

Equipping churches address the opportunities and challenges their people face at work

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/the-equipping-church>

These churches are helping their people discover new ways of nourishing and living out their faith in the course of their daily work. This includes helping to provide people with Bible reading and prayer resources to encourage personal spiritual disciplines, as well as other recommended readings and taped or video material dealing with work issues. It may also mean encouraging the congregation to get involved in small work-related prayer groups, personal mentoring, peer groups, or seminars. Sometimes these approaches are embarked on in partnership with other churches or parachurch ministries.

What kinds of topics and issues need addressing?

Members of the Theology of Work Project decided that three sorts of resources were particularly lacking. These included a commentary on each book of the Bible explored from a workplace perspective, a simple statement of core beliefs to help in the construction of a sound theology of work, and the exploration of key workplace topical issues from a biblical and theological perspective in an easy to read format. These are now freely available on the Theology of Work [website](#).

But what might the core curriculum for a church look like?

It is clear that not everyone starts to examine faith and work issues for the same reasons. David Miller identifies four different doors people walk through to explore the integration of faith and work: Evangelism, Ethics, Experience (integration of a compartmentalised life), and Enrichment (a more nourishing

FAITH AT WORK BREAKFAST

Once a month people gather in a central city venue in Christchurch, New Zealand. People pay \$10.00 at the door, file in and choose what they want for breakfast. It is 7.00am. For the first 20 minutes there is buzz of lively conversation. At 7.20 a different person from the group each time is invited to share something of their faith and work story. The aim is to keep it honest, down to earth and catch a glimpse of everyday discipleship, rather than focus on more dramatic stories from professional speakers. There is time for questions. Sometimes a case study is presented for discussion. Formalities are concluded by 8.00 am. Many cities around the world have similar gatherings.

ADULT EDUCATION MODULES

Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York runs regular classes lasting five weeks each that deal with faith and work issues. These series include *Why Work? A Theology of Work*, *Vocational Decision Making*, *Leadership, Work and Cultural Renewal*, and *Ethics*.

everyday spirituality). Miller pictures these as four quadrants in his so-called 'Integration Box'. One quadrant may be the initial concern that gets a person started in the process of seeking a more holistic integration of faith and work, but they may also go on to explore other dimensions of integration over time. Hence churches wanting to support Christians at work need to be aware that different approaches are required to connect with the needs of people at different starting points. Moreover, a holistic approach should probably include all four dimensions.[26]

Some topics worth thinking about in preaching, teaching, seminars and discussion groups include:

- Your work matters to God. God's work and our work in the Bible. An introduction to a theology of work. (See TOW Project's *Theological Foundations*.)
- What in the world is God up to? An introduction to a theology of mission and of ministry, especially as this relates to the world of work. (Something like what we have developed in the opening sections of this paper.)
- Does God call Christians into work outside churches and Christian institutions? A theology of calling and vocation related to the work of all God's people, both inside and outside the church. (See *Vocation Overview*.)
- How do I find where I fit? Practical exploration of what calling and vocation specifically mean for individuals, including practical processes for clarifying gifts and values and for discerning the guidance of God. (See *Vocation Overview*.)
- What about prayer in the fast lane? Exploring understandings and practices for developing a spirituality for everyday life.[27] (See **Spiritual Formation and Work*, CONTENT NOT YET AVAILABLE)
- How can I share my faith at work? Resourcing the people of God for evangelism in the workplace. (See **CONTENT NOT YET AVAILABLE Evangelism and Work*)
- Ethics for the marketplace – theory and case studies. (See *Ethics at Work*)
- Managing competing time demands: family, job, church, community and leisure. What does healthy whole-life discipleship look like? (See **CONTENT NOT YET AVAILABLE Rest and Work*)
- The work of Business. Models of Christian business and entrepreneurship. Business as mission and models for marketplace mission.
- How should we work as Christians. (See *How Should We Work as Christians*)
- The work of artists.
- Cultural and social transformation? Workplace ministry and cultural transformation. (See James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*,[28] Tim Keller, *Centre Church*,[29] and Andy Crouch *Culture Making*.[30])
- Christian leadership for the marketplace and the world.

CONTACTS, COUNSEL AND KUDOS FOR JOB SEEKERS

[Crossroads Career Network](#) is a not-for-profit ministry at Perimeter Church, Atlanta, USA, which seeks to provide contacts,

For Eugene Peterson the challenge lies in affirming the worth of the everyday ministry of all the people of God:

One of the most soul-damaging phrases that has crept into the Christian vocabulary is “full-time Christian work”. Every time it is used, it drives a wedge of misunderstanding between the way we pray and the way we work, between the way we worship and the way we make a living....

Most of what Jesus said and did took place in a secular workplace — in a farmer’s field, in a fishing boat, at a wedding feast, in a cemetery, at a public well asking a woman he didn’t know for a drink of water, on a country hillside that he turned into a huge picnic, in a courtroom, having supper in homes with acquaintances or friends.... Twenty seven times in John’s Gospel Jesus is identified as a worker: “My father is still working and I also am working” ([John 5:17](#)). Work doesn’t take us away from God; it continues the work of God. God comes into view on the first page of our scriptures as a worker. Once we identify God in his workplace working, it isn’t long before we find ourselves in our workplaces working in the name of God.[31]

Each church needs to identify the *particular* opportunities and challenges their people face in their places of work. Do people work as professionals, managers, labourers, technicians, public servants, teachers, or service workers? The opportunities and challenges vary widely between these types of work. Do congregants’ jobs have high status, pay, opportunity, power, security, and mobility, or low? *Initiatives*—a quarterly online publication of the National Centre for the Laity in the USA (www.catholiclabor.org/NCL)—

gives details in each issue of ways that local churches identify and are responding to the particular workplace situations their people are in. This could be a resource for churches looking for examples.

counsel, and encouragement to help you find a job, a career, your calling. Perimeter's Crossroads Career Ministry offers monthly career meetings that become foundations for support and spiritual growth. Each meeting includes a short presentation by a guest speaker or expert in the business community. Attendees gain insight and instruction on what scripture teaches about employment and provision from God. There is no charge to attend.

CREATIVE VIDEO PRESENTATION

To introduce the work theme to a group of young people a humorous, but also sobering, video clip of oppressive work conditions from Charlie Chaplin’s film *Modern Times* is screened, interspersed with digital photos of youth group members in their work places. The rock song ‘We gotta get out of this place’ by The Animals is playing at the same time. During each chorus pictures are overdubbed with the words ‘We gotta get out of this place’ until the last line when the following words are added ‘Or do we?’ A presentation on faith at work follows.