

## 3 EASY STEPS

It's easy to start a peer-facilitated discussion group using a Workmatters Study. The 3 simple steps are:

01

Choose the resource you will use for discussion.

02

Decide on a time and place, and reserve the room, if necessary.

03

Extend personal invitations to a few people face-to-face and through email.

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## ENCOURAGEMENT FROM PEOPLE WHO HAVE DONE IT

Here are some common questions along with experiences from people who have started a faith-based discussion group at work.

### Q: Can I have a faith-based discussion group in my workplace? How do I approach that?

A: "You can! I approached my two bosses with the proposition that a few employees were interested in participating in this [leadership Bible] study, but we did not want to proceed without their blessing. They were gracious and had no issues so long as it did not interrupt our work, which we made sure it did not. The study was great and we all looked forward to our meeting each week. We are hoping to do it again soon." – Lauren Manatt, Rainwater Holt & Sexton

### Q: I want to do this the right way. How do I go about presenting what these studies are about and getting permission?

A: "Have information about Workmatters at your fingertips and be ready to answer questions. Let your leader(s) know the mission of Workmatters and why you believe those who participate will benefit from taking part in the discussion group. Let your leader(s) know that facilitating a Workmatters discussion group is taking a step in personal leadership growth. Those who have participated in our studies are seeing a big difference in both their work and spiritual lives." – Leslie Pearson, Kimberly Clark

### Q: How do I handle inviting people when I don't know where they are with their faith?

A: "It can be intimidating inviting someone to join a workplace Bible study without knowing where they are with the Lord. The best (and most faithful) thing you can do is be brave and simply invite them. Let them know that these studies are for people across the spectrum, from those deeply rooted in their faith to those who are just starting their spiritual journey. But they won't even have the opportunity to start or reboot their journey if you don't invite them. When I asked a few people in my office, I was pleasantly surprised about 1) how many Christians were in my office and 2) how many people were open to the idea of doing a Bible study with coworkers." – Kyle Gore, Unilever

**SESSION 1: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT AT WORK****“**

Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.

- Matthew 22:37-39

Is there a business case for treating employees with love at work? Let's take Southwest Airlines as an example. According to a Forbes article from 2017, Southwest Airlines was able to share profits with its people for 43 years in a row. In the book *Nuts*, the authors write: "The real secret to Southwest's success is having one of the most highly motivated and productive work forces in the world. They are motivated by a sense of fairness that says, 'We want your well-being to be tied to the company's well-being because, after all, you are the company.'"<sup>1</sup> They put people first.

Chances are you spend more time with people at work than anyone else in your life. But those relationships can be impacted by tension, conflict, communication issues and other challenges. Love can make a huge difference and is gaining traction in the marketplace. It is the common denominator among the top 10 of the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For<sup>2</sup>. According to an article by Harvard Business Review, major companies like Southwest Airlines and Whole Foods understand love as a guiding principle that informs every aspect of business operations<sup>3</sup>.

Christians have an even more compelling reason to love at work. Have you ever considered how the verse above applies to the people at work?

The definition of neighbor includes the people we encounter at work. Nearly all of us are busy and under pressure to perform. Although loving others at work may not come naturally and requires time, it is essential. The core of our Christian faith is God's saving love for us through Jesus. And our response to His love should be to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and to 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

**WHAT LOVE AT WORK LOOKS LIKE**

The Bible tells us what loving others looks like in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

**“**

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

These verses are meant to apply to all relationships – including those at work. The love described here is agape. Agape is defined as "selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, the highest of the four types of love in the Bible."<sup>4</sup>

Agape is not an emotion or a feeling, but a commitment that results in loving action and behavior in all circumstances. It's unconditional – loving without expectation of anything in return.

<sup>1</sup> Forbes.com, "Why Do Southwest Airline Employees Always Seem so Happy?" by Darren Dahl, accessed April 27, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Great Place to Work article "Love is all You Need" by Jason Slusher, greatplacetowork.com, accessed July 10, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Business Review article by Duncan Coombe hbr.org, accessed July 10, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Source: christianity.about.com

# EXAMPLES OF APPLYING THESE VERSES AT WORK



**It is not self-seeking, does not envy, does not boast, is not proud.**

It's not about us and making ourselves look good, but rather about serving one another.



**It is kind and patient.**

We can work much better together when we treat each other with kindness (compassion and generosity), respond with patience, and give others grace (unmerited favor).



**It keeps no record of wrongs.**

We all fall short and need to forgive people at work as we've been forgiven and want to be forgiven.



**It rejoices with the truth, always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres.**

Gossip and self-serving agendas destroy, but truth promotes growth and teamwork. We can support the growth of others by providing honest, candid encouragement and feedback.

## REFLECTION & APPLICATION

01

What do you think it means to “love your neighbor as yourself” in a work context?

02

What gets in the way of treating people at work with love and respect? What aspect of love do you find the most difficult to apply at work consistently?

03

What can you do this week to demonstrate love for your neighbor at work? Who will hold you accountable?

## ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

VERSE 1

**JOHN 3:34-35**

VERSE 2

**LUKE 6:35**

VERSE 3

**JOHN 15:9-12**

## SESSION 2: SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

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Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

– Mark 10:35-40

It's always easier to see the blind spots of others than it is to see our own. Yet, how often do you give people critical feedback they may need to grow. Donnie Smith, former CEO of Tyson Foods, shared an example of a time he neglected to deliver feedback to a team member. When she came up for a promotion, the issue he noticed was the same issue that held her back from getting that promotion. Donnie encouraged people to give one another feedback so they can grow and be ready for those opportunities.

In this biblical account, James and John made a request that was in their own self-interest as opposed to seeking God's will. Jesus showed us what it looks like to get ahead in God's eyes. He didn't look out for his own interests, but instead came to serve. Jesus demonstrated agape, or selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, to everyone he met in everything he did.

The main point of this interaction is that we should serve one another (we'll look at that in session 3). But Jesus modeled another element of love in his response to the disciples – speaking the truth. It was necessary that Jesus correct the two men. Love gives you the power to speak the truth out of primary concern for others. When you speak the truth from that place, even difficult feedback can be communicated so that the worth and dignity of the other person is preserved.

Jesus addressed issues with the intent to help others grow, not feel condemned. He turned this interaction into a teaching moment and told them a truth that wasn't easy to hear – that they would also experience persecution (drink the same cup). Even so, only God chooses those who will take the places of honor.



Love rejoices with the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. When you speak the truth – even the hard truth, when necessary – from a place of love and a desire to build others up, you can provide important feedback that results in real change.

You can point out problems without blaming, and encourage others to contribute to a solution. And when you need to have tough conversations, speaking the truth in love can help you turn that difficult topic into one that makes your relationship stronger and more mutually supportive.

The fact is, the more we avoid speaking the truth to others at work, the more we contribute to growing problems, future mistakes, and opportunities for misunderstandings and resentment to build.

# CAN YOU RELATE TO ANY OF THESE CHARACTERS?

## THE PEOPLE PLEASER

By not providing constructive feedback to someone who works for you for fear of hurting her feelings, you are not only contributing to the potential for future problems, you could be holding that person back from growing in her career. If she never gets that feedback in a way that encourages her, she may never be able to move up in her career. The feedback you provide today could help her prepare for the position she is striving toward in the future.

## THE SILENT ENABLER

By not communicating about a process issue you notice that could compromise the ability to provide an excellent product or service, you could be contributing to costly product issues, damaged customer relationships, or even possible injuries. All of these will take a toll on jobs and morale.

## THE TOXIC AVOIDER

If you avoid clearing up a misunderstanding with a coworker, you could poison the relationship, which could lead to future misunderstandings, difficulty working together and stress.

You've probably seen many other examples of what withholding the truth can do to relationships at work, team morale and the overall work environment. The fact is, these are very real challenges that are not easy to handle – without love. But when you make love your guiding principle – your motivating force – it can put these situations in a very different light.

Love gives you the courage to speak up and the wisdom to do so in a way that lifts people up, instead of judging or tearing them down. Turning to Jesus' example will give you the strength to follow through and create the most beneficial results for all.

## REFLECTION & APPLICATION

01

What situations have you faced recently in which you have avoided speaking the truth?

02

What holds you back from speaking the truth at work? What are your motivations?

03

What truths do you need to share? How can you share these truths so that it builds others up and serves them?

## ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

VERSE 1

1 PETER 3:10

VERSE 2

COL. 3:8-10

VERSE 3

EPH. 4:25

**SESSION 3: IT'S ALL ABOUT OTHERS (SERVE)**

“

“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” – Mark 10:38-45 NIV

When Cheryl Bachelder was first hired as CEO of Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, she had a big job ahead of her. Popeyes was struggling and franchisees were very unhappy. In her book, *Dare to Serve*, Cheryl shares how she and her team realized that if things were going to turn around, they had to serve the franchisees. That's exactly what they did and the result was a dramatic increase in sales.

James and John were seeking to gain status for themselves. This incited the other disciples to become indignant. The disciples' indignation was very likely motivated, at least in part, by their own desire to be recognized. There wasn't a lot of love happening there.

Love is not self-seeking. Jesus reframed the disciples' ambition, explaining that those who would be great must serve others. As followers of Christ, we are to think of ourselves last, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus washed his disciples' feet. He healed those who were ill. He taught truth. And ultimately, Jesus paid the price for our debt by laying down his life for us.

The world teaches us to get ahead by looking out for ourselves – our position, our status, and our goals. We all have needs to know we're valued, and reach our goals. Jesus affirmed the disciples' impulse to be great, but reframed greatness in the context of valuing others above ourselves. In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul goes on to say that we should not look to our own interests, but to the interests of others. The first may bring short-term success, but the second has eternal rewards.

God's promises remind us that He values us and He will take care of us. Since God has our back, we are free to serve others. In fact, He wants us to partner with Him so that He can serve people through us. Read these verses:

VERSE 1

**ISAIAH 49:15**

VERSE 2

**PSALM 139:13-16**

VERSE 3

**MATTHEW 6:25-34**

One way to think about serving in a work context is that your output – the work you produce, the tone of voice you use when speaking to others, the words you speak, the pat on the back you give – is someone else's input. When you serve others with love through your work, you contribute to a more productive, joy-filled workplace. You please God and bring Him glory.

## FOUR WAYS YOU CAN SERVE AT WORK



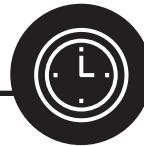
Help someone whom you see is overwhelmed with work.



Offer to pick up coffee or lunch for someone who can't get away from their desk.



Go the extra mile on the project you are working on with others on the team.



Be willing to come in a little early or stay a little late to mentor a coworker who is less experienced than you.

## REFLECTION & APPLICATION

01

When are you most likely to focus on your own needs and goals at the expense of others?

02

In what other ways can you serve people at work – including those you work for and those who work for you?

03

What can you do to make sure you are more intentional about serving those around you?

### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

VERSE 1

JOHN 13:1-17

VERSE 2

PHIL. 2:3-4

## SESSION 4: THE POWER OF KINDNESS

“

Now Jesus had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

– John 4:14

In 2012, Shawn Windmeyer, founder and executive director of Campus Pride, an LGBT advocacy organization, and his group were engaged in actively protesting Chick-fil-A on college campuses. Dan Cathy, then COO of Chick-fil-A, reached out to Shawn, not to confront him about his protests, but to understand his concerns. As a result of their conversations, Chick-fil-A put a stop to contributions made to anti-LGBT organizations, focusing on pro-family causes, and Dan and Shawn developed a deep mutual respect for each other.

Being "kind" requires the ability to recognize the needs of others and take steps to meet those needs. Showing kindness includes extending grace, mercy and charitable service.

In the case of the Samaritans, they were despised by the Jews because they were made up of Jews who had intermarried with idol-worshipping foreigners and Jewish criminals. The woman at the well was outcast by her own people on top of that, evidenced by the fact that she went to the well alone. Jesus didn't judge this woman. He sought her out to have a conversation with her. He showed her compassion and generosity by offering her living water.

For most of us, kindness requires being intentional to put our own needs aside, let go of our judgments, seek to understand others, and have compassion for others. Most of us have a lot of demands coming at us. It may not seem like we really have the time to be that intentional, but the fact is, we don't have time not to. When we react to those around us based on our own needs, judgments and stress, we contribute to the breakdown of relationships and muddy communications. This often results in more problems that slow us down.



Kindness is a superpower. When you wrap your working relationships in an envelope of kindness, you can accomplish more together. Being kind has the power to melt walls that get built up between us and other people.

Kindness empowers us to shift our perspective so that we can put ourselves in the shoes of others – which helps us have compassion. Kindness gives us the ability to change hearts – both ours and the hearts of others. Kindness is transformational. It helps us build stronger relationships and tap into creative solutions that make things better for everyone.

# SIX WAYS YOU CAN EXPRESS KINDNESS TO OTHERS AT WORK

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Praise people for small achievements & successes.
- 

Support & encourage others in the midst of challenges.
- 

Do small acts of kindness for others each day.
- 

Pray for your boss, coworkers & subordinates.
- 

Refrain from judgment & seek to understand what the other person is dealing with.
- 

Offer a helping hand to someone who has a lot on his plate.

If you read on in the story of the Samaritan woman, you'll see that this woman was the one who delivered the news of Jesus, the Messiah, to the rest of her village. As a result, many Samaritans came to believe in Christ. Jesus made a brief investment in a woman's life that made an eternal difference for her and her people. You have no idea what impact your small gestures of kindness could have on a coworker.

## REFLECTION & APPLICATION

- 01 What is the biggest factor in your work that makes it challenging for you to be kind to a coworker? What is your responsibility in that area?
- 02 Who have you had difficulty being kind to recently? What small step can you take to express more kindness to that person?
- 03 What can you do to help create a culture of kindness with others in your work?

## ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

VERSE 1  
JOHN 3:34-35

VERSE 2  
LUKE 6:35-36

VERSE 3  
JOHN 15:9-12

VERSE 4  
EPH. 4:32