

# Infusion—God’s People Ministering in the Marketplace

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Lately, I have thought much about the need for the laity, God’s people, to be more active in the marketplace. Following this line of thinking, the word “infusion” comes to mind. It is an interesting word that is not often used these days. The literal meaning of this term is: *to cause to be permeated with something that alters usually for the better*. In a spiritual sense this definition fits the goal of every local evangelical church: God’s people permeating into the workplace with a desire to share the gospel to their fellow workers. If the marketplace is “infused” with believers who are properly equipped through training in “marketplace ministry,” there will be a revival of witnessing that will result in many people receiving Christ.

The reason I am passionate about this type of outreach is due to the fact that I found Christ as my personal savior over 50 years ago because someone was bold enough to share Christ with me at our workplace. I was a trucking terminal manager for a large moving and commercial warehousing business in Portland, Maine. As our business grew, the owner built a beautiful new warehouse and trucking terminal. This necessitated hiring a receptionist and personal secretary for me. This lady immediately brought a powerful Christian presence into our previous all-male office and warehouse crew. I was totally intrigued about the joy that I saw in her life on daily basis. One day I asked her this question: “What makes you so happy?” She immediately said, “It is the Lord Jesus Christ in my life.” Being a true pagan, I had no idea who she was referring to as “Lord.” I thought it might be a distinguished Englishman! During the weeks and months that followed this conversation, she beautifully explained the way of salvation and invited me to attend church with her. I accepted Christ after several months, fell in love with my secretary and we have been married for 54 years!

My testimony and the testimony of thousands of others is the reason why I think our churches need to prepare its members for sharing Christ on their jobs. It must be pointed out that caution has to be given not to be too forward because, after all, believers are hired to work not to evangelize. But we must also realize that equipping churches see their people’s daily work as part of the church’s ministry. These churches have begun to ask, ‘Where are our people during the week?’ They have started to develop ways of identifying where their people are and what they are doing during the week. This may be identified as pins on a map, or a photo board, or a PowerPoint presentation of people at work, or a booklet listing people’s jobs and interests. These churches give the people of God a sense that they have been strategically placed by God in their working worlds to make a difference there.

There is no single model or simple formula. This is about each church embarking on its own journey towards resourcing Christians to serve God in their daily work. Each church must start with the people God has already given it and the places and types of work that already occupy their lives. This is not about heaping extra expectations and obligations on people already struggling to make time for church involvement. These churches affirm that teaching school children how to write is godly work, that excellence in making beds gives glory to Christ, that managing a company budget is good stewardship of God’s creation. Equipping churches offer

encouragement and help to add a new sense of purpose to people in their existing weekday lives. It is about churches helping people to hold pressured lives together by better integrating faith and work and family and all of life.

Church surveys reveal that the majority of Christians give about 10 hours per week to church activities (including worship, small group and some other ministry) unless they are employed by the church or have a lot of voluntary time. This raises the question, “How can this 10 hours be best used to equip one another to live well for Christ in the other 110 hours invested in work, family and leisure?” and “What would change if we were really serious about equipping?” They are asking:

- What would we pray for when we were together?
- How could preaching really help us to live well for Christ, wherever we were?
- What issues would be given most time in leadership meetings?
- What songs would worship leaders choose?
- What would we talk about in small groups?
- What stories would we expect to hear when we came together?
- What criteria would decide whether we had had a good time together?

The marketplace is a great place for Christians right now. Here is why I think preparing people for “workplace ministry” is a worthy goal for the evangelical congregations of today.

**The workplace is a ripe harvest field filled with unbelievers.** Almost all non-Christians are in the marketplace. The percentage of Americans who attend church regularly has declined in the past decade or so. Different sources have different methods of measuring church attendance, but most agree that it is around 20 percent or less. More Americans say they never attend church or synagogue than those who attend every week. If the unbelievers don’t attend our churches how can we find them? They are at work! The good news is that these people who aren’t attending church will still be waking up to go to work alongside their Christian co-workers in the marketplace each morning. In addition, almost all Christians are in the marketplace. At least 85% of the Christian workforce spends 60-70% of their waking hours in the marketplace. Think of the opportunity that church laity have to use their spiritual gifts. The ministry potential for Christians using their God-given abilities in the marketplace is astounding!

**The workplace is a great place for “public” discipleship.** Discipleship actually can happen in the marketplace. Church leaders often are criticized for the lack of discipleship and spiritual growth among their congregations. Marketplace ministry provides an opportunity for “on the job” discipleship. Most of the discipleship training given these days is at the local church. How much discipleship actually can happen during a two-hour church service on Sunday? How can a Sunday School class adequately disciple the attendees? Discipleship infers that believers become more like Jesus. This concept happens in everyday life. The potential for discipleship and ministry investment in a weekly service is a fraction of what is possible during an entire work-week spent with our co-workers, clients, etc.

**Marketplace ministry is an opportunity to showcase Christianity.** Think about this principle. When it is time for you to buy a new automobile what do you do? If you are like most of us we end up at a dealership showroom. We look the vehicle over and when we find one we like we

want to go on a test drive. The local church is like the showroom for Christianity. The marketplace is the test drive. The marketplace is where our unbelieving co-workers get to see if they really want what we have. Daily, they see how we react under pressure. They see how we treat people. They see how much God truly matters to us in our daily lives. Since in-house church attendance is in the decline marketplace believers have an opportunity to discreetly “showcase” Christianity in the public arena.

**The marketplace expands the outreach of the local church.** It allows the the Church to use all of its capabilities. “Spectator Christianity” doesn’t work in the marketplace. You and I were created by God and called and gifted by Him to reach others. So far, most of the teaching about “marketplace ministry” has been defining marketplace ministry without regard for people’s unique spiritual gifts. We need to approach marketplace ministry in a way that utilizes the spiritual gifts of all Christians in the marketplace. Further, the marketplace has a way of bringing all believers together, regardless of their individual church backgrounds.

Years ago I was working in a large manufacturing firm as the transportation manager. The owner of this firm (and three other factories) was a backslider who was not serving the Lord. Several of us believers got together and began to pray for this man. His personal assistant was a local pastor’s wife and was a great witness for the Lord. God began to move in the owner’s life and through a series of events at work, he made a personal decision to recommit his life to Christ. He became a wonderful, revived believer right before our eyes! The point is at work, denominational divisions are not important. Privately we can go to our church of choice, but most of us don’t have the luxury of co-working only with Christians with whom we agree theologically. The marketplace has a way of diluting some of these differences. This opens the door to cooperative ministry beyond the walls of our local churches and traditions.

Here is what I truly hope to see happening in our desire to train and equip evangelicals in marketplace ministry. Our goal is to create a “three-fold awareness” of ministry in the marketplace. First, to declare that marketplace ministry is a calling by God for business owners and leaders. Second, to equip believers to fulfill the Great Commission in the marketplace. Third, to demonstrate how churches can impact marketplace ministry.

Let’s follow the command of “Nike 1:1”—*Just do it!*