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Office Evangelism

Navigating the tricky task of sharing
your faith at work



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Introduction

Too “Subtle” Evangelism?

By Kelli B. Trujillo

I have an acquaintance I'll call "Al" who twice has been fired for witnessing at work. Well, that's how he explains it. Perhaps a better explanation may be that Al's approach to evangelism is quite "in your face." If there were a caricature of an evangelical on the popular show *The Office*, Al would fit the bill perfectly. He embodies all the negative stereotypes our culture has about evangelical Christians: he's quite judgmental of all things secular, he frequently refers to "the Lord" in any and all conversations, he gets so pumped up when talking about his faith that his behavior borders on the bizarre, he's completely (and purposefully) out of touch with culture, and he regularly asks coworkers and customers alike what would happen to them if they got in a car accident while leaving the store. Would God let

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them into heaven or would they burn in hell? Al considers any attempt by a supervisor to get him to "tone down" his evangelism at work as persecution, spurring him on to even more zealous proselytizing. In a word, Al's simply obnoxious.

None of us want to be like Al, so we hop on the pendulum and take a ride as it swings *far* in the other direction. Instead of going overboard with evangelism at work, our efforts to share our faith may be more "subtle" and "nuanced." They may be so subtle, in fact, that they're imperceptible.

Or we may be waiting—for the right opportunity, the right relationship, the right line of conversation. The trouble comes when we're waiting for a really, really long time . . . like years.

Or we may simply have a line drawn in our lives: on one side of the line is faith and family, and on the other side is work. We may feel it simply isn't appropriate to try to witness to others while on the job.

Of course, I'm overlooking those of you for whom witnessing about Jesus at work comes naturally. Maybe it's because I'm jealous! The reality is that for me, and for many other women, figuring out how to bring faith to work—without being an "Al"—is tough. We love Jesus, we want to let our light shine, but we don't quite know how, or we can't quite get up the gumption to take those first steps.

This TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN download is designed to help you explore with God how he wants you to share your faith at work. The articles provide a wealth of insights about how to integrate one's faith and work life, enlarging our idea of what evangelism

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can look like in the workplace. As you read the articles, engage with Scripture, and explore your own response through the Reflect questions, invite God to challenge you about bringing your faith to work. You may be surprised by how un-Al-like evangelism at work can be!

Grace,

Kelli B. Trujillo

Managing Editor, TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN downloads,
Christianity Today International



Leader's Guide

How to use “Office Evangelism” for a group study

“Office Evangelism” can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the Reflect questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**



Bringing Faith to Work

An Interview with *God at Work* author David Miller

Interview by Nancy Lovell

David Miller is author of *God at Work* (Oxford University Press), a book that explores the faith-at-work movement. David knows well the challenge of bringing faith to the workplace through his experiences of working for IBM, as a director of European operations for a U.S. securities bank, and as a top-level partner in a private bank specializing in corporate finance and international investment. He's now executive director of the Yale Center for Faith & Culture and teaches a course for Yale MBAs and divinity students called "Business Ethics: Succeeding without Selling Your Soul."

FaithintheWorkplace.com spoke with David about this "movement"—where it comes from, what it hopes to change, and how he got into it.

What is behind the faith-at-work movement?

A deep desire by men and women no longer to compartmentalize their lives and parts of their days as did my generation and older. For us, work and play were two different worlds: "Work hard, play hard." Many Baby Boomers have come to see that as an unhealthy way to live. Not only that, but it robs our careers of powerful resources. Generations coming along after us—GenX and the Millennials—don't have that mind-set. A guy who wears an earring on the weekend wants to wear it at work too: "Why should I take it off? That's who I am." People are saying, "My faith is part of who I am. Why should I leave it in the parking lot when I go to work? It helps me shape, filter, and interpret my world."

Where is the church in the faith-at-work movement?

The church generally shies from the topic, and our divinity schools and seminaries are no better. Surveys say that fewer than 10 percent of regular churchgoers can remember the last time their pastor preached on the topic of work. When he or she did preach on work, inevitably the tone was critical—if not hostile—and painted all business people as greedy and uncaring. Seldom do pastors honor the work world as a place for parishioners to live out their high calling. Whether you're a secretary or a CEO, people in the pews seldom hear from the pulpit that God has a plan that includes your work, and that your faith can help inform how you approach your work.

Would you comment on the tensions between marketplace pressures and faith principles? Many of us consider the pressures more real than the principles.

One big pressure is competition. That can be positive because it brings out our greatest creativity, a biblical principle.

Or it can be destructive. Also, because of its intensity, the marketplace often lacks space for compassion, grace, and mercy. And the Christian life, of course, includes those teachings.

Another tension comes from shareholders and Wall Street who demand high returns. To meet those earnings expectations, you might decide to reduce your workforce by 10 percent . . . and that hits hard with some Christians. These are just a few of the tensions. But, short of a perfect world, many of these issues would also exist under other economic systems, but that's a conversation for another day!

That's a lot of responsibility over lives . . .

People at the top are under great pressures to make high-stakes decisions quickly. The time to reflect, contemplate, and bring in other voices takes effort. And it takes wisdom when the faith teaching might conflict with your best-practice leadership in the marketplace. So what do you do? You have to pick your fights carefully; you can't take on every single issue. We all need the discernment and wisdom to know what to choose and what to let go. Jesus dusted off his sandals and marched on at some points; other things he deeply engaged in. Business leaders have to figure out what to put up with—which things are just the reality of life in a fallen world and which things, as a matter of principle, they should take a stand on and say, "Everyone else can do that, but our company won't."

How does an American company in the new millennium allow for faith at work?

If the top executive is interested in those questions, it sure helps. One of the biggest things a CEO can do is give people

permission to talk about these things—let them know it's not taboo. In effect, give them permission to live out their faith at work.

Why in the world would an employee need permission to have personal faith?

It's not that you need permission to *have* a personal faith; it's the issue of whether and how you *express* it at work. Say you live in New York City—a different religious demographic than Dallas, Texas. In Dallas it's common to say, "Praise the Lord" and "bless you" and use religious language and expressions at work. You don't find that in New York City. Such expression of overt religiosity seems insincere or like sloganeering. So many decide to side step the faith question, for fear of offending someone.

But a CEO can grant permission to think and talk about these things. We've figured out how to talk about historically thorny issues like race, sex, and gender orientation. Why not give people permission to talk about faith and its role in our lives? It may be as simple as casually mentioning a sermon that weekend, or that you're leaving early for choir. There's a way for people to have a faith identity and mention it without causing a ruckus. In the Bible Belt, that may sound like a no-brainer. But in London, New York, Boston, Beijing, you've just signaled to all your employees that it's okay to have and express your personal faith at work.

No worries about proselytizing?

While not an unimportant question, I think it's a big red herring. This is often raised by people not in favor of the topic. But there's a difference between obnoxious harassment

and an attractive life of faith. On balance, I find worries about proselytizing to be overblown, and good leaders know how to address the few conflicts or isolated problems that may emerge. Where would we be if businesses decided not to racially integrate for fear of problems? Management learned how to work through the issues. Why not do the same thing with faith? Will it surface issues? Of course. But we can think, talk, and find healthy ways to develop what I call a "faith-friendly" culture.

In my research about you, I read that Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Stott were all strong influences on you. What do these men have in common for you?

Two dead guys and one live guy?! The common thread is all three had a deeply held Christian faith, great minds, and all felt that their faith should be in service of something in life; that faith should be a shaping force in how we live daily. It wasn't just a matter of getting a doctrine right or being proud of correct orthodoxy. They believed their faith was made to shape and impact the world, and all three did that in dramatic and powerful ways. Two eventually gave their lives for that. John Stott, still alive today, went against the grain of secularization trends in the UK to hold together a cogent intellectual case, a compelling case, for the reasonableness of Christianity. Not only that, he felt faith wasn't just about church, but how it impacted your whole life. Those are the questions that interest me with faith: how it shapes and forms our lives—particularly in the marketplace.

What do you know now about faith and business that you didn't as you were leaving school?

When I graduated from college at age 22, I was the quintessential compartmentalizer. I focused on my work and my career, and never in my wildest dreams did I think faith might have something to do with it. Not that I turned into a jerk on Mondays, but the idea of Scripture guiding me in an ethical gray zone or as a leader in a fast-track work world was unheard of—never did I think faith would play a role in that. Maybe I slept through the sermons that sought to teach me otherwise, but I don't remember hearing this message from the pulpit.

John Stott helped me connect these worlds. The "ah-ha moment" was the realization that faith was a reasonable proposition in its own right; it was not incompatible with science and reason and all spheres of life, including work. I began to realize that faith wasn't just a Sunday event.

Was your understanding a single point of illumination or more gradual?

Gradual, but a geometric curve once the *ah-ha* happened. I couldn't get enough of thinking and reading about it and realizing how vitally important this was in general to people of faith—in the marketplace and in life.

As I work with execs and CEOs and we all become more intentional about faith at work, life becomes more vibrant and enjoyable. And work is more fulfilling, more natural. Not necessarily easier—if you pay more attention to faith, you might make less popular decisions. The Bible says pick up the cross, die daily, and follow Jesus. But Jesus

also reminds us that his yoke is light. He frees us from sin, empowering us to a healthier way of living, even as we struggle about how to do it in a faithfully.

Why do you like what you do?

I've never been asked that question. I love the business world and the marketplace. I love Jesus and my faith. And I have a real interest in the roles of theology, reason, and thinking to help bring these worlds together. I suppose I like what I do because I get to swim every day in my three favorite swimming holes: business, academics, and the church. At the end of the day, my greatest reward comes from helping other people—both business people and clergy—have their moment of illumination to integrate faith and work.

Nancy Lovell is a writer and principal of Lovell-Fairchild Communications, which specializes in marketing and public relations. This article, originally titled "Interview with David Miller," is part of FaithintheWorkplace.com and is reprinted with permission from [Laity Lodge](http://LaityLodge.com) and TheHighCalling.org.

Reflect

- *Early on in his career, David Miller describes himself as "the quintessential compartmentalizer." When have you compartmentalized your faith and work, keeping them separate rather than integrated? (If applicable, share a time when you've kept them too separate.)*
- *To a certain degree, it is quite appropriate to keep some aspects of faith expression out of the workplace. For example, belting out a worship song from your cubicle might not be a good idea! The apostle Paul seems to be hinting toward this idea (within his own historical and cultural context) in **1 Thessalonians 4:11–12**. Read the passage, then list some actions or behaviors you intentionally refrain from in order to win the respect of others, to do your work well, and to honor your employer's expectations.*
- *Miller claims there's a "difference between obnoxious harassment and an attractive life of faith." What is the difference? Describe specific examples of attitudes or behaviors that fit each category.*
- *Read **1 Peter 2:11–17**; though not specifically about work, the principles in this passage could easily translate into the realm of being a Christian and a good employee. How would you sum up the main ideas here in your own words? How does this passage challenge you personally in your job?*
- *Miller asserts, "There's a way for people to have a faith identity and mention it without causing a ruckus." For example, rather than hiding or downplaying the important role your church plays in your life, what about "casually mentioning a sermon that weekend or [telling a coworker] that you're leaving early for choir"? Do you find it easy or difficult to speak naturally about your faith and church involvement in conversations with coworkers?*
- *What role can casual "hints" about faith like these play in witnessing to coworkers?*



Love Your Coworker As Yourself?

Bringing love to the workplace

By Christopher de Vinck

I am in charge of 32 English teachers in the second largest high school in New Jersey, and it is my honor to serve those teachers as their "boss." It is a standing joke that my colleagues call me boss now and again because they know how much this term annoys me, and how it defines the opposite of who I am and how I treat the people who have been entrusted to my care and evaluation.

A new teacher found me in the hall on the first day of school in September and enthusiastically stopped me. "Chris, I have to tell you something. I woke up this morning, jumped out of bed, threw my arms in the air and said 'I'm a teacher!'" She knew I would be delighted for her.

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One of my top senior teachers said to me the other day, "Chris, I am blessed with my students, each day." He knew I was eager to hear such words of joy.

The oldest teacher in the department read to his students a section of *To Kill a Mockingbird* with such passion and goodness, and then said, "Good people, do you see how Atticus tried to help Tom Robinson because of his deep sense of what was right?" I left a note in this man's mailbox that said, "How lucky the students are to have you as their teacher."

I have found over the years that the best teachers know their subject matter, deeply care about the academic and social success of their students, and have a personality of confidence and goodness—valuable qualities no matter what we do for a living.

Do the people beside you love their work? Does the person in the next cubicle care deeply about the clients? Can you recognize each person in the sales force as an individual with a unique personality of goodness, talent, and will? Healthy professional relationships involve dialogue. People who work for a common cause need to talk to each other—whether that common cause is making money, designing cars, teaching children, or painting buildings. When we love what we do and love the people we work with, we build better products, create better innovations, and return to our homes each day with a sense that we made a difference in the world.

Above all else that was written in the Bible stand the words Christ said when he summarized the law and the prophets. The religious leaders asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" His answer: Love God. Love one another.

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In our professional world, we need to love the people beside us. We need to avoid jealousy, personal competition, and backstabbing. Instead, entwine the labor relations in love. A team of people can understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. They can share their dreams, sorrows, faith, and fears. When a team works in a life-giving environment, our labor is rewarded with more than a paycheck. We are also rewarded with a sense that our time together was holy and significant.

Ask yourself each day, "Was I a good employee of God today?" "Have I enriched the life of my coworker today to strengthen our professional relationship?"

We work best in a place where we are valued. We work best in a place where we are part of a supportive, loving team. We work best when we know that we are not alone.

Author and essayist Christopher de Vinck was a high school teacher and administrator for 25 years. This article, originally titled "How to Love Your Coworkers," is part of FaithintheWorkplace.com and is reprinted with permission from [Laity Lodge](http://LaityLodge.com) and TheHighCalling.org.

Reflect

- *The author lists several important reasons we should care for our coworkers, noting the power strong team-relationships have in business. But most important, he says, are the teachings of Jesus. Read **Matthew 22:34–40**. Think of a person you admire who does a good job of living out these two commandments; what is he or she like? How does he or she express love for God and others?*
- *Think of one or two specific coworkers who are difficult for you to work with—whose personalities, behaviors, opinions, or actions rub you the wrong way. Now imagine Jesus saying directly to you, "Love _____ (coworker) _____ as your self." What's your gut response? Why?*
- *Read **Galatians 5:16–26**. Several of the "acts of the sinful nature" (5:19–21) are common in many workplaces. Which stand out to you as areas of struggle for a Christian in a secular workplace? Share some modern-day examples.*
- *The author challenges us to "avoid jealousy, personal competition, and backstabbing. Instead, entwine the labor relations in love." What do you think he means? Brainstorm ways you could more effectively relate to your coworkers in love.*
- *Imagine how your more consistently living out the fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23) would impact your coworkers. How do you feel challenged or inspired to do so?*



Community and the Cubicle

Sharing the gospel by investing in others

By Jonathan Dodson

About forty million American white-collar employees work in a cubicle. What began as a customizable work environment has turned into an urban dungeon. Cutting us off from contact with the real world, the cubicle is scorned for suffocating productivity and community. Attempts to correct these individualistic work environments, such as co-working or collaborative workspace, have met with little to moderate success. Does work have to be so isolating?

In a thoughtful essay on tobacco production from *Sex, Economy, Freedom, & Community*, Wendell Berry lists the benefits of tobacco work. (The morality of tobacco work is another issue altogether.) Among them is the practice of "swapping work." Tobacco, Berry points out, is a very "sociable crop," one that calls upon the entire community for help in the setting, cutting, stripping, and harvesting of tobacco. He comments: "At these times, neighbors helped each other in order to bring together the many hands that lightened work. Thus, these times of hardest work were also times of big meals and much talk, storytelling and laughter."

I suppose that tobacco farmers could have insisted on doing the work alone, but it wouldn't have been near as fun or efficient as swapping work. But there's more merit to work swapping than efficiency. Berry's reflections reverberate with community. Words like *neighbor, each other, together, many hands, big meals, storytelling, and laughter* seem foreign to the professional workplace, even to contemporary expressions of church. Yet, many of these words and concepts occur frequently in New Testament descriptions of the early church.

For example, Acts consistently describes a church that experienced a steady state of Christian community, not just meeting one another on weekends. They devoted themselves to sharing meals, needs, possessions, and a mission (Acts 2:42–47). This radical community was in response to the gospel of Christ, a community-cultivating message that enriched the surrounding social fabric of Jerusalem (Acts 4:32–37). The gospel promoted community in private and in public, through the ministry of reconciliation. They sought

God-centered reconciliation (Acts 2,7,17), ethnic reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10,15), and social reconciliation of the poor, sick, and lame (Acts 3:1–10; 5:12–16). The gospel of reconciliation brought very different people together publicly and privately, renewing Jerusalem socially and spiritually.

What would it look like to extend the community-cultivating power of the gospel into our cities, our workplaces, our churches? How would the workplace change? In the city, when our workload increases, community often declines. We buckle into the cubicle for days, only to emerge a worn-out mess. Berry recounts an increase in community when hard work sets in—more laughter, more meals, and more hands. On the contrary, urban work deadlines often bring about despair, fewer meals, less sleep, and less time at home with the family. Far from enriching community, office work can isolate individuals from coworkers and families. Ironically, Tom Rath has demonstrated that community can increase productivity. In his book, *Vital Friends*, Rath points out that people with best friends at work are proven to be seven times more engaged in their job!

It would appear that the city has much to learn from the country. Although some vocations are not as sociable as others, the gospel compels us to work for community and reconciliation. To honor, serve, and love those that are different from us, even the employees that get on our nerves. What if you became an agent of reconciliation and community in your workplace? Company morale and output would likely increase, and so would the glory of God in your life. Perhaps some repentance from go-it-alone work is in

order. The rural wisdom of "work swapping" could take us a long way in cultivating better work, better relationships, and better communities. Wouldn't it be great if Christians led the way?

Jonathan Dodson is lead pastor of Austin City Life, a church in Austin, Texas. This article is part of [FaithintheWorkplace.com](#) and is reprinted with permission from [Laity Lodge](#) and [TheHighCalling.org](#).

Reflect

- *On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being non-existent and 10 being "we're all best friends!"), how would you rate the sense of community in your workplace? Why?*
- *Jonathan Dodson describes the situation for many of us this way: "[W]hen our workload increases, community often declines. We buckle into the cubicle for days, only to emerge a worn-out mess. . . . [Our] work deadlines often bring about despair, fewer meals, less sleep, and less time at home with the family." When have you experienced periods of increasing stress and isolation at work? How has that affected you personally? How has it affected your coworkers?*
- *Dodson draws attention to the impact that the early church's powerful community had on the surrounding social culture. Get a picture of their sense of community in **Acts 2:42–47** and **4:32–37**. Obviously, there's a significant difference between community within the church and*

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community in a secular workplace environment; keeping that in mind, what attitudes or actions of the early church could translate into the modern workplace? Share some examples.

- *What connection is there, if any, between community and evangelism? How can these two Christian practices work together?*
- *Dodson claims that "the gospel compels us to work for community and reconciliation." He powerfully asks, "What if you became an agent of reconciliation and community in your workplace?" Dream big: how could you strengthen the sense of community in your workplace? How might your attitudes or actions influence your coworkers' view of Christianity?*



Witnessing from Weakness at Work

Sharing your faith during hard times

By Caryn Rivadeneira

One of the greatest shames of my life is that never once during my first job out of college did I share the gospel with any of the people I worked with. While my friends there certainly knew I graduated from a Christian college, went to church, and believed in God, in several years of working together that was all they knew about faith in my life. At the time, my focus was so much on learning the ins and outs of magazine publishing and meeting my earthly achievement goals (after all, this was my dream!), that I failed to see the people around me as lost souls in need of a Savior and instead saw them just as people to laugh with and learn from.

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Though I know I'm forgiven for this sin, to this day I can't think of certain colleagues without wincing—and praying that they are surrounded by Christians, who, unlike me, dare share their faith at work.

While my self-centered career goals certainly kept the focus off of other people's eternal welfare, it was also that I misunderstood what sharing my faith at work would look like. I didn't learn this until I started working at Christianity Today International years ago. Suddenly I was surrounded by once-lost people who had *found* their Savior, the sharing of faith was everywhere. The distinction was that we shared personal faith, rather than *the* faith. We talked of mighty ways God had moved, of huge disappointments, of doubts, of praise, of unanswered prayers, of our own often rocky journeys through a life of faith.

In my earlier job, I imagined sharing my faith at work would mean I had John 3:16 printed on business cards or had a huge "Repent or Burn" placard posted on my cubical wall. Maybe I'd have to invite a different coworker to lunch every day and ask—immediately after saying grace loudly—if she knew where she would go if she were to die right now. Any image I'd conjure up just didn't jive with my working environment—or my personality—so I passed.

If only I'd have had the wisdom of John Nunes, a professor at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois. I heard him speak recently on "witnessing out of weakness." I love this premise—especially for the workplace. It means that you aren't standing on soapboxes telling coworkers they're going to burn in hell (this may get you burning in the HR department!), but instead puts you in the driver's seat of

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conversations with coworkers that are less about personal righteousness and more about how Jesus has worked through your weaknesses.

Especially in a culture that so roundly attacks Christians—not always without good reason—it's important for the world to see Christians as we really are, not as we often pretend to be. They need to see us as messed up, wounded, and hurting people who have found the great Hope and our ever-present source of strength.

If you were to share with your coworkers the ways in which God has walked with you through difficult, stressful times at work and in life, it might offer glimpses of how God could embolden their own lives. If they knew that you too went through seasons of doubt—wondering if all this stuff about the Son of God rising from the dead could possibly be true—but were sustained by experiencing the Holy Spirit's work in your life, imagine the impact. And of course there's no better way to shine the irresistible grace that has saved wretches like us than to be willing to open up areas of struggle and mercy in our own lives.

Now, I'm not fool enough to suggest you need to bare your deepest sins to coworkers who may or may not use them against you. But I have come to realize that the strongest witnesses are the ones willing to give glory where glory is due.

Caryn Rivadeneira is editor of GiftedforLeadership.com and author of The Mommy Revolution. This article was first published online at GiftedforLeadership.com in February 2007.

Reflect

- *Caryn Rivadeneira writes of her strong sense of regret about missing many opportunities to share her faith with coworkers. Can you relate to Caryn? If so, how?*
- *Rather than trying to witness by presenting a perfect, polished front to coworkers, Caryn puts forth the idea that "it's important for the world to see Christians as we really are, not as we often pretend to be." She goes on to say, "They need to see us as messed up, wounded, and hurting people who have found the great Hope and our ever-present source of strength." What's your reaction to this idea? Would you feel comfortable sharing a struggle, disappointment, or deep hurt with a non-Christian coworker? Why or why not?*
- *One common approach to evangelism is the idea that we strive to live such a stellar, admirable, magnetic Christian life that others will be attracted to Jesus as a result. This "witnessing from weakness" approach seems to be quite different: letting down your guard, showing your weaknesses and struggles, striving to be transparent rather than to seem perfect. Can the two approaches co-exist? What are the strengths of each approach? What may be some dangers to avoid in each approach?*



Ministry @ Work

Any job can be an outreach—it's all in your attitude.

By Penny Schlaf Musco

Jose Zeilstra grew up in a church that focused on sending people overseas to share the gospel. "The feeling was if you're a true Christian, you go into full-time ministry; the business world wasn't a place for real believers," she says. Jose admits she rebelled against this mindset, eventually reaching the position of vice president at J.P. Morgan Chase. But it wasn't until she read *Roaring Lambs* by Bob Briner, a book in which Briner argues that Christians should be salt and light in all arenas of life, that she finally realized her career was a legitimate calling from God. "The first time I spoke publicly about my faith was for *Fortune* magazine," she says. "In the business world, it doesn't get more public than that." She connects her two worlds by attending and speaking at Bible studies and workplace seminars in Manhattan, as well as meeting regularly with a Christian mentor and a group of spiritually like-minded CEOs.

Angie Tracey's revelation came at a women's event. "I'd seen the value of the National Prayer Breakfast and other prayer gatherings when I worked in Washington, D.C. So when I started working at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, I felt strongly that our agency could benefit from having similar meetings. I immediately started praying God would bring someone to lead them." Then, while at a women's conference, the Holy Spirit told Angie she was that leader.

"I was going to send an email inviting our employees to a breakfast or lunch," says Angie. "I thought maybe I'd have 10 or 15 people respond, 20 if I was truly blessed." She quickly discovered that to use the CDC's e-mail system for this kind of solicitation, she had to establish an employee association. So Angie tackled the detailed forms and the bureaucratic layers typical of an agency with nearly 10,000 employees in 10 states. She prayed every step of the way, and to her amazement, what should have taken a year took two weeks start to finish. The first ever official Christian employee association in the federal government was born.

Within hours of approval, Angie received more than 200 emails and phone calls. Six days later, planes crashed into the World Trade Center. She believes God was preparing the agency to handle the extra stress from 9/11 and the war on terror. The first meeting attracted 225 employees; now the CDC Christian Fellowship Group has more than 500 members.

Jose and Angie would be the first to say they're not doing anything special. They've realized they don't have to separate their faith from their vocation; they're missionaries right where they are.

A sacred touch

Bringing God to work is often referred to as workplace or worklife ministry. Os Hillman, director of the International Coalition of Workplace Ministries, defines it as "an intentional focus on equipping men and women in all spheres of work and society to understand and experience their work and life as a holy calling from God." Os points out that Jesus spent the majority of his life as a carpenter, not as a preacher; 122 of Jesus' 132 public appearances were in the marketplace, and 45 of the 52 parables are set in a work environment.

Dr. Bob Reccord, former president of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and author of *Made to Count: Discovering What to Do With Your Life*, indicates that although the Hebrew word *avodah* is the root word of both work and worship, the Reformation effectively separated the world into two classes: secular and sacred. This split led to what Os sees as a "hierarchy of calling" within the church: "We said the most spiritual vocation is the pastor, then the missionary, then the full-time Christian worker, and then the stay-at-home mom, and way down at the bottom is the ad agency executive or the nurse. It's often an unspoken hierarchy, but it's there."

But when you read the Scriptures, you never find culture referred to as secular and sacred. "God literally intended for everything to have a sacred touch," says Bob. So while he doesn't intend to diminish the importance of pastors and missionaries, he seeks to raise the church's view of the calling to workplace ministries.

Preach not

The path from vision for workplace ministry to concrete action isn't always clear. As Jack Munday of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association emphasizes, "We're not encouraging people to go to work on Monday and start preaching." Instead, he says Christians must change the way we view our job, to see it not only as the place where we make our living, but where we consciously live out eternal values. That kind of perspective, he insists, can't help but positively impact the people with whom we spend the majority of our time.

"We hear a lot about the church's involvement in city transformation today, but we've not seen one city transformed in America," says Os Hillman. "The reason is that we haven't equipped, empowered, and affirmed those in the marketplace who have the ability and authority to make changes in the cities and in our culture." If there's going to be real revival in the nation, he believes it will come through Christians purposefully bringing their faith into this "9-to-5 window."

Linda Rios Brook couldn't agree more. She's the author of *Frontline Christians in a Bottom Line World* and president of the Lakeland Leadership League, which, among other things, ministers to the Colorado Springs community by providing affordable housing. "The kingdom is going to advance through commerce, science, the arts, and education," she says. "If all we ever tell people is that to be really holy you've got to have a job in the church, we're going to continue to forfeit our influence in those areas."

Angie knows how tough it can be to balance working for her earthly bosses and for the heavenly Boss. After a few

employees took issue with her Christian fellowship group, the CDC reexamined the separation of church and state issues involved. "That's when I had to become quite an expert on the matter," she laughs. Her favorite tool is a set of guidelines released by the Clinton administration on respecting religious practices within the federal workplace. "It's amazing how much we employees can do and how little we Christians know about it," she says.

"Most groups are well aware that you can't force your religion on another employee," Angie adds. "As Christians, we wouldn't want to do that." Case in point: At the CDC, an atheist employee sent her a "venomous" email blasting the Christian fellowship group. After much prayer, Angie replied graciously, addressing the legal concerns, and the woman backed off. About a month later, the woman sent her another email: "I thought you might want to know I was visiting one of our facilities and the Christian Fellowship Group there was having their Christmas party. I went for the first time, sang Christmas carols, and thought of you."

Like any good businesswoman, Angie keeps her eye on the bottom line: "I believe God equips us with certain skills to do the kind of job he has for us to do for society. But I also believe that as Christians we're ambassadors for the kingdom of God, and that's our job too."

Penny Schlaf Musco lives and works in New Jersey. This article was first published in the July/August 2007 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Reflect

- *Jose Zeilstra spoke publicly about her faith—very publicly—by talking about it in a major magazine. Angie Tracey organized a Christian organization within her agency. These are bold steps! Put aside your fears for a moment and just imagine: What are some big, bold steps you could take in Christ's name in your workplace? (Share ideas even if they scare your socks off!)*
- *Read **Matthew 28:16-20** and **Acts 1:8**. One key aspect of both of these passages is that witnessing and disciple-making happen within the context of God's presence. Jesus promises that he is with us; the Holy Spirit empowers us. How attentive are you to God's presence during a usual workday? How could you heighten your awareness?*
- *In what ways do you feel you need God's power to help you be a witness at work? Share at least one specific area of weakness.*
- *What can you do to better rely on God's presence and power as you seek to shine his light during your workday?*



10 Non-Obnoxious Ways to Share Your Faith at Work

Use these ideas to help you integrate faith at work

By Kelli B. Trujillo

- 1.** As you deepen friendships with coworkers, ask sincere questions and truly listen in a spirit of caring as they share about their life. When appropriate, tell others you are praying for them. (Then make sure you actually do pray!)
- 2.** Make it a daily habit to pray as you drive to work or as you walk into the office; ask God to help you see your workplace as a mission field.
- 3.** Refuse to hide or play-down the importance of your faith. When it naturally fits a conversation, freely talk about the role your church, prayer, Scripture, and Christian community have in your life. Let others see the joy and purpose you find in your faith.

Office Evangelism

10 Non-Obnoxious Ways to Share Your Faith at Work

- 4.** Emphasize the importance of God's love for all people by initiating opportunities to lead your coworkers in service or charity. For example, lead a canned food drive for a local food pantry or organize your company's annual blood drive. When appropriate, share in conversation how you are motivated to help others by God's character and his love.
- 5.** Start or join a lunch-time Bible study or prayer group at your office.
- 6.** Strive for excellence and integrity in your work. Don't be a slacker or a poor worker; be the person that coworkers and supervisors can rely on to do a solid job.
- 7.** Form a prayer partnership with a Christian coworker; meet together regularly to discuss your efforts to shine Christ's light at work and pray for specific coworker relationships.
- 8.** As you deepen your relationship with a non-Christian coworker, invite her for lunch off-site or to a weekend night out for a movie and coffee. Being out of the workplace environment will set a more open tone as you talk and get to know each other better. Being off-site will also allow you more freedom to talk directly about your faith and to share the gospel.
- 9.** Invite interested coworkers to social events with your Christian friends, to your small group Bible study, or to events at your church. As holidays like Christmas or Easter approach, invite a coworker to attend church with you; many people who don't regularly attend church are open to coming on an important holiday.

Office Evangelism

10 Non-Obnoxious Ways to Share Your Faith at Work

10. Be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. When you're unsure about whether or not to say something about your faith, check in with God. He'll nudge you in the right direction and will give you the words to say (Mark 13:11).

Kelli B. Trujillo (www.kellitruijlo.com) is an author and the managing editor of Today's Christian Woman downloads.

Reflect

- *Which of these ideas most resonates with you? Why?*
- *Who is a specific non-Christian coworker that God has brought to mind for you as you've journeyed through this download? What do you feel God might want you to do in order to share Christ's love with him or her?*



Additional Resources

Books, online articles, and a Bible Study to help you further.

Books

Frontline Christians in a Bottom-Line World by Linda Rios Brook (Destiny Image Publishers, 2005; 192 pages). This book debunks the traditional notion that business and belief do not create a profitable partnership. Taking cues from Old Testament rulers like Joseph, Daniel, and David, Brook plots a game plan on how to not only survive but also how to thrive the ups and downs of marketplace ministry while still glorifying God.

God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement by David W. Miller (Oxford University Press, 2006; 232 pages). David W. Miller looks at how the Faith at Work movement developed and considers its potential value for business and society.

Going Public with Your Faith: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work by William Carr Peel and Walt Larimore (Zondervan, 2003; 208 pages). Revolutionize your view of evangelism and let your actions speak for you. Everyone will be wondering

what's different about you as you practice a biblically based view of evangelism specifically suited for today's workplace. Learn how your skills and God-given gifts can impact lives and be used to draw customers, clients, and coworkers to a personal relationship in Christ.

Mastering Monday: A Guide to Integrating Faith and Work by John D. Beckett (InterVarsity Press, 2006; 224 pages). Beckett draws from 40 years of experience in the workplace to guide you into an integration of your faith and work. He introduces seven biblical characters who were role models for the workplace and then offers "God's Workplace Agenda"—those biblical realities that intersect with today's business realities: purpose, values, people first, stewardship, and service.

Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World by Bob Briner (Zondervan, 2000; 208 pages). In this book, Bob Briner issues a clear call for Christians to reclaim culture by joining it rather than running from or boycotting it. For those who wish to engage our culture, and to shape it with the good news of God, this book is a must read.

Bible Studies

Faith & Work by Christianity Today International (Thomas Nelson, 2008; 128 pages). This 8-session Bible study guide, for individuals or small groups, explores key aspects of the intersection between faith and work, including one's sense of calling, competition, evangelism and the workplace, and retirement.

“Missional Evangelism”—this 6-session study series from **ChristianBibleStudies.com** explores how we can see all aspects of our lives, including our workplace, as God’s “mission field” for us and provides key insights for how to effectively share our faith with others.

Online Articles

“Silicon Valley Saints”

by Tony Carnes, available at **ChristianityToday.com**

“Working to Serve or Serving the Work?”

by Kelli B. Trujillo, available at **GiftedforLeadership.com**

Other Web Resources

FaithintheWorkplace.com—an online resource from Christianity Today International

WorkLife.org—WorkLife empowers Christians to integrate faith and work through coaching and a variety of other resources.

WorkPlaceInfluence.org—WorkPlace Influence specifically encourages Christian women in their efforts to be successful leaders in the workplace.

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