

## Aim of lesson

To get the young people to think through, in the light of Scripture, some of the issues that may affect them at work, and to help them to be prepared for them.

## Bible background

Ephesians 6, Colossians 3

## Preparation required

Think through your own experience of work, and be prepared to give the young people examples in your own experience that they can discuss. Don't be afraid to tell them of mistakes you may have made - you want them to learn, don't you? - and they will respect you for being open with them.

## Suggested outline of lesson

Begin with a general discussion about work. Ask the young people about their own experience of work. They may have had little or no personal experiences to draw on, but most will have seen the effects that work has on their parents and will have listened to others talking about their experiences. What are the problems, or potential problems, that face anyone at work? Are these pressures new, or has it always been like that? Have a discussion about their ambitions so far as work is concerned.

Discuss with the young people the passages from Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22-24, and get them to make some notes. The main points should include:

- Obey earthly masters, and sincerely try to please them.
- Serving a boss out of reverence for Christ is serving God, and the real aim should be to please God, not your employer.
- Work hard at everything.

Have a discussion about how someone who works like that is likely to be perceived at work.

Get the young people to 'mark' the chart on their own, then to discuss what they thought, and any differences. It is important to recognise that our faith may lead us to be criticised at work, and to welcome, rather than be ashamed of, this.

Now talk about how anyone who works so conscientiously is likely to be treated. The important points are that:

- One is likely to be given more and more responsibility. This can bring apparent benefits - promotion and more money. Talk about the pressures that could cause one to accept promotion.
- Talk about the impact of that. More responsibility brings more stress. The important thing is that we have to learn when, and how, to say no.
- Saying no will bring its own difficulties. We are likely to 'miss out' on promotion, and are likely to be regarded as lacking commitment. How would one feel in that situation, and what would be the right frame of mind?
- Someone who has principles that are 'not of this world' is likely to come under pressure at work. Discuss these and how one might deal with them.

Discuss the teaching of Jesus that 'no man can serve two masters' (Matthew 6.24), and the potential conflicts that may arise in work. Obvious examples are:

- working on a Sunday or Bible Class night
- neglecting your family
- travelling too much (which brings its own temptations)
- being expected to behave in a dishonest way (the pressures that face salesmen are obvious but arise in many jobs)
- working in the evenings, which may affect Bible reading and prayer

- being expected to entertain clients in places where it would be better not to go

The important thing about all of these is to be 'up-front' about one's faith, and to be prepared to make a stand, whatever the consequences.

This applies especially at a job interview. Everyone wants to get a job, but we have to be prepared to be honest so that we don't get jobs that will harm us in the end.

There may be members of the class whose ambitions are not related to employment but to bringing up a family. Discuss how a wife should seek to influence her husband for the good of their mutual faith and their family.

Use the last activity to encourage the young people to think through their own ideas of what they want to do at work and what situations they might face.

## **Relevance to our lives**

This goes without saying. You may like to end by asking the young people to summarise something they have learned that is going to affect their actions relating to work.

## **Prayer**

Pray that we may all be guided in our work to obey the lessons that we have learned.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

If the subject of military service is relevant to the young people, you could, as a separate activity, consider the following points:

- A Question of Authority. Read John 18:28 - 19:16 Who gave Pilate his authority? Read Romans 13.1-7. So are all authorities good? What do we learn about what should be our attitude to human authorities?
- My kingdom is not of this world. Use the example of Philippi (Philippians 3:20, where 'conversation' (AV) means 'citizenship'. Philippi was a Roman colony, where the inhabitants counted as citizens of Rome, and the language, laws and benefits of Roman citizenship applied. Compare this with the way God wants us to behave. So what do we learn from this about the careers that we should avoid?
- ... and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21). Consider some examples of men of God who refused to obey Authority? What does God expect of us that we cannot 'render to Caesar'?
- Suffering and retaliation. Read 1 Peter 2:13-14,18-23; Matthew 5:38,43; 26:52; Romans 12:19. How would we apply that in a time of war? Or if there were an oppressive Government?
- You may like to photocopy the following page (or print it out from [www.cssu.org.uk/oltw2.htm](http://www.cssu.org.uk/oltw2.htm)) and get the young people to have a tribunal at which the disciple is appealing against being called into the army. Although superficially about a topic which in most countries is no longer a problem, many of the issues raised in this lesson will crop up.

# **Military Service Tribunal**

## **THE PANEL**

### **Lady I C Fairplay, Chairman of the panel**

The job of the chairman is to ask the defendant to explain his position, and then to control the interrogation, in which members of the panel will ask questions in order to establish whether the defendant should be allowed exemption from military service. She is also aware of a range of alternatives, such as working in a munitions factory, joining the police, or becoming a non-combatant member of the forces (for instance, driving an ambulance), which she will be keen to offer to the defendant.

### **Field Marshall Sir I L Killum VC OBE**

The Field Marshall is a retired soldier who fought in two world wars and was many times commended for his bravery. He received his VC for defending a church hall in which a group of women and children had taken refuge; despite being badly injured he managed to hold the enemy at bay for two days until help arrived. He is convinced that military service is not only a service to one's neighbour but is also a great benefit in teaching young men discipline and a sense of personal achievement.

### **Sir James L Beagle QC**

Sir James is an experienced judge who believes that the law of the land must be obeyed. It will not do for people to pick and choose which laws they obey - that is a sure route to anarchy. In particular he doesn't see why these conchies should have all the benefits and protection of the state but not be willing to play their part in maintaining them.

### **The Very Rev D Collar, Bishop of Aldershot**

Aldershot being a military town, the Bishop comes across a lot of troops and was during the second world war the chaplain to an army brigade. He knows of occasions in Old Testament times when God commanded whole nations to be wiped out, and can't see the difference now. He is also familiar with the passages where centurions and soldiers are referred to in a favourable light in the New Testament.

### **A disciple**

At a time of national crisis you have been called upon to join the army to serve your country. You believe what the Lord Jesus said about loving one's enemies and loyalty to God, and therefore have a conscientious objection to this. However, you have to convince the panel of your sincerity. You would be willing to do a wide range of work, including manual work on a farm or in a hospital.