



Work as Ministry – Study 5

Aim of study:

In this study we look at workplace relationships. It is something that often we don't think much about, but work is mostly about relationships. We can focus on the technology, or what we do, or deadlines, or mission statements or goals; but often the effectiveness of our working depends on the quality of our relationships at work. How can we apply our faith in this area? What is our responsibility as Christians in terms of workplace relations?

A Personal Perspective:

If I review my 25 years of working, I appreciate how much of my working has been enhanced, or distracted, by workplace relationships. Although there has been a great deal of emphasis on teamwork in the last 20 years, we are often not coached in how to work well with other people, many of whom are not in our teams.

There is the older worker who can share some wisdom. There is always someone in your circle who is incredibly difficult to work with. There is the person who you combine very well with, who can multiply the effectiveness of your work output, and theirs.

In the same way, we can underestimate the emphasis in the Bible of relationships. I was first challenged to consider my faith from this perspective when I heard a talk by Michael Schluter, a Christian who consults to organisations to improve working relationships. The inspiration for his work is his reading from the Bible that God is all about relationships, and our mission is all about reconciling relationships: with God and with others. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

It seems clear that part of our ministry in the workplace is about invigorating the relationships around us, and seeking peace in those relationships that have been ruptured. Let's explore those ideas some more.

Thought Starter Questions:

- What has been the impact on your working of relationships in the workplace?
- How does it change your attitude toward your faith if you think of it in terms of relationships?

Some Bible passages to reflect on:

Consider the following aspects of faith in terms of relationships? How are relationships central? If you have time, find some Bible passages that back up your findings.

- Creation: Why did God create us?
- Was it a "fall" or a "rupture in relationships" described in Genesis 3?
- God's covenants with his people (promises to Abraham and Moses and David): were they primarily about land or relationships? How does God prefer to relate to people through whom he communicates his purposes?



- Is the Gospel about being saved “from” something or “for” something? Is the Gospel message primarily about personal salvation or reconciliation? Or are those the same thing?
- How will we spend the endtimes? How does Revelation describe the primary activity of the people in God’s presence?
- How does the Trinity model relationship? What are the characteristics of that relationship?
- What are the central ideas of the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission?

Going Deeper:

- If our faith is primarily about relationships, and work is primarily about relationships, how does that impact our role as Christians in the workplace?
- Read Ephesians 6:5-9 and Titus 2:9-10. Although this is a description of the relationship of slaves to masters, it could also be about our relationships at work. What are some of the principles here of working with others?
- Read Philippians 2:3-4 and Galatians 5:13-15. Although these passages are directed to Christians living in community, how do they challenge us about our behaviour in the workplace?

Reflect and Respond:

- How have you been challenged by what you have read? What will you change? Stop doing? Start doing?
- How does a focus on relationships help us to be more integrated in our faith and working?
- How does what you have learnt change the way **you** see your work?
- How would you describe what you have learned to someone else?

Prayer:

Thank you Father God that you made us for relationship with you, with each other, and with the environment. Thank you that your relationship with Jesus and the Spirit model the quality of relationships we should have with each other.

Help us to model positive relationships at work. Help us to be patient with those who frustrate us, to be encouraging to all, to be peacemakers where we can have influence.

Help us also to work for justice in relationships at work, advocating for those who have less power. If we are in positions of leadership, help us to be servant leaders like Jesus.

AMEN