



Faith, Work and Christian Discipleship

By John Weaver

Leader's Guide

Session 3 - **Fair remuneration
for work**



Faith and work in the lives of Christian disciples

Leader's Guide

Welcome to this ICF resource, which is one of six discussion outlines about faith and work. These leader's notes are designed to be used in conjunction with the participants handbooks that can be purchased from ICF. The leaders' notes include additional study material and theological reflection. It is unlikely that the group will have the capacity to absorb or engage with all of this, but it offers further ideas and insights that you can inject into the conversation when you feel it would be helpful. Remember that your role as a leader is to stimulate and moderate discussion – you don't have to include everything that is outlined in these notes, nor should a discussion be constrained by them if it goes off in a direction that is useful to the group as a whole.

The relationship between faith and work is quite complex with many and varied aspects. We cannot cover every element of it, but the discussion starters in this series seek to introduce what we consider to be some of the most significant features. The direction and content of any discussion will depend upon the particular experiences and perspectives of those who participate in it. The task of a good group leader is to allow the conversation to flow in appropriate directions, pay attention to see everyone is included and to hold the general principle of encouraging a Christian understanding of work by relating the biblical narratives and theological reflections to the day to day experience of the group's members. This should include work in all its forms: formal and informal; manual and managerial; creative and intellectual; caring and technological and so on. This is what we might often refer to as a theology of work. These discussion outlines should provide you with the resources to begin to make connections between the Bible and attitudes to work and its practices.

Our purpose is to go further than simply encouraging people to act as Christians while they are at work (important as this is!) Rather we seek to explore work itself as an expression of Christian discipleship; consider how work might enable us to participate in God's mission to reconcile all things and to reflect on work in the light of God's purpose for human beings as stewards of creation. If you are to help others engage with these realities, they are issues that you might helpfully think through for yourself first.

The six key themes are offered as a basis from which you can develop a group discussion in which members reflect on their own experience of work. The emerging conversations will depend not only on the particular jobs that people do, but the workplace cultures in which they operate and the nature of their own discipleship journey. The atmosphere of the group needs not only to be a place of learning, but also pastoral sensitivity – work is not a positive experience for everyone, and talking about it might well reveal hurts and struggles that need to be heard with care and acceptance.

The six study guides in this series are:

1. **What is work?**
2. **Covenant and contract; work and rest**
3. **Fair remuneration for work**
4. **Faith, ethics, and work**
5. **Work and the Church: worship, church programmes, and church operations**
6. **Work, community and transformation**

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Session 3 Fair remuneration for work

Session outline

This session seeks to consider whether the principles previously discussed can be applied to the way that reward and remuneration is calculated and offered. The concept of a “Living Wage” is one that reflects the principle of providing wages on the basis of need. As this idea attracts increasing commitment, we might go on to consider how the principles we are talking about can find their way into business practice and behaviour. The session concludes by considering whether church communities do enough to make themselves relevant to the working lives of their members, and explores what our Scriptures teach about the sharing and distribution of wealth.

Introduction

What is a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?

Most people are likely to answer this question from the perspective of the job done, hours worked or the income that an organisation generates. Jesus states that workers deserve their pay (**Luke 10:7**), and in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (**Matthew 20:1-16**) describes an approach which not only jars with our understanding today, but caused disquiet amongst those in the story. He demonstrates that generosity and a requirement to enable workers to have enough to eat are marks of a Christian approach to employment. The Apostle Paul's understanding of discipleship extends to work (**Ephesians 6:5-9**) and provides principles for employment in the contemporary world.

In the light of this, the group is invited to consider:

Does a biblical reflection on God and creation, human beings in the image of God, God's covenants and the redemption of the whole of creation in Christ, which includes the redemption of work help us in considering fair pay?

How do we measure the secular understanding of contracts, a minimum wage, the living wage, salaries and stipends, bonuses and share allocations against the values we find in Scripture?

The Real Living Wage⁸

Richard Weaver, who works for Citizens Cymru and Citizens UK, has identified the Living Wage⁹ as an important measure of justice for employees. One cleaner in central London said: 'on the minimum wage you can survive, but you don't live.' Dr John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, and chair of the Living Wage Commission (<http://www.livingwage.org.uk>) commented: 'It cannot be right that somebody should work all the hours that God gives them and still be in poverty.' Out of 13 million people living in poverty in the UK, 6.7 million are in a family where at least one person works, according to a June 2014 report by the Living Wage Commission.

Those hardest hit are the people who clean, cater, and provide security, those who work in hotels, social care and retail. Some are stuck for years on wages that don't begin to make ends meet.

The 'Real Living Wage' is calculated to be the level of pay required to enable workers to sustain a personal and family life, contribute to the wider life of a community, and still have enough money to meet their material needs. On 3 November 2014, at the beginning of Living Wage Week in the UK, the recommended living wage was set at £7.85 an hour, and £9.15 an hour in London, compared to the UK minimum wage of £6.50 an hour, due to rise as the Living Wage to £7.20 an hour in April 2016 for those over 25 years of age. Employers choose to pay the 'Real' Living Wage on a voluntary basis. Currently, 21% of all UK workers, more than five million people, are paid below the living wage, including (according to KPMG research in 2014): 85% of bar waiting staff, 43% of part-time

⁸ The UK government in late 2015 reconstituted the minimum wage as 'the Living Wage', but at a level below that recommended by the Living Wage Commission (<http://www.livingwage.org.uk>). For this reason the original Living Wage has been renamed the Real Living Wage. In October 2017 the UK Government Living Wage was £7.50 an hour for those over 25 yrs. The Real Living Wage for those outside of London was calculated at £8.75 per hour for everyone over 18 yrs, and the London Real Living Wage was £10.20 per hour.

⁹ Richard Weaver, 'The Living Wage - making sense for business and the common good', Faith in Business Quarterly 17.1, 2015 pp. 29-32

workers, 72% of 18-21 year olds, 14% of 30-39 year olds, 27% of women, 16% of men, 25% of workers in Wales, and 17% of workers in London.

However, as Richard Weaver observes, the 'Real' Living Wage is increasingly making sense for businesses. More than 1,000 employers in the UK are now accredited as living wage employers. This list includes 18 FTSE 100 companies, 20 local authorities, the Nationwide Bank, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Legal and General, Aviva, Nestlé, Google and Ogilvy & Mather. On 11th December 2014 Chelsea became the first Premier League football club to be an accredited a living wage employer. Football clubs are high profile businesses, and are often beacon employers with a history rooted in their communities. Many do brilliant community work, but are continuing to pay below the living wage to many of those who work on match days and around the stadium.

Following the action of the UK government in late 2015 to reconstitute the minimum wage as 'the Living Wage', set at a level below that recommended by the Living Wage Commission, the original Living Wage has been renamed the Real Living Wage.

As Christians following a God of justice who calls us to love our neighbours, should we be actively supporting the living wage campaign? We have a rich tradition of acting on issues of social and economic justice: from work to end the global slave trade, to defeating apartheid in South Africa, and the cancellation of US\$130 billion of unpayable debt for developing countries through the Jubilee 2000 movement (inspired by the Jubilee laws in Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 25).

Can we address the Real Living Wage in the same way that the church was the backbone of Jubilee 2000?

Krish Kandiah, President of the London School of Theology, in writing about the Bible, wages and family life argues that a mature biblical theology of poverty and the family¹⁰ will include modelling of ways of giving respect and empowering the poor rather than patronising them and creating dependency. For example Boaz's obedience to the Levitical gleaning laws did not give grain to the widows and strangers as hand-outs, but instead gave them access to the farmland and allowed them to gather what they needed for themselves. This provides dignity to those being helped and offers near neighbourly care (cf. **Leviticus 19:19, Ruth 2**). It also includes recognition that systems and structures unfairly disadvantage some so that their circumstances rather than their character have been the predominant cause of their poverty.

The Bible is clear that the earth belongs first of all to God – and that its fruits need to be distributed in a way that ensures everyone has dignity and the material as well as spiritual means to flourish.¹¹ We can also draw on **Malachi 3:5** where those who oppress hired workers are lumped with sorcerers, perjurers and those who oppress immigrants. In addition, in this and other passages ensuring fair pay for hired workers, often the lowest paid, is included alongside the importance of responding to the needs of widows, orphans and immigrants.

For churches and other Christian organisations in particular, it is important that we live out our values in every area of our work, and part of that will be shown in how much those who work for us are paid. It's a basic part of the gospel that all people are created equal and that we are all equal in the eyes of God. As Christian organisations we should apply this to all that we do, in seeking to build the kingdom, including what we pay.

Helping employers:

Although conducted in the UK in 1992-1993 a survey of nearly 400 Christians,¹² mainly engaged in the professions or as managers, has revealed some challenging results for the churches. Seeking to establish some factual information the survey asked five major questions:

- i) How did Christians, as Christians, view their working experience and the organisations which employed them?
- ii) How did they engage and communicate as Christians with others in the workplace?

¹⁰Krish Kandiah, *The Heart of the Kingdom*, London: The Children's Society, 2013, p35

¹¹<http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Celebrating-Living-Wage-Week-2014.pdf>

¹²David Clark, *A Survey of Christians at Work and its implications for the Churches*, Birmingham: Westhill College, 1993

- iii) How did the local church validate and resource its members in their working lives?
- iv) How did the church as a whole draw on and make use of their experiences at work?
- v) What insights, skills and resources might Christians at work want to help them fulfil that aspect of their ministry?

The respondents were 60% male; 40% female; mean age was mid-forties; 83% were managerial or professional; they had high job satisfaction; 92% saw their work to some extent as a Christian vocation; 84% saw their work to some extent as part of the mission of the church; and they spent an average of 4 hours per week on church activities, many holding church offices. These people are amongst the most highly committed of church members, which makes their responses all the more challenging to the church.

Here are some of the issues and questions raised by the survey:

1. Questions that work raises about faith

The following broad questions were raised; the percentage of respondents who identified the particular issue is also indicated.

- i) the relevance of faith and church to work 30%
- ii) the conflict between business ethics and Christian principles 23%
- iii) the desire for justice to be seen to be fair 11%
- iv) showing Christ in a multi-faith society 10%
- v) the difficulty of acting with integrity when in a position of authority 8%
- vi) the creation of wealth, especially personal wealth 5%

2. The place of the church

Questions about the nature of the church's response to work issues received the following replies:

- i) Does the worship of your local church affirm you in your work?
35% little or not at all; only 17% said very much
- ii) How could worship affirm work?
answer: through knowledge of each other's work and life
- iii) How much do church members know of each other's work?
47% little or not at all; 5% a great deal
- iv) Does pastoral care support you in your work?
33% very little; 24% not at all; 9% very much
- v) Do educational programmes in your church address your faith and work concerns?
50% very little or not at all; 3% very much

Over a third said that Sunday worship was separated from the rest of the week. They recognised the need for daily work to be valued in the worship, preaching and teaching programmes of the church. They placed the following as priority issues for those programmes: ethics, care, management, employment, ambition, wealth creation, justice and fair trading. The responses indicate both a do-it-yourself theology and two cultures, of work and worship, not connecting. The church appears to ignore the large issues of ethics and faith, while concentrating on private morals. There is a danger of emphasising values and virtues, without understanding the doctrines of creation, incarnation and redemption. Here is further evidence of a dualism, the private world of faith separated from the public world of work.

What would you see as the main issues that work poses for you as a Christian?

Modern capitalism and sharing with the poorest:

It is helpful to consider the biblical principle of gleaning mentioned above by Krish Kandiah. The Jews of the Old Testament were not to harvest to the edges of their fields, but leave some of the grain, grapes or olives for the poor to collect (**Leviticus 19:9-10**). Is this a pattern for business owners to follow today? In Craig Blomberg's survey of the Mosaic laws of gleaning, releasing, tithing and Jubilee, he concludes that the biblical attitude toward wealth and possessions does not fit into any of the normal categories of democratic capitalism.¹³

Timothy Keller in his book, *Generous Justice. How God's grace makes us just*, maintains that modern companies should not squeeze every penny of profit out of their businesses for themselves by charging the highest possible fees and prices to customers and paying the lowest possible wages to workers.¹⁴ Instead companies should lower prices, pay higher wages, and share corporate profits with employees and customers. This should also include the wages paid to workers located in developing countries producing merchandise for the developed world. The success of employee profit-sharing by the John Lewis Partnership is a good example; and the challenge for companies to pay the real living wage rather than the minimum wage (the government's 'living wage') is a step on the way.

While poverty may often be the result of selfish individualism or the enhancement of shareholder profits rather than concern for the common good, the Bible also identifies natural disasters and personal moral failures, including idleness, as causes. People must take responsibility for their own actions (**Jeremiah 29:29-30**), and internationally governments should provide aid to areas suffering the effects of natural disasters.

In the New Testament we find that Jesus declared the Sabbath and Jubilee principle at the beginning of his ministry as recorded in **Luke 4:18-19**.

Luke directly addresses rich Christians who might be wondering how they get into the Kingdom of God, where Jesus says 'Happy are the poor'. Luke in his pastoral concern offers Jesus' guidance for rich Christians through the story of Zacchaeus (**19:1-10**); the parable of the rich fool (**12:13-21**); the rich man and Lazarus (**16:19-31**); the Good Samaritan (**10:30-37**); and the shrewd manager (**16:1-12**), which are only found in Luke's account of the Gospel. Here Jesus offers guidance for how to deal with wealth. For example in **Luke 12:13-21** the rich fool's ambitious planning focuses on a desire to secure himself independent of any reliance on God.

The group is invited to consider what pointers these Gospel stories provide in how we deal with our wealth.

In the letter of **James (4:13-15)** the business people are condemned because they prefer to develop their money-making plans rather than placing their lives in God's hands; and in the Book of Revelation (chapter 18) the kings of the earth are seduced by the wealth created by the imperial economic practices of the earthly kingdom set against God.

Paul recognises all of these aspects of a world running away from God, where poverty is rooted in broken relationships and the Roman Empire set against God, encouraging the Colossian Christians to see that God has reconciled all things in creation to himself in Christ (**Colossians 1:15-20**).

Questions to consider:

1. What lessons do you draw from Luke's approach to riches?
2. How might the principle of gleaning be applied in our workplace?
3. Does your church help you to relate your faith to your work? What does or what would help you?

¹³Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1996, p.46 quoted in Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice. How God's grace makes us just*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010, 2012, p.32

¹⁴Keller, *Generous Justice*, p.30