

Faith in the Workplace: A Personal Reflection



What is faith in the workplace from a Christian perspective? It might be easier to begin by saying what it is not. It is not proclaiming loudly to everyone you work with that you are a Christian and that they should all turn to the Lord and be saved (although, of course, they should!) and it is not putting a large bible in everyone's pigeon hole (although, I'd love to). Remember, Jesus did not arrive in a loud and forceful manner; he made his entry to our world quietly and humbly and he came to serve. Christianity in the workplace is much the same. It is quiet, humble and it serves others.

In my experience, it all began very simply. In the course of conversation, when someone asked what I had done at the weekend, I would say we had been to a church barbecue, lunch or something similar. People slowly began to ask which church I attended, if I went every Sunday, and why I went. In response, I didn't give them a lecture on Christianity, I just said there were really friendly people at my church and how much I enjoyed being with them and their families. I told them about the interesting people there and what they had done and were doing. My faith grew stronger. I started saying a polite "no, thank you" to Sunday morning activities for work (like golf with the boss, work picnics, etc.) because I was going to church with my family. Everyone understood and nobody minded. They knew church was important to us. It was a while later that I noticed that the picnics started to be scheduled on a Saturday, or later in the afternoon on a Sunday.

As time went on, we went overseas to work in Papua New Guinea and the people in my workplace there saw other things we were doing. My wife, Christine, and I became involved in various activities to help those less fortunate than ourselves (visiting squatter settlements, helping the poor, etc.) and the local people I worked with saw this and really appreciated what we were doing to help their people. At first they were even a little confused as they had developed a stereotype of expatriates working for multi-national companies, and I didn't fit!

Around this time my management career began, and using the management style set by our Lord, I tried to be a servant leader and shepherd or guide the people who worked with me. I cared for the people who worked in my department and helped them with their career development, training them in new skills and giving them opportunities to take on new responsibilities, etc. This led to them opening up to me and sharing their needs and desires with me. I have been privileged to make some wonderful friends over the years. Christine says that my colleagues often told her that there was something different about me, even more when I became a senior manager of the company, because I still had time for them and their needs and did not abandon them. Again, I simply used our Lord as a role model.

Along the way in our working lives, Christine and I have been asked to do some wonderful things. I remember in Melbourne there was a colleague who was a Muslim and he knew us well and knew we attended church and were committed Christians. When his little boy became very sick with leukemia, he came to our house shaking. He cried and asked us to pray to "Jesus, your great healer" so that his son would recover. We prayed for his son and, praise God, his son recovered fully after treatment. It was wonderful to be asked to pray for him.

I had another opportunity to demonstrate my Christian faith in the workplace while in Indonesia. The company was changing its business model and this meant reducing staff. One of the ladies working for me

was a contractor and she was first to go. She had lost her husband earlier in the year and was bringing up her son on her own. Now I was going to tell her she had no job. She sat in my office crying when she heard the news. I offered to help her find another job and we prayed together. Within four weeks, in a country with high unemployment, she had a permanent job, which was paying more money and was closer to home. It is especially important in difficult situations to resolve problems in a Christian way.

Now, every Christmas and Easter I receive hundreds of SMS blessings and greetings from people around the world. Not all of them believe in the Lord themselves, but they recognize that I do and they remember our friendship and send me greetings and blessings because they know that Christmas and Easter are special times for me and my family.

To finish, if you want to share your faith effectively in the workplace, my advice is to just go slowly, plant a few seeds in a small way and wait for the Lord to make them grow. Live your working life with Christ as your role model and you won't go wrong.

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