

Working Challenges

Six sessions on the Sermon on the Mount looking at key challenges at work
Week 2: Our Witness at Work (Matthew 5:13-16)

ICEBREAKER: Do you remember the Mr Men/Little Miss series of characters? Which Mr Man or Little Miss do you most relate to when you think about witnessing in your workplace? Mr Jelly? Mr Brave? Little Miss Shy? Mr Chatterbox? Mr Bump? Little Miss Whoops? Mr Perfect? One of the others?!

1. Don't Conform but be Distinct (v.13)

The point: Read v.13. When Jesus says we are to be “salt of the earth”, he is encouraging us to be distinct. Jesus says if salt loses its saltiness it is a waste of time – presumably because then it's just like everything else around it. Our danger is one of conforming to the surroundings we find ourselves in, so that we are no longer distinct from those we work with.

The illustration: Recount a situation where you either needed to be distinct when you weren't, or when you were distinct when you shouldn't have been (e.g. turning up for a party which was not fancy-dress wearing a Spice Girls outfit)

The application: Jesus is calling us who are Christians to be distinct at work - presumably by living out the Beatitudes which we looked at last week. e.g. Distinct by not seeing all our colleagues as rivals to be put down and climbed over, but seeing them as God's creation to be loved and served, whoever they are (Matthew 5:5). Distinct by hungering and thirsting for righteousness rather than for a pay rise or a promotion (Matthew 5:6)

BUZZ GROUPS: Discuss how you currently conform to be no different from work colleagues and in what ways you need to be more distinct at work. Then get feedback.

2. Don't Conceal but be Radiant (v.14-16)

The point: Read v.14-16. When Jesus says we are to be the “light of the world”, he is encouraging us to shine brightly for our Father in heaven with whoever we come into contact with. Our danger is that we conceal by putting our light under a bowl.

The application:

We can conceal the light in three ways:

1. Physically

It is much easier to be the light of the world if we are surrounded by people who aren't Christians. Unless we feel we are being specifically called out of the workplace, we should remain in it. [Give personal example from workplace]

2. Morally

According to v.16, the light we conceal is good deeds. So often we can let the culture of our workplace transform us, when Christ longs to use us to transform our workplace. [Give personal example from workplace]

3. Verbally

Even if we are not concealing the light physically or morally, we can still conceal verbally because we are never upfront about our connection to Jesus Christ. [Give personal example from workplace]

QU: Which bit of verse 16 would not take place if we didn't actually speak about Jesus?

Praising our Father in heaven

QU: What would happen instead?

People would praise us for being such nice people, rather than praising the God who we serve. John Stott writes: "Evangelism must be counted as one of the good works by which our light shines and our Father is glorified".

BUZZ GROUPS: Which of these three ways of concealing the light are we most in danger of succumbing to?

To be good witnesses at work, we need to be physically, morally and verbally pointing people to the Lord Jesus who is THE light of the world.

BUZZ GROUPS: If we feel like Mr Jelly or Little Miss Whoops, how can we practically help ourselves to be better witnesses in our workplaces? Get feedback

Six suggestions:

1. **Time** - Spend time with your colleagues. As our friendships grow, so our opportunities to speak of Christ grow. Going to the pub with your colleague to enable you to speak of Christ with them is just as much a ministry serving God as getting involved by leading on Alpha at church
2. **In**ite – To Alpha, To Church.
3. **Con**fess - Be quick to say sorry to your colleagues when you have done something wrong at work
4. **Kitted Out**. Get prepared with answers to the kinds of questions people often ask (see Searching Issues by Nicky Gumbel). Learn a quick 30 second "water-cooler" testimony if people ask you to "give the reason for the hope you have"
5. **Lean on God**. Pray – don't try and do it in your own strength
6. **Ex**ample. If in doubt – look to follow the example of Jesus. WWJD.

In other words – be a Mr TICKLE!

MINISTRY IDEA: In the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit most often fills people for mission and evangelism. Pray that He might do the same for everyone in the group. Then pray in 3s/4s for what individuals have been particularly challenged by. Encourage individuals to name one colleague they want to pray about for an opportunity to witness to. You could suggest reporting back on how things have gone at the next pastorate session.

[See chapter 6 and chapter 10 in *Working without Wilting* by Jago Wynne (IVP) for more info]