

WORK WITH PURPOSE INITIATIVE | PASTORS GATHERING

More than Semantics: Pastoring with the Whole of Life in Mind

This discussion considered how the language we use implicitly and explicitly shapes the way our congregations think about work.

What words do we commonly use to describe church activities? What words naturally evoke the concepts of church and spirituality?

believe	godly	saved/lost
biblical	gospel	seeker
call/calling	growth	seminary
church	holy	serve
clergy	invite	service
community	mass	spirit-filled
contemporary/traditional	membership	spiritual
discipleship	ministry	stewardship
doing church	ministry leaders	the body
faithfulness	mission	the church/to church/ at church
generosity	officiant	unchurched
gifted	ordained	volunteer
gifts/giftedness	passion	

What are some practical ways we can learn about the vocational contexts of those we minister to?

- Ask about their customers
- Ask for workplace prayer requests
- Ask people to tell the congregation what they are doing “at this time tomorrow” and then pray for them
- Ask specific questions
- Ask them how they would respond to current events or situations
- Attend events that are of interest to a specific vocation (i.e. artists)
- Consider getting a second job
- Convene an industry-specific group at church
- Create a directory of skilled people
- Do research
- Expand your own scope
- Express interest in the details of their work
- Find books, movies and TV shows related to the industry
- Find out about the missions of businesses
- Follow them on social media
- Gather people for a work expo
- Have a vocational discussion at church
- Have meaningful conversations
- Host a progressive work tour

- Invite people to teach and talk about their workplaces
- Listen
- Patronize their workplaces
- Read Economist magazine
- Read industry magazines
- Share lunch/dinner/coffee
- Share stories
- Visit local schools
- Visit their homes
- Visit their work sites
- Volunteer to work in contexts outside our own

How can we communicate the value or importance of how God works through various jobs? How can we help others see how God can use their vocation as ministry?

Attorney

- Describe how God cares about law, righteousness and justice
- Point out opportunities to serve clients and colleagues, engage in meaningful discussions, and have conversations about ethics

Bartender

- Talk about how the vocation serves as a “frontline psychologist” with real space to make a difference in people’s lives
- Discuss listening well to patrons, offering wise counsel, and encouraging good behavior by setting limits on consumption

City or School Bus Driver

- Suggest greeting all passengers warmly and showing joy on the job
- Emphasize the importance of doing work well – running an efficient route, being on time, managing problems, and being kind yet firm to passengers
- Prepare him/her to intervene (when appropriate) in instances of bullying or violence
- Encourage personal, private prayer for everyone who boards or leaves the bus

Entomology Professor

- Share how God cares about all creatures “great and small”
- Explore his/her role in the stewardship of God’s creation and the ecosystem
- Explain that we can learn much from insects, such as the industriousness of ants (Proverbs 6:6)

Police Officer

- Talk about God’s concern for justice, righteousness and protecting others
- Help him/her look for ways to be a positive authority figure in the community
- Encourage discussion on both sides of controversial issues (i.e. Black Lives Matter)
- Show how the vocation is sacrificial; the officer puts his/her life on the line daily

Sanitization Worker

- Reveal how the work is about “making the old new”
- Emphasize how waste disposal helps human flourishing
- Look for ways to care about the neighborhood; be a vigilant set of eyes