

LIFE Group Leader Handout

March 1, 2020

Message: Walking with Jesus in My Workplace

Pastor Michael O'Connor

Scripture--1 Peter 2:18-25

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Main Idea--Jesus' Footprints Are in Your Workplace--Follow Him!

The workplace then and now

What incites the cheers of the Almighty--endurance when we are suffering

Encouragement to endure:

- He is our Example in his life (vv. 21–23)
- He is our Substitute in his death (v. 24)
- He is our Watchful Shepherd in heaven (v. 25)

Application--

- If you are working, how is your workplace similar and how is it different from the one described in this passage?
- These verses describe Jesus: *22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* Which of these attitudes is being tested most in your current work situation?
- Can you share a testimony of how God is using you among the people you work with? What are you praying about in this area?

5 WAYS TO CULTIVATE VULNERABILITY IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

By Reid Smith

Vulnerability is uncomfortable. A turtle that's belly up is vulnerable. It's stuck and has no defense. That's what vulnerability feels like to most people, which is why it's unnatural to choose to go there. People don't naturally pursue ways to make themselves feel exposed to some kind of insult or injury. However, it is a path leaders must tread if the relationships within their small groups are to deepen.

God chose to be vulnerable with us. *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14a, NIV)*. Eternal relationship is possible because the Lord became vulnerable with us through His birth and crucifixion.

Although vulnerability feels weak, it can be the result of one who exercises the strength of authenticity. A strong leader endures the risk of becoming vulnerable because he or she knows it is the pathway to biblical community. One of the reasons group members complain of a group not being "deep enough," is not so much due to shallow curriculum, as it is the lack of relational depth among participants.

The vulnerability that flows from authenticity deepens relationships and results in group discussions that have more depth and challenge to them. There is no greater influence on the dynamic of a group than how real the leader is with the participants. Authenticity is contagious! A leader who is transparent will inspire others to be more real with each other, and consequently, group members will look forward to getting together with more enthusiasm than you might have thought possible!

Like many leadership qualities, authenticity is something that can be developed and it's worth the investment so that your group members will be free to be themselves and share from the heart. These five practices will enable you to become genuinely more authentic in how you lead so that your group can experience biblical community.

1. BE PREPARED TO ANSWER FIRST AND ERR ON THE SIDE OF RISK.

Look ahead at the questions to be asked and envision how you could answer with transparency. This will help you to take risks in the moment for the sake of others.

2. BE HONEST ABOUT THE GAP BETWEEN DESIRE AND REALITY.

None of us is where we want to be, and when the leader is transparent about the gap in their personal life, it invites others to deeper levels of participation. For example, "I know how important it is to have a devotional time each day, but there are seasons when I struggle with this...lately, I've let other things take priority in my life and I want this to change. Please pray for me." Though some might view this as vulnerability that shows weakness, it is the exact opposite. People are more likely to be open about their personal needs when they hear others express struggles they identify with and this will generate more ministry moments in your group life.

3. SHOW GRACE AND YOUR NEED FOR IT.

Be a good listener, patient, empathetic and non-judgmental in response to others. This graceful disposition will encourage others to open up and share more. Group members will be further inclined to risk vulnerability when the leader expresses gratitude for God's amazing grace and underscores our common dependency on Christ.

4. DON'T SPIN.

When you get something wrong, acknowledge it openly and don't be hard on yourself. Freely admit mistakes and share how you learned from them. Your imperfections make your group a safe space for people to be vulnerable.

5. FORGIVE.

Grudges and unforgiveness toward others (whether they're a part of the group or not) create barriers in relationships and make it more difficult to be vulnerable. Conversely, forgiveness cultivates authenticity and allows us to worship God fully (Matthew 5:23-24). It's imperative for us to be right with people if we want to be real with others.

These practices will help you to be authentic and traverse the uncertain terrain of vulnerability. Know that the Holy Spirit will use your faithfulness in this area to break-through to real community, deepen relationships, fuel disciple-making, and compel your group members to also have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5-8, NIV).