

**Alpha in the Workplace**

This course provides a practical introduction to the Christian faith over 7 to 15 sessions. It is an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to explore the meaning of life in a familiar and convenient location and is designed to fit into a regular working day, e.g. over a lunch hour or run after work. There are courses running from boardrooms to factories and from local coffee shops to those run through virtual online networks. All the materials for running a course are online, downloadable and easy to use. Find out more at <http://alpha.org/workplace>.

# ***Stories of witness in the workplace***

God works through his people in a whole host of loving ways – to bless others, to bless the work and to communicate the gospel directly. Here are a few stories about God at work, through his people at work.

## ***Passing strangers and the power of a smile***

And it came to pass that in an ordinary, fairly large pharmaceutical company, a young scientist called Anita would, in the course of her work, walk down the office corridor. From time to time, a particular woman from another department would pass by and Anita would smile. Anita did not know her name and could only guess at her job. And the other woman, Gabriella, would smile in return. Occasionally, a little 'hello' would accompany the smile but they had no occasion to pause or chat, for both had work to do and places to go and people to meet whose names they knew. And besides, the work of the one did not touch the work of the other. And so time passed, counted in smiles and little 'hellos'.

And so it was that at the end of an ordinary day Anita was walking to her car and there, coming towards her, was Gabriella. They stopped and began to talk, Gabriella telling Anita that her four-year-old child was chronically ill with asthma and eczema that would not go away and that she wanted to leave her husband. Anita listened and asked if she could pray for her and if her home group could pray for her child. Gabriella said 'yes' and Anita offered her a Bible from the box of Bibles in the boot of her car.

The next day they met for lunch. And Anita prayed. And her home group prayed.

Within six months Gabriella's son was completely healed of his eczema and his asthma had subsided significantly. And Gabriella did not leave her husband but drew close to him and to Christ and to his people.

So Anita cared. Anita prayed. Anita shared the good news and was ready with materials to help Gabriella to get to know God. And Anita involved others in prayer.

Simple.

And by God's grace life-transforming.

## **Disarming response**

‘What do you think God’s taught you at work that you’ve become good at?’ the leader asked.

‘Well,’ Ian replied, ‘I’m in the armed response unit and people in armed response tend to be pretty macho, tend to face off with one another quite a bit, so there can be a lot of tension. Over the years I’ve found that I’m pretty good at bringing people back together. And that’s really important because when you go into a life-and-death situation with guns it’s vital that you completely trust the person next to you.’

What’s Ian done? ‘Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God,’ Jesus says in Matthew 5:9. And beyond that Ian has shown his colleagues how to forgive one another, he’s taught them the way of the King . . . and they’ve tasted that it’s good.

## **The conscience of the company**

‘When I left my previous job,’ Ron began, ‘someone said to me, “I’m sorry you are going; you’ve been the conscience of this company.”’

Well, that would be impressive if the company were ten people, but Ron was talking about the second largest mining company in the world – with 35,000 employees.

## **Andrew says . . .**

I have found that my faith as a Christian can be a bit of an enigma for my hospital colleagues; there doesn’t seem to be a box to fit me into. I have conservative moral views, like the Muslims, but unlike the Muslims I will join in the hospital socials and have fun. I will drink but not get drunk and arrange my annual leave around church events, but won’t seem to make a big deal of Christian holidays. I am ‘religious’ but seem very different to the typical hospital chaplain. This creates a great opportunity for conversation and I have found work colleagues to be some of the most open people I have come across.

Hospitals are very pluralistic; with Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and atheists all working alongside each other. When I have taken genuine efforts to understand their worldview, asking lots of questions, people have been extremely open towards the gospel. My greatest joy came when my nominal Hindu friend from medical school became a Christian at my church last year. It had been nine years of friendship, with lots of socials and holidays together, that culminated in him saying that he knew Christianity was genuine because he saw it lived in people’s lives.

*Andrew is a doctor and a member of the Christian Medical Fellowship. This story is reprinted with permission from Foundations – A Survival Guide for Junior Doctors published by CME, [www.cmf.org.uk](http://www.cmf.org.uk).*

## **Gareth says . . .**

I don’t share Christ with everyone I meet and sometimes I can go months without telling anyone about him at all but I have found three tactics useful for opening up conversations:

- First, I wear a cross or fish. This can encourage believers, so that they often ask you to pray with them, and perhaps they will pray for you. It acts as a possible conversation starter.
- Second, I try to keep an eye on the locker of each of my patients. If the Gideon Bible has moved, I ask them about it and what did they read? Often this will start a conversation.
- Third, I try to ask if they have any religious beliefs when I take a social history. I used to cringe when I started doing this but people can happily answer ‘C of E’ or ‘None’ without embarrassment, while a Jehovah’s Witness might be glad you asked. The next part is answering their questions and I would recommend a Confident Christianity or Saline Solution course for anyone who feels they need practice or more confidence.

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