

Being a Disciple at Work

Session 2 : Discipleship and the Workplace

Leaders' Notes

7.30 Welcome and Prayer
Brief re-cap of previous session

7.40 Opening activity
What or where is my place of work?
Sharing in pairs. Each person feeds back to the whole group 3 things their partner has said about their place of work.

7.50 What is the value or significance of work?

John Stott: "Work is the expenditure of energy, (manual, mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfilment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God."

Mark Greene (London Institute of Contemporary Christianity) suggests that Biblically there are 3 overall levels of significance of work:

- **instrumental value**

through paid work, people receive money which allows them to provide for themselves and for others (1 Tim 5:8). This includes their dependents, the poor, the plans of God's people. Those in unpaid work can also ask: does this work contribute to other peoples' well-being eg. health, education, flourishing, mentally, spiritually and emotionally eg. a homemaker.

- **intrinsic value**

work is a context in which we can use the gifts and skills God has created us to use, as stewards . . . we may feel pleasure not just in the results (as God did in Genesis 1 when he reflected on what he had created) but also in the process – working on the accounts, setting up the classroom, cooking etc. This is pleasure in the way God has created us in the flesh.

- **strategic value**

work can provide opportunities for a wide range of ministry and evangelism.

8.00 How does this relate to God?

How does these values relate to what we know about God's nature, character and methods? Let's put some of these on the flipchart .

8.10 Bible study

Working in small groups – each group taking one or two passages.

What can we learn from the Bible about God's vision and mission in relation to work?

Genesis 1 – 2	God is creative and what he creates is good and blessed by him Mankind in dominion over animal and plant world
Isaiah 65:17-end	A new heavens and a new earth, happiness and joy, no more weeping. People will live in their own homes and eat the fruit of their own vineyard, and have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. They will not work in vain – they and their children will be blessed by the Lord, who will answer their prayers.
Revelation 21-22	A new heaven and a new earth, and a holy city. God living amongst his people. He is Alpha and Omega. Jesus is coming soon.
Ephesians 4:11-13	Jesus gives gifts to the church. The church has responsibility to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. They will grow in unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus, mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.
Romans 8:21	The redeeming of the whole created order, which becomes whole again.
Galatians 5:19-23	Contrasts the outcomes of evil with the fruit of the Spirit.

In these passages we have God's vision for society, for the church and for individuals – a community of human beings in loving and harmonious relationships with God and with each other.

We also see the NOW and NOT YET of the Kingdom. – this is the tension with which we live and work.

8.30 The values, purpose and pressures of our current place of work

In pairs discuss the following three questions, each person recording their own key words on a sheet of A4, folded into three sections.

1. What are the guiding values and 'mission purpose' of your current workplace or situation?

Some examples:

Financial Services Agency's framework of core values:

- *open, honest, responsive and accountable
- *committed to acting competently, responsibly and reliably
- *relating to colleagues and customers fairly and with respect

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2. How are these values experienced in practice for those involved?

eg. sense of community; teamworking; nurturing; competitiveness; profit-oriented etc.

3. What are the pressures on your company/school/home/organisation etc?

eg. competition, customers, market forces, suppliers, business partners, shareholders, publicity, media, neighbours, local community, legislation, costs, stress amongst the workforce, industrial relations, finances, premises ...

Each pair shares their key thoughts with the whole group.

9.00 A Reflective and Practical Spiral

We are a gift to the workplace and the workplace is a gift to us.

How can we approach this in a practical and reflective way?

Introduce the group to the Reflective and Practical Spiral (see handout). You may like to illustrate the use of the spiral with an example from your own experience, or a hypothetical example that might occur in the working environment.

In applying the cycle we always need to be :

- * inviting / drawing Jesus into the situation, or seeing where he is already at work.
 - * checking that the actions we are prompted to, and the results we seek, are based on Christian values and sit comfortably with the Bible's teaching on the gifts and fruit of the Spirit – do they lead somewhere positive? There are close links between love and unity.
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9.20 Worship

Reading : Genesis 10:8-12

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." The first centres of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Ninevah, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Ninevah and Calah; that is the great city.

Short time of quiet reflection

What is the value of your work?

How might you be a mighty worker before the Lord?

Prayers (see sheet)

We read the three prayers, pausing for a short time of reflection between each one.

Final reading : Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Our sending out :

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ, Amen

DURING THE WEEK

Invite members to:

- apply the Spiral to an issue facing you in your work or workplace
 - reflect further on the inter-relationship between ourselves and the workplace – the external and internal values involved – and how we might make decisions. ('Habitus and decision-making' sheet)
 - get hold of a copy of your workplace's purpose or mission statement for further reflection
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FOR SESSION 2. you will need:

- copies of the Prayers for the closing worship (see Downloads)
 - Bibles for Bible study – or print copies of the Bible passages
 - copies of the Reflective-Practical Spiral (see Downloads)
 - copies of the 'Habitus and decision-making' handout (see Downloads)
 - sheets of A4 – enough for one each
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Leaders' preparation for Session 3.

In the next session there is an 'optional slot' which can be used as you and your group feel most appropriate for their situation (as well as the core elements of the session).

- For this you may wish to choose something from the 'Additional resources for study' in the Downloads section of the Diocesan website:

Old Testament Bible study on work as blessing and curse, and the place of the Sabbath, Biblically, historically and in the present-day.

Meditation on the inter-connectedness of existence and the place of work.

Two poems by D.H.Lawrence on work, fulfilment and our sense of identity.

- Or you may wish to research something from the 'Further resources' download, which contains a book list, many of which are available to borrow from Bouverie Court.

eg. **Hope, Respect and Trust** by Joel Edwards (51pp) – how Biblical ideals address the postmodern search for these values; thoughts on how to engage in discussing these with non-Christians.

- Or you may wish to browse some of the websites recommended in the 'Useful websites' Download, for items for reflection and discussion, or to help you write your own occupational prayer cycle (see below).

www.licc.org.uk London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, founded by John Stott to equip Christians to make a radical difference for Christ in the contemporary world - workplaces, neighbourhoods, schools and colleges. Free bi-weekly emails: *Connecting with Culture* and *Word for the Week* on work/world issues, making faith connections. Plus adverts for their courses and publications.

www.icf-online.org Industrial Christian Fellowship. Excellent site for ideas, material and other links; yearly prayer calendar, prayers and worship; downloadable articles for church magazines; very useful short booklets.

www.congregationalresources.org - the Alban Institute - congregational resources guide, comprising articles on different aspects of faith / church / work involvement.

www.sywc.org.uk – South Yorkshire Workplace Chaplaincy - for downloadable occupational prayer cycle, for use in church each week of the year. Maybe use this as a guide to write your own, as a group, incorporating the different types of work engaged in by your congregation.

www.transformworkuk.org - articles and Forum, plus info on current workplace fellowships, meetings, nationwide events and links to professional Christian fellowships.

www.worknetuk.org – helping people to integrate spirituality with their work. (To be renamed *WorkTalk* in Spring 2008, so watch for possible change in website name)