



The use of small groups

[This worksheet is based on the course *Christian Life and Work*, London, London Bible College and Scripture Union, 2000.]

Purpose

- To draw together working people in a small group to help build and strengthen relationships
- To create a safe space where members can confidently share their work concerns
- To pray for one another and for the work situations represented
- To realise that work and faith are not two separate compartments of life
- To stimulate reflection on and discussion of faith and work issues concerns

Content

There are six sessions to the course *Christian Life and Work*:

1. Who are we working for?
2. Why on earth are we working?
3. Ministry at work
4. Relating to the boss
5. Handling stress and pressure.
6. Spirituality in the fast lane

Each session has the same pattern:-

- Warm up – introductions and the sharing of news
- DVD Part 1 – introduction of topic
- LIFE TALK – group discussion
- DVD Bible Base – a Bible passage is introduced in an amusing and interesting way
- BIBLE TALK – discussion of the biblical material
- DVD Fusion – further teaching on the subject, including interviews with six working Christians, an industrial chaplain and others
- LIFE TALK – final discussion

Preparation

- Raise the issue of confidentiality. Personal information shared within the group is confidential to that group and should not be passed on.
- The group needs to be seated comfortably and able to see the television screen.
- Leader's notes are provided with the DVD.
- It is advisable for the leader to look at the session on the DVD beforehand to make sure that all the sections are suitable for the group. Sometimes there is too much material for one evening so there is a need to be selective. For example, one group might relish the theological discussion of secularisation in part of Session 1, while others would find it hard going. They might prefer to continue getting to know each other and finding out about each others' work situations.
- Sometimes Bibles would be helpful for the Bible base sections, or to have the appropriate passage printed out. It is worth experimenting with some modern translations such as *The Street Bible* (Rob Lacey, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2002) when looking at Genesis 1 in Session 2.

Point to note

Session 4 offers some interesting discussion material on attitudes to authority. It may be important to give group members permission to disagree with the line taken in the DVD – for example, if anyone has experienced bullying or harassment at work.

Some discussion topics

- How do we feel about work? Why are we here? What are we doing this for?
- What is it about our work that gives us the greatest/least pleasure and why?
- What should motivate us as Christians at work?
- Do we think our particular work might matter to God?
- What does the Bible say about the purpose and nature of work?
- What kinds of pressure do we face in your work?
- What is the main source of stress for us in the working day?
- What ethical dilemmas do we face at work?
- How can we support each other over the next week to face problems at work?
- What specific things could we do to serve and encourage our workmates?
- How does God see our boss? or How could we be a better boss?
- Do/should people in our workplace know that we are Christians?
- How can we encourage an atmosphere of openness in the church that is an example of what an open workplace should be like?

General comments

- The issues raised in these sessions help the group to link faith and work; to begin to understand and to bridge the sacred/secular divide.
- Groups feel affirmed in their work, no matter how mundane. They realise that God is present and interested in what they do in the workplace as well as in the church.
- The group can begin to see their everyday working life as 'ministry' – letting their light shine in the world around.
- The group is able to see that Scripture speaks to their work situation and is a resource for them.
- The group becomes aware of what others in the church do in their working lives, and is ready to share some of the problems and issues they face. The group often develops the confidence to pray for each other.
- Topics for sermons and intercessions are aired which are relevant to peoples' working lives.
- The group can become a place where ideas are shared and which enables the church to be more supportive of those at work.
- The suggestion that each course member starts a journal of what happens at work has proved helpful. It facilitates sharing and deepens thinking around the issues raised.

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