

John Boyd. Ace fighter pilot. Real-world, cutting-edge aircraft designer. Teacher of the already elite. Ground-breaking strategist. Antagonistic military misfit who ultimately helped change that very military. Robert Coram, Boyd's primary biographer, captures his truly unique story engagingly and exquisitely.

Colonel Boyd was a complex, fault-ridden, yet still amazing man, someone who impacted multiple spheres that he was appointed to in very unusual ways, several times while being a virtual outsider with regard to those spheres. This podcast episode on "who do you really work for?" is part of a series on Boyd that follows several episodes about Boyd: for example, building snowmobiles...being relentlessly curious to completion...designing for stewardship...redesigning war...and bad blockers in the modern era. Go listen!

In this current episode, Boyd makes someone think about this question: *who do I really work for?* Well, we can pretty much encapsulate the entire biography about John Boyd around that one issue: who do I really work for? The reality was that John Boyd defined that on his own terms, and he defined it differently than many others around him, especially some of his bosses. And that led to intense conflict.

Let me summarize, generally at least, who John Boyd most often thought he worked for. Yes, he believed he worked on behalf of top pilots in fighter jets—sometimes pilots he knew personally—and always the pilots in a dogfight for their very lives high in the air, real time. Yes, he believed he worked on behalf of U.S. service personnel who lacked the fullest possible protection from the enemy. Yes, he believed he worked on behalf of the military specialist with a crucial job to do who got squeezed out of the military budget wars for reasons having little to nothing to do real military battles. Boyd and his disciples were called "reformers." And, many times, that label was not designed to be complimentary by many people in the military establishment—even to this very day as military observers speak of Boyd's role in his era!

The irony is that Boyd's workaday adversaries often believed they were fighting for similar priorities as Boyd. But often their advocacy took the form of advocating one branch of the military like, say, the Air Force winning a budget battle over the Navy—largely for the primary sake of the service branch itself—casting a narrative that the budget money win was the essential "win." Or sometimes it was about getting a contract awarded to a defense contractor that would put the latest costly bells and whistles on an airplane—but often that with a lucrative job offer at that defense contractor waiting for the advocate at the end of military service. Or sometimes it was about the latest "improvement" in defense theory, not necessarily battle-forged, lean-and-mean responses needed for the front-line Air Force pilot or Marine. Many times, it was about climbing the ladder at the Pentagon or in one of the service branches. But each of those rationales was easily represented as to be about working for the front-line service personnel.

Boyd fought for his vision every time and won his fair share of the battles. And so his adversaries cast him as a rogue, an out-of-control egomaniac. And all that's largely why Boyd was not promoted above colonel. Regardless, an overarching reality is this: the U.S. military is an institutional bureaucracy where people are just people, naturally focused on long careers, lucrative exits, and prestige. And reformers of any stripe rarely thrive or get to the top of entrenched bureaucracies. The fact is, Boyd believed he was serving the constituents who he and the bureaucracy were *supposed to be focused on* in a demonstrably strong way. You read the Boyd biography and see what you think—it's fascinating reading for all of us who are increasingly compelled to live as participants in a sticky web of government and corporate bureaucracies.

As for us as believers, the answer about *who we work for* is clear. Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV) says "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." Right off the bat, we surely know that we can work in a secular job and be precisely fulfilling this amazing verse—that is, working heartily as for the Lord. That's because every job, every career is "full-time ministry" for the serious believer. You can search and find a Whitestone podcast on exactly that truth. You see, there's not *necessarily* any conflict

whatsoever when we work for anyone in any enterprise, because our posture is to “work as for the Lord,” regardless of where that work is found! In fact, when you’re the only Christian in your workplace, it’s very likely you’re in one of the choice spots where God truly wants his children—doing your work very competently as a ready witness for the Lord in a veritable desert of faith and knowledge of the Lord!

That brings us to Romans 12:1-2 (ESV), which says “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Now this is really important. We’re to present ourselves as a living sacrifice as an act of spiritual worship. You see, worship isn’t just something we do pretty much only with a guitar player up front at a church service. What we properly do with all facets of our entire life comprise our cumulative acts of spiritual worship!

But wait a minute. These verses tell us to not be conformed to this world. But what these verses *don’t* tell us is to hide in a cave so as to not interact with this world. In fact, God’s intent is quite the opposite—we are to present ourselves to the world gently and meekly yet persuasively and relentlessly as having different foundations and motives for doing what an unbeliever is doing. When I first came to know the Lord as an adult businessman, I found the Christian subculture in America to oftentimes hold a general belief that unbelievers are very immoral, while believers tend to generally act as unto the Lord. I found this theology to be often clearly mistaken. You see, before being born again, I worked for an international business firm which closely guarded its reputation for high ethics...and many of these leaders were not Christians—they were people just happy to do the right thing as part of their business model. At the same time, I found many of the shenanigans that many Christians perpetrated—major *and* minor—to be far from the Lord. Do I mean this is the rule all of the time? No, but a more balanced reality check is in order.

You see, John Boyd often had demonstrably different motives and outcomes because of his peculiar belief set, his foundations. Shouldn’t a Christian be similar, if there is indeed a notable separation of motives regarding nearby unbelievers? Of course! But that itself brings us to a twist, found in Matthew 6:1-4 (ESV) “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Like the Old Testament stories of Joseph, Daniel, and Esther, God can work through us effectively in situations where God is not being uplifted by others in harness with us.

But Matthew implied that Christians can inappropriately practice “righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.” To be sure, some Pharisees wanted to look like they were fasting. In contrast, Daniel prayed in private. Yes, we are to work as unto the Lord, honoring God—but *not* working pointedly to be seen by others, let alone working to call unbelievers out with what Paul calls a “ministry of condemnation” which leads to death. Careful, lest we “have no reward from our Father who is in heaven.”

But sometimes there *is* actually the reality of a big clash in motives and values between one person and another. For the believer, discernment is the order of the day. Is this a big deal that requires taking a public stand? Perhaps. But is each transgression a nuclear event for the mature Christian? Of course not.

It all comes down to Who we work for—and that’s God. Our motives are clearly going to be different than others’. So is our righteousness self-proclaimed or truly God-directed? God will reward the latter in heaven...but not our self-righteousness. We know this for sure: we live for and we work for the King, but the King Himself calls for our proper grounding *and* discernment *and* right responses. How classy is that?

A&A: Application & Action

1. John Boyd often had different motives than other key people in his workplace. So he often came into conflict with many of his superior officers in the military. Was that OK, if the cause was important enough? Or should workplace peace supersede the cause? Describe a situation in your experience where it was one direction or another.

2. How do you see other Christians working out their faith at work? Are they in simmering conflict with others in their workplace? Is that OK? When conflicts arise, have these Christians cloaked themselves with self-righteousness or are they truly manifesting God's true priorities? Be specific.

3. Now, see #2. How about you? Be specific.