

NAVIGATING  
**BAD**  
BOSSSES

MINI-EBOOK FROM JOHN BEVERE



# Navigating BAD Bosses

## *mini-ebook*

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE BAD BOSS PROFILES

What comes to mind when you think of “bad bosses”? Perhaps Meryl Streep’s character in *The Devil Wears Prada*. Or maybe the mischievous Dr. Evil, who routinely devises schemes to terrorize and take over the world. What about Frank Shirley from the 1989 comedy *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*—the guy who eliminates Christmas bonuses and replaces them with memberships to a jelly of the month club? Or, if you’re a Millennial, you’re likely seeing GIFs and clips of Michael Scott from NBC’s *The Office*.

Regardless of what we think a bad boss looks like, we label them “bad” because of the way they make us feel: unappreciated, unnoticed, humiliated, and oppressed (just to name a few). If you dislike your boss, you’re not alone. Bad bosses are everywhere. And not just in movies.

There’s no question that your boss will greatly affect your work life. According to statistics, your relationship with your boss can be one of the most difficult relationships to navigate. Period. In fact, 75% of people say their dynamic with their boss is the hardest part of their job. Another statistic shows that 44% of people say their boss was the primary reason they left their job.

Quitting your job may not be your best option. So before you start planning an exit strategy, remember that the chances are high you’ll end up working for another bad boss. Let’s take a moment to categorize different types of bad bosses, so you can figure out who you’re working with. Then we’ll look at how you can thrive working for them, despite their badness.

### **THE MICROMANAGER**

Often labeled the control freak, this type of boss can leave you feeling suffocated and incapable. A lack of empowerment for ingenuity and

creativity is the distinguishing behavior of a micromanager. They hesitate to delegate tasks because they fear no else but themselves can complete the task the right way.

These bosses love to dictate workflow, preferring your compliance to your initiative. If they do indeed entrust you with a task, you can be sure to feel them breathing down your neck. Micromanagers are convinced that their reputation relies on you. That's why they keep a close eye on your work—it has to meet their standards. Think *perfectionist* (in a bad sense)!

### **THE INCOMPETENT BOSS**

An incompetent boss is someone who is inadequate for their position—lacking sufficient knowledge, experience, skills, and strength. The reality is they're not suited for their position.

### **THE DISCONNECTED BOSS**

Also known as the ghost, they are the polar opposite of the micromanager. With their stoic leadership style, they can appear disinterested in you and your job. Common behaviors from the disconnected boss include a lack of focus, communication, and acknowledgement. Some of the reasons they are disengaged is because they don't plan to stick around or they lack relational skills. Any response from this type of boss is vague and minimal.

### **THE UNREALISTIC BOSS**

Having unrealistic goals and deadlines, this boss is all about the big picture with little consideration of the time, energy, and ability to get the job done. They want it all, and they want it now. When deadlines are approaching, expect to work through lunch and put in the overtime—and don't you dare call in sick!

### **THE MEAN BOSS**

If you cringe at the mention of your boss, chances are you work for a "meanie." With their dictatorial approach to leadership, they will make

you feel threatened and on edge. Full of sarcastic and critical comments, they're always ready to point the finger and cast blame. This type of boss behaves very condescendingly and will gladly make you feel inferior and humiliated. When you arrive at the workplace, don't expect a smile!

### **THE BUDDY BOSS**

The buddy boss prizes your acceptance and friendship above all else. You may not consider this type of boss necessarily "bad," however, when it comes to getting work done, good luck! They are always excited to see you, and meetings can easily become sidetracked with meaningless conversation. Lacking a sense of urgency and professional boundaries, productivity will be low and inappropriate behavior unaddressed.

I'm sure there are other types of bad bosses, but most can be found within one of these groups. And there will obviously be bosses who are hybrids, combining elements from two or more of these groups. But don't dismay, my friend. There is hope. In the next chapter, we will look at how you should respond to each of these bad bosses.

# CHAPTER ONE

## RESPOND, DON'T REACT

Obviously, learning to navigate your boss is crucial to your well-being, sanity, and success in the workplace. That's one of the reasons why your response to leadership will determine your future. There's no question that working under a difficult boss is challenging. And you might find yourself tempted to succumb to resentment or resignation. After all, you can't always choose the type of boss you have.

But the good news is you can choose your response to your boss!

Scripture tells us:

**Those who are servants, submit to the authority of those who are your masters—not only to those who are kind and gentle but even to those who are hard and difficult. (1 Peter 2:18 TPT)**

Peter leaves no room for uncertainty: *We are not only to submit to bosses that are kind and gentle, but also to those who are hard and difficult.* The word “difficult” means “needing much effort or skill to accomplish, deal with, or understand.” With this in mind, we should refuse to allow a boss's bad behavior to be an excuse for our own. We are responsible for our actions and attitudes. That's why we should look for ways to improve how we respond to our boss's deficiencies.

### **SEEK TO UNDERSTAND YOUR BOSS**

Understanding the type of boss you have is the first step to implementing a plan of action. Earlier, we profiled common types of bad bosses. I'm sure you could identify with one or more of them. Let's revisit these profiles and look at how we should navigate them.

### **NAVIGATING THE MICROMANAGER**

A micromanager is generally a task-oriented personality. They care

more about the task at hand than anything else. Therefore, adapt to their working style. Make sure expectations are clear. There is no room for assumptions. Ask how they want the task done and pay attention to the details. Do things the way they suggest, rather than the way you think is best. Frequently present them with updates and progress reports. This will build trust and credibility.

### ***NAVIGATING THE INCOMPETENT BOSS***

The incompetent boss needs your help. Rather than resenting them because you may be more educated or better suited for their position, choose a posture of humility and lend your strengths. While it may sound counterintuitive to support an incompetent boss, there is absolutely nothing to be gained by making them look bad or facilitating their failure. Consistently, ask how you can help and try to compensate for their deficiency. Think like a leader and lead up. Refuse to undermine them.

### ***NAVIGATING THE DISCONNECTED BOSS***

Find ways to connect with your boss. This will require you to take initiative. Try scheduling regular meetings. Make the most of any time you have with them. You can also compensate for their absence by collaborating with team members on the status of projects to keep things moving along.

### ***NAVIGATING THE UNREALISTIC BOSS***

Always affirm their vision. Your goal should be to help them understand the practical steps to completing their goals and what is needed to do so. Collaborate together to develop a detailed plan of action. This helps create an awareness of the work required and sets realistic expectations. Open and honest communication is imperative.

### ***NAVIGATING THE MEAN BOSS***

Working under a mean boss will require having thick skin. Refuse to take things personally. Understand that someone or something made them mean. Hurting people hurt people. Instead of moping around

with a victim mentality, respond in love. Oftentimes, this type of leader has been mistreated before and is determined to never let that happen again. Have compassion, yet set healthy boundaries.

If you're in a situation that places you in risk of danger or harm, remove yourself. If needed, report inappropriate behavior, such as verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. Always use discretion and company protocol for dealing with such matters. Even David removed himself from the palace when King Saul was throwing spears at him.

### **NAVIGATING THE BUDDY BOSS**

Dealing with the buddy boss means setting professional boundaries. During work hours, keep in mind that they are your boss. Show them you honor their position by addressing them respectfully and for the most part, keep conversation work related. Have the humility to remain teachable and to receive correction. Don't allow yourself to slack off and become complacent.

It's also good to figure out your boss's personality type and respond accordingly. Sometimes the problems you're facing with your boss could just be a personality clash. Learn to adjust to their personality and leadership style. Discover their triggers. Are you doing things that annoy or aggravate them? Could your high level of criticality be coming across as demeaning and disrespectful? If you're going to successfully navigate a difficult boss, you'll have to first seek to understand them.

**"As workers who tend a fig tree are allowed to eat the fruit, so workers who protect their employer's interests will be rewarded."**

(Proverbs 27:18 NLT)

### **PRAY FOR YOUR BOSS**

Prayer postures your heart to love and honor your boss. Rather than gossip or complain about them, direct your frustrations to God through prayer. Leadership is affected by your prayers because prayer invokes God's intervention.

The Apostle Paul encouraged, “First of all, then, I admonish and urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in positions of authority or high responsibility, that [outwardly] we may pass a quiet and undisturbed life [and inwardly] a peaceable one in all godliness and reverence and seriousness in every way. For such [praying] is good and right, and [it is] pleasing and acceptable to God our Savior” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Your prayers have power. Make time to pray.

## **FORGIVE YOUR BOSS**

Choosing to forgive keeps your heart free from offense. It’s safe to say that your boss doesn’t always set out to hurt you. Many times they are unaware that their behavior could be hurtful. Make allowance for their faults. Extend grace and mercy. Remind yourself that they are human.

“He who covers and forgives an offense seeks love, but he who repeats or harps on a matter separates even close friends.” (Proverbs 17:9)

## **DON'T DEFEND YOURSELF**

Always be ready to receive correction and to take responsibility for your mistakes. Value correction. I like to define correction as “course correction.” View correction from your boss as them making an investment in you, rather than a threat to you.

The Bible reveals, “*He who learns from instruction and correction is on the [right] path of life [and for others his example is a path toward wisdom and blessing], but he who ignores and refuses correction goes off course [and for others his example is a path toward sin and ruin]*” (Proverbs 10:17 AMP); and, “*If a ruler loses his temper against you, don't panic; a calm disposition quiets intemperate rage*” (Ecclesiastes 10:4 MSG).

## **MAINTAIN INTEGRITY**

The only time we are not to obey those in authority is when we are asked to violate our integrity. For instance, if you receive a phone call for your boss, and she instructs, “Tell them I’m not here.” Instead of lying, inform the person that your boss is unavailable. In this case, you not only took care of your boss’s request—you also maintained personal integrity. In an environment with ungodly leaders, a culture of ungodly practices can be formed. Protect yourself from these bad habits by working with integrity.

**“The one who walks in integrity will experience a fearless confidence in life, but the one who is devious will eventually be exposed.” (Proverbs 10:9 TPT)**

God looks at the way you respond to authority as the way you ultimately respond to Him (more on this in the next chapter). That’s why your response to authority is so important.

# CHAPTER TWO

## A HIGHER LOYALTY

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive . . . . Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17 NKJV)

The writer of Hebrews directs us to do two things when relating to authority: obey and submit. These are different directives, and this is where many get confused. Obedience deals with our outward actions toward those in authority; while submission deals with our inward attitude toward them.

There is a difference between the attitude of submission and the action of obedience. A leader may ask their employee or subordinate to run an errand for them. Initially, the employee responds enthusiastically, *“Yes, sir! Whatever you need!”* The employee accepts the task with a smile on their face. However, as they go on their way, they complain, *“I can’t believe I was asked to do this and not the intern! Who does he think I am, his slave?”*

Outwardly, this employee was obedient; yet inwardly, they lacked submission. A submitted heart would respond with something like, *“I’m so thankful my boss trusts me to do this for him. I’m glad he can depend on me.”*

The topic of obedience and submission is addressed several times throughout Scripture. Paul advised:

**Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. (Colossians 3:22 NKJV)**

Notice that Paul highlights two groups of servants. The first are referred to as men pleasers: These are people who have politically correct behavior, saying and doing the right things with an alternate agenda. They conduct themselves one way in the presence of their boss, and they behave differently in their absence.

The second group comprises those who fear God: They work with a sincere heart. The word “sincere” means, “free from pretense or deceit; proceeding from genuine feelings.” There is no pretending or faking it with those who fear God—they carry the awareness that motives matter to God. These individuals not only focus on *what* they do, but also *why* they do it.

After revealing the two groups of servants, Paul went on to write:

**Whatever may be your task, work at it heartily (from the soul), as [something done] for the Lord and not for men, knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [and not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [real] reward. [The One Whom] you are actually serving [is] the Lord Christ (the Messiah). (Colossians 3:23–24)**

The secret to working with a pure and submitted heart is to work with the conviction that the one whom you are actually serving is Jesus. From this understanding, you will work enthusiastically, not just to be pleasing to your boss, but more important, to be pleasing to the Lord. You'll give your best effort, not just the minimum to get by. When you work at something heartily, it becomes satisfying work. Just like eating a hearty meal, you'll feel full and satisfied.

CBS has a reality show titled *Undercover Boss*, which follows high-level corporate executives as they slip anonymously into entry-level jobs within their companies. Once undercover, they'll get busy with other team members and find out what their employees really think of them and discover how smoothly their companies actually function.

In the process, these senior executives learn about themselves, their employees, and the culture of the workplace. Often, the undercover boss experiment leads to the discovery of overworked and overlooked employees, resulting with them earning raises and promotions.

Now it's time for an honest moment: If you were in a situation similar to that of *Undercover Boss*, would your boss be approving or disapproving of your attitude and work ethic? Although this type of scenario is rare, God sees and knows all things. He is aware of both your actions and your motives. Taking that into consideration, would God approve or disapprove of your attitude and conduct? Take a look in the mirror and ask yourself, "Am I the type of worker I would want to hire?"

When you work with the motive to do all things as unto Jesus, you'll be driven to be pleasing to Him in every way. This will position you to be both obedient and submissive, regardless if your boss is good or bad. Ultimately, you serve the Lord Jesus!

# CHAPTER THREE

## WHO'S THE BOSS?

Does God know who is in control? If so, why does God allow bad bosses? These are valid and commonly asked questions. As I mention in my book *Under Cover*, all authority is of God; however, not all authority is godly. The first deals with the position; the latter deals with the behavior. Therefore, can God use bad bosses for his plans and purposes?

King Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C., had a reputation of being a wicked leader. He played a big role in the history and outworking of God's plans and purposes for Israel. Look what God said about him:

**"Now I will give your countries to king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is My servant. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control. All the nations will serve him, his son, and his grandson until his time is up. Then many nations and great kings will conquer and rule over Babylon. So you must submit to Babylon's king and serve him; put your neck under Babylon's yoke! I will punish any nation that refuses to be his slave, says the Lord. I will send war, famine, and disease upon that nation until Babylon has conquered it." (Jeremiah 27:6–8 NTL)**

God placed Nebuchadnezzar as ruler of Babylon. We are told that God put everything under his control for a season. The Lord went as far as to call Nebuchadnezzar His servant. Elsewhere, God says in regard to him, *"My servant [or agent to fulfill My designs]" (Jeremiah 25:9).*

It is clear that God uses both good and bad bosses as His servants and agents to fulfill His plans and purposes. King Solomon confirmed this when he wrote, "It's easy for God to steer a king's heart for His purpos-

es as it is for Him to direct the course of a stream” (Proverbs 21:1 TPT).

The reason many struggle with submitting to ungodly leaders is because they can't see God's providence in their situation. Believe it or not, there are times when God will place us in situations where we receive mistreatment from those in authority.

You're probably thinking this is crazy talk, but let me show you three reasons why God would allow us to work for bad bosses:

**1. IT MAKES ROOM FOR GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT.**

No boss or leader can keep you from accomplishing God's plan for your life. In fact, God uses the unfair treatment to your advantage, if you handle it correctly. It's not your place to judge your boss; God will deal with them.

**2. IT DEVELOPS CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER IN US.**

God uses imperfect leaders to perfect us—molding a submitted heart when we properly handle unfair treatment. Choosing to obey God in the midst of difficult situations develops strength of character. The greater the hardship you endure, the greater authority God can entrust to you.

**3. OUR SUBMISSION DESPITE MISTREATMENT GLORIFIES GOD.**

Obedience to God reveals who your real master is. God is honored when you remain faithful in the midst of unfair treatment. It's easy to obey God under pleasant circumstances; but will you still obey Him during unpleasant circumstances? When we honor and submit to our leaders as unto the Lord, they will see that we're different. And our example could draw them to the heart of God.

At the end of the day, God knows what's going on. He knows the treatment you're experiencing under difficult bosses. Trust Him to protect you and to fulfill His plan and purpose for your life. All things are working together for your good.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## OCCUPY YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. (Romans 12:1 MSG)

Your work can be an act of worship to God. This happens when you dedicate your work to God and perform it as an offering to Him. All of life, including work, should be considered sacred. Unfortunately, many Christians hold an incorrect view of work. They have a false distinction between what they perceive as sacred (prayer, ministry, church attendance, etc.) and secular (work, along with basically anything outside of church). This sacred-secular dichotomy makes people believe that pastors are spiritual, but business men/women are not. Prayer is spiritual, but work is not. Sadly, this kind of thinking compartmentalizes our lives and keeps us from being effective where God has placed us. The Apostle Paul exhorted:

**Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17 NLT)**

If you do everything as a representative of the Lord Jesus, then your place of employment becomes your place of deployment. Where you work becomes your mission field. You begin to understand that you are strategically positioned for God's purposes. There are people only you can reach, including your boss, because of where you are located. This mindset greatly affects the way you relate to your boss and those around you.

Paul clearly stated, “Guide slaves (employees) into being loyal workers, a bonus to their masters . . . . Then their good character will shine through their actions, adding luster to the teaching of our Savior God” (Titus 2:9-10 MSG). The *Passion Translation* reads, “By doing this they will advertise through all that they do the beautiful teachings of God our Savior.”

What type of Christ are you advertising? Are you a Christian who professes their faith within the workplace, but undermines it by your hypocritical behavior? In relation to this, Paul warned, “Conduct yourself with wisdom in your interactions with outsiders (non-believers), make the most of each opportunity [treating it as something precious].” (Colossians 4:5 AMP). How you relate and respond to your boss will affect your witness for Christ in your workplace. Actions really do speak louder than words. Heed Paul’s words to conduct yourself with wisdom in all your interactions with others. Consider every opportunity as precious—you could be the only Christian that person encounters!

Throughout this minibook, we've looked at how we can better navigate bad bosses. This included the importance of responding to them correctly, rather than reacting irresponsibly. We examined the differences between obedience and submission and what it looks like to do all things as unto Christ. We also saw that God can use ungodly leaders for His purposes, as He is ultimately the One in control.

If you're struggling with a leader or authority dynamic in your life—whether it's someone you lead, someone you follow, or pain from someone who was once your boss/leader—I strongly encourage you to dive into the [Under Cover](#) message. I extensively unpack the four different types of authorities—civil, social, family, church—and offer biblical wisdom along with personal examples to help you discover and leverage God's design for authority.

I hope this minibook offered fresh perspective and hope. Remember, your boss doesn't control your future. The only person who can get you out of God's will for your life is you. That's why your response to leadership does determine your future.

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Published by: Messenger International, Inc., P.O. Box 888, Palmer Lake, CO 80133-0888

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Interior design by Carmen Romo and Brooke Herzog