

Getting God to Work with Richard Meryon

Richard started by outlining the need to emancipate the Christians in the workplace from being in a secular mindset during the week – those of us in workplace are at the front line of mission work, sharing the gospel. Two important caveats to add – firstly that while Richard is based with Christian Viewpoint for Men, the focus of the seminar was applicable to both sexes, and secondly, workplace is taken to be inclusive of any secular environment where we spend significant periods of time, which for many, is predominantly, the workplace.

So, for example, having a preacher with a congregation of 100 say, each of whom meets up to 100 lost people during each week to the extent of meaningful contacts, the majority through work, the preacher and 'sermon' have the potential to reach 10,000 people in a week. However, the question was whether the Church as whole uses this opportunity to its best advantage, or even whether those in the workplace context made the most of these contacts.

To illustrate how the workplace could be a mission field - if only in the evangelistic capacity as a silent witness without words, Richard drew on the person of Daniel in the Old Testament as a role model.

Born around 620 BC, the Lord delivered Daniel around the age of 15 into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Dan 1:2). Daniel with three mates were to enter into the Royal Academy (Dan 1:6-7) for three years. They were given new names as part of a process of inducting them into the culture of Babylon. In this context, Daniel chooses not to defile himself (Dan 1:8), applies negotiation (Dan 1:12), which God honours (Dan 1:15,17). Thus by the age of around 17 or 18, Daniel had made a stand for God in a hostile culture in an alien land. People in our workplaces chip away at our God given standards. Are we a business asset as a believer or a business liability as a believer? Daniel trusted God.

Richard then moved onto Chapter 2 of Daniel and God using his given gift of dream interpretation, after the false proclamation at verse 11 by the astrologers that God does not live among men. After a prayer meeting (verse 18) Daniel is able to interpret the dream, but we should note, he correctly attributes the interpretation to God (Verses 26-27), leading to Nebuchadnezzar also testifying to the Lord (Verse 47). Richard challenged us at our willingness to take work issues to God and to give him credit for the solutions he provides.

Chapter 3 tells us that Daniel's mates were not willing to bow down to the false idol, that they trusted in the Lord who could save them, but even if not, they would not serve the foreign gods or worship the false image (Verse 18). After being seen walking in the fire, and the three told to come out, the King again praises the Lord (Verse 47) and the three are promoted. Daniel had tutored his three mates well in trusting in the Lord - do we encourage and tutor younger believers in our places of work?

In Chapter 4, following the witness of Daniel and his mates the King raised his eyes towards heaven and praises God (Verse 34) - Babylon, the biggest empire in the world at that time, had a King who recognised the Lord. Do we pray for our corporate and Governmental bosses to bow the knee and turn our nation back to God and Godly standards?

Chapter 5 records the incident of the writing on the wall during a banquet where the Jerusalem temple treasures were being desecrated, Daniel is 81 years old or

thereabouts by this stage, but had not retired at all from serving the Lord. The message that the reign of the Babylon empire was about to expire will have been a heresy, with Babylon being a huge city. It was surrounded by 240 foot high walls of 20 foot depth. The Euphrates River ran through a conduit under the city. That night, the Medes and Persians surrounded the city of Babylon and the river Euphrates was diverted to permit attack via the north conduit of the river. Daniel had again used his Godly gift.

Chapter 6 starts with Darius the Mede appointing Daniel as an administrator and Daniel excelling in his eighties with a different dynasty (Verse 3). Can we say that the only way that our colleagues can fault us is by 'having a go' at our God and law rather than on the count of our work (Verse 5)?

At Verse 10 we learn that even with this decree in existence Daniel did not change his pattern, his discipleship, his priority for God. He did not take the easy option of conforming to the world around him. The king was unable to sleep during the night Daniel was in the lion's den (Verse 18), and hurried down to the den, wishing Daniel to be alive by the grace of his God (Verse 20). Note that Daniel immediately gives glory to the Lord for what he had done. Richard highlighted that the lions were obviously hungry by the quick despatch of the false accusers (Verse 24), who could number up to 480. The lions were hungry but God shut their mouths. Are there 'lions' in our workplace that we need God's protection from? There is no place that we cannot stand for God.

From these examples from the book of Daniel, Richard moved on to look at the motivation for working. Some at the session considered there was an inherent need for men to work as part of God's plan to enable self-esteem and self-fulfilment, especially when for our culture the second question we ask of somebody after their name is what do they do.

Richard outlined the following reasons from his study of this question. Firstly, we are to be God's ambassadors, whether as Christ's ambassadors in the work place meeting non-Christians, and/or secondly, to earn money to fund Christian ministry. On this second point, Richard made the observation that we hold onto our wallets too tight and when we do give our whole tithe in to the Lord's barn, he will open the floodgates of heaven (Malachi 3:10, the only other occurrence of God opening the floodgates in the bible being at Genesis 6:11 and Noah's flood).

Secondly, when Christ returns, he will require us to run the earth for 1,000 years, so we need to be prepared (Revelation 20).

Work is not something that is un-Godly or vulgar. We read in the Bible at John 5:17 that "My father is always at work ... and I too am working."

However, we need to wary of becoming addicted to work since this will mean other areas of our life are cut back, but we may be called to suffer for the Kingdom in our workplace (Romans 8:18). Partly with this warning in mind, Richard with the general agreement of those at the seminar, commented that churches do not pray enough for the workers, especially those who have challenging roles. We may on occasion pray for the person who is made redundant, but are we asked to pray for the person who has to make the decisions over redundancies, who has to go and discuss people?

The analogy was given of our Christian witness at work being like a formula one motor race with the pit stop being the Church and the racetrack the workplace. While we can loose the race in the pit stop, the race is won on the track. As part of the

racing car, we are all given gifts as part of our Christian blessing, but Richard encourages us to call on other gifts when they are required.

The seminar then went onto to examine our witness at work under three headings in break-out groups.

1. Passive

A question to ask yourself is whether we have Christian as a core running through our whole week or just at the ends of the week: are we like Brighton rock? Do we display the 9 fruits of the Holy Spirit of Galatians 5:22 throughout the whole week?

Passive actions meant in this context passive ways of displaying ourselves as Christ's ambassador. We need to be displaying the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our character and behaviour. Examples from the seminar included:

- Daily prayer meeting
- CU posters around the building with your name on them
 - Having a bible on your desk
 - Screensaver with appropriate picture or verse
 - Alpha poster on your desk
- Lapel badges - fish, trade justice campaign, Gideon, etc.
 - Biblical quote at the bottom of emails
- Incorporating the fish symbol as part of your signature (final y or g etc.)
- Having a CV that starts with home-life, has both strengths and weaknesses
 - Not conform to the crowd in gossiping
- Prayer before meetings and phone calls that in many ways we would rather not have to attend or make

2. Practical

Richard challenged us by asking whether we thought we could do our job better with God or without Him? If the former, how has God made our job better? Are we adopting Biblical practices, often in the face of opposition, but expecting God to honour our stand and thereby benefit our employer? Testimonies from the seminar included:

- God waking someone up to set the alarm clock to avoid lateness
 - Prayer before phone calls which are then easier than expected
- Reduction in stress at work, through bringing little things to Him in prayer
 - Change away from being a driven person to spending more time with colleagues
- Trusting God and not worrying about how I come across as a Christian
- Practical intervention in the words said by God in Courtroom settings

Overall, we concluded that we underestimate what God can do for us.

3. Proactive

In what ways can we bring Christianity to our peers, those we work with, so that they can consider the claims of Christ in their lives? Do we even seek out other believers, regularly meet with them, and develop a strategy to make a positive Christian statement at work? Examples from the seminar included:

- Discussion following the death of someone known to the colleague
 - Invitation to Alpha or Marriage Courses
- Direct conversation when a suitable question is raised, perhaps following a current news story on suffering for instance
 - Christmas - exploring the background to the festival
 - Carol Services (see later)
 - Ask to pray for them when appropriate opportunities arise
 - Discussions about the Boiler Room in Reading

Witness at work

At this point, Richard outlined six easy steps to being a witness at work:

Step 1 – Find other Christians. This may be by word of mouth or it may be by noticing that they have a screensaver on their desktop computer saying “Jesus is Lord.”

Step 2 – Agree to meet once. Start off with a suggestion for a simple get together.

Step 3 – Meet and decide what The Lord might just want you to do. Pray, think, talk about what His will might be for you.

Step 4 – Set up something – fix a time, place and format, seek permission (if applicable), advertise it, get on with it and don't get despondent. If it is only two people meeting together for 15 minutes to pray once a fortnight, it is still bringing His Kingdom into that workplace in a way that cannot be achieved on your own – “when two or more meet in my name...” as Jesus said.

Step 5 – Wonder what The Lord may want you to do for Outreach. At this time of year [the session was before Christmas], with Christmas approaching, there is plenty of opportunity to lead a carol service. Perhaps invite the “Chief Executive” or equivalent to give the reading, and so involve the whole workplace in the initiative.

Step 6 – Grasp the nettle! When the Lord speaks to those involved, follow his will.

The seminar concluded that this all sounded so easy, but we can and must call on God's help to implement these steps in our workplace.

Getting God to Work Website

Richard then outlined some work in progress between Christian Viewpoint for Men and the Institute for Contemporary Christianity on a web based Getting God to Work site. The aim is for this to be released on 7 November 2003 at the beginning of the next CVM conference, where Mark Greene (author of the key title "Thank God it's Monday" in this field of workplace ministry). The web site will potentially include a full listing of all workplace ministries in the UK, details of midweek midday events as well as annual events, such as gatherings at the Albert Hall for 20,000 men.

There would also be a Christian Handbook section, separate links to evangelism for men and women and reference to the Josiah project. The Josiah project has both a booklet including monthly studies and Bible based training for particular workplace activities such as counselling, negotiation etc. and material for particular generic issues.

Lastly, the web site would have links to professional sector fellowships that could provide additional support to those working in a particular sector for the issues they face - doctors and abortion for example. Richard did make a clear warning that this all-embracing web site was currently at an early stage, and news of its completion would be relayed in due course.

[See now our [Resources](#) page for relevant links.]

Conclusion

Richard concluded the seminar by returning to the example of Daniel and recalled that Daniel had been born under the kingship of Josiah. Previously, Moses had read out a decree that the King should read the law each day (Deuteronomy 17:14), following which after Saul, David, Solomon and the divided kingdom, Israel decided not to have any king for 500 years. 900 years later from Moses' edict, 2 Chronicles 34 Verse 2 records that King Josiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, purged the land of idols and cast images, and then the book of the Law was found (Verse 14).

At hearing the word of the Law, Josiah tore his robes, (Verse 19). Daniel is calculated to have lived under this Godly king for his first 11 years. Daniel was then equipped through the Babylonians and followed his call from God. Daniel was challenged to stand firm in the Lord and did so, being transformed and not conformed.

Are we ready to stand firm to the end in our workplaces for the Lord?