



Having
confidence that
you do not have
to check your
faith at the
door

Additional Helpful Resources

More on Religious Freedom - If you want to learn more about religious freedom in the workplace, go to www.priorityassociates.org and click on **Freedom in the Workplace** where there are several more articles including: helpful guidelines, practical applications, and FAQs for both employees and employers.

Legal Advice & Services - If you feel you might need legal advice and/or services in this area, these organizations can provide more detailed information and further research into specific situations where religious discrimination may be occurring:

- ~ American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) - www.aclj.org
- ~ Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) - www.alliancedefensefund.org
- ~ The Rutherford Institute - www.rutherford.org

Faith and Family Friendly Employee Policies - Corporate Resource Council (CRC) endeavors to improve the work/life balance for employees and to enhance the ability of employers to attract and retain top talent. CRC's resources provide objective analysis of the value to corporations of family-and-faith friendly employee policies. The goal of all CRC resources and programs is to equip corporate executives and business leaders to establish family-and-faith friendly employee policies based on sound business, legal, and financial principles. You can access these resources at their website: www.corporateresourcecouncil.org.

Faith & Work Integration

If you are interested in more information on integrating faith and work, becoming a next generation leader, or making an impact with your life, please visit us at www.priorityassociates.org or email us at info@priorityassociates.org. You may also be able to get help from the organization or individual who provided you this resource.

PRIORITY ASSOCIATES

A worldwide movement of young professionals, established professionals and next generation leaders
www.priorityassociates.org

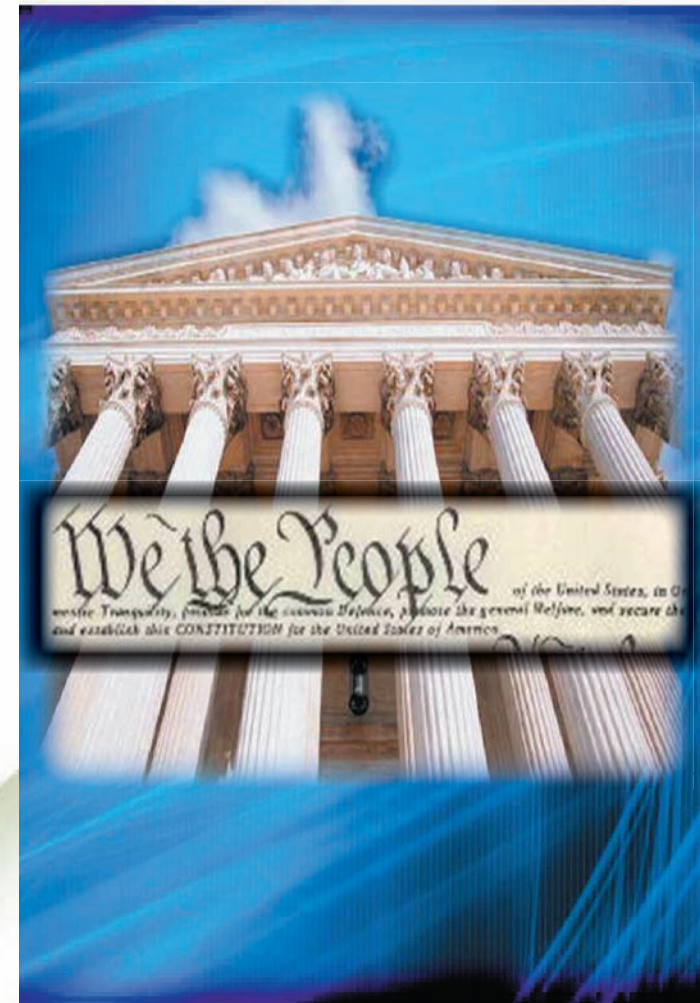
The marketplace ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ

To order additional copies or request additional resources
www.lifehelp.org ~ 1-800-503-2214 ~ www.priorityassociates.org

The statements and information in this brochure should not be considered provision of legal advice. Personal situations and circumstances will vary. You should consult with an attorney if you need legal advice or assistance for your situation.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM in the Workplace





Religious Freedom in the Workplace

The purpose of this brochure is to help inform workplace professionals of their religious freedom in the workplace.

The primary hope is that it will instill confidence in people of faith that they do not need to “check” their faith at the door of the office. However, the employee must also understand that the company has some legitimate expectations of them.

People are beginning to realize that there is no such thing as a religiously neutral environment. Even “Secular Humanism” and “Atheism” are religious in nature in that they both promote a philosophy about God and humankind; namely that God is either irrelevant or does not exist. This in turn, produces a philosophy of work, ethics and life that impacts companies and businesses every day. Thus it is becoming clear, that any world-view tends to promote some view of God, people, and life whether or not it is stated.

So the questions merely become: “what freedom do I have to live out my beliefs at work without ridicule or harassment?” and “what freedom do I have to connect with others who have a similar interest?”

This brochure serves as an introductory guide to those freedoms in the workplace.



Guidelines

The first amendment protects an employee's rights of free speech, freedom of religion and freedom of association. Additionally, employees have their religious rights protected by the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964. The CRA states that employees cannot be discriminated against based on: race, skin color, gender, disability, nationality, or religion.

The basic framework for understanding religious expression at work is that employers have to reasonably accommodate the employee's religious beliefs as long as it does not create an undue hardship, and employees have to cooperate with the employer in that accommodation.

In general, this means that an employee can talk about religious matters at work both individually and in groups, but here are some further guidelines on this:

§ **Expressions of Faith** - An employee has the right to both verbal and written expression of religious sentiments. However, if a co-worker asks the employee not to talk with him/her about religious topics, the communication should cease. If the employee continues to pursue the co-worker, this could be considered harassment and result in discipline by the employer.

§ **Company Time** - A company has a right to expect its employees to work on company business while on the job. Therefore, the company may restrict non-work related speech during working hours. On breaks or at lunch the situation is different, but if the company does not want people talking about personal things while they are working, it has a right to say so. The only limit on this is that the company has to be consistent in applying its policies. The company cannot prohibit religious speech only, that would be targeted discrimination.

§ **Personal Work Space** - The issue of what an employee can put in his/her work space is more complicated. Generally, personal religious articles are okay, but a company does have a right to set certain standards for the work environment if it chooses to do so. This means that a Bible on the desk where other personal items are allowed should be okay, but a Bible on a machine stand, where personal items are not allowed and might present a danger, would not be okay. This example presents two ends of a continuum, in between, it will depend on company standards and work related circumstances.

§ **Religious Clothing or Symbols** - Generally, an employer cannot regulate this. But if the employer has a uniform policy, or if there are safety concerns about jewelry which are legitimate, the employer has a right to limit these.

§ **Bible Studies** - Employees can have a Bible study unless there is a prohibition of all meetings by all employees. If the employer allows employees to discuss football on their lunchtime, they must also allow employees to discuss the Bible.

§ **Meeting Rooms and Public Bulletin Boards** - If the company provides space that can be used to advertise or host any extra-curricular group meetings or outings such as: toastmasters, diet clubs, book clubs, ethnic groups, technology groups, artists groups, sports groups, fan clubs, etc... then employee organized Bible study or prayer groups, or employee initiated events like National Day of Prayer, Thanksgiving lunches or Christmas socials cannot be discriminated against from using such space for these purposes.

§ **Company Communications** - If the company allows the use of email, voice mail, or phones for personal communication including jokes, photographs, quotes or personal communications of any kind then it cannot discriminate against religious content such as a Bible verse, a prayer request or other religious speech. Further, if any of the groups mentioned above have reasonable access to company communications to inform interested employees of their meetings, events or gatherings, then the company cannot discriminate against religiously oriented employee groups having the same access.

§ **Government Employees** - If the employer is a government employer AND the employee has a public role, there are special rules that apply when they are acting on behalf of the government.

This is a very general overview and explanation. How it applies to individual employee situations depends upon a lot of factors. Our hope is that this overview can provide a basic understanding of how employees and employers can accommodate one another as it pertains to religious freedom in the workplace.

