


REGENT BUSINESS REVIEW

ISSUE 9

www.regent.edu/review



The Faith at Work Movement: Opening “The 9 to 5 Window”

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

**Advice on Praying
for that Difficult
Person at Work**

**Unconcealed Faith,
Uncommon Profits:
Evidence That They
Are Compatible**

**Launching a Work-
Life Ministry in
Your Local Church**

PLUS: Are You Too Busy for God?

Launching a Work-Life Ministry in Your Local Church

by Doug Spada and David Scott

Today, many Christians live schizophrenic lives, balancing commitments to church, home and work, often relegating God to the former. But, as Dallas Willard has written, “There is truly no division between sacred and secular except what we have created. And that is why the division of the legitimate roles and functions of human life into the sacred and secular does incalculable damage to our individual lives and the cause of Christ.” Indeed, there should be no distinction between our devotional life and our daily life.

This is reasonably elemental theology, and almost every church would embrace it, but when it comes to *preparing* people for Monday morning ministry – for executing the tenet to live out our faith daily – there is a gaping hole in most churches. That hole, more positively-conceptualized as a discipleship opportunity, involves preparing people to live their faith at work, or what we call “work-life ministry.”

Few churches offer anything resembling a ministry in this area. Often, the closest they come is an effort focused on the white-collar business community – a “marketplace ministry,” a businessmen’s small group, or a 7 a.m. executive prayer breakfast. In doing so, they minister to the five percent who are leaders in their work environments and

ignore the ninety-five percent who are not.

That’s tragic, we think, not only because this ninety-five percent is left with little guidance about what it means to be a Christian at work, but

The church is missing one of the greatest opportunities for both discipleship and evangelism. Here’s a roadmap to the remedy

also because this majority is surrounded every day by untold legions of non-Christians and nominal Christians to whom they could reveal God. Seemingly, the church is missing one of its greatest opportunities for both discipleship and evangelism. At best a church attracts a few hundred, perhaps a few thousand people each week. Its members, on the other hand, have contact with twenty times that many people in their typical work day.

Work-life ministry fills this gap, assisting believers to see God’s agenda for their work lives and teaching them to steward their time, talents, and relationships in God-honoring ways. What does that look like

in operation? And what tools exist to help a church create such a ministry? From our experience with launching these ministries in local churches around the country, here are several essential steps.

A Road Map for Launching a Work-Life Ministry in Your Church

Lay a Foundation of Prayer. Any effort is in vain without the blessing of God’s Spirit. Start the ministry with a campaign of prayer and undergird its ongoing efforts with continued intercession.

Appoint an Active, Passionate Leader. A work-life ministry needs a “champion,” a delegated, activist leader, whether a lay member or a person on staff. This is an absolute prerequisite for success here. Next to God’s blessing and the pastor’s support, identifying the right individual whom God has raised up is fundamental to the whole effort.

If you are interested in launching such a ministry, but you’re not in your church’s leadership, begin persuading the decision-makers that this ministry should be a priority. Share with them your vision and passion. Pass on to them the books, tapes, and articles that have opened your eyes to the paradigm of work-life ministry. Begin praying for

them. Invite them to go with you to a work-life related conference. Connect them with other churches who are successfully implementing work-life ministry strategies. God may very well use you to help them catch a whole new vision, and you may be the key to the reformation of your church.

An active, passionate leader is a prerequisite for any work-life ministry to succeed

Add “Work-Life Equipping” to Your Church’s Objectives.

A work-life focus ought to be a central theme integrated into the mission of your church. A one-time programmatic emphasis will probably falter. Work-life equipping is not an event-driven campaign, but a long-term initiative that, if done properly, yields abundant fruit.

Build a Strategic

Framework. Carefully consider what it is that you want to do and what it will take to do it. What’s entailed in equipping your members? And how will you deliver that information? How will you go beyond imparting information and encouragement to generate real passion for living out the faith at work?

One place to start looking for ideas is HisChurchatWork.org. Besides offering conceptual models, His Church at Work also provides a set of turnkey practical tools and strategies that many churches are finding helpful. The organization helps

churches develop the framework for an ongoing process of work-life ministry and, if desired, comes alongside church leaders and their delegated work-life champion to help create and launch the ministry. That includes, among other things, creating a vision, a team, a unique set of online tools, and plan for long-term success.

Promote the Work-Life Ministry. Without visibility, a work-life ministry will not engage and mobilize people in the church. It needs a name, a logo, and a communication infrastructure. It requires promotion in church communications like bulletins, announcements, the church web site, newsletters and emails.

We suggest a month-long, church-wide emphasis to get the ministry onto the average member’s radar screen. The ultimate goal is to integrate it into the entire culture of the church. Sermons cast the vision from up front and lay the groundwork of the basic biblical precepts. Involvement tools and online resources help people get on board.

Plan Ongoing Equipping and Mobilization. Once the framework and tools for the ministry are in place, don’t get complacent. Think through what you can do on an ongoing basis to help your members to continue to learn how to live their faith at work. Here are some practical ideas:

- Pastors could schedule periodic sermons related to workplace topics. Consider including member

testimonies of how God is transforming their work-lives.

- Offer classes on God’s view of work and on calling and vocation.
- To recognize and bless their calling in a formal way, empower believers in their vocations through a church commissioning service.
- Help your members organize Bible studies, prayer groups, and evangelistic outreaches at their places of work. In one success story, Dave Treat with the Workplace Ministry of Willow Creek, organized small groups that meet at commuter rail stations’ coffee shops.

Avoid Vocabulary That Can Derail Your Message.

Ultimately, work-life ministry is a paradigm-shifting effort. For everyone to get the message that their “work matters to God,” we must choose our rhetoric carefully. The question is not what you think you are saying, but what your audience actually hears.

Consider a month-long, church-wide emphasis to get the ministry on the average member’s radar screen

Much of Christian’s confusion about their jobs can be traced to the stumbling block of our vocabulary.

For example, be careful how you speak of “ministry,” taking care to not unwittingly exclude

the spiritual significance of “work.” Even well-meaning categories such as “spiritual gifts,” “evangelism,” “tithing” and “missions,” when given singular emphasis, can leave the impression that work-life only matters as a means to the end of “real ministry.”

Use inclusive language that communicates to the entire workforce spectrum of your church. Most would not describe themselves as “business people,” “executives,” or even “professionals.” Also in describing the ministry, talk about “work-life” rather than “workplace” ministry because not every worker has a workplace, per se. But every worker does have a work-life.

So audit the cumulative message and language of your church. Ask yourself, what are we really communicating to our intended audience?

Keep Work-Life from Becoming Just a “Niche”

Ministry. By nature it is catalytic. All Christians need equipping for a Christian work life. Youth must be prepared for it. Singles, couples, men and women all struggle with it. Senior citizens face significant adjustments related to it. Accordingly, this ministry should cut across and resource almost every other sector of traditional church programming and ministry: adults, youth, families, evangelism, prayer, small groups, and preaching. The transformational potential of a work-life ministry outlook will probably not be realized if it’s relegated to a special interest group ghetto.

The Payoff

Launching and sustaining a work-life ministry in the local church requires a shift in a church’s strategic thinking. It requires envisioning a whole new ministry landscape for the local church. Tall order, for sure, but the payoff is far taller. Consider this: the true scope of influence for any church is not its attendance, but the sum total of the relationship networks of its members, most of whom work. If each person

If each church member has regular interaction with twenty people during the week, then a church of 250 has a potential scope of influence of 5,000

has regular interaction with twenty other people during a given week, then a church of 250 has a potential scope of influence of 5,000, and a church of 5,000 has a potential reach of 100,000! Work-life ministry grows out of the vision to steward this wider ministry opportunity. Its task is to mentally and practically merge the ministry of the church with the daily ministry of its people.

Such a ministry has other payoffs as well. It will not only accelerate the growth of your church, it will enhance the spiritual maturity of your church members. Moreover,

members’ appreciation for their church will likely deepen as the church relevantly speaks to the daily challenges people face and as it equips people for their calling. It keeps God in front of them, empowering them everyday. In one church where they launched a work-life ministry, a member wrote to the staff a message that is typical of the outcome here: “Our workplace ministry and the tools are a great encouragement for me throughout the week. This is an awesome ministry and it helps me to stay focused on what’s really important. Thanks to all that are involved!”

Surely, the church that makes a priority of work-life ministry will have no problem filling its pews. Beyond that, though, it will be filling its pews with more authentic disciples – people equipped to take that 9:00 Sunday message and apply it at 9:00 on Monday.

Douglas Spada, a former nuclear submarine engineer and entrepreneur, is the founder of His Church at Work, a ministry devoted to fostering work-life ministry in the local church. For more information on church-based workplace ministry development, visit www.HisChurchatWork.org or write Doug at doug@hischurchatwork.org.

David Scott, Ph.D., is a writer, speaker, and consultant with Life 2.0, a ministry committed to helping the church embody a more holistic Christian life view. For resources and help implementing a renewed Christian worldview in your church, write to David at dscott@lifetwozero.org or visit www.lifetwozero.org.