

SHOWING AND TELLING THE GOOD NEWS AT WORK

5 x 15min

BIBLE BITES

SHORT REFLECTIONS TO
GET YOU FOCUSED ON
FAITH AT WORK

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INSIDE

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Bible Bites are short small group reflections where we let the Bible focus our thinking and discussion on how faith intersects with our work and workplace witness.



STRONG AND COMPELLING REASONS FOR SHARING JESUS AT WORK

1

John 4:28-30

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Acts 4:12-20

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name." Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard

2 Timothy 1:8-10

So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

There are many reasons why we might be fearful about sharing our faith with our colleagues. We might fear discrimination and people thinking less of us. We might fear not being able to respond to questions that people ask us. We might fear getting into trouble from our boss. We face a variety of fears when it comes to telling others about Jesus.

So, like many good and worthwhile things in life we need motivation to keep sharing our faith. The passages above give us many great motivations. First and foremost, when we encounter Jesus and “taste and see” how good He is we can’t help but be like the Samaritan women who goes and tells others to “come and see” (John 4:28, c.f. Acts 2:20). That is, the most compelling reason for sharing our faith is that we can’t keep quiet about how great Jesus is! “Mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive is something that cannot possibly be suppressed” (Lesslie Newbigin)¹

But there are numerous other compelling reasons also. Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus (Acts 4:12). We have the only hope for the future and need to share it. It really is good news, news about life and immortality (2 Timothy 1:10). Further we do not share it on our own. God goes with us and empowers us for the task (2 Timothy 1:8). So rather than fearing “man” we should fear God (Acts 2:19) and speak!

Discussion

1. Which of the motivations do you personally find most compelling? Why is that?
2. What practical things can you do to remind you of this (and other) motivations?

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a pluralist society* (Eerdmans, 1989) 116.

Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise".

How do you view your colleagues? At one extreme we can see them as competitors, an obstacle to my promotion. Or perhaps we see them as functionaries, there to do my bidding and achieve my goals and budget. But what about "neighbours"?

For many of us, our "neighbours" are more likely those we work with rather than those we live next door to. And what is our response to our neighbour to be? We are to know them so that we might love them. Often we are not in a good position to extend them love because we simply don't know their needs, fears, aspirations, desires and concerns. We are very good at putting on the mask at work.

Just as work is only one dimension in our lives, so it is the case for our colleagues as well. If we are to penetrate the corporate veil, we will need to both model an appropriate openness and vulnerability as well as invest time and resources into getting to know our colleagues. As in the case of the “Good Samaritan”, showing love at work will involve sacrifice, inconvenience, patience and perseverance.

So if we are serious about loving them, we will seek to build three-dimensional relationships that transcend the boundaries of the office. By getting to know the whole person and not just the suit who turns up in the morning, you come to understand their background, why they think and act the way they do and what openings there may be for the Gospel. This is more than just participating in after work drinks. A social setting in casual clothes can be really helpful, like a gym or playground. By living your life in a generous, transparent manner your colleagues will trust you. Showing an interest in their activities and listening well are essential.

Good evangelism is an expression of love for our neighbours. Building three-dimensional relationships with our work colleagues is an essential step if we are to effectively know them and love them. Are you willing to make this investment?

Discussion

1. Make a list of three work colleagues. Which of these colleagues do you know outside of work? Has this made a difference in the way you relate to each other?
2. What prevents you from building a three-dimensional relationship with a work colleague? What practical steps can you take to start building such relationships?

Mark 5:18-19

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you".

1 Peter 3:13-17

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

One of the common reasons given for why we don't share our faith with others is that we don't know what to say. We feel ill-equipped to answer all the questions people might ask us about the Christian faith. But there is a very simple way to overcome this, and it is something encouraged in the Bible. Rather than facts about Christianity, perhaps one of the most powerful things that we can do is simply tell our story...and that's something no one can dispute!

Shortly after healing a demon-possessed man Jesus instructs him in how he should speak about what has happened to him. "Go and tell your own people how much the Lord has done for" (Mark 5:19). The man is to tell the story of his own personal encounter with Jesus.

Learning how to answer difficult apologetic questions is important. Not only so that we can answer the questions of others, but also to strengthen our own faith. However time and time again the emphasis in the New Testament is on us simply sharing our own personal story, "the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). In this passage Peter doesn't say, "Always be prepared to answer any and every difficult question someone might ask you". Rather he encourages us to simply tell our own story. We speak of the way that God has been at work in our life, in the ups and downs, the joys and the sorrows, such that we have hope for now and the future.

Commenting on these verses, Tim Chester writes, “Our role is to live good and attractive lives under the lordship of Christ, lives that provoke questions”.²

In light of this Biblical model of telling our story to others, Sam Chan³ suggests three steps that we can all easily take in order to do this. Firstly listen to the stories of others. We earn the right to share our story in part by being willing to hear the story of others. A simple question such as “Do you have a faith?” might be a helpful way of raising the topic with others. Listen to their story, seek to understand where they are coming from, and empathise with their position. Secondly, tell your story, as a story. We need to learn to tell our story, as a story with an introduction, a moment of crisis, and a conclusion. That is, begin by sharing something about who you are (the dreams, plans and ambitions you have), then how you attempted to fulfil them in an idolatrous way (the crisis), concluding with how Jesus fulfils all your longings and hopes and gives you hope for the future. Finally, tell a story about Jesus. Share a story from the Gospels which really resonates with you and your experience. Is there one account in the Gospels which fits your experience?

Discussion

1. 1. Workshop with others how you might tell your story of coming to Christian faith.
 - a. What was the moment of crisis in your life where you realised only Jesus satisfied all your longings, hopes and fears?
 - b. Is there a story from the Gospels which really resonates with your experience of encountering Jesus?

² Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 131.

³ “How to tell your colleagues about Jesus – Sam Chan” (YouTube).

Matthew 5:13, 14, 16

You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

1 Peter 2:12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

What does it mean to witness to our colleagues about Jesus? Of course it involves telling them about Him, sharing that story. Declaring with our lips is essential to Christian witness.

But the New Testament teaches that Christian witness is bigger than just our words. We do not just declare the Gospel with our lips, but we also display it with our lives. The New Testament teaches that the people of God are living witnesses. There is a direct correlation between our “good deeds” and people being led to “praise our Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12).

How we live and work each day forms an integral part of our witness. How we work might be the very thing that wins the respect of our colleagues (1 Thessalonians 4:12) and makes them willing to hear the message of the Christian faith.

So remember this each day at work. Regularly commit your living witness to God in prayer. If we want to tell our colleagues about a sovereign God, then it's no good being a control freak in the office. If we want to tell our colleagues about an extravagantly generous God, then it's no good never being generous with your time

and money. If we want to tell our colleagues about a forgiving God, then it's no good holding grudges against colleagues and clients.⁴ How you live matters. Your colleagues are watching.

Discussion

1. What areas of your work life are you particularly aware of at the moment that don't bear a good witness to the Gospel? Commit them in prayer to God now.
2. Think of other examples of how the way we live might bear witness to truths of the Gospel (for example not being a control freak is one way we bear witness to trusting in a sovereign God).

⁴ To consider your living witness in the workplace in more detail see *In God's service: Being a distinctive disciples in the workplace* (Laird and Naoum).

TALKING TO GOD ABOUT TALKING TO PEOPLE

5

Ephesians 6:19-20

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

1 Corinthians 2:14

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:6

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

There are a number of reasons why we might not pray for our work colleagues to come to faith. We don't know what to pray, we're not sure God can really change certain people, we're discouraged by having seen a lack of fruit...or maybe we just don't think it is important.

However prayer is central to mission. English author Tim Chester writes, "Prayer is not a support activity to mission. Prayer is itself a frontline missionary activity".⁵ Prayer is central to our workplace witness.

Why is it central to mission? Because it is ultimately God who changes hearts (1 Corinthians 2:14, 3:6). Rather than discouraging us from mission this should motivate us! The end result is out of our hands – it's God's responsibility. So we can go out, confidently, and speak, leaving the outcome to Him. But it means prayer must be central – we need to be asking that He would change people.

What should we pray specifically? Along with asking that God might take the seeds we plant and water and make them grow (1 Corinthians 3:6), we should also ask that He would give us boldness, and the right and fitting words to say (Ephesians 6:19-20).

⁵ Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 174.

Discussion

1. What practical things can you do to remind yourself to pray for colleagues?
Perhaps meeting regularly with others is one idea!
2. Share with others two colleagues now who you would like to pray for. Pray now specifically that God would give you opportunities, boldness, and fitting words to say to them. And that He would change their hearts

FURTHER READING

MORE

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Eight ways to easily be missional in the workplace

By Andrew Laird

“Mission is not an event we tack onto our already busy lives. It is our life”.

So writes Jonathan Dodson in a helpful little article *8 Ways to Easily be Missional*.

Dodson’s point I couldn’t agree with more – mission and evangelism are not extra activities that we try and find time in our day or week to do. Rather the Christian is always on mission; how we live and speak and act in every moment witnesses to the transforming power of the Gospel. As we go we live out our faith. Our lives are a “living witness”.⁶ The only question is, in each and every moment of every day, what kind of witness are we providing?

How then can we take what we already do each day in our work life and do it with greater missional or evangelistic significance? Inspired by Dodson’s original article, here are 8 ways to easily be missional in your workplace.

1. Pray for your colleagues

It is a mistake to think that prayer is not itself mission. As Chester and Timmis write “Prayer is not a support activity to mission. Prayer is itself a frontline missionary activity”.⁷ God wants to see people saved. And ultimately it is God, through His Spirit who does the saving work. In His kindness, and strange providence, He chooses to use us in this, but ultimately He does the work of salvation. So therefore prayer is a missionary activity – it is asking God to do the work that ultimately He does. So commit to praying for your workplace and your colleagues.

What in particular should we pray? Of course we should pray for a specific chance to chat with Matt by the water cooler. But if mission is more than just an extra activity but the way that we live all our life then perhaps this suggestion from Mark Greene is more fitting: “We ask God to open a door not just for a Gospel-focused conversation, but for a relationship of openness and trust”.⁸ We should pray that God might pave the way for real relationships of

⁶ Draycott and Rowe, *Living witness: Explorations in missional ethics* (Wipf and Stock)

⁷ Chester and Timmis, *Everyday Church: Mission by being good neighbours* (Crossway)

⁸ Greene, *Fruitfulness on the frontline: Making a difference where you are* (IVP) 167.

genuine trust with our colleagues, into which we can share openly and honestly, and in time speak Gospel words of hope, truth and life.

2. Eat with your colleagues

Perhaps the easiest way of developing “relationships of openness and trust” is by sharing a meal with someone. So make it a priority to eat with your colleagues.

How many meals do you eat at work each week? Most likely five. Well those five meals are five missional opportunities already created for you! You just need to find someone to share each meal with.

Take a colleague out for lunch each day and get to know them. Find out their story, what has happened in their life to make them who they are today. Find out what makes them tick. “If you want to understand a person’s worldview don’t read a book...eat with them”⁹

3. Listen and share stories with your colleagues

As you eat with your colleagues listen to them. Be an excellent listener. “Being heard is so close to being loved, that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable”.¹⁰ And in time as you listen take the opportunities to share your story, the story of how God has been, and is, at work in your life. Weave His work in your life into the story of who you are, how you’ve become who you are, and what makes you tick. Be ready, not necessarily to defend all the difficult apologetic questions people have of the Christian faith (as important as this is), but simply to share your story, the story of “the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). Be honest. Be real.

4. Pay for your colleagues

When you finish sharing that lunch with your colleague be the one who pays the bill. Paying for your colleague does a number of things. Firstly it shows them that you love them, that you value the relationship. But perhaps more importantly it demonstrates something which is at the heart of the Christian message – grace and generosity. It’s no good speaking of a God who has shown extravagant generosity in the cross and then being a stingy person. Demonstrate what grace and generosity looks like in a tangible way – pay for your colleagues.

5. Hobby with your colleagues

One of the keys of living with missional intentionality is to not necessarily add extra events or activities into your daily life, but to take what you already do and do it with missional intentionality. So rather than create a new soccer team with all your Christian friends in the hope of meeting non-Christians (which requires lots of organisation on someone’s behalf)

⁹ Chester, *A meal with Jesus: Discovering grace, community and mission around the table* (Crossway) 92.

¹⁰ David Augsburger, *Caring enough to hear and be heard* (Regal Books) 12.

join an already existing team. When it comes to our workplace, rather than hobby on your own or with just your Christian friends do your hobby with your colleagues. If it's cycling then find the cyclists in your office and ride with them. If it's Boot Camp before work join the one your colleagues go to. If it's photography go on a weekend shoot with your workmate.

Hobbying together gives us another opportunity to develop "relationships of openness and trust" with our colleagues and put ourselves in a space where we can share deeply with them. Take the hobbies that you are already doing and do them with your colleagues.

6. Go to after work drinks and office social events

Make it a priority to attend after work drinks and other social events that your workplace organises. This is important for two reasons. Firstly these events are ready-made forums in which to deepen "relationships of openness and trust" with your colleagues. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, going to them shows that you are part of the team and that these relationships matter to you. If you never attend office activities outside of work it sends the message that your colleagues don't matter very much to you – they're not worth your out-of-work hours. But they do matter to you, so make it a priority to go to the after work drinks and social events.

7. Travel to and from work with your colleagues

Like meals, the daily commute to and from work is an ordinary part of your work week that you can bring missional significance to. Whether you drive, cycle or catch public transport see if you can find a colleague to travel with. And as you travel it will provide just another opportunity to develop "relationships of openness and trust" as well as opportunities to listen and share your stories with one another.

8. Care for your colleagues in times of pain and suffering

You don't have to work somewhere for too long before pain and suffering impacts the life of one of your colleagues. Whether it's the death of a loved one, or personal injury or sickness, suffering is rarely very far away. In these moments of pain and suffering which impact your colleagues be the first to show love, concern and care for them. How you love your colleague in that moment of crisis will never be forgotten, and it will display something of the transforming power of the Gospel in your life.

There are so many simple ways that we can love our colleagues in these moments of crisis. Provide them with a meal, send a card or flowers, offer to take some of their work off their hands. If a close family member or friend of theirs has died go to the funeral. In moments of crisis be quick to love and care for your colleagues. I repeat, it will never be forgotten.