

MINISTERING IN THE MARKETPLACE

By Kent Humphreys

Obviously, most workplace leaders are not CEOs and owners. The following list of ideas can be used by *anyone* to minister in the marketplace. Use lunches as a time to build relationships with fellow employees and business associates.

- Encouragement—Send birthday or anniversary cards to fellow associates. They could have a Christian message or verse. Add a short handwritten message, and sign them. Most adults do not receive cards from anyone other than immediate family members. They will be surprised and appreciative.
 - Comfort—Use times of crisis (illness, divorce, death, and so on) to share the comfort of Christ. Send a card. Visit a hospital.
 - Hospitality—Invite fellow workers to your home for recreation, dinner, and fellowship. Take them to a sporting event.
 - Fellowship—Lead a group Bible study before work or over lunch.
 - Thanksgiving—Use simple thank-you notes to show appreciation to another person for specific acts. Fewer than 10 percent of the people they encounter every say “thank you”.
 - Joy—Be positive, use clean language, and don’t allow yourself to have negative, critical, or judgmental talk. Be a bridge builder. Share times of joy at births, marriages, or graduations.
 - Patience—Ask God to give you a special spirit to deal with times of crisis and pressure. Others will see the difference in your life.
 - Concern—Listen to a friend who is having difficulties with a child. Loan that person a book about raising children, discipline, or whatever you think might be appropriate.
 - Evangelism—Let your supervisor, vendors, customers, and fellow associates know that you practice biblical principles in the marketplace. This gives an opening to share your faith.
 - Prayer—Offer to pray for an associate who shares a problem with you. Put it on a 3 x 5 card to remind yourself to pray for the person as you exercise, walk, or drive. Check back in a few days or weeks for an update.
 - Travel—When traveling with associates, you have great opportunities (in a car, at an airport, in a restaurant) to talk about important things in life.
 - Listening—Listen first to the Holy Spirit for guidance and then to the people around you.
1. Your Influence – Your successors will receive respect because of your life and ministry. Joseph modeled this as he received a heritage from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Genesis 50:24; 2 Kings 13:23). Solomon received the blessings of God and others because of his father, David (see I Kings 3:6; 4:8)
 2. Your Desire – You want your successors to be successful; therefore, they should listen to your counsel. David gave specific instructions to his son, Solomon (see I Chronicles 22:5; 28:20). Jesus did the same for the disciples (see John 8:14).
 3. Your Perspective – As a good leader you will look at: The long term, not the short term. (Jesus constantly had to get Peter’s eyes off the temporal – see Matthew 17:4).
 - a. Their potential character, not their current one. (David prayed for Solomon – see I Chronicles 29:17-19; early in his association with Jesus, Peter thought of himself as a fisherman, but Jesus saw what he would become: a servant and an apostle.
 - b. Their spirit, not their talent. (Moses saw this in his successor, Joshua – see Numbers 27:18).
 - c. Their humility in the process. (Peter went from a proud, independent spirit to a humbled man – see Luke 5:8; John 18:27).

4. Your Plan – You must share your life with your successors. Jacob shared with his son Joseph (see Genesis 48:3). Jesus continually talked with the disciples (see Mark 7:17). Paul had Timothy with him as he wrote 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1-2 Thessalonians. Spend time with your successors, whether over lunch, at a ballgame, at a Christian conference, or at a business event.
5. Your Principles – Your successors will follow your principles, but not necessarily your methods, because methods change with each generation. Note the attitude of Joshua (see Joshua 11:15). Solomon's problems occurred not because his methods were different but because he left the principles of God and turned his heart to other things (see I Kings 11:4). As my son and I worked together for six years, he brought in another generation with new methods, but the values were unchanged.
6. Their Responsibility – They are to learn from you.
 - a. They must get to know you well (Solomon – see 2 Chronicles 8:11).
 - b. They must remember your words (Jesus/Peter – see Mark 11:21)
 - c. They must listen carefully to your last words (David and Solomon – see I Chronicles 28:20).
7. Their Goal – They must stay on course and not neglect to honor you. Have you honored your members? Have you written and thanked them for their investment in you? Solomon got off course and paid a huge price (see I Kings 3:3; 11:4-6) but Elisha's commitment was total (see 19:21).
8. Their Challenge – You could "order" your people to follow the new, younger leader, but instead you must allow the leader to win over their hearts. Remember that leadership is not a position but a person. Your successors must verify the faith that you have in them. This takes time! David tried to order people to help his son, Solomon (see I Chronicles 22:17). Jesus chose instead to present the changed lives of Peter and John to the world (see Acts 4:13).
9. Their Transformation – As they mature as leader, their weaknesses may become strengths. This is certainly true with Joshua and his courage (see Deuteronomy 31:7). For many years, I had a great weakness helping people one on one. Though this ability is not natural for me, I have learned to be adequate in this area because of the huge dividends it pays.
10. Their Opportunity – They will probably do more than you as a leader because of the foundation that you have laid. This was true with David and Solomon (see I Kings 1:37), Elisha (see 2 Kings 2:9), and the disciples (see John 14:12). My son has a ministry as a pastor today partly because of choices that his grandparents and parents made. Our daughters are women of God, nurtured by a long line of godly heritage. Hopefully, you will see your children (physically and spiritually) be able to build on the foundation of your life and ministry.
11. Their Obstacle – Watch out for family interference. The reverse side of all these advantages is that we must train our children and disciples only to let them go. We then assume the position of counselor when asked. Do not ruin a good investment by interfering with their lives and ministries and what God wants to do uniquely through them. The Scriptures are full of wives, mothers, and others interfering in the lives of their children (see Genesis 21:10; 27:46; I Kings 1:13).
12. Their Vision – They must be careful to listen to God, not just you. Samuel modeled this (see I Samuel 3:9). He then shared the vision from God with his mentor, Eli (see 3:18).