

296390 - Is It Permissible to Show Humility to Your boss?

the question

I am a university student, and I want to earn permissible wealth, so I can spend on myself and help my family with it as much as I can. The only obstacle to my finding a way of earning a living is my submissive and obsequious attitude towards many people, including my boss at work. My question is: isn't showing submissiveness to anyone other than Allah a sin? Doesn't that make wealth earned this way prohibited? How can I rid myself of this submissiveness and obsequiousness with the boss in particular and with people in general? I don't mind if you advise me to read a book on this topic, as I love reading.

Summary of answer

If you are doing permissible work, and not helping in any sin or approving of it, and not putting yourself in a humiliating position, then there is nothing wrong with your work. Your feelings of being inferior or submissive to the boss may be intrusive thoughts from the Shaytan, aimed at discouraging you from doing that which is beneficial for you. The way to deal with that is to seek Allah's help and focus on what you find beneficial in your permissible work.

Detailed answer

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What is the basic principle with regard to taking up jobs and occupations?

The basic principle with regard to taking up jobs and occupations is that they are permissible, and nothing is a sin, unless there is clear evidence that it is prohibited.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“People’s words and actions are of two types: acts of worship, by means of which they have sound commitment to their religion, and regular daily activities that they need in their worldly affairs.

By examining the basic principles of Islam, we realise that the acts of worship which Allah has enjoined or that He loves cannot be proven to be enjoined except on the basis of religious texts...

Regular daily activities are permissible in principle, so none of them are to be prohibited except what Allah has prohibited, otherwise we will be included in the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{Say, “Have you seen what Allah has sent down to you of provision of which you have made [some] lawful and [some] unlawful?”} [Yunus 10:59]

Hence Allah condemned the polytheists who prescribed matters of religion for which Allah did not give permission, and they prohibited things that Allah did not prohibit... This is an important and beneficial principle." (Majmu` Al-Fatawa 29/16-18)

What causes the feeling of being inferior and submissive?

What is causing you confusion as a result of feeling inferior and submissive is because this type of feeling usually occurs as a result of four things when people interact with one another.

- **Humility**

Humility is prescribed for Muslims in general, and is encouraged in Islamic teachings.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion – Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favour of Allah; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.} [Al-Ma'idah 5:54]

Humility is a kind of mercy and being easy-going when interacting with others, and not looking down on them or being arrogant, as is explained in a different verse, in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah ; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves.} [Al-Fath 48:29]

It was narrated that `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Shall I not tell you of one who will be forbidden to the Fire, or one to whom the Fire will be forbidden: every approachable, gentle, easy-going person.”

Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2488); he said: This is a sound Hadith. It was classed as authentic by Al-Albani in As-Silsilah As-Sahihah (2/611).

- **Fear**

The worker’s fear of the boss that he may dismiss him from his job or deduct something from his salary is usually a kind of **fear of people** regarding that in which Allah has granted them power. This is not prohibited and is not a sin, but it is falling short in putting one’s trust in Allah (Tawakkul) in the true meaning of the word.

- **Shyness**

Shyness (Haya’) in dealing with people is part of faith.

It was narrated from `Abdullah ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) passed by a man of the Ansar who was exhorting his brother regarding **shyness** . The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Let him be, for shyness is part of faith.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 24 and Muslim, 36)

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “What is meant by “exhorting his brother regarding shyness” is that he was telling him not to be shy, and telling him that shyness was bad

and rebuking him for being too shy. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told him not to do that, and said: “Let him be, for shyness is part of faith” – in other words, let him be shy and stop telling him not to be like that.” (Sharh Sahih Muslim 2/6)

- **Obedience**

Obedience to your boss regarding what you committed yourself to do in the contract between you and him is something obligatory.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, fulfil [all] contracts.} [Al-Ma’idah 5:1]

With regard to obeying your boss when he asks you to do something that is in the interests of the work, but is not included in the contract, if it is minor and does not harm the worker, then doing that is recommended.

It was narrated from Jabir ibn `Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “May Allah have mercy on a man who is easy-going when he sells, when he buys, and when he asks for payment.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 2076)

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“This is encouragement to be easy-going when dealing with people, and to be well mannered, with a sublime attitude, and not to be strict.” (Fath Al-Bari 4/307)

To sum up, if the Muslim interacts with his boss or with other people in these ways, he will be fine or will be rewarded.

But that is subject to the condition that good manners and a good attitude when dealing with people does not lead to keeping quiet about or approving of prohibited actions, or helping others in doing them, or doing them oneself.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and transgression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.} [Al-Ma'idah 5:2]

There can be no humility, shyness or obedience when it comes to forbidden matters.

It was narrated from `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There is no obedience if it involves disobedience [to Allah]; rather obedience is only in that which is right and proper." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 7257 and Muslim, 1840). It was also narrated by Imam Ahmad in Al-Musnad (2/318) as: "There is no obedience to any human if it involves disobedience to Allah."

Just being afraid of your boss at work is not an excuse for committing forbidden actions.

Rather what you must do if you see prohibited actions being committed is to denounce them to the best of your ability and as much as will achieve the goal of removing them, in compliance with the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): "Whoever among you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand (by taking action); if he cannot, then with his tongue (by speaking out); and if he cannot, then with his heart (by hating it and feeling it is wrong), and that is the weakest of faith." (Narrated by Muslim, 49)

You should also be cautious and ensure that your good attitude in dealing with people does not lead to you allowing others to humiliate you, for it is not the way of the believer to put himself in a humiliating position.

Ibrahim An-Nakha`i (may Allah have mercy on him) said: They – meaning the early generations (Salaf) – hated to be humiliated by others, but when they had the power to retaliate, they would forgive. (Mentioned in a Mu`allaq report by Al-Bukhari; Fath Al-Bari; 5/99)

In conclusion, if you are doing permissible work, and not helping in any sin or approving of it, and not putting yourself in a humiliating position, then there is nothing wrong with your work. Your feelings of being inferior or submissive to the boss may be intrusive thoughts from the Shaytan, aimed at discouraging you from doing that which is beneficial for you. The way to deal with that is to seek Allah's help and focus on what you find beneficial in your permissible work.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, although both are good. Strive to do that which will benefit you and seek the help of Allah, and do not feel helpless.” (Narrated by Muslim (2664)

If your issue has to do with extreme shyness, we advise you to read the **book Fiqh Al-Haya'** by Shaykh Muhammad Isma'il Al-Muqaddam (may Allah preserve him)

And Allah knows best.