

Being a Disciple at Work

Session 1 : My Discipleship and Work

Leader's Notes

7.30pm

Welcome and Prayer and module overview

- Exploring together our experiences of Work & Discipleship in the light of Biblical perspectives, God's big picture, & the nature of the gathered/dispersed church;
- Exploring the nature, ethics, purpose & relationships within our places of work;
- Developing appropriate responses to these through prayer & action;
- Considering ways our churches can develop their support to members in their discipleship through work

7.45

Opening activity

On a sheet of A4, each person is invited to draw something to represent each of the following:

1. Who I am
2. My work
3. What I enjoy doing
4. What I am hoping for from these sessions

Each person has one minute to share with the whole group

Discussion point: To what extent are we what we do?

8.00

Reflecting together on some different comments on work

Consider together the comments on work on the resources handout.

What is our experience?

Invite the group :

*to browse the statement cards spread around the room (or on the printed sheet, if space is tight) and to pick out 1 or 2 statements that speaks to them, or expresses most strongly how they feel.

*invite people to share briefly why they chose the one they did.

Is it part of their experience, as an individual or within the church?

Does it express how they would like things to be?

8.25

Exploring our experience

Brainstorming together on different flipchart sheets:

- most enjoyable aspects of my work
- most frustrating aspects of my work
- ways in which my work challenges my faith
- ways in which my faith challenges my work

8.45

Reflecting on some Christian perspectives on work

The Gospel & Work in outline :

*God was the first worker. God created (and then rested!) and was pleased with what he had created.

*Humanity turned away from doing things God's way, and with humanity the whole of creation experienced the Fall. Though still made in God's image, it is shot through with corruption—thus work may be a joy and a curse. The Law and the Prophets illustrate the inability of humanity to rescue itself and resolve these paradoxes.

*Jesus brought reconciliation, through his incarnation, ministry, death on the cross and resurrection. He is the way, the truth and the life to all who will give their lives to him.

*Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, who came at Pentecost, empowers his disciples and enables the growth and development of the church.

Ask the group :

What is the purpose of the church?

Brainstorm keywords and phrases on large sheet of paper or flipchart.

Draw out ways in which the church is called :

***to be** : a foretaste of heaven (ministry, worship, pastoral care, releasing of gifts for God's glory, to be a sign of God's Kingdom in the world, salt & light etc.)

***to do** : involved in Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (mission & world-transforming, extending God's Kingdom in the world)

Encourage the group to see themselves as the church, not the building or just what happens on Sundays. Sunday worship is a particular expression of the life of the church through corporate worship and fellowship. This is the *"gathered church"*.

There is also the *"scattered or dispersed church"* when we are dispersed throughout the rest of the week—a much greater percentage of our time (even if you're a vicar). We are much more vulnerable here, though no less disciples.

There is always a tension within us, in different proportions, as individuals and as churches, between *being* and *doing*. Yet they are two sides of the same coin—or like the parts of a sentence. The noun and the verb don't make sense without each other. We express both in our church and faith, in our work and as we move through the world. Our experiences in all these areas can challenge and interpret each other, bringing growth, meaning and understanding.

9.00

Bible study in pairs / small groups

Each pair / group explores a section of Bible passages from resources handout. Feedback to whole group

How can the Bible help us in exploring faith and work?

Leader: choose one or more sets of readings, according to their appropriateness for your particular group & group size. Alternatively, choose one reading from each set. Divide the group into 2/3s—each small group taking one reading. Allow 10 minutes for studying the passages and then 10 minutes of sharing/feedback. Keywords/thoughts can be recorded on a flipchart.

Genesis 2:15-25 Adam & Eve called to work *before* the fall
Exodus 35:30—36:1 Skills & abilities from the Spirit of God
Matthew 25:14-30 Using what God has given us

Ecclesiastes 4:10-12 & 5:18-20 Satisfaction & wealth
John 6:27-40 Jesus is the bread of life
Mark 10:42-45 Servanthood

Acts 17:16-23 Paul interacting with popular culture
2 Corinthians 5:16-21 Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation in the world
Ephesians 6:5-9 Serve wholeheartedly

Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus' Great Commission
Luke 12:1-12 Truth; acknowledging Jesus before others

Depending on which passages have been chosen, encourage the whole group to consider some of the following questions:

How do these passages help us to :

- * value our work as divine-human collaboration
- * think Christianly about work and stewardship
- * consider appropriate responses to the world & community
- * think about our discipleship & mission

How helpful is it to think of our work as the '*outworking*' of our faith?

9.20 Worship

Gathering prayer :

Work is a means of loving God by serving human needs.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the life you have called each one of us into.—for our homes and families, our church, our places of work and the people we come into contact with each day. We surrender to you the joys and sorrows, opportunities and disappointments of all those experiences. We pray that through them you would help us to grow closer to you, closer to each other and day by day become the disciples you want us to be. We ask this for your glory and in Jesus' name, Amen.

Bible reading :

Colossians 3:22—4:1 Working as for the Lord

Prayers (open or led)

Based on the flipchart notes for the Local Picture.
Concluding with **the Lord's Prayer**

Our offering :

The group is invited to write on small pieces of paper anything relating to work/faith/relationships/world that they would like to bring to God for his help. These may be folded and placed at the foot of the cross or in the bowl of water for His cleansing.

Everyone is invited to light a candle, representing Christ's new light and hope in the situation. Music may be played during this time.

When everyone has had the opportunity to make an offering & light a candle, conclude with :

The Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Go in peace to love & serve the Lord—**In the name of Christ, Amen.**

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Invite group members to think about the following questions during the coming week:

If we are Christ's ambassadors in the world, where is my embassy?

How will I be serving God in my work this month?

Is there *one* thing I could pray about this week for my workplace?

Follow-up resources for Session 1.

Books :

Mark Greene	Thank God It's Monday
Brother Lawrence	Practising the Presence of God
Joel Edwards	Hope, Respect & Trust
John Stott	New Issues Facing Christians Today

Websites :

www.christiansatwork.org.uk

www.icf-online.org

Bible passages :

In addition to ones already given in the session notes,

Nehemiah 4:1-23; 6:15 Community & the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 1:4-9 The calling & empowering of Jeremiah

John 13:1-17 Jesus washes the disciples' feet

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS SESSION

A4 sheets for opening activity

Definitions of work handout – from Downloads

a set of printed statement cards—or statements on printed sheet (one for each participant – from Downloads)

flipchart (or large sheets of paper) & pens

Bibles—or Bible readings on sheets

small pieces of paper for Worship time, plus Cross / bowl of water & tea-lights, matches, pens/pencils and background music.