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## The Relationship Between Religious Freedom in America and the Current and Future Workplace

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AMERICA AND THE  
CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKPLACE**

**By**

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**An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of  
Science in Business Administration in Management with Organizational Leadership  
Concentration**

**Sam M. Walton College of Business  
University of Arkansas  
Fayetteville, Arkansas**

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## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AMERICA AND THE CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKPLACE**

The Establishment Clause in the Bill of Rights states that, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The following Exercise Clause states, “or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” While these words were written hundreds of years ago, they are nothing short of controversial in today’s society. On what seems like almost a daily basis, news headlines display titles such as, “Masterpiece Cakeshop Owner Sued Again after Refusing to Bake ‘Gender Transition’ Cake,” or, “Imam sues Alabama for Not Letting Him Join Muslim Inmates in Execution Room.” The number of American court cases dealing with the issue of religious freedom has assuredly been on the rise over the past few decades. To set the current scene of where the American government stands in regards to religious freedom, I have selected three court cases that span from 1962 to the present day, and provided a brief summary and analysis of each.

### **ENGEL VS. VITALE**

In 1959, Steve Engel and several other parents presented their concerns regarding the Union Free School District of New York’s use of a 22-word nondenominational prayer in their children’s schools. This prayer was as follows: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.” The prayer was led by the teachers and was voluntary. If a child did not want to participate in this practice, they were able to be excused, with no ramifications, by written concern from their parents. The First Amendment Encyclopedia stated, “Engel, a Jewish man, believed that the state should not impose a one-size-fits all prayer upon children of many different faiths or no faith. The plaintiffs lost before the Supreme Court of New York in 1960, and the Court of Appeals of New York in 1961, none of which viewed the prayer practice as the establishment of an official religion. Engel and the others appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the parents in a 6-1 vote.” In 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that, “voluntary prayer in public schools violated the Constitution’s First Amendment prohibition of a state establishment of religion.” Justice Hugo L. Black did not refer to any Supreme Court cases in his decision (except *Emerson v. Board of Education* (1947) in a footnote), but rather arrived at his decision by, “focusing on the history of religious discrimination and intolerance in England and the early Colonial days of the United States. That history, according to Black, showed that by the time of the adoption of the U.S. Constitution Americans had a ‘widespread awareness of the dangers of a union of Church and State.’” Black asserted, “The First Amendment was added to the constitution to stand as a guarantee that neither the power nor the prestige of the Federal Government would be used to control, support or influence the kinds of prayer the American people can say...government in this country should stay out of the business of writing or sanctioning official prayers and leave that purely religious function to the people.” Justice William O. Douglas concurred by writing, “Once the government finances a religious exercise, it inserts a divisive influence into our communities.” The principles that were decided upon by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Engel vs. Vitale* have carried over into numerous cases in the following decades, and have opposed cases such *Wallace vs. Jaffree* (1985), which presented the issue of an Alabama law that required a moment of silence in schools to encourage prayer, *Lee vs. Weisman* (1992), which dealt with the issue of prayer in a middle school graduation ceremony, and *Santa Fe Independent School District vs. Doe* (2000), which dealt with the issue of prayer in high school football games, just to cite a few.

I believe that this case is of significance because it deals with the issue of religious freedom and expression in a public establishment. In this case, the schools in question were public schools—funded by the government and taxpayer’s hard-earned dollar—and thus create a controversial landscape for an issue of “organized religion.” This case would have been a much different situation had the school in question been a private school. However, because the schools were public, and the fact that children have to attend each day by law, citizens were upset and disgruntled that their children were being encouraged to participate in group prayer.

I have several thoughts on this case. I am a practicing Christian. My faith is my entire life—there is absolutely nothing that is more important to me. However, while I am a Christian and pray at least once an hour, I do not support organized group prayer in a public establishment such as a school system. I believe that adhering to Christianity is a personal choice that must be made by an individual—not forced upon anyone. That is completely insincere and contradicts the religion’s whole purpose—to consciously choose to follow God. While the students were not forced to participate in the prayer, I still do not think that a public school was the right setting for this type of activity. However, while I do not believe in this type of organized prayer in school, I am a serious supporter of a moment of silence or similar practices. I believe that this would give people of all religions (or lack thereof) to practice their own belief system. I personally do not see how this would offend anyone, since it simply a moment of silence. One could spend that moment however they would like.

### **MASTERPIECE CAKESHOP VS. COLORADO CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION**

In 2012, Charlie Craig and David Mullins, a same-sex couple, entered Masterpiece Cakeshop to order a wedding cake from the owner, Jack Phillips. Phillips, a practicing Christian, politely dismissed the offer on the grounds that the cake would conflict with his strongly-held religious values. An Oyez article on the case stated, “Phillips declined to do so on the grounds that he does not create wedding cakes for same-sex weddings because of his religious beliefs. Phillips believes that decorating cakes is a form of art through which he can honor God and that it would displease God to create cakes for same-sex marriages.” The couple took this situation to the court, claiming that Phillips was discriminating against them because of their sexual orientation. The article continued, “Craig and Mullins filed a formal complaint with the Office of Administrative Courts alleging that Masterpiece discriminated against them in a place of public accommodation in violation of CADA. The Administrative Law Judge issued a written order finding in favor of Craig and Mullins, which was affirmed by the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. On appeal, the Colorado Court of Appeals subsequently affirmed the Commission’s ruling.” The Supreme Court reversed this ruling in a 7-2 decision, concluding that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission’s ‘conduct in evaluating a cake shop owner’s reasons for declining to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple’ was in violation of the Free Exercise Clause. According to Oyez, “The Court explained that while gay persons and same-sex couples are afforded civil rights protections under the law and the Constitution, religious and philosophical objections to same-sex marriage are protected views and can also be protected forms of expression. The Colorado law at issue in this case, which prohibited discrimination against gay people in purchasing products and services, had to be applied in a neutral manner with regard to religion. The majority acknowledged that from Phillips’ perspective, creating cakes was a form of artistic expression and a component of his sincere religious beliefs...The Court concluded that the Commission’s actions violated the State’s duty under the First Amendment not to use hostility towards religion or a religious viewpoint as a basis for laws or

regulations. Under the facts of this case, the Court determined that Phillips’ religious justification for his refusal to serve Craig and Mullins was not afforded the neutral treatment mandated by the Free Exercise Clause.”

Unfortunately, the chaos for Masterpiece Bakery did not end after their first exchange with the Supreme Court. On June 26, 2017, an LGBTQ customer named Autumn Scardina called Masterpiece Cakeshop to order a pink cake with blue frosting to celebrate her identity as a transgender woman. Like before, Jack Phillips, the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop stated that he would not make the cake due to his religious beliefs. The case went to court, and Phillips had to deal with more legal trouble over his religious views conflicting with his business. Scardina filed a complaint against Phillips with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. Phillips then filed a countersuit that was settled last March with the agreement that the case would not move forward. After this case ended, Scardina filed another lawsuit against Phillips, alleging that Masterpiece Cakeshop had been in violation of Colorado’s Anti-Discrimination Act and the Colorado Consumer Protection Act. The legal battle continued as Scardina and her attorney continued to fight against Phillips. Phillips’ attorney stated, “This attorney’s relentless pursuit of Jack was an obvious attempt to punish him for his views, banish him from the marketplace and financially ruin him and his shop.” Scardina and her legal team responded that they, “simply want the law to be enforced.”

I believe that this case is significant because it deals with the issue of religious freedom and expression in the private business sector. This case is much different from *Engel vs. Vitale* in that *Engel vs. Vitale* dealt with public establishments such as public schools while this case deals with religious freedom in a privately owned and operated business. These are two extremely different situations. While the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the owner, Jack Phillips, this case caused an outcry in the American society. It has spanned news headlines for years, and still does even to this day. Jack Phillips will most likely face continued dissent for following his religious beliefs in his business.

I personally side completely with Phillips. Masterpiece Cakeshop is a private business. Nobody is being forced to utilize their services—that is the choice of the individual customer. Jack owns and operates his business under his name. I believe that he, as well as any other business of any certain religion, should be able to operate their business in the way that they would like, within reason and with respect. For instance, I am a Christian. If I went to a Jewish bakery, and insisted that the food that I purchase must NOT be Kosher, and the owner refused to serve me because of his religious beliefs, I would understand where his opinion was coming from, and I would take my business elsewhere. His decision to respectfully refuse to serve me would not drastically alter my life by any means. America is a free country (in principle), and I am free to take my business where I please, just as the owner of a business should be free to respectfully adhere to their religious values and morals within their privately owned business. We are never going to live in a perfect world where we all agree—that is and absolutely impossible and unreasonable goal to reach for. This is why we need to be able to live our own individual lives and adhere to our own beliefs, while respecting others, even when we do not agree with them.

## **DUNN VS. RAY**

In Alabama, Dominique Ray, who was sentenced to death in 1999 for raping, robbing, and stabbing a 15-year-old girl to death in 1995, requested that a Muslim Imam be by his side while he was executed. Ray was told by the prison warden a few weeks before his execution that

a protestant Christian chaplain could be in the room with him to pray, but cited Alabama's Department of Correction's policy and said that a Muslim Imam was not allowed inside of the execution room and would have to stay outside of the glass. An entire two decades after Ray was sentenced to death, he was finally executed by the State of Alabama. A Courthouse News Service article about the case stated, "Five days later (after speaking to the prison guard), Ray filed a federal civil rights complaint in the Middle District of Alabama, alleging Alabama's policies unfairly provided religious accommodations to Christian death row inmates but not inmates of other faiths. The lawsuit was dismissed by the district judge. On appeal, the 11<sup>th</sup> circuit granted Ray's emergency stay of execution. In his order for the appellate court, U. S. circuit Judge Stanley Marcus, a Bill Clinton appointee, wrote that, 'Ray has provided an altogether plausible explanation for why the claims were not filed in district court sooner.'" The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in favor of Alabama, with their reasoning being that Ray waited too long to file his lawsuit.

This case is significant for several reasons. This case deals directly with the government. The State of Alabama refused to provide a Muslim Imam for Dominique Ray, and only offered him a Christian chaplain. This is controversial for two reasons. Not only did the Alabama government deny Ray a religious representative of his own faith, but the only option was a Christian chaplain—a religion that Ray does not adhere to.

I personally believe that this case perfectly reflects the ambiguity and blurred lines that are seen all across our society today in regards to religious freedom. I do not at all agree with the State of Alabama's government's decision to only provide Ray with a Christian chaplain. While I am a Christian, and I would choose to have a Christian chaplain with me if I was in Ray's situation, I am not Ray. Ray is a Muslim and wanted a Muslim Imam of his own faith to be with him. While I personally adhere to my Christian beliefs and values and would have made a different choice than Ray, his desire and decision to have a Muslim Imam with him in his execution would not affect me at all. If America is truly a free country that supports religious freedom and separation of church and state, then how could a situation like this have occurred? The lines are blurred. The government says that that citizens are free to practice and exercise their religions of choice, but then only provides a religious figure of one specific religion to someone of a different faith on death row. There are so many contradictions across society today in regards to religious freedom.

## **CURRENT STATE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AMERICA**

The state of religious freedom in present-day America is a very ambiguous and multifaceted topic to tackle. There seem to be so many different opinions being voiced from a wide variety of different people, sources, and groups—the government, Supreme Court, politicians, activists, individuals, and the perceived opinion of the public at large. It is unclear as to which voice is the strongest or "correct"—the voice of the government and perceived idea of what the general public believes about these issues, or the opinions of actual individuals functioning, living, and working in society. No matter whose voice is, "correct," or, "loudest," it is undeniable that there has been a significant increase in tension between the many different views and sides of religious freedom and expression in our country. This is an extremely hot topic in our society today, and seems to grow more controversial with each day that passes. The increased tensions between religious freedom, establishment, expression, and secularism that have become so commonplace in our society today have carried over into the modern workplace,

and will continue to affect both the future workplace and subsequent management systems and leadership styles. Because the issue of religious freedom is so controversial in our society today and HEAVILY spills over into the business environment, it is vital that managers, both present and future, have a deeper understanding of both how their employees view this sensitive topic as well as how they can effectively manage in this delicate climate. I believe that in order to effectively prepare managers to successfully lead their future employees, it is important to first take a deeper dive into the future workforce's (Gen Z) views and beliefs on matters of religious freedom. It is not enough to blindly accept mainstream, broad, "generally accepted" stances and perceptions on this topic. It is important to investigate how Gen Z actually feels about these current issues so that managers can prepare to constructively conduct their future workplaces. The remainder of this paper will serve as an in-depth analysis of Gen Z's views on matters of religious freedom to prepare future managers to lead their workforces in an informed, educated, and effective fashion.

## **SURVEY INTRODUCTION**

I began my investigation by creating a survey on Survey Monkey. This survey was administered to 67 students (Gen Z) at the University of Arkansas and collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The survey was broken up into three main categories: historical cases dealing with the issue of religious freedom, personal experiences in the workplace, and finally, questions regarding the ideal workplace and leadership. The questions were as follows:

1. "The 1962 Supreme Court case, *Engel vs. Vitale*, dealt with the issue of whether or not school-sponsored nondenominational prayer in schools was legal. A New York state Law required public schools to open each day with the pledge of Allegiance and a nondenominational prayer in which the students recognized their dependence upon God. The Supreme court ruled that school-sponsored prayer was illegal. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being fully disagree and 00 being fully agree, how do you feel about this case?
2. *Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* was a case in the United States Supreme court that dealt with whether owners of public accommodations can refuse certain services based on the First Amendment claims of free exercise of religion, and therefore being granted an exemption from laws ensuring non-discrimination in public accommodations—in particular by refusing to provide creative services, such as making a custom wedding cake for the marriage of a gay couple, on the basis of the owner's religious beliefs. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, do you think that the owners of Masterpiece Cakeshop should have been able to refuse to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple based on his religious beliefs?
3. If you were a customer at a business and you were denied service/felt that your lifestyle was being attacked, how you respond?
4. Dominique Ray, a Muslim, was sentenced to death in Alabama for raping and stabbing a 15 year-old girl. Ray requested that a Muslim Imam join him during his execution, but was denied and told that only a Protestant Christian could be in the room with him. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, how do you feel about the State of Alabama's policy to only provide a Protestant Christian chaplain during executions?
5. If you have ever been offended in the workplace (for example, a coworker made a demeaning or rude comment to you about your religion), did you feel comfortable talking to your superior or boss about it?

6. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, do you perceive having a confrontational conversation with your superiors about your personal values as something that is job-threatening?
7. List the top 5 traits that you believe define a successful leader.

### QUESTION ONE OFFICIAL SURVEY RESULTS

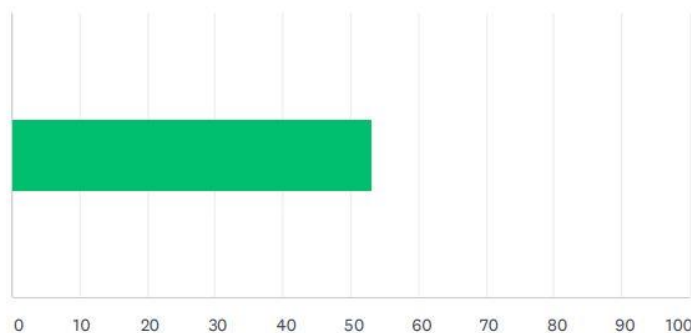
The first question on the survey was as follows: “The 1962 Supreme Court case, Engel vs. Vitale, dealt with the issue of whether or not school-sponsored nondenominational prayer in schools was legal. A New York State Law required public schools to open each day with the Pledge of Allegiance and a nondenominational prayer in which the students recognized their dependence upon God. The Supreme Court ruled that school-sponsored prayer was illegal. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, how do you feel about the Supreme Court's decision in this case?”

WALTON HONORS THESIS SURVEY

SurveyMonkey

Q1 The 1962 Supreme Court case, Engel vs. Vitale, dealt with the issue of whether or not school-sponsored nondenominational prayer in schools was legal. A New York State Law required public schools to open each day with the Pledge of Allegiance and a nondenominational prayer in which the students recognized their dependence upon God. The Supreme Court ruled that school-sponsored prayer was illegal. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, how do you feel about the Supreme Court's decision in this case?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	53	3,300	62
Total Respondents: 62			

I chose to ask this question for several reasons. First, I asked this question because Engel vs. Vitale is a significant court case in history that deals with the issue of the religious freedom. Second, I chose the question because I thought that it would provide helpful insight into my generation's view of religion being enforced in a public organization. The results that I received



were very interesting. On average, respondents stated that on a scale of 1-100, with 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree with the Supreme Court's decision that school-sponsored prayer was illegal, they were a 53. I found this significant because this result indicates that the average of my respondent's opinions on the court case leaned slightly toward agreement with the Supreme Court's decision, though the average was very close to being exactly in the middle.

I was honestly surprised that the average response for this question regarding organized prayer in schools in *Engel vs. Vitale* was so close to being exactly in the middle. I thought that the responses would lean more strongly towards one direction. I am a Christian. While I personally would enjoy organized prayer, I very much believe that Christianity is a personal choice that has to be made by an individual. I do not believe that forcing anyone to participate in religious activities will do any good for either the individual nor the group. Because of this, I personally do not think that there should be organized prayer in schools. While I think that people should be able to freely express their religions and opinions in public places, such as school, without fear of retaliation, slander, or persecution, I do not think that prayer or religious expression of one specific religion should be encouraged over another.

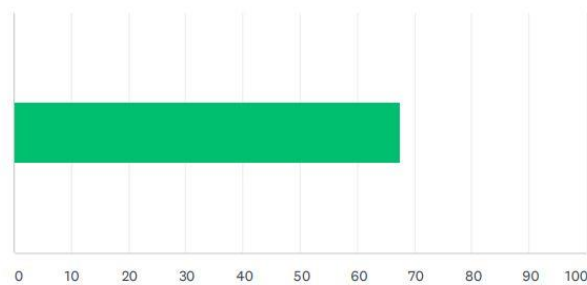
From a management perspective, I believe that these results are significant because they display that while Gen Z is not super opinionated on organized religious expression in public establishments, they do lean slightly more towards NOT supporting organized religion in the public arena. This would be important information for a manager to know, especially managers who work in a public setting. These results show that Gen Z is slightly more in favor of there not being any type of establishment of a certain religion. A manager should take this information and make sure that they are fostering a work environment that is free of any type of group religious activities that people will feel "forced" to participate in, or that will make people uncomfortable.

## **QUESTION TWO OFFICIAL SURVEY RESULTS**

The second question on the survey was as follows: "*Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* was a case in the United States Supreme Court that dealt with whether owners of public accommodations can refuse certain services based on the First Amendment claims of free exercise of religion, and therefore being granted an exemption from laws ensuring non-discrimination in public accommodations--in particular by refusing to provide creative services, such a making a custom wedding cake for the marriage of a gay couple, on the basis of the owners religious beliefs. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, do you think that the owners of *Masterpiece Cakeshop* should have been able to refuse to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple based his religious beliefs?"

Q2 Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission was a case in the United States Supreme Court that dealt with whether owners of public accommodations can refuse certain services based on the First Amendment claims of free exercise of religion, and therefore being granted an exemption from laws ensuring non-discrimination in public accommodations--in particular by refusing to provide creative services, such a making a custom wedding cake for the marriage of a gay couple, on the basis of the owners religious beliefs. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, do you think that the owners of Masterpiece Cakeshop should have been able to refuse to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple based his religious beliefs?

Answered: 65 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	67	4,377	65
Total Respondents: 65			

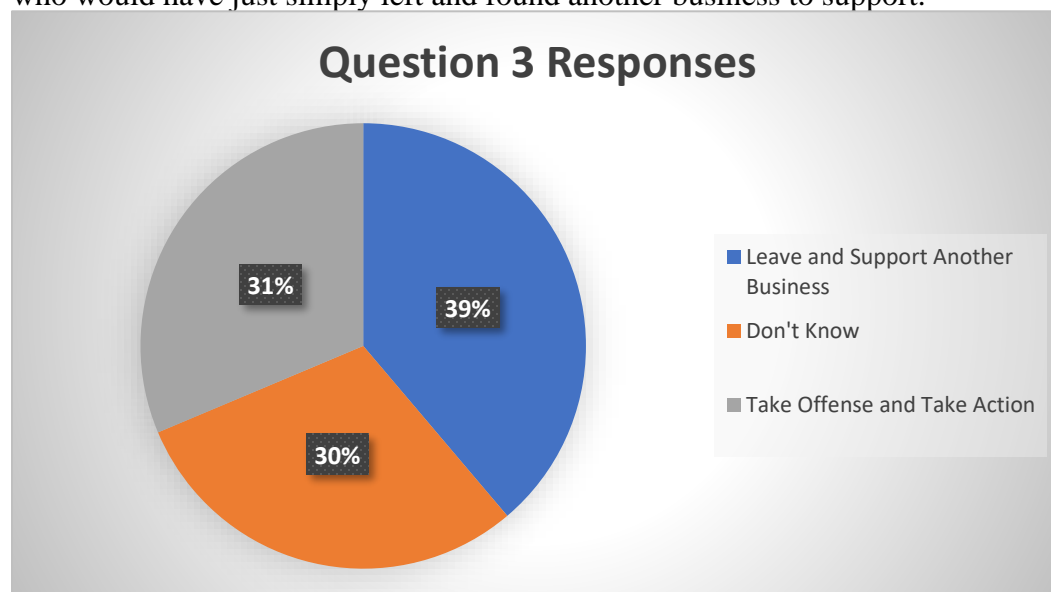
I chose to ask this question about Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civils Rights Commission for several reasons. First, similar to the first question regarding Engel vs. Vitale, Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission was another major court case in history that dealt with the topic of religious freedom. This case was all over news headlines when it occurred, and the dramatic legal saga dealing with Masterpiece Cakeshop still fills the media even today. I knew that my respondents would most likely have heard of this case and have an opinion on the situation. I also chose to ask this specific question because I thought it may offer insight on my generation's views of religious freedom from a different angle than the first question. Engel vs. Vitale dealt with organized religious activities in a public establishment such as school. Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission deals with the freedom of religion in a private business dealing with the public. This is a much different situation than organized religion in a school where children are required to be there everyday. In a private business such as Masterpiece Cakeshop, customers are not required to partake in the business's services—they are free to attend other businesses. As seen in the official graph above, on a scale of 1-100, with 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, the average respondent was in 67% agreement that the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop should have been able to refuse to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple based on his religious beliefs. Compared to the average response of 52% agreement in the first question, this response of 67% agreement in favor of the baker had a more opinionated response.

I personally believe that the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop should have been able to refuse to bake a cake for a gay couple’s wedding because of his religious views. The owner’s religion is the most important thing to him, and defines his life. He is dedicated to following the Bible. This dedication to God does not stop when he enters his bakery in the morning and start when he leaves in the evening—it defines his life 24/7. He was not hateful towards the couple, he simply refused to support their marriage by baking them a cake. I believe that this is a much different situation than prayer in schools because the couple could have gone to any other cake shop. They were not being forced to attend Masterpiece Cakeshop. They had total freedom to find another bakery that aligned more with their values.

From a management perspective, these results are very applicable to the work place and private business sector. These results imply that Gen Z is in favor of respectfully standing up for one’s values in the private workplace. A manager should pay close attention to these statistics. Gen Z, for the most part, believes that private business owners should be allowed to stand up for what they believe in. This information could be applied in several different ways. First, this could lead managers to feel more confident in respectfully adhering to their own beliefs while leading their employees—not forcing their beliefs on others, but rather standing strong in what they themselves believe. Second, a manager could use this information to create and foster a work environment where employees also feel comfortable to adhere to their own values and not feel the need to back down when they are opposed. This type of work environment is very important because employees wish to feel like they can be true to themselves at work.

### QUESTION 3 OFFICIAL SURVEY RESULTS

The third question on the survey was as follows: “If you were a customer at a business and you were denied service/felt that your lifestyle was being attacked, how would you respond?” This question was a free response question where respondents were free to type their opinions on the subject. There were a wide variety of results, ranging from respondents who would have been extremely upset and taken legal action, to respondents who would have been offended but would have understood the situation from the owner’s perspective, to respondents who would have just simply left and found another business to support.



Here are some examples of the variety of responses that I received:

- “I would be enraged.”
- “Probably defensively, I doubt I would take legal action unless I felt physically threatened.”
- “Just go to another place.”
- “I would probably be upset, but I would find another place to do business I would rather them stick to their beliefs than compromise for the business though. I can see the situation from their perspective.”
- “I would take my business where my lifestyle is accepted.”
- “I would calmly leave. I wouldn’t want to cause a scene. I know what I believe and not everyone needs to agree or believe the same.”
- “I would file a complaint/speak with management. I would likely tell my friends to not go and go somewhere else for service.”
- “I would take advantage of capitalism and take my business somewhere else.”
- “I would simply take my business elsewhere.”
- “I would leave and then take to social media to alert of the mistreatment they may receive at said business.”
- “Depending on the circumstance, I would be upset. However, if it was in regards to their religion, I would try to respect that.”
- “I would not give the business my money and I would go somewhere else.”
- “I wouldn’t be happy but there are plenty of businesses like that same one I would imagine, that’s how American capitalism works, there is competition, so I would just go to a different business that would do what the other wouldn’t.”
- “I would try to find a different business that would provide the same service better aligned with my values.”

I think that these results were interesting and significant. Today’s media portrays Gen Z as being easily offended and getting their feelings hurt easily. However, the most common response that I received from this question was that the member of Gen Z would have just left the business and found another business to support. This result was surprising, as it seems to conflict with the picture that today’s media paints.

Because I am a human with feelings and emotions, I would be lying if I said that I wouldn’t be hurt if someone denied me service because they didn’t agree with my lifestyle. However, more importantly than my temporary feelings, I support capitalism and a free country. I think that people should be able to conduct their businesses however they please, within respectful boundaries. I do not think anyone should ever be hateful or abrasive when dealing with a customer that does not align with their personal values, but I think in an extreme situation like the Masterpiece Cakeshop scenario where the owner’s religious beliefs did not align with the customer’s request, the business should be allowed to politely decline service to a customer.

From a management perspective, these results could be applied in several different ways. These results imply that Gen Z is not as easily offended and soft as the media often portrays them to be. I think that this information is important for a manager to know because today’s workplaces are so overly cautious with not offending anyone that people are afraid to actually be who THEY are. These results indicate that this does not necessarily need to be the case.

Managers should strive towards creating an environment that is inclusive and respectful, but not so overly cautious about offending people to where people feel uncomfortable standing firmly in their own values.

**QUESTION 4 OFFICIAL SUREY RESULTS**

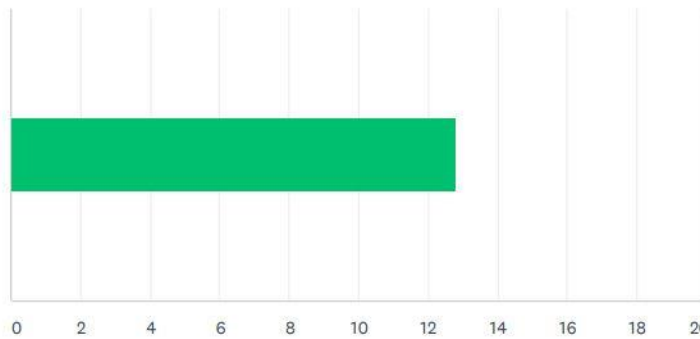
The fourth question on the survey was as follows: “Dominique Ray, a Muslim, was sentenced to death in Alabama for raping and stabbing a 15 year-old girl. Ray requested that a Muslim imam join him during his execution, but was denied and told that only a Protestant Christian could be in the room with him. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, how do you feel about the State of Alabama’s policy to only provide a Protestant Christian chaplain during executions?”

WALTON HONORS THESIS SURVEY

SurveyMonkey

Q4 Dominique Ray, a Muslim, was sentenced to death in Alabama for raping and stabbing a 15 year-old girl. Ray requested that a Muslim imam join him during his execution, but was denied and told that only a Protestant Christian could be in the room with him. On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, how do you feel about the State of Alabama's policy to only provide a Protestant Christian chaplain during executions?

Answered: 66 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	13	844	66
Total Respondents: 66			

I asked this particular question because I thought that it would be interesting to see my generation’s view on the American government enforcing and favoring one specific religion over the rest, particularly in a situation such as an execution. The results were very interesting and much more opinionated than I was expecting. On a scale of 1 to 100, with 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree with the State of Alabama’s policy to only provide a Protestant Christian chaplain during executions, the average respondent ranked themselves at a 12. This

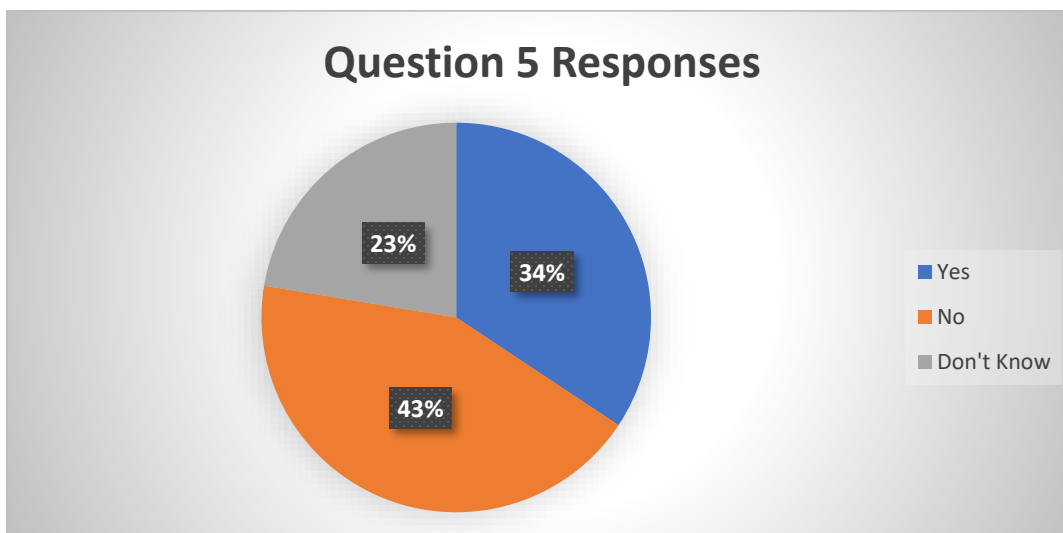
number is extremely low, and these results were much more opinionated than the other previous questions' results.

Although I am a Christian, I do not agree with the State of Alabama's decision to only provide a Protestant Christian chaplain during executions. While I would choose to have a Protestant Christian chaplain with me in the room, I understand that not everyone shares my same religious beliefs. I also fully support that America is free country in which citizens are free to practice their own religions. Just because I strongly believe my own religion, I wish to live in a country where people are free to make their decisions while respecting others.

From a management perspective, I think that it is very important to notice how opinionated Gen Z was on this particular matter of religious freedom. I think that these results indicate several things that could be applied to an office setting, particularly a public one that dealt with the government. These results display that the majority of Gen Z was displeased that the government did not allow someone a religious figure of their own faith. This could be applied in the work setting in the case of a manager not allowing someone of a certain religion to express themselves or adhere to their certain practices. Furthermore, Gen Z was also not in favor of the government ONLY offering Ray a religious figure of ANOTHER faith. This implied that the government supported one faith over another. This could be translated in to the work setting by a manager making sure that one religion was not being established or publicly dominating other religions. Managers need to be cautious in a public setting to not let one religion become the "dominant" religion. This would make the majority of Gen Z very uncomfortable, which would leader to lower work productivity.

### QUESTION 5 OFFICIAL SURVEY RESULTS

The fifth question on the survey was as follows: "If you have ever been offended in the workplace (for example, a coworker made a demeaning or rude comment to you about your religion), did you feel comfortable talking to your superior or boss about it?" I asked this question because I thought it would be interesting to analyze my generation's past experiences with offenses in the workplace. I thought that it would be important to understand their past experiences in the workplace so that could better understand what type of leadership that they would desire in the future.



I will list a variety of the responses that I received below:

- “No, I would feel uncomfortable talking about it.”
- “Absolutely.”
- “I would’ve felt comfortable enough to have the conversation with the person directly with the person to let them know that their actions were not acceptable. If those actions persisted then I would have been more than comfortable moving to their superiors to get the situation resolved.”
- “I don’t think I’ve reached this point. If not, it has to be handled carefully. While your boss may care about your story I would not feel comfortable putting this down on paper or any form.”
- “No. The majority of the time this happens to me is from a discriminatory or belittling comment about my gender and it is typical to be shrugged off or not believed when speaking about instances such as that.”

From a management perspective, these results are very important because they display that the majority of Gen Z would not feel comfortable approaching their boss about issues regarding their personal values. A person’s values are generally the most important thing to them. It is very alarming that more of Gen Z would NOT feel comfortable talking to their boss about such matters than WOULD feel comfortable doing so.

### QUESTION 6 OFFICIAL SURVEY RESULTS

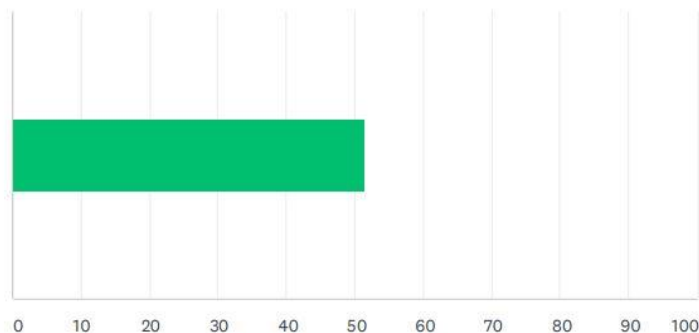
The sixth question on the survey was as follows: “On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, do you perceive having a confrontational conversation with your superiors about your personal values as something that is job-threatening?”

WALTON HONORS THESIS SURVEY

SurveyMonkey

**Q6 On a scale of 1-100, 1 being fully disagree and 100 being fully agree, do you perceive having a confrontational conversation with your superiors about your personal values as something that is job-threatening?**

Answered: 66 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	52	3,402	66
Total Respondents: 66			

I asked this question because I thought that to understand how to better manage in the future, it would be important to see how Gen Z perceives having confrontational conversation with their boss about their personal values. The results that I received were very close to being exactly in the middle, but leaned slightly more towards the side of perceiving a confrontational conversation with their boss as being job-threatening. These results were similar to the results from the previous question that indicated that members of Gen Z were more likely to not approach their boss about matters regarding their personal values.

Again, these results are significant from a management perspective because a manager should want their employees to feel comfortable approaching them with issues regarding their personal values without fear of retaliation or termination. When employees are fearful of communicating with their boss, this creates a disconnect within the office. Managers should strive to make employees feel welcome to present concerns and talk freely with them. A manager should work towards becoming more open and willing to have hard conversations with employees, person to person.

### QUESTION 7 OFFICIAL SURVEY RESULTS

The seventh question on the survey was as follows: “List the top 5 traits that you believe define a successful leader.” I chose to ask this question to investigate what characteristics Gen Z is looking for in their leadership to better prepare future managers.

Q7 List the top 5 traits that you believe define a successful leader.

confident good communicator caring responsible trustworthy motivated  
 Humble Kind strong knowledgeable integrity Drive  
 respectful open communication empathy  
 Honest compassionate understanding listening  
 hardworking kindness good listener open-minded  
 Confidence good

While there many different responses to this question, there five words that were repeated the most were, “Communication,” “Respectful,” “Integrity,” “Honest,” and “Understanding.” From a manager’s perspective, it is very important to take note of what the incoming workforce is looking for in a leader so that they can work on bettering themselves in these ways. The first characteristic that was repeated often in the responses to this question was, “Communication.” I was interested to see that this characteristic was so important to Gen Z. Based on the responses to the previous questions, Gen Z did not feel comfortable approaching their managers with matters regarding their personal values. I think this is the exact reason why Gen Z values good communication. Managers should work on practicing clear communication skills with their employees to effectively establish expectations as well as interact in a respectful manner. The second trait that was repeated frequently throughout the responses was, “Respectful.” Gen Z, like the majority of the rest of the human race, wants to be treated with respect. Managers should work towards being seen as someone who is respectful of their employees at all times. By



treating employees with respect, managers will gain favor, admiration, and trust from their employees. This will create a more welcoming and comfortable environment. The third characteristic that was repeated frequently throughout the responses was, "Integrity." Managers should strive to have integrity at all times in the office, even when nobody is watching. Employees do not wish to follow someone who does not have good character. However, when a manager has integrity, employees will see them as someone who is admirable and worthy of following. This will create a more efficient workplace, as communication will be easier between managers and employees. Another characteristic that was repeated many times throughout the responses to this question was, "Honest." This characteristic is very similar to integrity. Managers should strive to be honest with their employees to build trust within the workplace. This will make communication and interaction much easier. The final characteristic that was repeated frequently throughout the responses was, "Understanding." Gen Z wants their managers to be kind and caring. Managers should remember that their employees are humans too and that they have feelings, thoughts, and opinions that need to be taken into consideration.

## **INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWS**

To gain a better understanding of matters of religious freedom in the workplace, I chose to interview members of the current workforce who adhere to Christianity to learn from their experiences. I chose to interview Christians because I wanted to learn how members of my religion deal with and perceive these matters. I also chose Christianity because Christian values and beliefs have been increasingly been in the hot seat in the recent past.

I supplemented my research with four different interviews with Christians working in a wide variety of careers. To have a more wholistic view of Christian employees in the workplace, I interviewed Nathan Allen, the current Global Missions Pastor and previous Young Professionals pastor of New Heights Church. To gain a deeper understanding of Christians in the secular workplace, I interviewed Taryn Nejteck, a Special Education ARD Facilitator for a public school in Bonham, Texas, Micah Aguirre, an EMT in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Frankye Koontz, the Site Director of SOAR, an afterschool program in Springdale, Arkansas. I asked them the following questions: "What effects does your Christian faith have on your work-life, both in the short-term and in the long-term?" "Productivity can be measured in many ways. How does your faith impact how you internally measure your productivity in your career/job? Would this positively or negatively impact how your employer impacts productivity?" "How would you compare your work-ethic and attitude with that of your coworkers?" "If your employer told you that your faith would not be accommodated for or even might be restricted, how would this affect your work performance and attitude, and would you want to seek other employment options?" I also asked them each specific questions tailored to their individual job, as well as let them add any other information that they thought was relevant to the interview. I organized my research into three headings (Faith is an integral part of the workplace because it plays a huge role in the lives of employees, Faith motivates professionalism, which affects business attitude, performance, productivity and contentment, and Disregarding, or worse, removing someone's faith from the workplace will have adverse effects on the individual and business--and their responses will be dispersed throughout the entirety of this paper to expand upon my individual findings in regards to the relationship between Christian employees and the modern workplace.

Before I conducted my interviews, I thought that it would be important to understand why work is so significant to Christians so that I could better understand their responses in the interviews. Here is what I found on the significance between work and Christianity:

The Hebrew word *Avodah* simultaneously contains three meanings: work, worship, and service. While this word may not be of importance to some, for the 2.38 billion Bible-believing Christians scattered across the globe today, this word holds a great deal of significance. Before we analyze Christianity within the workplace, it is important that we first understand what Christians believe about work. Below are several important theological views of work held by Christians:

1. **Genesis 2:15**- The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.  
This verse in Genesis occurred before the fall of man when sin entered into the world. This shows that in a perfect world, God created us to work, and it was a good thing. Work was and is still a gift from God, but we are not living in a perfect world.
2. **Colossians 3:23-24**- Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Phillip Holmes, a guest contributor to John Piper's Website, *Desiring God*, stated it this way, "Man is finite, and a finite being can only observe so much. If we only work when others are watching, our work becomes insincere because we will cut corners and slack off when people aren't watching. More importantly, working in order to please man reveals a self-serving pursuit of glory that belongs to God. Our work should point men to our Father, not us. Any time we attempt to rob God of his glory, we consequently rob ourselves of joy because we make ourselves slaves to the opinions of men. Paul, therefore encourages us to work 'for the Lord and not for men' (Colossians 3:23). This means that our motivation to work is driven by our Father's character and his commands. As bearers of his image, we work because our Creator works. We want to be like our Father. At the same time, he also commands us to work. As our Father, we trust that his commands are good for us, and as his servants we work to please our true and gracious Master. How? We don't work for his acceptance or to meet his needs (which would be blasphemy); we work because we're already accepted, to meet the needs of others."

The following quote by Holmes is a great summation of how Christians view work. "This mindset improves the quality of our work regardless of our earthly boss's character. Whether we have an unjust boss or not, we work hard and joyfully to please the Father, our good heavenly Master. Such an understanding radically changes how we work when we don't have earthly overseers. At home, we work hard as we wash dishes, vacuum the floor, cook the meals, cut the lawn, and shovel the snow – because we're working in light of our Creator's character and command. We're working for an audience of one."

There seems to be an ever-increasing belief in society that religion and secularism should not be intertwined in any way.

**FAITH IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORKPLACE BECAUSE IT PLAYS A HUGE ROLE IN THE LIVES OF EMPLOYEES.**

To understand how a Christian employee's faith impacts them in their workplace, we first must understand how it affects them on a day-to-day basis. According to a Pew Research Center study of Christians in America, when asked about the importance of religion in one's life, 68% of Christians said that their faith was very important to them, 25% of Christians said that their faith was somewhat important to them, 5% of Christians said that their faith was not too important to them, 2% of Christians said that their faith was not at all important to them, and 1% of Christians said they did not know how important their faith was to them. When asked about attendance at religious services among Christians, 47% of Christians said that they attended a religious service at least once a week, 36% of Christians said that they attended a religious service once or twice a month/ a few times a year, 17% of Christians said that they seldom/never attend religious service, and 1% of Christians said that they didn't know. When asked about frequency of prayer, 68% of Christians said that they pray at least daily, 17% percent of Christians said they pray weekly, 5% of Christians said that they pray monthly, 9% of Christians said that they seldom/never pray, and 1% of Christians didn't know. When asked about the frequency of participation in prayer, scripture study or religious education groups among Christians, 32% of Christians said that they participate in these activities at least once a week, 11% of Christians said that they participate in these activities once or twice a month, 9% of Christians said that they participate in these activities several times a year, 47% of Christians said that they seldom/never participate in these activities, and 1% of Christians said that they didn't know. When asked about the frequency of feeling spiritual peace and wellbeing among Christians, 65% of Christians said that they feel spiritual peace and wellbeing at least once a week, 14% of Christians said that they feel spiritual peace and wellbeing once or twice a month, 9% of Christians said that they feel spiritual peace and wellbeing several times a year, 10% of Christians said that they seldom/never feel spiritual peace and wellbeing, and 1% of Christians said that they didn't know. When asked about belief in absolute standards for right and wrong among Christians, 38% of Christians said that there are clear standards for what is right and wrong, 59% of Christians said that right or wrong depends on the situation, 1% of Christians said neither/both equally, and 1% of Christians said they didn't know. Each of my interviewees said that their faith was the absolute most important thing to them, and affects every single aspect of their lives. This is further proved in their other responses to the questions about their faith in the workplace.

**DISREGARDING, OR WORSE, REMOVING SOMEONE'S FAITH FROM THE WORKPLACE WILL HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND BUSINESS.**

In a interview with Forbes, Mike Robbins, leadership expert, keynote speaker, and author, had this to say when asked, "What is the cost to our workplaces when bringing our whole self to work isn't doable?": "When we don't bring our whole selves to work we suffer – lack of engagement, lack of productivity, and our well-being is diminished. We aren't able to do our best, most innovative work, and we spend and waste too much time trying to look good, fit in , and do or say the 'right' thing. For teams and organizations, this lack or psychological safety makes it difficult for the group or company to thrive and perform at their highest level because people are holding back some of who they really are." I asked my interviewees the question, "If your employer told you that your faith would not be accommodated for or even might be restricted, how would this affect your work performance and attitude, and would you want to seek other employment opportunities?" The responses I received were very eye-opening. Taryn Nejtek passionately stated, "As Christians, we are called to a life of deep and lasting impact. We

are supposed to be an example of Christ to others and share God's heart. If I can't do that, I feel like I am just putting on a façade. If I am a Christian, but I can't express or talk about that, then I wouldn't be happy or authentic because I would feel like I couldn't be my real self...and since I wouldn't feel like myself, this would lessen my overall productivity in the office, work attitude, and overall happiness in the workplace and in life." Before I had even asked her this question, Taryn had explained to me that she several crosses as well as plaques with scripture on her wall above her desk in her classroom, as well as a statue of praying hands on her desk. She explained that no one has ever told her to take her Christian-themed decorations down, but that if they did, she would refuse, even if it led to her being fired. She told me a personal story about one of her coworkers who had a cross up on her wall. An atheist teacher complained to the principal, and her coworker was asked to take the cross down, and she complied. Taryn responded, "If you comply by taking down decorations that remind you of your faith in God, what are you saying about your faith? Do you not really believe? I am confident that if I lose my job over this, the Lord will provide me with another one." When I asked Micah Aguirre the same question in regards to his position as an EMT, he had a similar response. "I wouldn't necessarily quit this job immediately, but I would definitely start looking for another job. I know that I can be professional and love other people well without talking about my faith, but I would be extremely discouraged. I would feel like I had to walk on eggshells at my own job...which would be horribly uncomfortable. It would be the same as if they shut me down for my political views. My faith is the lens through which I view the world, so I don't think that they should try to take that away from me. Even though I would try to remain as motivated as I was before, it would be incredibly hard. It would be hard for me to do my job while I was feeling uncomfortable, especially because my job is so difficult and trying. While I would still love my boss, there would be an awkwardness between us if he told me that I could not longer express my faith at all. Because my faith is the most important thing to me, I would feel like I had to walk on eggshells around him and be careful of what I said. This strained communication would lead to a decrease in my ability to do my job well and feel comfortable." When I asked the third and final interviewee, Frankye Koontz, this question, she responded, "If my boss told me that I was not allowed to express or practice my religion freely, I would be very taken aback. I would comply, but first I would have to ask him some questions. I am a person that likes to ask why things are being done in a certain way, not just blindly comply. If there was a legitimate reason why I wouldn't be allowed to practice my religion in the office, then I would understand and go along with it. It all comes back to having relationships with people. People will know that I love the Lord by the way that I love them. I don't necessarily need to tell someone about Jesus for them to notice that I am loving them and treating them in a kinder and more intentional way than most other people. I would feel weird, which may affect the way that I am working, but I would try my hardest to not let the weird feelings get in the way of my job performance and attitude. I also think that my reaction to my boss's comments would show a lot about my faith. If I erupted in anger, this would not be an example of Christ. If I responded in a loving way, this would be a much better reflection of my faith. Anger gets you nowhere. However, I would definitely seek out another job, because this would not be my ideal situation at all."

I think that from a business standpoint, these responses should not be taken lightly. As Christians make up a significant portion of the workplace, there is a lot that can be learned from these responses. This is a very heavy reality for managers and bosses, because no business wants to risk losing a valuable employee. Losing a valuable employee means lost talent, money, loyalty, and time that now has to be spent finding a new replacement that has to be trained,

onboarded, etc. The second most important aspect of each of their responses was that all three employees made it explicitly clear that if their faith was not allowed to be practiced or expressed, there would be many negative ramifications within both their ability to do their job and within the workplace. Again, as a manager or boss, this should be extremely concerning. If employees feel uncomfortable or uneasy, their ability to work successfully will be majorly hindered. The first commonality between the three responses was that the employees' motivation would be lessened. Motivation is a huge component the workplace. If employees are not motivated to do their jobs well, or even just do their jobs at all, there will be negative domino effect within the office. The worst part about these Christian employees losing their motivation towards their jobs would be that their motivation levels were extremely high beforehand. Because Christians view work as something more than just a task or way to make money, their motivation levels are very high. When their motivation levels plummet, a company would definitely experience the strain and negative side effects. The second most interesting commonality that each of the employees mentioned was that they would not feel like themselves. Upon first glance, this may not seem like TOO big of a deal, considering a "job is just a job." But upon closer inspection, this sentiment actually holds a great deal of weight and power.

### **HOW MANAGERS SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE**

I have gathered so much valuable information over the course of this research paper. I have several main takeaways that can be applied to future management in the workplace. There seems to be an overarching culture in our current climate that focusing heavily on not being offensive to anyone. While this may seem like a good idea in theory, it leads to people being so fearful of causing offense to others that they do not feel comfortable actually being themselves and adhering to their own important values. This is problematic to the workplace for many reasons. If employees are not comfortable being themselves and following what they believe to be true in a respectful manner while at work, they will not be as productive as their full potential. They will feel stifled and uncomfortable because they will not feel like they are able to bring their whole selves to work. This will cause employees to be less productive and efficient at their jobs which will in turn hurt the business. Managers need to focus on creating an environment that is inclusive and respectful where employees are not afraid to be themselves in a respectful, responsible, and reasonable fashion. Going off of that, I also learned that people's values are very important to them all of the time, not just in private settings. People do not just stop adhering to their values when they enter the workplace every morning. They wish to live their lives according to the same principles in and outside of the office.

I also learned what Gen Z is looking for in their future management. This is very important to my study because Gen Z is the next generation to be entering the workforce. Gen Z wants their management to be good at communicating, have integrity, be honest, be understanding, and be respectful. I think that current and future managers should intentionally be working on these characteristics in their own lives so that they will be better prepared to lead the upcoming workforce.

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