

The Spirituality of Work

Business People

**A six-session
small group guide**

**by William Droel
National Center for the Laity**

by William Droel

Edited by Paul Canavese & Ann Naffziger

The following business people contributed to this report:

Patricia Dondanville Berman	John McDermott	Joseph P. Sullivan
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Thomas Collins	Faustin Pipal	John Zeller
William Farley	James Ramerman	Mark Zwolski
Emilie Griffin	John Sobecki	
Phil Lindstrom	Grace Sullivan	

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All occupations in this collection:

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- Educators
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Small Group Guidelines

Ground Rules

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5. **Listen to the feedback from the group along the way.** Pace the time for the different sections based on the total time available and what works for your group.

My Work Environment

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Creator God,
you worked to create the world
and you are still working and laboring
on our behalf today.

Help us to cooperate with your grace
so that we may grow as disciples
who are doing the work
that you need done in our world.

Amen.

Sharing

How did you do last week with your resolution to be “salt” or “light” in your workplace? Did you follow through? What did you notice about doing it?

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

The spirituality of work must take into account the context of the business person's work—the norms and customs of the firm, the department, the industry and even the larger international economic system. For, acknowledged or not, these business norms and customs are of a moral character. And over time the work environment, apart from the intentions of any one business leader, forms workers for better or for worse.

"An authentic Christian spirituality has to evaluate what work conditions are acceptable for a whole, holy life," explains John McDermott. "The spirituality of work must address strains and problems in the marketplace."

Some companies and some economic systems, because they are well organized and consonant with

the best of human aspirations, make it easier to live a healthy spirituality. On the other hand, when companies are poorly organized or out of touch with what is good, they hurt the people they are intended to serve and, therefore, actually impede spirituality.

McDermott furnishes a general example of current marketplace culture which the spirituality of work must consider: "There is a trend today to return to a 1920s way of thinking that labor is a commodity. A spirituality of work must insist that the economy is for the sake of the person; the worker is not for the sake of the economy. I know, for example, that a spirituality of work, or any other ideal, cannot force a company to stay in business and keep people on the job. But I believe that a humane economy can be fashioned and I believe that Christian action can play a part in improving the economy and keeping people employed. A Christian spirituality of work can challenge some of the defects in the marketplace."

"A humane work environment relates to spirituality," says Jennifer Morrow, an industrial psychologist in Chicago, Illinois. "As a Christian, I believe that a humane environment is a reflection of the Incarnation. The greatest spiritual being, Christ, took on humanity. Now humanity can reflect Christ as it becomes more human and more humane. In business this means, among other things, being fair. Thus, business ethics is one expression of this spirituality."



The subject of business ethics is experiencing a boom time. The last few years have seen the multiplication of ethics centers, ethics journals, ethics courses and codes of ethics for business. It would be a shame, however, if all the current talk about business ethics actually led to a benign neglect of ethical behavior.

Business ethics cannot be confined to case studies about corporate tragedies or scandals, nor can it be confined to promulgating codes of conduct within companies. As understood by the spirituality of work, business ethics is a pro-active style of leadership

which challenges us to seek out areas of the corporate culture for improvement.

"I can't confine ethical climate building to a series of *do's* and *don'ts* and hard choices," says Joseph Sullivan. "I've got to convince my new and veteran employees alike that successfully dealing with the ethical dimension of our business can be growth-inducing and exciting. Hence, we emphasize the excitement of working on a *turnaround situation*. As a fertilizer and agricultural chemical company we have our full share of environmental challenges. We try to look at new products and systems which will produce a better environment. For example, at our potash mine we've developed a product which provides a more environmentally sensitive and, for those people with high blood pressure, a safer approach to softening water."



The practical spirituality of work demands periodic reflection on these questions and others such as these: Do my priorities serve who I am or only what I do? Does my schedule serve to remind me that the people I meet during the day are dignified in themselves, or does my schedule reinforce an attitude that people are valuable only as a means to my other ends?

"I'm on the fast track by nature," says William Farley. "I move fast. I eat fast. It's my style. I see a receptionist on the way into my office. I ask her about her weekend but I don't really mean it because before she answers, I am down the hall. I fail to celebrate her individuality and mine. I have to learn to pause for celebration; to be present."



Is my work done in solidarity with all workers and does it add a little something to the common good? Or is it isolated and only self-serving? Am I concerned about my subordinates—not only about their productivity, but about their overall well-being?

"The success of managers at my company," explains Stephanie Certain, "is judged by this criteria: Did subordinates become more successful than their manager? Last week my firm was reorganizing in a way that made some employees uncomfortable. I made a suggestion at a partners' meeting which addressed the situation and drew us together as a firm."

Reflection

1. Are there any conflicts for you between the way your business operates and your Christian beliefs? If so, give an example.
2. Discuss an ethical or moral dilemma in your current work situation that concerns you.
3. Name a decision you have made in your business career that has been influenced by your religious values.
4. Share about a time when you were called to work for "the greater good" in spite of an imperfect system.

Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

Romans 12:9-18, 21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reflection

1. When, in your work, is it difficult to "be ardent in spirit and serve the Lord"?
2. St. Augustine once said we should "hate the sin but love the sinner." When in your career have you been called to do that?
3. How are you called to overcome evil with good in your profession?
4. What helps you to hold fast to what is good when you are tempted to give into apathy or despair?

Action Response

Consider this question for your week ahead. It does not need to be discussed now with the group, but we will reflect on it briefly next week.

What might you do differently this week in your workplace in light of this reading and reflection?

Closing Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Jesus, our Lord and our guide,

You worked tirelessly on behalf of the dignity of all,
especially those most often
neglected, forgotten, or outcast.

You know what it is like
to try to bring love and compassion
into an imperfect world.

Teach us how we are called to serve like you.
Show us how you would have us fight for justice.
Grant us hope and perseverance
when we are tempted to lose hope.
May we do what we can to bring about
your reign of justice and love.

Amen.

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Educators

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National Center for the Laity

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The following teachers contributed to this report:

Kenneth Bartos	Ruth Ann Derbas	Carl Malanga	Robert Schoenwetter
Agnes Collins	Clyde Evans	Kathleen O'Donnell	
Elizabeth Collins	Donna Frazier	Carolyn Reinertson	
Charles DiSalvo	Rebecca Ann Hilgedick	Wayne Renderman	

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Transforming Work Frustrations

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Creator God, you worked to create the world and you are still working and laboring on our behalf today. Help us to cooperate with your grace so that we may grow as disciples who are doing the work that you need done in our world. Amen.

Sharing

Did you do anything consciously to act as “salt” or “light” at work last week? Please share.

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

All work is inevitably linked with toil, hardship, and frustrations. In every teaching setting there is accountability. There are concerns about promotions or scheduling considerations. There are personality conflicts. "Let's face it, frustration is inherent in teaching," says Carolyn Reinertson, who has been teaching reading and language arts in primary grades for 23 years.

The spirituality of work encourages teachers to try to improve situations and eliminate problems when possible. In fact, it recognizes that teachers can complain about the frustrations of their work without destroying its spiritual meaning. Even when it comes to the paycheck, the spirituality of work does not mean accepting unjust wages. At all times an active spirituality of work finds a way to build on the negatives and perhaps even find in them a glimmer of new life. As work is a participation in God's ongoing creation, it is, in a certain sense, a collaboration in Christ's redemption.

"Sometimes I am misunderstood," says elementary

school principal Ruth Ann Derbas. "I sit at my desk and wonder how Jesus would act in the same situation. Deep down I know that I am an educator. It is my ministry and I am good at it. But at those times I pray for courage. If a tough situation came around a week later, I would go through the misunderstanding again."



Despite the great benefits of our organized educational institutions, there are some frustrations that come with them. The school may limit what a teacher can do in a given situation. "Sometimes I have to fight the institution in order to deliver education," Elizabeth Collins continues. "I suppose this a problem common to many occupations. I work in spite of the institution sometimes, rather than because of it."

Among such frustrations, teachers will most often mention paperwork. "The bureaucratic paperwork can be weighty," explains Kathleen O'Donnell. "For example, our district does not have a full-day kindergarten program, and thus many first graders are unprepared to handle the expectations of the institution. I have to decide how many and which children will repeat first grade. Maybe with some specific extra help a child could avoid repeating. No matter what I decide there is a long process to follow. There are services on a district level which might benefit a child. This means a 14 page form. There are many children in this category."

Teachers are also often frustrated by administrative personalities and procedures that seem too business-like, not attuned to the uniqueness of the individual teacher and the needs of the students. "In teaching, as in every other job, there are conflicts with administrators," says Kenneth Bartos. "For example, I might be evaluated on the basis of one or two visits to my classroom. The many other things I do with students are overlooked. At those times when I feel like I am being treated impersonally, I think about the reasons why I am a teacher. I fall back on my spirituality."

"Education has too often been made into a business," complains Kathleen O'Donnell. "The educational process has been reduced to measurable products. Some people in the system presume that learning can only be viewed as numbers, charts and graphs."

"At the same time that society has high expectations of teachers, it also thinks that teachers work a short day, never on weekends, nor during the summer," says high school teacher Rebecca Ann Hilgedick. "Our society expects a teacher to do something worthwhile during the day, but it doesn't appreciate all the preparation that is necessary to do that. Our society is asking for better education, but it doesn't value educators."

The spirituality of work offers the virtues of time management as a partial response to these frustrations. "Hustle and full-court press at work are virtues," says Charles DiSalvo. "There is important work to be done. We have short, very short lives. So I go to work and I hustle. My time is very important to me and as a Christian I am responsible to make work as productive and fruitful as possible. A teacher can be friendly, yet follow some simple principles: Deal with paper as quickly and definitively as possible. I try to handle each piece of paper only once. My other rule is to have an early-morning planning session with myself and set my priorities for the day. Of course, a student may knock on the door at any time. I have to use my best judgment. I might deal with the person immediately or make an appointment for later."



Institutional frustrations are not confined to the particular school in which the teacher works. One example is the frustration many feel because of the disparity between their pay and the importance of their work. "Regardless of what any so-called education reformers might say, every teacher is underpaid," opines Kenneth Bartos. "This is true in the public sector, especially in the lower grades. It is very true in the private school systems."

Because of the wage scale, many teachers hold part-time second or third jobs. "Sometimes the moonlighting detracts from what should be the main focus of a teacher's attention," says Kenneth Bartos. "I take small jobs on the side but the work is never steady. I usually teach a summer course in a nearby state. The course doesn't pay much, but it is predictable. Teachers don't usually leave their jobs

to go to another school. They quit to go into a different business."

"I do not consider myself economically poor," says Wayne Renderman, "but there are many times when my family has to think twice about purchases where other people might forge ahead. My wife has to work. For financial reasons I dropped out of teaching one time and worked for a steel company. I found that the pressures of lesson plans and student discipline merely gave way to the pressures of processing orders and quoting accurate prices over the phone. I remained with the steel company for only three months. I wasn't in love with that line of work. There was an opening back at the high school and I decided to go back to the teaching I loved."

Reflection

1. Name a frustration that you struggle with in your current job. What attitude or behavior could you adopt toward this frustrating situation that might allow God's grace to break through?
2. What are some sacrifices you make in the normal course of your job that you can offer up to God?
3. What helps you to stay focused on the call to be a teacher filled with wisdom and kindness despite the paperwork or bureaucratic hoops you must jump through?
4. What grace do you need to ask God for in your work in order to allow it to become less frustrating and more fulfilling?



Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

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Reflection

1. When, in your work, is it difficult to “be ardent in spirit and serve the Lord”?
2. How are you called to overcome evil with good in your profession?
3. What helps you to hold fast to what is good when you are tempted to give into apathy or despair?

Action Response

Consider this question for your week ahead. It does not need to be discussed now with the group, but we will reflect on it briefly next week.

What might you do differently this week at your job when you are confronted with a particular frustration?

Closing Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

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You worked tirelessly on behalf of the dignity of all,
especially those most often
neglected, forgotten, or outcast.

You know what it is like
to try to bring love and compassion
into an imperfect world.

Teach us how we are called to serve like you.

Show us how you would have us fight for justice.

Grant us hope and perseverance

when we are tempted to lose hope.

May we do what we can to bring about
your reign of justice and love..

Amen.

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Homemakers

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Patricia Coover	Anita Eberhart	Helen Long	Tom Samway
Catherine Corbett	Ruth Farley	Chris Murphy	John Schwab
Rosemary Cronin	Molly Finn	Denise Prue	Kathy Steward
Pat DeGregerio	Kathi Lehr	Mary Rooney	Joanne Toomey

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5. **Listen to the feedback from the group along the way.** Pace the time for the different sections based on the total time available and what works for your group.

Aware of God in My Work

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Creator God,
you worked to create the world
and you are still working and laboring
on our behalf today.

Help us to cooperate with your grace
so that we may grow as disciples
who are doing the work
that you need done in our world.

Amen.

Sharing

How did you do last week with your resolution to be “salt” or “light” in your home or neighborhood? Did you follow through? What did you notice about doing it?

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

The homemakers who contributed to this report identified particular people, places and situations in their work environment where they glimpse God by using their spirituality of work looking glass.

Among God's refractors, children are most frequently mentioned. "The closest that an average person can come to seeing God is to observe children," maintains Patricia Coover. "It is unlikely that I will meet a holy person like Mother Teresa. But, if I am observant, I encounter holiness in my children. They are pure, like God is pure. They are innocent. They are wise in a certain way. Children are like God because children are funny and God is full of humor. Their forgiveness is almost immediate.

"My daughter had a fight with her friend. The friend stormed home, but my daughter seemed unconcerned. 'She'll be back in a few minutes,' my daughter said, 'as soon as she sees that her mother is sleeping.' Sure enough, the friend came back for that very reason. The two of them then played for several hours and not a word was mentioned of the incident. There is wisdom there. It is almost as if children realize that life is short. I know that in many ways children act as if they will live forever. But in a profound way they also understand how valuable each moment is."

Coover thus concludes that "it is an honor to be in the presence of children. Not only at the big moments like graduations. But even in the moments when they are driving me insane. I was standing at the kitchen sink preparing the dinner. My son was pulling on me; making me irritable. Then, in a moment, I was able to look down at him and it occurred to me that I was his whole life. My attention was his complete need. Suddenly the feeling of duress left me."

Anita Eberhardt shares her story of an encounter with God's forgiveness through children: "My eight year old is a perfectionist. She has so many routines in the morning that it is a struggle to get her to school on time. One day I was yelling to get her out of the door. I must admit that I used abusive language. She started to cry. 'I can't even hear God telling me that He loves me,' she said tearfully. This was a revelation to me. It meant that most of the time she *did* hear God through me. It also meant, as she said, that she was not hearing God through me at this time. And, for me, it meant that I was now hearing God through her. Well, she was certainly late for school that day because we held each other as we both cried. And we spent some time mending our relationship."

Rosemary Cronin also sees God's love in the action of her children: "Last year, both of my parents died within a month of one another. During an illness they stayed at our home. My mother had poor circulation in her feet and had to soak them. Our son was seven at the time. He saw her in pain. Like firemen in a brigade, he took his three year old brother in tow into

the kitchen. They prepared a large cooking pot of cold water and dish washing liquid, then managed to carry it into the room where my mother was staying. Never mind that the cold water would probably worsen her condition. The boys responded, on their own, to someone in need. My husband and I looked at each other with tears in our eyes."



Several homemakers point out that God, who once resembled a disgraced outcast, is revealed in a special way through special people. "Every family is dealing with a special need," Tom Samway of Oakland, California, reminds us. "Maybe it's a child with a disability, or an alcohol problem, or an aged grandparent who needs care. Homemaking is spiritual as I respond to the various needs around me."

"We see the blessings of God in our retarded daughter Dorothy," says Helen Long of Waban, Massachusetts. "She is the cause of great frustration at times, but a very special blessing. For example, Dorothy has influenced my children's careers, directing them toward interesting work. One of my daughters is getting her degree in special education. Another son teaches in a special school. Another daughter is a lawyer and she does plenty of work for the disabled. Dorothy has been responsible for great solidarity within our family and with other families of the developmentally disabled."



Other homemakers point out that God, who once walked among the derelicts and the neglected on the streets and in the alleys of Nazareth and Jerusalem, is revealed among the forgotten people in their own neighborhoods. In particular, some homemakers understand that God, whose parents could not find a place to stay in Bethlehem and who wandered as illegal refugees in Egypt, is revealed in the homeless.

"A homeless woman with serious mental problems came to our door two and a half years ago," says Patricia Coover. "I brought her in for a little food. She returned the next day and every day since. Over 800 times now we have given her a meal. It's to the point where if I am not at home, one of the children takes care of fixing something for this person. Often times my husband sees a homeless person hanging out around a local fast food restaurant. He ushers the person inside and buys him a meal."

"To me spirituality means addressing social problems," says Anita Eberhardt. "We can't address the far away world problems except by donating money and prayers. But part of homemaking is to be available to the upset and the unsettled. More than once we had someone stay overnight at our home because of some difficulty they were experiencing. It's inconvenient, I admit. But the good that we do snowballs. As a homemaker I have to make a home out of the whole earth."

Using a spirituality of work, Denise Prue sometimes sees God in the less fortunate. She also sometimes sees "the difference that my spirituality can have in my own life reflected in my children's behavior. For example, my daughter Katheryn was given a dollar by her godfather on her fourth birthday. She had that dollar spent a hundred ways in her imagination. Then one Saturday my husband took her shopping to spend the dollar. On the way they stopped at a restaurant where my daughter saw a collection box for sick children. Without hesitation she put her dollar in the box. 'They need it more,' she said. Even at her young age, she was impressed by the plight of the poor and the obligation of Christians to respond."

Catherine Corbett and her husband are involved in various charitable organizations in their Needham, Massachusetts, community—aiding sick children, providing special recreational facilities. "All of this pertains to the spiritual life," Corbett says, "because it is about making a neighborhood, indeed a whole society, into a home. Jesus taught us to be loving, to care for one another. His teaching is practiced in its most elemental form in the home. From there the practice extends to the neighborhood, the community, the world."

Reflection

1. If you have children, describe a time when they helped you to experience God.
2. "Every family is dealing with a special need," said Tom Samway. Name a special need(s) in your family. How is it both a frustration and a blessing?
3. Describe any opportunities you have to be present to a neglected or overlooked person in your neighborhood because you work at home.
4. Through whom do you most easily experience God at this time in your life?

Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

Romans 12:9-18, 21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reflection

1. When, in your work, is it difficult to “be ardent in spirit and serve the Lord”?
2. How are you called to overcome evil with good in your home, neighborhood, or community?
3. What helps you to hold fast to what is good when you are tempted to give into apathy or despair?

Action Response

Consider this suggestion for your week ahead. It does not need to be discussed now with the group, but we will reflect on it briefly next week.

Try to be especially conscious this week of looking for God in the people you care for in your home or those you come into contact with in your wider community.

Closing Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Jesus, our Lord and our guide,

Many in our society are not aware of the work
that we do behind the scenes
in our homes and neighborhoods.

But you see it and bless it.

Help us to remember its great value.

Fill our hearts with gratitude
for the opportunity to do this necessary work.

Remind us throughout our days
of your presence amidst the ordinary.

May we see your face in the faces of those
we care for and meet along our way.

Let us be especially attentive to
those who are most often neglected,
forgotten, or outcast.

May we be a reflection of God for them.

We pray this in your name. Amen.

The Spirituality of Work

Lawyers

**A six-session
small group guide**

**by William Droel
National Center for the Laity**

by William Droel

Edited by Paul Canavese & Ann Naffziger

The following lawyers contributed to this report:

Patricia Dondanville Berman	Donna Krier Ioppolo	Matthew Simon
W. Joel Blass	Maureen Ivory	William Spielberger
Martin Burns	Philip Maphey	Fr. Ronald Stake
Charles DiSalvo	Gwendolyn Moreland	Lawrence Suffredin
Mary Elizabeth Dunne	William Raleigh	
Thomas Geoghegan	Sr. Catherine Ryan	

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Small Group Guidelines

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7. **It's OK to agree to disagree.** It's just a fact of life that everyone has different opinions. If the group has differing thoughts on an issue, there's no requirement that everyone agree. Respect everyone's opinions and where they are at in their journey.
8. **Turn off mobile phones** before the group begins! Put your electronic lives on hold for this short time to be fully present to others.

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2. **Go over the ground rules** at the beginning of the series, and quickly review them at the start of each session. Some of the material is challenging, since it explores how the Gospel challenges us to change our lives. Make sure that the below ground rules are followed so everyone feels comfortable in the group.
3. **Gauge the dynamic of your group.** If necessary, you (or another designated facilitator) may need to gently facilitate to keep the group on schedule, remain on-topic, and/or allow all voices a chance to enter the circle. You may feel timid interrupting someone, but this can be a very important role that helps the whole group. Apologize in advance when reviewing the ground rules with the group. However, don't put people on the spot by compelling them to share.
4. **Facilitate answering reflection questions.** Sometimes sharing times can be a little awkward waiting for people to initiate. You can rotate around the circle, but we recommend that you try something called the "popcorn" method. One person starts, and when they are done sharing they choose the next person (who is always allowed to pass and pick another person). We have found that in practice this works very well, sometimes adding a little levity.
5. **Listen to the feedback from the group along the way.** Pace the time for the different sections based on the total time available and what works for your group.

Addressing a Broken System

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Creator God,
you worked to create the world
and you are still working and laboring
on our behalf today.

Help us to cooperate with your grace
so that we may grow as disciples
who are doing the work
that you need done in our world.

Amen.

Sharing

How did you do last week with your resolution to be “salt” or “light” in your workplace? Did you follow through? What did you notice about doing it?

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

Many lawyers have serious reservations about the legal system and the assumptions upon which the system rests. One of those assumptions is fairness—that the parties to a dispute will have equal resources and talent on their behalf.

"In fact, this assumption is seriously flawed," says Charles DiSalvo. "For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the uneven distribution of wealth in this country, the system produces lousy results."

"There might generally be equal representation in areas of family law or in mergers," says Thomas Geoghegan, who practices law in Chicago, Illinois. "But there are vast areas of the law where rich people use the system to protect themselves. Thus the rules are really stacked against certain kinds of outcomes. For example, when I represent participants in pension

fund suits against corporations I encounter enormous legal hurdles. There are big, powerful law firms who use those hurdles to achieve ends that are not right, not good. Morally, I could not be representing the other side in such cases. The system is quite often unfair to the poor and to working people."

Or take the example of a landlord-tenant contest between a small shopkeeper renting space in a large complex owned by a corporate agency. The shopkeeper will probably be represented by a solo practitioner of limited resources who is hired for the occasion. The corporation, by contrast, will have in-house counsel or be represented by a large, resourceful firm that is on retainer. Does the tenant, represented by an over-worked attorney with a small support staff get the same quality of representation as the landlord who is represented by a well-paid, well-supported staff of attorneys, paralegals, and investigators? The answer is possibly yes, though certainly not always, no. There are always solo practitioners who can out-hustle any large law firm. But such people are exceptional.

On the criminal side, many lawyers live in jurisdictions where the government fails to adequately fund appointed counsel for indigent defendants. Where funding is available, it comes in such small amounts as to guarantee that usually only inexperienced lawyers, trying to build their practices, will put their names on the appointment list. These lawyers are then faced by career prosecutors with staff and investigative resources that easily out-match those of the less experienced lawyer. In addition, the appointed counsel in many jurisdictions usually have little or no government money to secure capable expert witnesses. The prosecution, meanwhile, usually has a stable of highly skilled expert witnesses of every sort and description.

"Those who can afford an expensive trial attorney will probably get better quality representation," says William Raleigh. "This is a generalization, of course. But it is also not right. Sometimes those who need representation the most are the poor or the middle class."

"The question is whether in real life the advocacy system fosters responsibility to justice or only to certain individual clients," says Martin Burns, who practiced labor law in Chicago. "I have a problem separating myself as a Christian from myself as a lawyer, and so I have to wonder if I should accept a system in which the end results depend so much on the particular qualities of the lawyer."

The limitations of the system drive some lawyers to seek a closer identity between the causes and people they represent and their religious beliefs. Such lawyers, for example, might work for a legal aid society, believing that helping the poor obtain food stamps or housing is a way of fulfilling the Christian corporal works of mercy. Similarly, other lawyers might work in projects to improve prison conditions on the theory that this is the direct legal equivalent of a Christian spiritual work of mercy. Other lawyers might do nothing but civil rights work for racial minorities or for women, believing that Christian social teaching demands that they defend the dignity of each person. Still others might focus entirely on mediation of disputes, rather than on litigation. Many lawyers, regardless of their area of practice, perform some work for the poor and for human rights.



Some lawyers would say a serious imbalance has undermined their belief in the system itself. They do not believe that the system will produce justice if only each lawyer plays his or her appointed role. They may also believe that playing by the rules of the system damages their moral sensitivities. Some lawyers ask themselves: Can I really do or say things for clients that I would never do or say for myself? Can I really divorce my professional self and my personal self?

Other lawyers see the legal system as a finely tuned, complex, deliberately designed machine that produces justice by applying objectively fair rules to all parties. As a consequence of this theory, some individual lawyers believe that they serve the greater good by staying within their respective roles. It is not a breach of their morality to represent causes or clients who, in other settings, would violate their Christian beliefs.

Many others strike a balance, make regular judgments about the content of their own practice based on their belief in the holiness of ordinary work. Such lawyers see everyday responsibilities not as weights dragging them down, but as opportunities to do God's work in

the world. These lawyers believe that almost any job can make a contribution to the kingdom of God.

Reflection

1. Are there any conflicts for you between the way the legal system works and your Christian beliefs? If so, give an example.
2. Discuss an ethical or moral dilemma in your current work situation that concerns you.
3. Name a decision you have made in your legal career that has been influenced by your religious values.
4. Share about a time when you were called to work for "the greater good" in spite of an imperfect system.

Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

Romans 12:9-18, 21

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Reflection

1. When, in your work, is it difficult to “be ardent in spirit and serve the Lord”?
2. St. Augustine once said we should “hate the sin but love the sinner.” When in your career have you been called to do that?
3. How are you called to overcome evil with good in your profession?
4. What helps you to hold fast to what is good when you are tempted to give into apathy or despair?

Action Response

Consider this question for your week ahead. It does not need to be discussed now with the group, but we will reflect on it briefly next week.

What might you do differently this week in your workplace in light of this reading and reflection?

Closing Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Jesus, our Lord and our guide,

You worked tirelessly on behalf of the dignity of all,
especially those most often
neglected, forgotten, or outcast.

You know what it is like
to try to bring love and compassion
into an imperfect legal system.

Teach us how we are called to serve like you.
Show us how you would have us fight for justice.
Grant us hope and perseverance
when we are tempted to lose hope.
May we do what we can to bring about
your reign of justice and love.

Amen.

The Spirituality of Work

Nurses

**A six-session
small group guide**

**by William Droel
National Center for the Laity**

by William Droel

Edited by Paul Canavese & Ann Naffziger

The following nurses contributed to this report:

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Maureen Gibson, R.N.

Margaret Alice Maye, R.N.

Mary Doyle, R.N.

Anne Gleason, R.N.

Mary Teresa Frech, R.N.

Suzanne Durburg, R.N.

Fran Hoekstra, R.N.

Gwen Strutzenberg, R.N.

Barbara Cohn, R.N.

Julia Lane, R.N.

Judy Taylor, R.N.

Mary Ghilardi, R.N.

Mary Majdecki, R.N.

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5. **Listen to the feedback from the group along the way.** Pace the time for the different sections based on the total time available and what works for your group.

My Work Environment

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Creator God,
you worked to create the world
and you are still working and laboring
on our behalf today.

Help us to cooperate with your grace
so that we may grow as disciples
who are doing the work
that you need done in our world.

Amen.

Sharing

How did you do last week with your resolution to be “salt” or “light” in your workplace? Did you follow through? What did you notice about doing it?

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

Medicine has so many diverse specialties that the response to different illnesses has to be well organized. An institution is a group of people organized to meet a human need. Through the organized rules and procedures of their institution, nurses contribute to addressing a vast array of health needs.

There are great benefits to our ability to organize institutions. For example, people today have a good chance of surviving their first heart attack. Because of the complex institutions we have devised, the heart patient counts on a predictable response from paramedics, nurses, lab technicians, physicians and support staff.

American television portrays health professionals as rugged individuals, a modern variation of the lone ranger. Real nurses find it amusing that the TV nurse

is in the operating room in the morning and in pediatrics in the afternoon. "Is there only one nurse in that whole hospital?" wonders nurse Barbara Cohn, a telemetry specialist.

No medical or health care professional works in isolation. Their response to illness is part of a vast network of specialists, all coordinated in institutions to deliver a remarkable quality of health care. "I'm sure most people don't appreciate the intricacies of a hospital," says veteran floor nurse Anne Gleason. "We rely on many different departments at any given moment. The labs usually do a good job in processing everything and getting test results back to us. Everyone pulls together."

In fact nearly every accomplishment in health care depends on teamwork and dense institutional interdependence. Thus the contribution a nurse makes to the delivery of health care is dependent on her institution. It is difficult to perform good work in a disorganized institution. On the other hand, a well organized institution helps the nurse to be at her best.

There are some frustrations, though, which come as a by-product of our ability to organize institutions. The same hospital, clinic, or doctor's office also limits what the nurse does in a given situation. For example, a certain treatment seems obvious to the admitting nurse. Before she responds, however, there are procedures and routines that must be followed. The seemingly unnecessary and frustrating delay is the price we pay for efficient institutions. "What we are talking about is the culture of our institutions," explains Suzanne Durburg. "Sometimes the delivery of health care gets stuck in the orthodoxy of the hospital." *Newsweek* columnist Meg Greenfield expresses the feelings of many people, both patients and health care professionals, when she states: "I had wonderful doctors and nurses and therapists who rescued me, along with superior hospital staff and administrators. They and their technological equipment operate, [though], against a background of remorseless ... bureaucratic inefficiency and indifference. The distinctive, essential hospital

experience of our times is a maddening combination of individual excellence and systematic incompetence."

Among such frustrations, nurses will most often mention paperwork. "If it isn't charted, it might as well not have been done," says Barbara Cohn. Bureaucratic paperwork is particularly annoying to nurses who see the time spent on such procedures as time away from direct patient care. "Charting consumes a great deal of time now because of insurance and governmental requirements," Cohn explains. "I might sometimes be charting at 4:30 PM even though my shift ended at 3:30 PM. This happens whenever I have patients who need attention throughout the day. I have a hard time giving up the human aspect of patient care for a paperwork focus. It is hard to strike a balance."

This attention to bureaucratic necessities in the midst of even life and death situations is one more competency of nursing. "I have to develop a way to remember to charge for all the things that are administered to a patient," says Mary Majdecki. "In an emergency situation I am running fast and the doctor is using a lot of materials. Later I have to remember everything that was done and used so that I can chart it and bill for it."

Nonetheless, despite all the tricks of the trade, nurses are continually frustrated by the paperwork necessities of their institutions. "I was behind in forms," admits Donna DelSanto. "The supervisor took me into her office and reprimanded me. I told her that I was a nurse and not a computer programmer and that I will always put patients first. She understood completely, but she felt compelled to reprimand me."

"Paperwork takes up too much of the time of a shrinking work force," according to Anne Gleason. "Nurses don't have time to give attention to the patient and the patient's family and still take care of the paperwork. It is not unusual for me to be charting an hour after my shift ends. We hardly ever leave the floor for lunch."



What does all this talk about institutions and practices have to do with a spirituality of work? In the past, spirituality was often an inward, private search for peace and the resolution of tensions.

In its basic sense, though, spirituality is about seeking and responding to God's presence. Sometimes God comes in splendor and majesty; other times God

comes in a quiet place and time. But quite often God comes disguised amid the daily chores of laundry and shopping or medical charting.

A spirituality of work recognizes that God not only comes to us through Scripture, worship, nature and neighbor but also through the institutional environment we have created. A spirituality of work, therefore, requires an appreciation for all the institutions in which God might be found—in the hospital or clinic, around the home and in the wider community. "You don't have to be in a church to be near to God," quips Margaret Alice Maye. "You can talk to God in my hospital too."

Reflection

1. Name a gift to society that comes from the marvelous interdependence of medical professionals working together.
2. Where do you experience teamwork in your job that is satisfying and fulfilling?
3. Share about a frustration in your job that you need to ask God for wisdom or grace to deal with.
4. What helps you to stay focused on the call to be a healing presence for your patients despite the paperwork or bureaucratic hoops you must jump through?

Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

Romans 12:9-18, 21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

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neglected, forgotten, or outcast.

You know what it is like
to try to bring love and compassion
into an imperfect world.

Teach us how we are called to serve like you.
Show us how you would have us fight for justice.
Grant us hope and perseverance
when we are tempted to lose hope.
May we do what we can to bring about
your reign of justice and love.

Amen.

The Spirituality of Work

Unemployed Workers

**A six-session
small group guide**

by Joseph Gossé
National Center for the Laity

by Joseph Gossé

Edited by Paul Canavese & Ann Naffziger

The following people contributed to this report:

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- Various Occupations

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Small Group Guidelines

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1. **Ensure good hospitality.** Members of your group may be new to a small group experience or the larger community. Facilitate introductions and be sure everyone feels welcome.
2. **Go over the ground rules** at the beginning of the series, and quickly review them at the start of each session. Some of the material is challenging, since it explores how the Gospel challenges us to change our lives. Make sure that the below ground rules are followed so everyone feels comfortable in the group.
3. **Gauge the dynamic of your group.** If necessary, you (or another designated facilitator) may need to gently facilitate to keep the group on schedule, remain on-topic, and/or allow all voices a chance to enter the circle. You may feel timid interrupting someone, but this can be a very important role that helps the whole group. Apologize in advance when reviewing the ground rules with the group. However, don't put people on the spot by compelling them to share.
4. **Facilitate answering reflection questions.** Sometimes sharing times can be a little awkward waiting for people to initiate. You can rotate around the circle, but we recommend that you try something called the "popcorn" method. One person starts, and when they are done sharing they choose the next person (who is always allowed to pass and pick another person). We have found that in practice this works very well, sometimes adding a little levity.
5. **Listen to the feedback from the group along the way.** Pace the time for the different sections based on the total time available and what works for your group.

The Spiritual Task of Looking for Work

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

(Psalm 139:1-10)

Sharing

Did you jot down all of the tasks you do in your household, family, neighborhood, and wider community that are work, even though they are unpaid? Share any new insights it gave you about your identity as an unpaid worker these days.

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

To be unemployed is not to be out of work. Unemployed people often work extremely hard—at family or volunteer activities, for example, or at

searching for a job. The real definition of unemployment is, instead, "the situation in which compensation for one's labor is absent, despite one's need and desire to work for pay." The spirituality of work for unemployed workers, then, provides a way of achieving spiritual growth in the very task of looking for work.

When a person is unemployed, it is easy for him or her to start with the negatives: rejection, disappointment, discouragement, and a raft of ill feelings. Some unemployed workers quarrel with God: "This is how you treat your faithful ones?" they ask. Other unemployed workers begin by bargaining with God: "Find a job for me and then I'll believe or then I'll do X, Y, and Z in return." Still others feel that "God does not care about my work or the fact that I am out of work."

Sometimes experience itself can shut the door of employment as effectively as the lack of experience. Job seekers who are told they don't have enough experience commonly reply: "How can I gain experience on a job if I am not hired for the job?" Today the situation is turned inside out when a job seeker hears to his or her dismay: "You have too much experience for this job; we cannot pay you the compensation you deserve. Therefore, we will not hire you."



In all cases, however, faith in God's constant presence and love must be the starting point—not a bargaining chip or an accidental circumstance—for all workers, including those unemployed. This is not a lofty, unreachable spirituality. Jay Davis, a lay minister who hosts a support group for unemployed workers in his church, remarks: "Since the transition to new work, perhaps not the same kind as before, is a creative process, it calls for special openness to the Spirit and the creative activity of God."

We can encounter God in the process of reading employment ads, sending resumes, making phone calls, networking, waiting to see a prospective employer, or being interviewed. So, too, can God be

found in our unpaid work around the home, with the family, in the community, and in church. It all depends on the attitude of the unemployed worker.

"You must realize," says Terrence Fisher, "that being unemployed is full time work. The next day's activities must be planned; there are phone calls, interviews, resumes, and networking. All of this requires focus and energy. It is the opposite of being idle and feeling sorry for yourself. I get up at 8:00 A.M. and work all day at finding paid employment."

Many out-placement consultants insist that clients record the hours they spend looking for a job, just as if they were being paid. Davis notes: "The view that unemployment is really just job transition is a conscious attempt to make it clear that work continues in this period of unemployment but in a different form. We teach unemployed workers how to use the telephone, how to interview, how to network, and how to present an attractive appearance. With these mechanics in place, they can then take the spirituality of listening, reflecting on one's life and choice of career, examining one's fundamental purpose, talents, and skills very seriously."

"My father, an architect, was a perfectionist," says Walter Schumann, a licensed psychologist. "I could never understand that until my recent unemployment from the county mental health department. I thought back to my father's unemployment during the Depression. Each day that he looked for new employment, he seemed more committed to the spiritual aspects of being an architect. The same happened to me. Instead of giving up my contacts in the community, especially among low income people, I used my unemployment as an opportunity to help people in a more human way. I made my unemployment a time to get to the core of what I really believe, to see if I couldn't practice my profession in a new way or, if not, to get out of it entirely. The loss of employment was a chance for me to define and develop the spiritual center of my work as a psychologist."

Where do unemployed workers discover the spirituality of their hard work in what can be the most frustrating of times and circumstances? Perhaps it is deep inside the tedium of their daily work: in the class that they attend to upgrade skills, in the home repairs that they suddenly have time for, while chauffeuring the kids to baseball or ballet practice, or in the demands and stresses on their family life.

Craig Gibson, a stock broker, notes: "The good that can be done in a time of unemployment consists in meeting the expectations and concerns of people in each step of the job search. The people whom unemployed workers meet during their job search should become better people because of the encounter."



The tone of an unemployed worker's brief encounters with others need not be terse, angry, or impatient. We can respond humanely to all those we meet, acknowledge their existence and good will, and conduct our job searches in ways that demonstrate that we are truly followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The spirituality of work emphasizes virtues like charity, kindness, peace, and patience. Unemployed workers need to listen and be receptive at all times. Tolerance of uncertainty and rejection can make kindness, courtesy, and pleasantness avenues of the Spirit as well as paths to opportunity.

Another insight offered by a spirituality of work for unemployed workers is that we are enriched in our dependency. The deference to and acknowledgment of others that comprises the daily work of a job search can be activities of faith that spill over into the rest of our lives. Our efforts to overcome obstacles and challenges can give us a realistic sense of solidarity with sisters and brothers in similar circumstances and help dispose us to finding reward in the act of helping others.

Herman Loewen, a car dealer who was unemployed for many months after losing his business, comments: "I had always thought of myself as a caring Christian, but the bankruptcy taught me a few things firsthand. I have a better handle on how to be more caring to a hurting neighbor. I think all of us care about our fellow Christians. We would really like to do something that will relieve suffering. But many of us do not know how to express our concern."

Finally, the church community can play a vital role in helping unemployed workers take their faith to the streets. In their recent pastoral message *Widespread Unemployment: A Call to Mobilize the Social Forces of Our Nation*, the Canadian Catholic Bishops said:

Concern for the unemployed and the task of humanizing our economy must become a more central priority in the ongoing life of the church itself. All those responsible for ministry in the

church must ensure that the social teaching of the church is integrated into preaching and catechesis. Everyone must show particular attentiveness and compassion to the anguish and needs of the unemployed.

Reflection

1. Have you found it easier or harder to be a caring Christian to all those you encounter while being unemployed? How come?
2. Does it change anything to consider your task of searching for new work as legitimate work in itself?
3. How have you acted in solidarity with other unemployed workers?
4. What is it that you find yourself working the hardest at now?

Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

Romans 12:9-18, 21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reflection

1. When, in your period of unemployment, is it difficult to “be ardent in spirit and serve the Lord”?
2. How are you called to overcome evil with good during this time in your life?
3. What helps you to hold fast to what is good when you are tempted to give into apathy or despair?
4. Share any other insights or reflections that stand out for you from this Bible passage.

Action Response

Consider this question for your week ahead. It does not need to be discussed now with the group, but we will reflect on it briefly next week.

Look for an opportunity to be in solidarity with another unemployed worker or someone who is hurting this coming week.

Closing Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Gracious God,

help us to know how to spend our time this week.

Give us wisdom to know
when and for how long to work at finding work,
when to give our attention
fully to family or friends,
and when to do something that is
life-giving for ourselves.

Help us to be loving and faithful disciples
who strive to overcome evil with good.

We ask this in Christ's name.

Amen.

The Spirituality of Work

Various Occupations

**A six-session
small group guide**

**by William Droel
National Center for the Laity**

by William Droel

Edited by Paul Canavese & Ann Naffziger.

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My Work Environment

Opening Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Creator God,
you worked to create the world
and you are still working and laboring
on our behalf today.

Help us to cooperate with your grace
so that we may grow as disciples
who are doing the work
that you need done in our world.

Amen.

Sharing

How did you do last week with your resolution to be “salt” or “light” in your workplace? Did you follow through? What did you notice about doing it?

Background

Read this passage aloud, with each participant reading a paragraph. Anyone who prefers not to read is welcome to pass.

The spirituality of work must take into account the context of a person's work environment—the norms and customs of the business, industry and even the larger international economic system. For retired people, students, homemakers, or the unemployed, the environment in which they spend most of their waking hours provides the context for their lives.

Acknowledged or not, the business norms and customs - and those of an environment outside of a typical workplace, - are of a moral character. And over time the work environment, apart from the intentions of any one leader, forms workers for better or for worse.

These work environments are different for different occupations. For a stay-at-home parent, they may encompass the neighborhood, PTA, grocery store,, and sports league. For a retired person, it may involve the

senior center and a local nonprofit where he or she volunteers. For a college student it may include their school and dormitory. All of these environments have a way of doing things that makes a difference.

"An authentic Christian spirituality has to evaluate what work conditions are acceptable for a whole, holy life," explains John McDermott. "The spirituality of work must address strains and problems in the marketplace."

Some companies and some economic systems, because they are well organized and consonant with the best of human aspirations, make it easier to live a healthy spirituality. On the other hand, when companies—and other work environments—are poorly organized or out of touch with what is good, they hurt the people they are intended to serve and, therefore, actually impede spirituality.

McDermott furnishes a general example of current marketplace culture which the spirituality of work must consider: "There is a trend today to return to a 1920s way of thinking that labor is a commodity. A spirituality of work must insist that the economy is for the sake of the person; the worker is not for the sake of the economy. I know, for example, that a spirituality of work, or any other ideal, cannot force a company to stay in business and keep people on the job. But I believe that a humane economy can be fashioned and I believe that Christian action can play a part in improving the economy and keeping people employed. A Christian spirituality of work can challenge some of the defects in the marketplace."

"A humane work environment relates to spirituality," says Jennifer Morrow, an industrial psychologist in Chicago, Illinois. "As a Christian, I believe that a humane environment is a reflection of the Incarnation. The greatest spiritual being, Christ, took on humanity. Now humanity can reflect Christ as it becomes more human and more humane. In business this means, among other things, being fair. Thus, business ethics is one expression of this spirituality."



The subject of business ethics is experiencing a boom time. It would be a shame, however, if all the current talk about business ethics actually led to a benign neglect of ethical behavior. Business ethics cannot be confined to case studies about corporate scandals and promulgating codes of conduct. As understood by the spirituality of work, business ethics is a pro-active style of leadership which challenges us to seek out areas of the corporate culture for improvement.

Is my work done in solidarity with all workers and does it add a little something to the common good? Or is it isolated and only self-serving? Am I concerned about my subordinates—not only about their productivity, but about their overall well-being? What about those I am in daily contact with, perhaps my children, or an aging parent, or my neighbors?

The practical spirituality of work demands periodic reflection on these questions and others such as these: Do my priorities serve who I am or only what I do? Does my schedule serve to remind me that the people I meet during the day are dignified in themselves, or does my schedule reinforce an attitude that people are valuable only as a means to my other ends?

"I'm on the fast track by nature," says William Farley. "I move fast. I eat fast. It's my style. I see a receptionist on the way into my office. I ask her about her weekend but I don't really mean it because before she answers, I am down the hall. I fail to celebrate her individuality and mine. I have to learn to pause for celebration; to be present."



What does all this talk about institutions and practices have to do with a spirituality of work? In the past, spirituality was often an inward, private search for peace and the resolution of tensions.

In its basic sense, though, spirituality is about seeking and responding to God's presence. Sometimes God comes in splendor and majesty; other times God comes in a quiet place and time. But quite often God comes disguised amid the daily chores of laundry and shopping, medical charting, lesson planning, or raking leaves.

A spirituality of work recognizes that God not only comes to us through Scripture, worship, nature and neighbor, but also through the institutional environment we have created. A spirituality of work, therefore, requires an appreciation for all the institutions in which God might be found—in the

hospital or clinic, around the home and in the wider community. "You don't have to be in a church to be near to God," quips Margaret Alice Maye. "You can talk to God in my hospital too."

Reflection

1. Are there any conflicts for you between the way your work environment operates and your Christian beliefs? If so, give an example.
2. Discuss an ethical or moral dilemma in your current work situation that concerns you.
3. Name a decision you have made in your work career that has been influenced by your religious values.
4. Share about a time when you were called to work for "the greater good" in spite of an imperfect system.

Scripture Reading

Read this passage aloud.

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Reflection

1. When, in your work, is it difficult to “be ardent in spirit and serve the Lord”?
2. St. Augustine once said we should “hate the sin but love the sinner.” When in your career have you been called to do that?
3. How are you called to overcome evil with good in your profession?
4. What helps you to hold fast to what is good when you are tempted to give into apathy or despair?

Action Response

Consider this question for your week ahead. It does not need to be discussed now with the group, but we will reflect on it briefly next week.

What might you do differently this week in your workplace in light of this reading and reflection?

Closing Prayer

Read this prayer aloud together:

Jesus, our Lord and our guide,

You worked tirelessly on behalf of the dignity of all,
especially those most often
neglected, forgotten, or outcast.

You know what it is like
to try to bring love and compassion
into an imperfect world.

Teach us how we are called to serve like you.
Show us how you would have us fight for justice.
Grant us hope and perseverance
when we are tempted to lose hope.
May we do what we can to bring about
your reign of justice and love.

Amen.