business owners—have the rights to live and work according to their beliefs without fear of government compelling them to violate their beliefs. Perhaps most importantly, the Supreme Court ruled that courts are *not permitted* to question whether or not a religious belief is reasonable, meaning that your sincerely held religious beliefs are yours alone.
- 3. A business can be run on religious principles.** An employer does not discriminate on the basis of religion by affirming the faith of its owners in business objectives, and business owners are not required to abandon their faith when setting principles and ethics for their company. A businessperson of faith is free to run his or her business according to the ethics they have learned via religious instruction.
- 4. You may engage in religious speech in the workplace.**

Employers may talk to employees about faith, so long as faith is not a requirement for continued employment or advancement within the company. Employers cannot, however, take adverse action against an employee for disagreeing with their religious views.

5. You may have prayer meetings and Bible studies in the workplace. Employers are allowed to hold prayer meetings in the workplace, so long as attendance is not mandatory. Notices about these meetings should clearly say so, and the meetings are best held before or after work, or during breaks.

6. You may have employee training based on biblical principles. Employers are allowed to use training programs that are biblically or faith-based. For example, an employer could require an employee to attend a management seminar that uses scriptural references as a part of its training. However, employees cannot be required to undergo religious training, participate in religious services or religious activities, or engage in behavior that would violate their sincerely held religious beliefs.

7. You may be headed for a collision between your religious freedom and the new cultural orthodoxy. Liberty Institute is currently representing three different clients whose religious liberties have been compromised in workplace-discrimination cases. Each of these cases points to a growing hostility toward employees' religious rights in the workplace. Even though the law is on the side of religious liberty—as seen in points 1 through 6 above—the rise of a “politically correct” corporate culture has made it necessary to have courageous people of faith willing to stand on their rights against discriminators and expert lawyers ready to defend them.