

HOW TO START A WORKPLACE FAITH COMMUNITY



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Faith At Work Network

Practical Godly wisdom for life in the workplace

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1. ENTERING INTO GOD'S STORY.

There are some amazing things in store for you as you step out in faith to start a gathering for Christians in your workplace.

When you start a faith community, you are entering into a chapter of God's story. You are entering into the story of how God is present and active within your workspace. This will be your own God story that you will be able to share with people to encourage them in their walk of faith.

Since work is part of what God expects us to do, it is only natural that we should pray for our work. Since God reveals himself to us through the Bible, it makes sense to study the Bible to see how we should approach work, how we should do our work, and learn more about how God views our work. Since God loves you and loves all people, it makes sense to join with others in prayer and studying the Bible to grasp how God views us, and how God views our co-workers and customers.

When you join with other Christians, you will see many different perspectives of God at work within your company. There is power in the name of Jesus. There is even greater power when we gather together in Jesus' name.

Your desire to start a group is a holy venture which God will honor.

2. SPENDING TIME WITH GOD

Once God has laid on your heart to start a faith community, where do you start?

You start by spending time with God. This is what Jesus did at the start of his ministry. Starting with prayer is following in the footsteps of your Savior. This is when God will draw near and align your will to his purposes.

What a wonderful opportunity you have to spend time with God. As David said in Psalm 84:10 – it is better to spend one day in God's court than thousands elsewhere. Prayer is one of the most precious times of your life in Christ.

Faith communities are the Lord's work. This work needs to be done in the Lord's timing and in the Lord's way. You may only pray for a few days, and everything will fall into place, or you may find yourself praying for a longer time period.

Don't get discouraged if you find yourself praying for a while. You are spending time with your Lord and Savior who calls you His friend. Waiting is not a bad thing. I know people who have prayed for weeks, months or even years before things fell into place. As you pray you are acknowledging that unless the Lord builds this group, your labor is in vain (Ps 127:1-2)

Trust in the Lord's promise in Isa 60:22 – "I am the Lord; in its time I will do this swiftly."

Invite your associates and colleagues, even those outside the company, to pray that God would bring together the right like-minded individuals to help you lead this faith community.

3. SEEKING WISDOM

One of the joys of starting a gathering for Christians in your workplace is that you are starting to create a new story. To help you craft this story find a few Godly men or women who will encourage you and walk beside you. This may be a coach, a mentor, a pastor or a friend. Listen carefully as God imparts wisdom to you through their words.

Surrounding yourself by a few Godly men and women will help you lay a solid foundation for this new narrative. These men and women will bring experience to keep you from stumbling. They will bring an outside perspective so that the story you create remains aligned with God's story.

On this holy venture, Satan may raise his ugly head and try to cast doubts in your mind or feelings of unworthiness in your soul. Having a few trusted friends holding you up in prayer, and providing encouragement can go a long way to keeping this holy venture from fizzling out behind the walls of fear, anxiety or stubbornness.

There will be rivers to cross and mountains to scale. Crossing these rivers and scaling these mountains is far more enjoyable with a Godly mentor or good friend at your side.

God does something amazing when you share the joys and the struggles of creating a new story with others.

4. CREATING YOUR OWN STORY

Within in the first few pages of reading a story, you decide if you want to invest several hours reading the book. If the story appeals to your mind and heart, you are more likely to continue reading.

Similarly, when people decide to participate in a group, they are deciding if they want to invest an hour a week, or give up their lunch hour to be part of the faith community.

Take the time to craft a compelling why. Why should somebody give up something they are already doing to be part of the gathering you are planning? Take the time to craft a compelling purpose for your community. If the purpose of the gathering entices people intellectually and tugs at their heartstrings they are much more likely to enthusiastically participate, than an invitation to participate in an activity.

For example instead of defining your group as a group that will meet to pray every week for the company's leadership (an activity); you might define your group as a hero making group where you are equipping people to be Godly heroes in their workplace, or you might define your group as stone masons building living stones as Peter describes in 1 Peter 2.

What is your elevator pitch? How can you compellingly frame the purpose of your group so that people sense that the gatherings will meet their needs intellectually, emotionally and spiritually?

See Appendix A for some questions to prompt your creative juices as you craft a compelling 'Why' statement for your group.

5. HANGING OUT WITH SOME AMAZING PEOPLE

What would a story be without the characters? What would a group be without a leadership team?

God already has placed people who want to be part of a faith community in your workplace. God has given them gifts and skills that complement yours so that the group will thrive. You will want to prayerfully invite them to become part of the leadership team of your group. As Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 4:12, a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

You have the privilege of hanging out with these neat people. You get to dream and pray together with some amazing people about launching this faith community. You have the privilege of blessing these fantastic people with a platform where they can share their ideas and express the skills and gifts God has blessed them with.

BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH A TEAM

Some of the amazing benefits of working with a team are:

1. Prevents Anxiety

Anxiety in a man's heart weights him down, but a good word makes him glad (Prov 12:25)

2. Mutual encouragement

Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing (1 Thes 5:11)

3. Godly counsel

Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed (Prov 15:22)

4. Creativity

God has blessed each person with unique skills to do all kinds of work (Ex 35:35).

Don't be afraid to invite people to join your leadership team. This isn't your one-man show, this is God's story. We are all members of God's household. God is building us together to become a dwelling in which He lives by His Spirit (Eph 2:22). You can trust God, that the people He brings around you will infuse this story with color and character.

6. THE COMPOSITION OF A LEADERSHIP TEAM

From my experience, as a minimum, you need people on your leadership team with the following gifts.

1. A CONVENER

You need somebody with the emotional capacity to connect with people. This person is the gatherer who will invite people to the group. This person is the convener who will connect with those who attend the group so that they feel welcome and cared for. This is more than the person who sends out the invites. This person has the uncanny ability to ferret out who the Christians are within their workplace. This person can invite people in a such a natural way that people feel compelled to join the community.

2. A PERSON OF FAITH

You need a person with a strong faith, who encourages each leader to remain faithful to the vision and mission of your faith community.

3. A SENSITIVE TEACHER

You need somebody who God has gifted as a sensitive teacher. Somebody who loves God's word and is passionate about helping other people understand God's word and how it relates to the workplace.

You might be wondering how you're ever going to find these people. Rest assured you will find these people. It all starts with one-on-one conversations as you share your compelling purpose for the group. When people are excited about the purpose of your group, they will want to become part of the story.

Meeting these people, forming friendships with these people, praying together and learning to work together will form a God moment in your story.

7. YOU'VE ALREADY STARTED!

Congratulations! This faith community that you have dreamed about, and prayed about is already launched. God has joined you into a faith community with the awesome and amazing people on your leadership team with whom you've been dreaming and praying together.

Consistently meeting together. Consistently pray with each other. Allow the teacher on your leadership team to help you explore together how God's word relates to your jobs. Even though you may be few in number, God will be in your midst every time you get together (Matt 18:20).

Linger awhile and savor the way God has answered your prayers. Allow the person of faith on your leadership team to help you reflect on what God has done. God has surrounded you by wise people to encourage you and walk beside you. You've crafted a compelling purpose for your faith community. God has connected you with an amazing leadership team of people who are engaged and committed.

Momentum and credibility will come as you faithfully meet on a regular schedule. This is the time when the convener in your leadership team can start inviting others to join your community. You will be amazed at the diversity of people God will bring to your community

8. SEEING YOUR FAITH STRETCHED

You are coming now to one of the most exciting and scary steps you will take as you launch a faith community in your workplace. This step will stretch your faith. This step will be another God moment in your story.

You have momentum! You have credibility! Now it is time to make sure that you are visible and compliant with the guidelines of your organization. As Christians, we aim to honor our employers by obeying the rules of our company. This can be the scariest step you will take, as now you are proclaiming to the public that you will be meeting.

I recommend that you arrange a meeting with the Vice President of Human Resources or another senior person in Human Resources to understand the guidelines for using company email and company meeting rooms. Prepare yourself before you ask, just as you would for any other meeting with a company executive. Make sure you understand the dynamics at play in your organization. Recognize that there may be a reluctance to mix church with corporate affairs.

Here are a couple of things you might want to mention in this conversation:

- You are not asking for their endorsement
- You are not asking for their influence to make your group successful.
- You are not out to hit everybody over the head with a Bible
- You are not out to distract people from their work – you will be meeting over lunch or before or after work.
- Conversations about faith include conversations about diversity, inclusion, and workplace engagement. (These are some of the current hot topics for organizations).
- Offer that your community will pray for the person you are meeting with and the leadership of the company
- Invite the person to contact you anytime they or anybody else wants prayer.

I don't know how this God moment will turn out, but I can assure you that it will turn out for God's glory.

At one company the Vice President said she wanted to be part of the group. At another company, the group leader was told they couldn't use company email or company meeting rooms. Both leaders chose to honor God and respect the wishes of their organization. Today the leadership of both companies respect the gathering of believers within their organization.

9. ALLOWING GOD TO UNFOLD THE NEXT CHAPTER

You've spent time with God praying about starting a faith community.

You can tell a compelling elevator pitch about the purpose of your group.

You've been hanging out with some awesome people dreaming and praying together.

Your momentum has established credibility.

You've taken a leap of faith and know what the company will and won't let you do.

Take a moment to record what God has done in your journal. You've experienced the introduction to an amazing story that will encourage the faith of others. There will be days in the future when the stories in your journal will give you the courage to press on. Bless the Godly men and women who encouraged you at the beginning by sharing your story with them.

Like any good story, there will be breathtaking moments of joy, and heartbreaking moments of disappointment. Remember that God is writing this story.

10. A NEW STORY BEGINS

Even while your story continues, God is preparing lives who will write a new story.

1. New people will join your community
 - a. How can your faith community care for them?
 - b. Listen to their stories. With your leadership team prayerfully consider how you can encourage them to express the skills and gifts God has blessed them with.
2. People will leave your company
 - a. Have they caught the value and vision of what you are doing so that they will look to start or join a faith community where they are working next?
 - b. Offer to journey with them during their transition
 - c. Offer to share your learnings as they start a gathering in their organization
3. Leaders will leave your group – sometimes when their job changes, and sometimes to take on a leadership role in a different capacity in God's Kingdom.
 - a. Celebrate when they leave.
 - b. Plan for their leaving,
 - c. Constantly look and pray for God to bring other people into the leadership of your group.

By starting this faith community, you have been blessed with the privilege of providing the paper and ink to a new generation of leaders who will write their own amazing God story.

Have fun together glorifying God!

11. SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

As your story continues here are a few practical tips

1. Keep a prayer journal
 - a. God hears and answers prayers!
 - b. There will be days when you and your community will be discouraged – having a journal of answered prayers, and referring to that during those times will encourage you to press on.
2. Don't expect perfect/regular attendance
 - a. People go on vacation, people have meetings that will conflict with the time you gather.
3. View your weekly reminders as ministry not announcements
 - a. Make your reminder unique every week.
 - b. Include a passage of Scripture in your reminders – this may be the only Scripture some people on your mailing list read.
 - c. Include a word of encouragement or something to make people smile.
4. Remember form follows function
 - a. Always look for innovative ways to fulfill the mission.
 - b. Hold forms that work loosely and be willing to change old forms to new forms whenever it serves the function.
 - c. Be flexible, open and patient – allowing God to lead!
5. Vision and Mission leak
 - a. keep discussing the 'why' with people to keep your leadership team committed.
6. Value each person's unique contribution
 - a. People who feel valued and connected are the best ambassadors for your faith community.
7. Your faith community will be unique
 - a. Your company is unique.
 - b. The people on your team are unique.

8. Keep praying

- a. This faith community started as a result of God answering your prayers, and the prayers of others.
- b. This faith community will only continue as you and others continue to pray.
- c. With permission, share prayer and praise requests with friends outside the community so that they can continue to pray for your group.
- d. Network with other group leaders, and pray together as group leaders for each other.

9. Have Fun

- a. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!

APPENDIX A — CRAFTING A COMPELLING WHY FOR YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY

Here are some questions for you to consider as you craft a compelling why for your faith community.

As you dream about why your faith community should exist, consider how much time is available for each meeting (e.g., a noon-hour gathering only has about 50 minutes of time). What can you realistically accomplish in the time available?

1. Do you want to provide a safe place for Christians to gather to connect with other Christians and remind each other that God is present and active in your workplace and that they are not alone?
2. Do you want to provide a place where people are encouraged?
3. Do you want to provide a place where people come away with one truth from the Bible that they can apply in their workplace?
4. Do you want to provide a place where yet to be Christians can explore what it means to follow Christ in the workplace?
5. Do you want to gather to pray for your company, your corporate direction, and the leadership of your company?
6. Do you want to help people find meaning and purpose in the work that we do?
7. Do you want help people see the relevance of the Christian faith in all aspects of day-to-day life?
8. Do you want to show that God has a special vision with regards to our work and our working lives, one in which God, people, and society can all benefit?

APPENDIX B – 31 REASONS TO START A WORKPLACE FAITH COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY

1. As brothers and sisters, we are companions in suffering, God's kingdom, and patient endurance
2. Together we seek to hear God's voice
3. Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (Prov 27:17)
4. Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Eccl 4:12)
5. Jesus intimately cares for all gatherings of believers wherever they meet

REFLECTING GOD'S RADIANCE INTO OUR WORKPLACE

6. These communities are lampstands that reflect God's radiance in the workplace
7. God's light shines in our workplaces
8. God's light shows order and beauty
9. God's light shows evil in perspective of all that is good and not to be feared
10. So that our lives will be radiant with joy (Ps 34:5)

HOPE

11. We all need a reminder that God says "Do not be afraid" and Perfect love drives out fear
12. Hope – Jesus is alive
13. Hope – Jesus controls life and death
14. Hope – Jesus holds this world together
15. Hope – God's Kingdom is coming. Therefore, I do not need to take matters in my own hands

GOD IS PRESENT IN OUR WORKPLACE

16. The Son of Man is at home where we live and work, taking the ordinary, everyday moments of work and infusing them with grace, healing, peace, and blessing
17. We have a High Priest who was tempted in every way as we are in the workplace, yet was without sin – Jesus is the source of strength against the temptations we face at work
18. In community, we can confess our sins and struggles so that God can wash us whiter than snow
19. God's eyes are like a blazing fire which see our work inspiring us to excellence, for what is done with excellence will come through his purifying fire like precious gold
20. God eyes like blazing fire see what is happening in our workplace
21. God offers insight and wisdom for our work, workplace relationships, and workplace politics
22. God with feet like bronze glowing in a furnace is capable and active in our workplaces
23. There is an eternal Perspective, God's enduring stability and strength vs. the temporal nature of our companies and work
24. God's living and active word speaks with passionate love and urgent mercy to us and our careers
25. God is sovereign over our workplaces
26. God is the ruler over the leadership of our companies (Rev 1:5, Rom 13:1)
27. God's word judges the thoughts and attitudes of our heart (Heb 4:12)
28. God is the first and the Last, apart from him there is no God (Isa 44:6; 48:12)
29. We, our work, our companies all have their beginnings in God, and would not exist without God
30. The skills and abilities that we have and use in our work come from God
31. All good work is Kingdom work

APPENDIX C – LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

The following resources were developed by CBMC (Christian Business Ministries) to train leaders for Workplace Groups.

1. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cbmc-connect3-team-leader-training-self-study-option-registration-30904395880>
2. <https://europartners.org/faith-and-work/course-god-at-work>
3. <http://advance.cbmc.com/>
4. <https://vimeopro.com/cbmc/cbmc-connect3>
5. <https://europartners.org/faith-and-work/media-and-blogs>
6. <http://www.marketplaceambassador.com/10-attributes>
7. 2016-05-09 10.00 Connect3 Leader Training, Session 1, May 9, 2016.mp4
<https://cbmc.egnyte.com/dl/K3TYWExOIW>
8. 2016-05-16 09.59 Connect3 Leader Training, Session 2, May 16, 2016.mp4
<https://cbmc.egnyte.com/dl/7ZvB46Qxkt>
9. 2016-05-23 09.59 Connect3 Leader Training, Session 3, May 23, 2016.mp4
<https://cbmc.egnyte.com/dl/zs02Yxq3Za>

APPENDIX D – ABOUT THE AUTHOR



James Bruyn is a bi-vocational visionary leader, writer, and speaker who enjoys helping individuals integrate their faith in God with their daily life. James leads a ministry to Christians in the marketplace in Calgary. James provides leadership coaching and consults for the rail industry. James is passionate about connecting the rich promises of our loving Heavenly Father that we find in the Bible, with the joys and challenges of living out our faith in the workplace. James writes a weekly devotional at faithatwork.ca/devotionals

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