

## **OUTLINE FOR A TALK**

### *Releasing Gifts through our Work*

#### **Introduction . . .**

- \* How far can we see?

Story of three workers:

The story is told of a man who, while taking a walk down a country lane, came across a stone quarry in which a number of men were working. He questioned several of them about what they were doing. The first replied irritably, 'Can't you see? I'm hewing stone.' The second answered without looking up, 'I'm earning £100 a week.' But when the same question was put to the third man, he stopped, put his pick down, stuck out his chest and said, 'If you want to know what I'm doing, I'm building a cathedral.' So it is a matter of how far we can see. The first man could not see beyond his pick, and the second beyond his Friday pay-packet. But the third man looked beyond his tools and his wages to the ultimate end he was serving. He was co-operating with the architect. However small his particular contribution, he was helping to construct a building for the worship of God.

- \* Consider the wide variety of places we 'work' each day – eg part or full-time work, voluntary or paid employment, involvement with the local playgroup, conversations at local shops, leisure activities/clubs etc.

- \* These are the ministry and mission fields that God has called each of us into – these are the places in which our discipleship and God's mission plan for the world are worked out.

*"Within its own life, the church hears the Word of God as offered in the Scriptures, in preaching and in sacraments. But it is to the world of which the church is part that we look for God's actions – creating, governing, redeeming – and in them we hear a living word . . . Christ comes to meet us, blessing us at the places where crosses stand in the world around us. More grace-laden than any gift we might bring from our privileged place within the church may be the gift God offers us of himself, met in those who confront us with their need."*

(An extract from 'Come Out The Wilderness' by Bruce Kenrick)

*"A Church turned inside-out, so that our world may be turned upside-down, as Kingdom values penetrate and influence every level of society" (John Smith)*

#### **A Church turned inside-out . . .**

- \* the people of God are just as much the church when dispersed into the whole of life as when gathered together in meetings.
- \* God's call to all of us, as disciples, to be the church in our local community and also as his ambassadors wherever we are sent out.
- \* the whole of our life being an expression of what it is to be church.
- \* we can only share what we have received ourselves. Our spiritual growth lies in the constant interchange between prayer, worship and real life experience. Beware of 'ghetto-ising' our spiritual lives in the church and, therefore, the church in the world.
- \* special role of lay people in helping interpret the world to the church, and the church to the world.

## **Our world turned upside-down . . .**

Variety of ways to express our discipleship in the workplace:

### **PEOPLE**

Who are the people we work with and what are their needs?

- \* how we are - Christ's presence in us – (2 Cor 5:16-21)
- \* being alongside others (Col 3:12-14)

### **PROCESS**

What are relationships/attitudes like in our place of work? Are people valued and respected?

- \* how we do it - the way we do our work (Col 3:17)
- \* bringing a Kingdom perspective on issues (1 Peter 3:15-16)

### **PURPOSE**

What are the core values/policies by which our workplace is guided and measured?

- \* influencing policies and ethics with Kingdom values (Romans 12:2)
- \* sharing the Good News when opportunities arise (Col 4:2-6)

### **The challenges to us . . .**

- \* How can the Church equip and support church members in being God's people in their workplace / community / leisure-time?
  - \* How does this affect the prayer life, study and activities of the Church?
  - \* How can we encourage one another to joyfully pursue our God-given passions and exercise our gifts in the most fruitful arena for God's glory?
  - \* How can we be *the believer* in the situations we find ourselves day by day?
  - \* How can we be Good News?
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## **WORSHIP IDEAS**

\* use the 'sermon slot' for a dialogue with a member of the congregation about their working life and how it relates to their faith.

\* invite members of the congregation to bring something to the service which represents the work they do, or a particular gift/talent they have, and to say briefly how that relates to their faith / service to God.

\* have a special prayer board in the service for people to put post-it prayers on relating to work / workplace / world issues

\* offer an opportunity in the service (or perhaps at a bring and share lunch after the service) for people to express / record (in pictures\*\* or words) their hopes for what they can offer God through their Mon-Sat lives, in the coming year – and ask for his help and guidance in doing this.

\*\* using pictures can be a helpful change from words sometimes. One easy way is to give everyone a sheet of A4 on which they draw lines or fold, to give four A6 boxes. In the four boxes they draw: 1. who they are; 2. their strengths/gifts 3. things they are passionate about; 4. their hopes. The box descriptions can be adapted to suit the purpose of the exercise.