

# Gospel and Community at Work

by Jonathan Dodson

By 2000, forty million American white-collar employees were using the cubicle. What began as a customizable work environment eventually turned into an urban dungeon. Cutting us off from contact with the real world, the cubicle is scorned for suffocating productivity and community. Attempts to correct these individualistic work environments, such as co-working or collaborative workspace, have met with little to moderate success. Does work have to be so isolating?

## Tobacco and Community

In a thoughtful essay on tobacco production in *Sex, Economy, Freedom, & Community*, Wendell Berry lists the benefits of tobacco work. Among them is the practice of "work swapping." Tobacco, Berry points out, is a very "sociable crop," one that calls upon the entire community for help in the setting, cutting, stripping, and harvesting of tobacco. He comments:

*At these times, neighbors helped each other in order to bring together the many hands that lightened work. Thus, these times of hardest work were also times of big meals and much talk, storytelling and laughter.*

I suppose that tobacco farmers could have insisted on doing the work alone, but it wouldn't have been near as fun or efficient as swapping work. But there's more merit to work swapping than efficiency. Berry's reflections reverberate with community. Words like neighbor, each other, together, many hands, big meals, storytelling, and laughter seem foreign to the professional workplace, even to contemporary expressions of church. Yet, many of these words and concepts occur frequently in New Testament descriptions of the early church.

## Early Church Community

For example, Acts consistently describes a church that experienced a steady state of Christian community, not just meeting one another on weekends. They devoted themselves to sharing meals, sharing needs, sharing possessions, and sharing a mission (Acts 2:42-47). This radical community was in response to the gospel of Christ, a community-cultivating message that enriched the surrounding social fabric of Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-37). The gospel promoted community in private

and in public, through the ministry of reconciliation. They sought God-centered reconciliation (Acts 2,7,17), ethnic reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10,15), and social reconciliation of the poor, sick, and lame (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16). The gospel of reconciliation brought very different people together publicly and privately, renewing Jerusalem socially and spiritually.

## Gospel, Community, & Work

What would it look like to extend the community-cultivating power of the gospel into our cities, into our workplaces, into our churches? How would the workplace change? In the city, when our workload increases, community often declines. We buckle into the cubicle for days, only to emerge a worn-out mess. Berry recounts an increase in community when hard work sets in—more laughter, more meals, and more hands. On the contrary, urban work deadlines often bring about despair, fewer meals, less sleep, and less time at home with the family. Far from enriching community, office work can isolate individuals from coworkers and families. Ironically, Tom Rath has demonstrated that community can increase productivity. In his book *Vital Friends*, Rath points out that people with best friends at work are proven to be seven times more engaged in their job!

It would appear that the city has much to learn from the country. Although some vocations are not as sociable as others, the gospel compels us to work for community and reconciliation. To honor, serve, and love those that are different from us, even the employees that get on our nerves. What if you became an agent of reconciliation and community in your workplace? Company morale and output would likely increase, and so would the glory of God in your life. Perhaps some repentance from go-it-alone work is in order. The rural wisdom of work swapping could take us a long way in cultivating better work, better relationships, and better communities. Wouldn't it be great if Christians led the way?

To view the original version of *Gospel and Community at Work*, [visit the highcalling.org](http://www.highcalling.org).

From [smallgroupexchange.com](http://smallgroupexchange.com)

# Life group prayer and praise

- We want to express our sympathy to the **Brian Stewart family** on the death of his **Grandma Bea**. Also, continue to pray for his **mother**, she has cancer and hasn't been feeling well.
- **James** needs prayer for troubles that have happened.
- **Brooklyn** is having problems again with her arthritis, please pray for her ~ **David McC**
- Pray for a friend of mine's dad, **Steve**, he was diagnosed with 2 brain tumors. ~**Carol Jodock**
- **Mark Wexelberg**, who was in a motorcycle accident, is home now, he needs prayer that his leg heals straight. ~ **Christen Weller**
- My **aunt Terri** had a stroke, please pray for healing as we don't know the extent of the damage. ~ **Sherra Ellis**
- **Dee Eckstrom** needs prayer for healing and for the doctors hands to be steady and sure.
- Please pray for my mom **Sandy Abood**.
- Please pray for **Edwina Carmack**, the adult daughter of **Shirlene Walker**, she needs healing.
- Please pray for the **Vietzke family** and everyone in the church that needs work: **Karl & Lorraine Durham, Roy McGowan, Darcy Stanyo, Elna Olson** and the stresses that are connected with that.
- Pray for my friend's father **Jim Bender** who has stage 3 prostate cancer. Prayer that his treatment will be successful and that throughout all this that he will find the Lord. ~**Judy Warren**
- Our students will be taking a mission trip to Mexico this summer from July 10-20. We will be working with **Pastor Gama** at a Children's camp in Merida. Mexico. Please continue to keep our team in your prayers.
- Please continue to pray for **Leanne Durham**, Praise God all is going well.

Dr. Fred Prinzing will be teaching a new 12 week series on Psalm 119—"Discovering and Using God's Treasures" on Wednesdays beginning July 1st from 12:00 to 1:00 pm in the Pacific Room. Everyone is invited to attend, invite your friends and come on down!



- *Jonathan Michaels Estrella— son of Sharon Boswell.*
- *Jason Bjazevich—Megan Owenby's husband—Army Special Forces— Stationed at Fort Lewis.*
- *Joel Ellis—son of John & Midge—Serving in Iraq.*
- *Scott Harpell—son of Brian & Lynne—Stationed at Fort Bragg.*
- *Aaron Weston—nephew of Ken and Kathy—Stationed in San Diego.*
- *Eric Schmidt — son of Gene and Pat Schmidt — Camp Fallujah, Iraq.*
- *Benjamin Lagonia—dear friend of the Naylor family—stationed in Manitoba.*
- *Elijah Austin —Ashley Naylor's husband—a Marine—Stationed at 29 Palms in California.*
- *David Coyle—son of Karen Mark—residing in Seattle, member of the National Guard.*
- *Adam Flynn—a young Marine safely home and out of military*
- *Brett Love—grandson of Wilma— Army National Guard-Serving second tour in Iraq.*
- *Robin Swartz - Serving in the military - currently home in Everett.*
- *Christian Chmielewski—nephew of JoAnn Couturie' - in the Marines.*
- *Jeffrey Lillard—son of Barbara Lillard — Srg. In Army, Stationed at Fort Lewis.*
- *ENS Andrew E. Timpner (fiancé to Christin Suthard) on deployment with USS Momsen.*
- *Devin Abbitt—nephew of Paul Abbitt - Marine, stateside.*
- *Doug Baer—a teacher at Kamiak HS heading to Iraq in the Army Reserves—thru Sept. 09.*
- *Duane Neyens—brother to Kathy Chapman—Nat. Grd. Afghanistan*
- *Philip Ankney-LCPL Afghanistan Cousin of MaryAnn Peterson*

# Life Group Happenings

## Friday Night Update

*by Florence Miller*

Friday night we fed 115 a wonderful Memorial Day Picnic! This weekend I had the opportunity to see the newly released movie, *The Soloist*. The movie website describes it as: "*The Soloist* is a biographical drama about real-life musical prodigy Nathaniel Anthony Ayers, who dropped out of Julliard after developing schizophrenia and became a homeless musician on the streets of Los Angeles. Journalist Steve Lopez discovers the former classical music prodigy, playing his violin on the streets. As Lopez endeavors to help the homeless man find his way back, a unique friendship is formed, one that transforms both their lives."

I encourage each team member as well as those with a

heart for outreach to either see this movie or read the book by the same name. What hit me hard was the importance of simply showing up - again, again and again...

Prayer requests for this week - **DF** - continued recovery from back surgery and help dealing with related depression **KB** - for **A** that he stays true and honest towards his dreams and our relationship we have just begun and to the Lord. **FW** - for my father dying from cancer and to keep my head and mind on God **MM** - my cousin. He's in the war and I'm really concerned for him since he is in Iraq.

Be Blessed - **Chris**

---

---

## Congregational Meeting—June 28th, 9:00 am in the Worship Center



**VBS**  
**BUMERANG EXPRESS**  
June 22-26th  
8:30-12:00



**June 13th**  
Les Schwab  
Evergreen Way  
**CAR WASH**

THIS CAR WASH IS BEING SPONSORED BY THE YOUTH GOING ON THE MEXICO MISSION TRIP AND WILL BE HELD FROM 9:00-2:00 PM IN THE PARKING LOT AT THE EVERGREEN WAY, LES SCHAWB STORE.



**Ross Point Family Camp**  
July 26<sup>th</sup> thru Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>  
**Sign up NOW!**



**SPRING BOOK SALE**  
**June 5th and 7th**  
Just drop off your donations at the S.A.M. desk. Proceeds go to fund our mission projects.

Please support **SAM**

# Life group contributing opportunities



May 27th, Chris Wojahn  
 May 29th, Amy Wright  
 Mary Lapham  
 Bruce Toscano  
 May 30th, Bud Bacon  
 May 31st, Florence Miller  
 June 2nd, Mary Blalock

Happy Birthday

## We need canopies for Fun In the Sun

Also, if you have an old FunInTheSun T-shirt and would like to donate it, we could use it, bring it in to the church office anytime!

## Update May 24th, 2009

Adult attendance: 221 Children: 9 am || 23/10 10:30 am || 46/16  
 Youth Small Group: Middle School || 9/3  
 High School || 8/3

### USHER CAPTAIN 2009:

June—Darrell Olsen  
 Marc Owenby

July—Pete Sontra  
 Luckey Elkins

### COFFEE HOUR 2009

May 31st  
 Ruelyn Nelson  
 Hospitality

June 7th  
 Ruelyn Nelson  
 Women of Purpose

June 14  
 Barb Menia  
 Women of Purpose

June 21  
 Darrell Olson  
 Foundation

June 29  
 John VanDalen  
 The Followers

**July 4<sup>th</sup> Fun in the Sun:** Again this year FBC will offer a street fair following the Everett July 4<sup>th</sup> downtown parade at 12:30 until 3:00 pm. This year's July 4<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday and so we want you to be sure you put it on your calendar. A couple of thousand people show up each year from our community and we get the opportunity to *show them* the love of Christ. Would your Life Groups be willing adopt one of the stations or venues? These include:

- Espresso
- Face painting
- Float in the parade
- Children's inflatable #1, #2, #3
- Miniature golf
- Set-up crew
- Clean-up crew
- Welcome & Registration Desk
- Cotton Candy machine
- Popcorn Machine
- Street Hockey
- Clown Ministry



Our student ministry has already adopted hotdog sales and root beer floats, and our worship ministry has adopted the stage and band. For more information and to volunteer contact [bharpell@fbc-everett.net](mailto:bharpell@fbc-everett.net)