

## The Gospel at Work

Written by Andrew Oswalt

### INTRODUCTION

**[Watch the short video]** – *While it is not ideal, if you are unable to show the video to the group, you will find the transcript at the end*

#### Group question:

- 1) What was the most encouraging portion of this story for you?
- 2) Does anyone have a similar experience they would like to share?

### ENCOUNTERING THE WORD

Let's look at couple principles found in Colossians that we can apply to this idea of sharing and embodying the Gospel at Work.

**Read:** Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV)

**4:2** Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. **3** And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **4** Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. **5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

1. Paul offers a “recipe” for sharing the Gospel, and it applies to in the workplace as well. He suggests SIX aspects of “being” and THREE aspects of “doing”. What are they?

#### Answer for the Leader:

1. **Being:** Be watchful, Be thankful, Be wise, (THIS ONE IS A HARD ONE): Be prepared to suffer and/or be inconvenienced (“for which I am in chains”), Know how to answer everyone and Let your conversation be always full of grace
2. **Doing:** Pray, Proclaim and Make the Most of every opportunity

2. What must God do that apparently we cannot do?

**Answer for the Leader:**

God must open a door for our message.

3. Do you discern a process at here? To put it another way, does Paul put these things in a discernable order?

**Answer for the Leader:**

There is not a clearly discernable step-by-step process of evangelism here, but this question makes for a great small group discussion that leads into application. In the **APPLICATION** section below, I have offered a step-by-step process that you can refer to if it is helpful.

## **APPLYING THE WORD**

4. As a follow-up to Question 3, if you were to practice these things in the workplace, in what order would you do them in? Where should God be in the process?

**Answers for the Leader:**

After group discussion, you may want to offer this sample process of workplace evangelism that flows from this text. Note the emphasis on “Be”. I think this is consistent with the tone of Paul’s text. If you “Are” the right things, then the “Doing” will come naturally.

**Anticipate**

**Be Prayerful**

**Be Watchful**

**Be Thankful**

**Participate**

**Be Wise**

**Be Graceful**

**Be Seasoned with Salt**

**[So That] You Will Know How to Answer Everyone**

**Celebrate** (Share great stories of God using you in your workplace. It build’s other’s faith!)

5. Is it realistic to practice this kind of “Being” in your workplace? When we think of embodying the Gospel At Work, what are some examples of the kind of “doing” that Paul is talking about? What things come easily for you? What are the challenges?

## RESPONDING TO JESUS

### Personal Challenge:

This week, ask God to open your eyes to the people around you at work. Use your imagination to Anticipate what God might want to do in pursuit of people who don't know him. Consider how big your faith is, and prayerfully ask God to use you in an audacious, unexpected way. Then ask God to highlight one person at work, and begin to pray for that person. Participate in what God is doing in that person's life, maybe by asking him or her out to coffee or lunch. Celebrate with your small group the next time you get together by sharing your story.

### Group response(s):

Spend some time waiting together on the Holy Spirit – what is He speaking to your group? Ask him to reveal barriers in your life and in other's life that are preventing you from embodying the Gospel At Work. Consider choosing one person from the workplace of one of your small group members and begin praying for that person as a group.

### QUICK TIP:

Break up for prayer differently than you normally do. It is really common to get into a routine with prayer in our small groups, i.e. splitting men and women. Consider changing things up, week to week. Here are some ways to that:

1. Number Off like gym class when you were in elementary school. People routinely tell me that their most impactful prayer times were when they were being prayed for by someone who they don't normally pray with.
2. Identify Prayer Needs and allow people to gravitate toward the person they would like to pray for. Not everyone needs to get prayer every time.
3. Hold Hands in a Circle and encourage people to pray short prayers as they feel led. The leader closes the prayer.
4. Prayer Walk Invite anyone in the group who wants to, to go on a prayer walk around the neighborhood. Those who stay back pray together.

## Transcript for the Video (In case you are not able to show the video to your group)

---

### The Gospel at Work

Andrew Oswalt

I know who a man who, many years ago had turned away from the Christian faith of his youth because the gospel only seemed to address the problems created by churches but did not actually appear true enough to speak to the problems of real people and real life. After almost ten years of seeking after God and truth, a kind of truth he had never seen in the church, he came into contact with someone from this church, Vineyard Columbus, at work. What slowly unfolded is a great story, because it is my story and I am that man. I want to share it with you.

I had just been promoted into a management role at a large non-profit organization and a full-time field assistant was being provided for me but had not been hired yet. On the day that she started, I came into the office that we would soon share and noticed that she had put a daily calendar of the Psalms on the desk. So, before I even met her, I knew she was a believer of some kind, and enough time had passed since my childhood, that my memories of church had faded away. There was something even a bit comforting and intriguing about that calendar. When we did meet later that day, I asked about her calendar and found that she was indeed a believer, was a leader for a youth organization called Young Life, and went to a church just a mile or two from our office.

Over the next several months, we had weekly planning meetings at a local coffee shop and almost all of each meeting was dominated by conversations about faith. She doesn't remember saying much of anything, but I remember very engaging conversations about God, evil, church, etc. As time went on and I expressed my frustration with churches, she tentatively suggested that I might like the church that she went to. I said that I doubted it, but thanked her for the suggestion. During our six months working together, I thought she seemed pretty anxious for a Christian and chided her about that. After all, he did not have any Christian faith and felt pretty peaceful in comparison. It was fun to watch her squirm and feel like a hypocrite.

What she could not have known is that behind these conversations and her less than perfect Christian example, God was working. I was praying often to some conception of God and was thinking all the time about the huge problem of humanity's distance from Him. One night, after we had worked together for several months, God spoke to me in my heart, but completely out of the blue and in a way that made me afraid that I might be having an unwanted Christian conversion experience!

I told her about the God-experience at our next planning meeting and she started to cry which I thought was a little presumptuous (and I told her so) because the God I had heard from was not necessarily the Christian God. I had just decided to start finding out where that voice came from. She tentatively suggested that I read the book of John in the Bible and that I may find that voice there. A few months later, I actually did. I finally decided that at some time in the future, I was going to give my life to the God that I had heard, the God that I saw in the Book of John, the God revealed in that Jesus. As I drew nearer to Jesus, there was one condition though, that any possibility of church was off the table.

Meanwhile, my wife was starting to want to go to church and I remembered my co-worker had suggested that I might find her church different from other churches. So we went. I was nervous and excited and during the music and I felt a kind of electricity that I could not describe. As if God was right there, he heard a voice in his heart say *“You know, you can be on the outside looking in, or you can actually be a part of this electricity.”* Three days later, I gave my life to Christ, sat through two services the following Sunday, and then my wife and I joined a small group the following Thursday.

By this time, my co-worker had already left our organization to move to another state and pursue a full-time leadership position with Young Life, so I excitedly called her to tell her the good news and thanked her for allowing herself to be used by God. She told me that she felt like she had not done anything but listen to someone talk himself into the Kingdom! She also mentioned that she had really never wanted the job at the organization, but try as she might she could not find anything else. She even said that she really could not stand it for the months she was actually working there! Apparently, she admitted, God was in it all along.

That woman still goes to this church today, but at the time she never could have known that I had been pursuing a relationship with God for more than ten years when she arrived on the scene, and that a Psalms calendar on her desk could be enough to spark a conversation about faith because my heart was so soft to God. She also could not have known that in so many unrelated ways over the next several months, God would be moving and speaking in my life.

She also could not have imagined, that a few weeks later, when her replacement started, God would give me the strong impression that my very first job responsibility was to show Jesus to him. And she could not have imagined that he and I would have weekly planning meetings in that same coffee shop, that turned into conversations about faith, only with me playing the part of listener this time. And finally, she never could have imagined that the young man who occupied the same desk where her Psalms calendar first sat, came to the Lord within the next year and is walking with Jesus today.

I share this story, because these weekly coffee conversations about faith NEVER would have taken place in a church. Instead they took place in the context of work, “on the clock” so to speak...and there is a HUGE opportunity--maybe the best opportunity available to you--to share the gospel easily and naturally in the context of work. Most jobs are not done in solitude. Many of us spend hours a week in relationships with the same people in the context of work. There are ample opportunities for the stuff of life--relationships, tragedies, anxieties and joys--to filter into the daily conversation.

What gets me excited about all this is that in many ways there is a renewed sense in the church in America today that the workplace is a legitimate and fruitful place to do ministry. There is a renewed recognition that, based on sheer numbers, God calls many more people to be in full-time ministry at their place of work than he calls to full-time pastoral work in churches.

What if God needed his people to invade every workplace-every business, store, company, jobsite, assembly line, trade show, showroom, office, or call center, not because they are proselytizers who walked in off the street uninvited, but because they have a legitimate reason to be there, because it is THEIR JOB to be there? Asking this question, and then asking God to fill us with his vision for ministry in the workplace is the beginning of watching the Kingdom of God be advanced simply, because we are obedient to do what God has gifted us to do and to reflect his light, wherever we have been planted.