



What do Christians do between Sundays?

TN10 Training Notes series: Management

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In the past few years there has been a welcome surge of interest in the true meaning of 'worship' as the offering of our whole lives in God's service (see, for example, Romans 12:1). Within this has come new thinking about the place of daily work itself, and the opportunities for Christians to be living witnesses by what they do in the work-place, not just what they say there.

But most churches still fail to value their members for what they get up to between Monday and Friday (or whatever) each week. The impression given by some is that work is solely a means for earning money (to finance the church!) or an opportunity for evangelism.

There are a number of excellent books and papers now available within this subject area, but as a provocative way-in to a leadership discussion on the issue, or as a means of testing whether any changes might be made to present attitudes and practices, here is a set of ten double-questions. The first five look at work itself, the second five focus more on witness in the work-place.

Each question comes in two different forms:

- **M** questions are for Ministers/leaders.
- **E** questions are for everyone else.

But it is best if they are then discussed by both groups together! These notes then provide some practical ideas your church might consider to improve matters.

The term 'work-place' should be seen to include all types of daily work (not just paid employment), including the home for those who 'work' there and those who cannot find work. It should also cover schools and colleges.

Q1-5: Work itself

M1 How well do you understand your members' work-places?

You should consider this question across the complete range of your members' occupations: managerial and operational, the special pressures of classroom or health-care, commuters and home-workers, high responsibility and monotonous assembly line, and of course home-carers, home-makers and the unemployed.

E1 How much interest do your church leaders take in the daily work you do?

Consider the kind of questions they ask you about it, their interest in your life off the church premises, and their understanding of any special needs you have.

M2 What teaching do you give your members on work itself as Christian ministry?

Check your sermons to see when last you preached on God's view of work, or look at your small group material to see when you last tackled a work-place theme (not just for evangelism).

E2 When was the last sermon you heard on your work-place activity being your worship?

If nothing comes to mind, you might ask for a series.

M3 How would you react if key church members told you that they felt that, instead of giving time to church committees or activities, they wanted to devote themselves to serving God in their work-place or local community?

E3 What value does your church place on your work-place activity compared with 'church' activities?

You might consider the likely reaction if you missed the home group or PCC/deacons' meeting because you were going to the pub with colleagues at work so that you could be Christ among them.

M4 In what order would you rank the following in value to the Church?

A full-time missionary worker, a farmer, a teenager at school/college, a Minister, an unemployed person, a senior manager, an office junior, a full-time youth worker, a manual worker, a father who stays at home to bring up children, someone active in local politics or community life? Be honest!

E4 What value to the Church (or your church) do you instinctively see yourself, compared with those on the list above that you are not?

M5 When is your church being church?

E5 When is your church being church?

Think about it!

Q6-10: Witness in the work-place

M6 How do you encourage your members to see their work-place as a mission field?

Or is proper outreach only the kind that is based at your church?

E6 If your church has outreach on the agenda, is your work-place seen as one of your primary responsibilities?

It is after all the place where most people will have more warm contacts than anywhere else.

M7 How (and how often) do you help your church members to challenge the non-Christian world-views and management practices that many of them meet daily?

One problem is that full-time Ministers rarely encounter the moral or ethical decisions that many of their congregation have to make each day.

E7 How (and how often) are you helped by your church to make the ethical and moral work-place decisions that confront you as a Christian?

Perhaps biblical principles to encourage and equip you are expounded and applied regularly; but then again, perhaps not.

M8 What training do you provide for your members in how to be a witness for Christ in their work-place?

They may need help with what to say, but the most powerful witness of all may not include words.

E8 When was the last time your church gave you practical help to enable you to be a more effective witness at work?

But perhaps the sermons at 10 am. on Sunday have little relevance to 10 am. on Monday. Sadly, if so, this would not be unusual.

M9 In what ways does your church see 'full-time Christian workers' in a different light from those who seek to witness in their work-place?

Many churches will distribute their prayer letters, feature them in services, and treat them as VIPs; then ignore some of the most obvious front-line workers in their congregation.

E9 In what ways do you see such people in a different light from yourself?

Perhaps you have been given the clear impression that your daily work is of little concern to God, and what matters is when you next come back to church. Roll on next Sunday when you can pick up your Christian faith once again!

M10 How much of your church's praying is for its members in their work-place

Consider Sunday intercessions, meetings for prayer, small groups.

E10 **How much prayer support do you receive from your church for you in your work-place?**

Can you share your deepest work concerns in your church and find support and encouragement?

Practical ideas you might consider

Teaching

- ☆ Aim for sermons at 10.00 am. on Sunday morning always to apply in practical outcome to wherever people will be at 10.00 am. on Monday morning.
- ☆ Ensure that your church's preaching programme covers the specific topics of work as worship, and dealing with ethical and moral issues in the work-place.
- ☆ Expect all your teachers/preachers to have regular exposure to a secular work-place or to be advised by a group on what work is like and where biblical help is required.
- ☆ Expect your Minister to spend some quality time each week with non-Christians.
- ☆ Question the traditional form of sermon as the only or main way of teaching: consider other means more in tune with the culture of the day as occasional alternatives.

Discussion

- ☆ Arrange a forum where the under 40's in your church can explain to older generations the specific issues facing them with their peers and at work.
- ☆ Hold occasional evening meetings or breakfasts for those in different types of work (or non-work) to discuss issues that might otherwise not get covered from a Christian perspective.
- ☆ Study all the features of your church services that may feel right for over 40's, but which may seem inappropriate for younger people: eg. day of week, time of day, forms of music, involvement by everyone, formality.
- ☆ Consider what features of your church life have become a barrier to people coming to meet Jesus Christ.

Practical service

- ☆ Ensure that for every church member their primary responsibility is to witness to Christ outside the church: be it in their family (for some), their community, their school, their social clubs, their work-place, etc.
- ☆ Emphasise that service as a youth leader, home group leader, Elder, Deacon, committee member, etc. is all secondary to people's external witness responsibility.
- ☆ Display a large-scale map of your wide-area (not just the church locality) and mark on it (in different colours), where your members live, where they work, the schools/colleges they attend, their clubs and leisure activities. Study the networks you have as a result.
- ☆ If you have a missionary display board, set up the equivalent for all your church members, perhaps highlighting different people each month. One month a display of teachers or farmers or students or those bringing up families. Add pointers for prayer, and issues that these people have to face.

Support

- ☆ Encourage those in different types of work to have occasional opportunity to seek prayer and practical help from others in similar situations.
- ☆ Once service in the work-place is seen as primary and not secondary, build in times in small groups for sharing and support for each other in these environments.
- ☆ If you offer prayer ministry after your services, encourage people to seek prayer for issues at work.

In the work-place most Christians spend many hours each week next to those of no or confused faith, with relationships already built. Few other outreach initiatives have this starting point. It should not take too much imagination to use these ten double-questions as a means to forming some clear suggestions for what your church might do in future and then to add to the list of practical ideas shown above.

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> then TN10. See also Training Notes TN91, *An MOT for disciples of Jesus*, and TN106, *Talk about taking time off*.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN10 under Management.

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