

Equipping you to live out your faith at work

<http://www.christiansintheworkplace.com/mission/>

Our Mission

The Christians in the Workplace Project seeks to encourage and equip Christians to live out their faith more fully at work.

Our project currently includes a video-based small group curriculum - Christians in the Workplace: Equipping You to Live Out your Faith at Work, a website with regular blogs, video clips, small group leader tips and forums, and a major research project. Future videos, curriculums, events, online forums, seminars and research projects are also under development right now.

Our Purpose

We have shaped Christians in the Workplace: Equipping You to Live Out Your Faith at Work A Six-Week Bible-based Small Group Experience, our research project and our other endeavors based on some fundamental realities about human nature: 1) Where we focus our attention, we focus our efforts; 2) When we are motivated, we make positive changes 3) When we are motivated, we make positive changes only if we are able.

1) Where we focus our attention, we focus our efforts.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us we cannot serve both God and mammon, (or money), because we will either love one and hate the other or serve one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24). Jesus is not saying it's bad to make money or be productive. Rather, he recognizes that if our primary or ultimate goal is making money or furthering our career, we will not have the focus to serve God faithfully. This is a pretty radical call to focus our attention on the kingdom of God, isn't it? It's been my experience that my default position is to focus on the task at hand to get it done. Unless I remind myself regularly, I don't try to discern God's intentions in my daily tasks. In this I'm not alone.

Recent research on the neurology of attention emphasizes something that seems obvious once you think about it: when we have decided to focus on something specific prior to an experience we recognize and remember more details and see more opportunities than if we simply move into the experience and allow the circumstances to determine our focus. For example, if you go for a walk in a park looking for nothing in particular, you'll notice what is novel—a noisy volleyball game near the path or the smells of a barbecue, perhaps. When asked, you're not likely to remember many details about that walk or discuss how they relate to you. However, if you go into the same park to evaluate it because you are thinking about moving into the neighborhood, you'll notice many details: the number of baseball diamonds and soccer fields, walking and biking trails, barbecue pits, swimming pools,

etc. When asked, you'll be able to give a thorough description of the park and talk about how it fits with your family's needs. This is called top down attention.

The Christians in the Workplace Project focuses our attention on kingdom of God opportunities. As an example, in our small group experience you'll learn to see that potential conflicts at work can become redemptive opportunities to build relationships and grow spiritually, rather than situations in which we simply react to protect our own interests. With continual effort to discern God's purposes, we begin to see work as a place filled with opportunities to further the kingdom of God.

2) When we are motivated, we make positive changes.

We've probably all known times when we could have done something good, but we didn't because we didn't "feel like it"; simple things like helping a neighbor move, or getting up to exercise instead of watching TV, or eating a healthy meal instead of a burger and fries for dinner. It was obvious what the right choice was: I just wasn't motivated to do it. However, as we focus on the kingdom of God, we can be motivated to change. As an positive example, my neighbor and I will bring in both of our trash cans, with whoever comes home first doing the task for both of us. There are some days that I come home and just want to bring in my trash cans and hurry in to see my kids and get stuff done around the house. However, I've made a commitment to being a good neighbor. My commitment was both an internal desire and external encouragement from a weekly small group that focused on neighborliness. Now, that commitment focuses my attention and no matter how I feel I take in both of our trash cans. I've overcome the "I don't feel like it," with a commitment to be a good neighbor.

The Bible talks about this problem when it challenges us to be doers of the word and not just hearers (James 1:22-25). Change research suggests that to be motivated to do what is good, we need three things: 1) to reflect on the positive outcomes of the action; 2) to make the changes with others who are doing it with us; and 3) to reflect on the successes and failures of our new actions so we can learn and grow. Our project is developed in such a way that participants will have the opportunity to do all of these things as they decide to grow spiritually.

3) When we are motivated, we make positive changes if we are able.

Have you ever been enthused to learn to speak a new language, play a musical instrument, or begin some other new endeavor, only to discover that you don't understand the instructions, don't know where to begin, or don't have the strength, time, or money to get started? Pop! goes the balloon and we go back to business as usual. Here, my friends, is the tricky part. There is no new program, no new one-size-fits-all plan that will revolutionize the way we live out our faith at work.

I remember wanting to learn how to share my faith more effectively at one point in my life. I joined a group that was learning a specific way to share the gospel. I tried it—once. Meanwhile, the gung-ho Christian I'd gone with jumped all over the opportunity. For him, it was powerful. I felt stupid and assumed I wasn't as committed a Christian as he was. Over time, God used me in some very different

ways and I learned it wasn't about my commitment; it was that what I had learned did not relate to me—to the unique person God had created me to be.

God works in many different ways. Because we are made in his image, with the right encouragement and a little prompting, we can come up with our own ideas about how to live out their faith at work in ways that 1) fit with how God made us, and 2) positively challenge us to grow in our Christian faith. We are shaping the various aspects of our Christians in the Workplace Project to enable us to take the initiative to learn how God wants to work through us at work.

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