

### Overview

Work is vital to our wellbeing as human beings and is much more than just a means to an end. However, our experience of work is not always positive. Why is this and what can we do about it? Through sharing our experience and ideas we will identify together practical ways to address the issues and challenges of work. These ideas will help you and others to influence our own work context and help others to flourish too.

***This is your worksheet to make notes, jot down ideas or questions.***

### Facilitator

*Offer a quick overview of this session and note that there are other Topics in this series that relate to the wider question of work and how we connect our faith with our work. Some issues that may come up in discussion will need to be dealt with in another session.*

*Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members*

### Facilitator

*People might find this question thought provoking – thinking of work as a positive activity that benefits us, rather than simply a means to a pay cheque. Encourage people to think for a short time then share answers – go round the group ensuring that each person has a turn to express their ideas. It would be helpful for you, as facilitator, to make a list of all of the responses as you go around the group.*

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### Question

**Why is work good for our wellbeing?**

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### Facilitator

*Ask the group to see if they can identify any themes from their responses. Introduce the Perspective 'Wellbeing' below. How do the group's responses relate to these 5 factors?*

*For the background psychological model to these 5 factors, please refer to the background reading provided for this topic. Explain to the group that the theory is that for many people, 'work' is now often the main provider of all 5 factors – since the breakdown/decline in neighbourhood communities, faith institutions, fragmentation of families and political parties. Note the impact on people who are unemployed.*

### Perspective

#### Wellbeing

The sociologist Madeline Bunting cites Marie Jahoda's five factors necessary for human well being:

1. Time structure
2. Social contact
3. Collective effort or purpose
4. Social identity or status
5. Regular activity.

*From 'Willing Slaves ; How the overwork culture is ruling our lives' by Madeleine Bunting.  
(Harper Collins 2004)*

**Facilitator**

Introduce the question about what damages wellbeing

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**Question**

**From your experiences, what might damage wellbeing at work?**

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**Facilitator**

Ask the group to share their own personal experiences of times at work where their wellbeing was affected. Ask the group to see how their experiences relate to the five factors. There might be some emotion connected to these examples. We are going to explore ways to address some of these issues later in the session.

If the group have already completed 'Our Understanding of Work' (Topic GW1), they will have already explored how work is much more than just a paid job – it includes all our different roles; there are many different kinds of 'work' we engage in. Some of our work, paid or unpaid, may contribute more significantly to our well being than others. You can use this exercise to explore what kind of work is offering the greatest sense of well being.

**Facilitator**

Ask people to think of the different kinds of work that they do (paid, voluntary, family, community, church etc.). Position each kind of work on the scale, relative to the others.

**Activity**

**Using Jahoda's 5 factors, mark on each scale how you would rate the different kinds of work that you do – which offers the greatest sense of well being?**

**1. Time Structure**

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My work does **not**  
give me time  
structure

My work gives me time  
structure

**2. Social Contact**

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My work does **not**  
give me social  
contact

My work gives me social  
contact

**3. Collective Effort or Purpose**

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My work does **not**  
give me collective  
effort / purpose

My work gives me  
collective effort /  
purpose

**4. Social Identity or status**

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My work does **not**  
give me social  
identity /status

My work gives me social  
identity / status

**5. Regular Activity**

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My work does **not**  
give me regular  
activity

My work gives me regular  
activity

**Facilitator**

*Invite the group members to share their assessment of their own different work situations. Ask them to comment on the impact on their sense of wellbeing and what they value about the different kinds of work that they do. Do people doing similar kinds of work have similar experiences? Are there any common themes?*

**Facilitator**

*People often feel that they have very little influence on the nature of their work. We would like to explore if this is actually the case or are there small ways in which we could make a difference to our own well being and the well being of others.*

*Part of our Christian discipleship should be to make work better so that people can flourish. We can change the ways in which we work. Explore what the group think might be the distinctive contribution Christians can make to this issue. The quote below, from Bishop David Jenkins, offers a vision for how work might be. We can work at the level of small behaviours, and also on making an impact on the wider system of work. Ask the group what they think about the quote below.*

**Perspective**

**Being Human at Work**

*'The motivation...is to set free human beings who are structurally and ideologically confined. The aim is that more people should get more space to be human and in this shall be able to perceive and create signs and foretastes of that full development of human reality which lies, as we Christians would put it, in the kingdom'*

*From 'The Contradiction of Christianity' by Bishop David Jenkins  
(SCM Press, 1976)*

**Facilitator**

*Encourage the group to explore practical ways in which they might make a difference by reflecting on some of the issues that were raised in the earlier discussion. Explore in the discussion positive glimpses of the kingdom that have occurred in the past and could be encouraged in the work context of members of the group*

**Question**

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**Going back to your list of ideas that might damage well being at work, take a few ideas and develop positive ways of addressing these issues**


**Facilitator**

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*Encourage group members to identify practical actions that they can take tomorrow that might make a difference large or small to them and to those with whom they work.*

**Facilitator**

*During the week, you might like to reflect on :*



**What can you do to impact  
someone else's sense of well  
being at work this week?**

**Facilitator**

*Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session and ask them to share quickly 1 or 2 points.*

**Ponder**

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**What did you learn from this session?**

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**Final Prayer**

**Good Lord Deliver Us**

From empty hours  
And waning powers  
*Good Lord, deliver us.*

From lack of peace  
And mind's dis-ease  
*Good Lord, deliver us*

From sore disgrace  
And lack of face  
*Good Lord, deliver us.*

From darkest night  
From taking fright  
*Good Lord, deliver us*

From feeling tense  
From lack of sense  
*Good Lord, deliver us*

*From 'Power Lines : Celtic Prayers About Work' by David Adam  
(Triangle, 1992)*