

If you want to make a difference at work



Join a Band

A simple format to build authentic relationships and initiate change at work

Foreword



Work matters to people.

We spend a lot of time doing it – sometimes too much, sometimes with enormous satisfaction, sometimes with vein-bursting frustration. How can we support one another through the realities of working life?

Work matters to God.

It's the instrument he uses to get a lot of things done he wants done. How can we help one another do good work God's way?

The people we work with matter to God.

How can we help one another grow in kindness and consideration for those around us? How can we encourage one another to live the Gospel, apply the Gospel and indeed share the Gospel with our co-workers?

One response is to join a Band. There are many other fruitful ways in which Christians have over the centuries come

together to work out how to share Christ's love in their workplace and Bands is a thoroughly updated version of one that Wesley pioneered all over Britain in the 18th century. It's been tried and thoroughly road-tested for the 21st century by people whose lives I admire, whose testimonies I trust and whose prayers God has blessed.

No tool is for everyone but this one encourages people to be real with one another about the issues they are facing at work and purposeful about God's calling to be His people there. The results have been exhilarating. So if you want to make a difference where you work, think about forming or joining a Band.



*Mark Greene, Executive Director,
The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity*

How Bands started



I work in a City law firm and, about four years ago, a group of us realised that we wanted to explore together more deeply God's heart for the workplace and find a better way to make a difference in and through our work. We felt we needed a simple tool to support us. We knew we needed open relationships, and we knew we needed the wisdom that comes from others who really understand the dynamics of our kind of work. We didn't need another Bible study group or home group, but rather a group of people that could be real together about the challenges we were facing at work and purposeful together about discovering how God wanted us to make a difference where He'd put us.

The Band concept emerged among us, and I'm grateful in particular to Rachel Blanshard and Laurence Singlehurst who allowed me to travel down this road with them. Today there are quite a number of people in a variety of different workplaces using the Band framework, finding it helpful and finding that God is working through it.

May God give you wisdom as you seek His will for your workplace.

James Featherby, London, December 2004

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

HEBREWS 10:24-25

Envisioning & Resourcing

An increasing number of Christians are convinced that the UK will only be won for Christ, and the Kingdom of God become evident in our society, as 'ordinary' Christians are envisioned and resourced to be all that God intended them to be wherever they are – including 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, every week of the year.

Bands are a simple tool to help bring about that envisioning and resourcing. It is a format for purposeful community amongst Christians at work. A format for praying together and working together for maximum Kingdom influence in our offices, our schools, our factories and our hospitals.

The Bands concept is certainly not the only answer to our challenges. But we believe it can make a valuable contribution, in partnership alongside all of the other ways in which God is currently speaking into this arena.

Bands have their origin in the 'bands' that John Wesley formed to help new Christians live out scriptural holiness in every area

of their lives, but over the last four years it has been adapted and developed for the contemporary work context by a number of groups of 'ordinary' Christians in 'ordinary' workplaces.



Bands have already proved immensely helpful to many people, as you'll see from some of the testimonies in this booklet. And it works for two main reasons. First, because a Band offers a place where people can be real with one another about the challenges they're facing. Secondly, because a Band focuses a group on how they can work together for a purpose, to make a difference at work and show and share the love of Christ.

The remainder of this booklet explains:

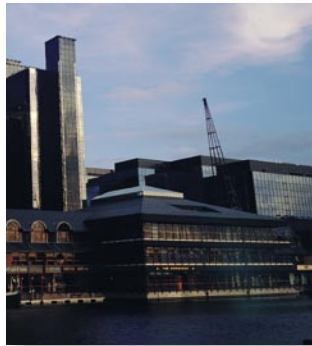
- ✦ what we mean by 'maximum Kingdom influence' and why it's important,
- ✦ the three simple 'P's that give a Band its structure,
- ✦ the foundational beliefs behind a Band gathering,
- ✦ the value hallmarks of a Band community, and
- ✦ some answers to some questions that are often asked.

Maximum Kingdom Influence #1

What is your experience of being a Christian at work? Exhilarated by the work you do but can't make the connection with your faith? Exhausted by the work you do but can't make the connection with your faith? Bored or embarrassed by your fellow believers? Glad just to survive until the end of the day?

What a difference a purpose can make to our day. What a difference when we realise the value that God places on our tasks and when we understand the influence we can have, whatever our position in our workplace.

When we speak of 'Kingdom influence', what do we mean? We mean praying together and working together purposefully to see the Kingdom of God come – even in the workplace.



We mean a Kingdom:

☞ where Jesus is present, and His presence makes a difference,

☞ where there is justice, righteousness and peace,

☞ that we know has not yet fully arrived, and yet is nevertheless with us,

☞ that comes through a battle against evil, and yet love for individuals,

☞ where much is leavened by little,

☞ where all of God's children are blessed, whether they know Him or not, and

☞ where salvation by multiplication, rather than just occasional addition, becomes more possible, even in the workplace.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

LUKE 4:18-19

Maximum Kingdom Influence #2



Maybe you're exhausted by visions that never materialise. Maybe you're weighed down by the tasks already on your list. But we don't believe that being a partner with Christ in the workplace has to be a weighty task, another responsibility to add to our already impossible schedule. Jesus promises to exchange our heavy burden for His light yoke. The Bible does not make an exception for those who work. It is no more of a burden to be part of a Band community than it is to be with friends over coffee.

It's not a question of doing more, it's a question of doing the same differently.

Are we saying your workplace will be transformed overnight? Not necessarily.

Will His Kingdom definitely arrive if we make the right plans? No, our God does not respond to a formula.

But what we can promise you is that as we learn to trust God more in our daily working lives He will inhabit and fulfil His promises.

"The Band concept has provided a model for moving our work-based prayer group beyond the superficial, with a focus on workplace transformation rather than personal survival. As a result we have been inspired to run two work-based Alpha courses with the local church, and three seminars based on Romans in the company board room!"

JOHN, RESEARCH MANAGER

Band Meetings – A Framework

A Band meeting is built around a simple framework of three 'P's – *Presence*, *Pressure* and *Purpose*.

1. Acknowledging Christ's PRESENCE

A short time for prayer or Bible reading that acknowledges the presence, and the power, of Jesus in the meeting.

2. Sharing the PRESSURES

An opportunity to share a pressure that is being faced personally, at home or at work. This is an opportunity to be real about issues that we are facing among people likely to understand the pressures, the temptations and the challenges of our workplace.

Often as we pray for each other we are not only helped by sharing our concerns but also by discovering how Jesus wants to make a difference in our situation.



3. Pursuing the PURPOSE

This is a time to seek God's heart for our workplace and for the people that work alongside us. This is focussed out on others, rather than focussed in on ourselves. Here our concern is for change in

ourselves, in our colleagues, and in the way things are done around us in our workplace. What, we might ask, is God doing already? How does he want to use us? How can we bless those around us? How can we encourage one another? What are we each trying to do in our sphere of influence? What is our purpose?

Many have found the concept of being a pastor to the flock that God has put around them in their workplace a helpful picture that encourages them to love their colleagues .

Value Hallmarks of a Band

Values precede actions. So Bands are characterised not so much by the shared ways of doing things – methods can vary – but by the shared values that motivate us to do them.

1 *Jesus at the centre*

There is no aspect of our lives, or of the problems in our workplace, with which Jesus is not intimately concerned. He must be at the centre of all that we do, and of all the solutions that we bring.

2 *Honesty*

Without honesty there is no reality, and without reality there is no personal change.

It is only as we admit our weaknesses that others can hold us accountable for the future, and only as we make ourselves vulnerable that we can find forgiveness and renewal for the future.

3 *Change*

At a personal level change is foundational to our faith. We must be committed to change, even when costly or painful.

God, however, is not just concerned for individuals and the planet. He is concerned for our institutions and our structures, and for the systems in which we work. As Christians we have a responsibility, and a mandate, to change the structures and the values around us so that all may benefit from the peace, justice and righteousness inherent in His Kingdom.



4 Equipped for the workplace

The church is called to equip the saints for works of service. We can aspire to equip one another to serve Christ in the workplace as well as in the church.

5 Outward looking

We have a relationship with Christ to share with our co-workers, and this involves more than just the proclamation of truth.

May we discover together how to build relationships with our friends that enable us to share Christ in a way that is relevant and appropriate for them.

6 Sacrificial love

In a work climate of self, what greater witness can there be than a life lived for others? The challenge is to demonstrate a love that puts others first, even in the workplace.



“It’s great to be able to share work and personal challenges, and the steps of faith we each want to make to see the Kingdom of God further enacted where I work. And it’s great to be with like-minded individuals: those who share a vision and understand the pressures, the traps and the competing priorities. It’s great to know that attending a Christian meeting is not the ‘be all and end all’, and to explore alternative and creative ways to ‘spur one another on’ outside of the meeting.”

JANE, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Foundational Beliefs

Bands have three foundational beliefs:

1 *That when two or three gather together there is Christ in the midst*

To demonstrate Christ in the workplace we need to meet with Him and experience His presence. Both the Bible and our experience are clear that there is an added dimension to our experience of Christ when we seek Him corporately.

2 *That Jesus has given us a yeast and mustard seed mandate for the workplace*

All of us are called to be catalysts for change in the workplace, yeast that leavens the lump by our faith, by our words and by our actions, individually and together.

3 *That we are called to bless, not condemn*

Jesus' message, expressed through His words and His actions, was one of reconciliation and of blessing. The question is not just 'how can we share the gospel?', but also how can we bless others and actually be good news to our colleagues.



A Typical Band Monday Morning

7.30 I arrive at my office. Everyone else is already waiting in reception, except Gina who's abroad. Mike has brought with him five cappuccino, two latte and seven pastries.

7.34 We read Psalm 139 together.

7.38 Rod prays for Christ's presence and wisdom.

7.41 The group shares pressure points.

7.48 The discussion focuses around one issue brought up by Rod, namely the tension he feels about going out for a drink with his colleagues after work.

7.52 Rachel offers Luke 10 v 1-9 as a text that might address Rod's situation. We pray for that. And other points including the bullying that one of Rachel's children has experienced at school.

8.06 Rebecca shares an encouragement about an issue the group prayed for two weeks ago.

8.07 Mike shares a discouragement about a conversation he fluffed with a work colleague.

8.11 Paul asks for wisdom on how to approach the directors in his company about starting a work/life balance debate.



8.15 We pray for issues raised and issues already known.

8.28 Everyone leaves.

8.29 I clear up the cups. And take the spare pastry upstairs to offer to my secretary.

7.12 Paul sends me an email to say that his boss wants to talk to him about how his company can become more imaginative about helping people work less hours.

1.53 I remember a book I read on helping kids with problems at school, and ring to tell Rachel.

Questions & Answers

How is this different from a normal Bible study or prayer group?

A Band is based on personal openness and outwardly focussed community. It aims to avoid the pitfalls of academic discussion or focus on self. It recognises the importance of other resources and relationships.

How can I start one, I'm not a leader?

A Band does not need a leader, it needs a facilitator. A Band recognises the value of the God given contribution that every member of the group can make. It is a key part of the process that every member takes responsibility.

How can I make a difference in my workplace, I'm just the tea boy?

We all have colleagues around us in the workplace. Our influence comes not from our position but from our willingness to pastor and serve the flock that is already around us.

How do I start?

Pray, and talk to your Christian colleagues in your workplace or nearby. It is worth investing a good amount of time going over the foundational beliefs and value hallmarks. It may take a while before old habit patterns learned from other groups are readjusted. Set an initial period for the group to operate of, say, nine months. This gives everyone an opportunity then to make a graceful exit or re-evaluate and move forward.



How often should we meet?

A Band is primarily about relationships, not meetings. Friends do not have meetings, they call each other, they lunch together, they email each other, they share sadnesses and joys as they happen. It is, however, good to set aside a time each week or each fortnight to meet for, say, one hour to go through the three Ps of Presence, Pressure and Purpose.

How many should be in the group?

We suggest not less than three (there's something about the third that keeps things on track) and probably not more than five or six. This is for two reasons: first, it allows each person to participate fully within what is often a limited amount of time and, secondly, it minimises the amount of organisation needed to get the group together.

How can I trust them?

Everyone should agree to keep confidential everything that is shared. Trust builds over time.

Should we all be the same sort of people?

There are advantages and disadvantages. Same sex, same seniority and same employer can mean you'll relate to each other quicker. On the other hand, there is nothing like difference to keep us out of the rut. You decide.

How will I know if it's working?

We suggest you don't measure things by the numbers attending (remember the size of the mustard seed) or the quality of your meetings (we're here to bring Kingdom, not to hold services). The test is simple: are the members of your group telling each other stories of having seen the Kingdom come in their workplace?



“As host to a Band I can only say how wonderful the meetings are from the perspective of experiencing deep fellowship with each other over time. Tuesday mornings have become an oasis for prayer, friendship and discipleship with each other in the love of Christ.”

JOAN, FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINER

Questions, Next Steps, Resources...



If you want to find out more, or have some questions, log on to www.bands.org.uk, browse the answers to the FAQs, post your own question or listen or download the audio talks/interviews on Bands.

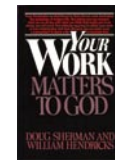
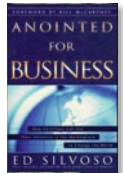
Bands don't necessarily have to be done a particular way – but they do have particular values. As you experiment you may well find new ideas and new ways of doing things. As you do, please post them on the website to stimulate others. Similarly, if there are stories that you think will help others – whether cautionary tales or celebratory sagas – do post them on the site or e-mail them to mail@bands.org.uk

The only resource you'll need to facilitate or participate in a Band is a Bible but there are a wide range of resources that will help to deepen your understanding of what it means to work out your faith at work. Here are some of our favourites:



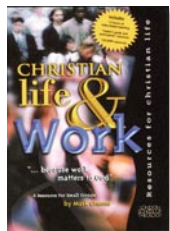
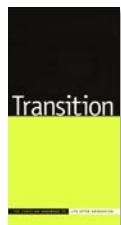
Thank God it's Monday, Mark Greene, SU, £6.99. An entertaining introduction to living for Christ at work, with material on theology of work, vocation, ministry, evangelism, work-life integration and ethical challenges.

Anointed for Business, Ed Silvano, Regal, £8.99. A fresh insight on how Jesus used business men and business women in His ministry, and how God anoints us to bring transformation to our workplaces.



Your Work Matters to God, Sherman & Hendricks, NavPress, £8.99. Thoughtful, and thought-provoking, with an emphasis on theology and lots of practical applications, plus excellent insights into why work matters.

Transition – The Graduate’s Guide to Life after University, Ed. Tim Vickers, £3. (Only available from LICC). For final year students and new graduates helping them integrate their faith with the workplace. Includes material on work, relationships, money and finding a church.



Christian Life & Work, Mark Greene, six-part group video with leader's guide, £25.00. A creatively-shot video series combining teaching, Bible study, discussion questions, and down-to-earth commentary from a number of workers in a variety of jobs

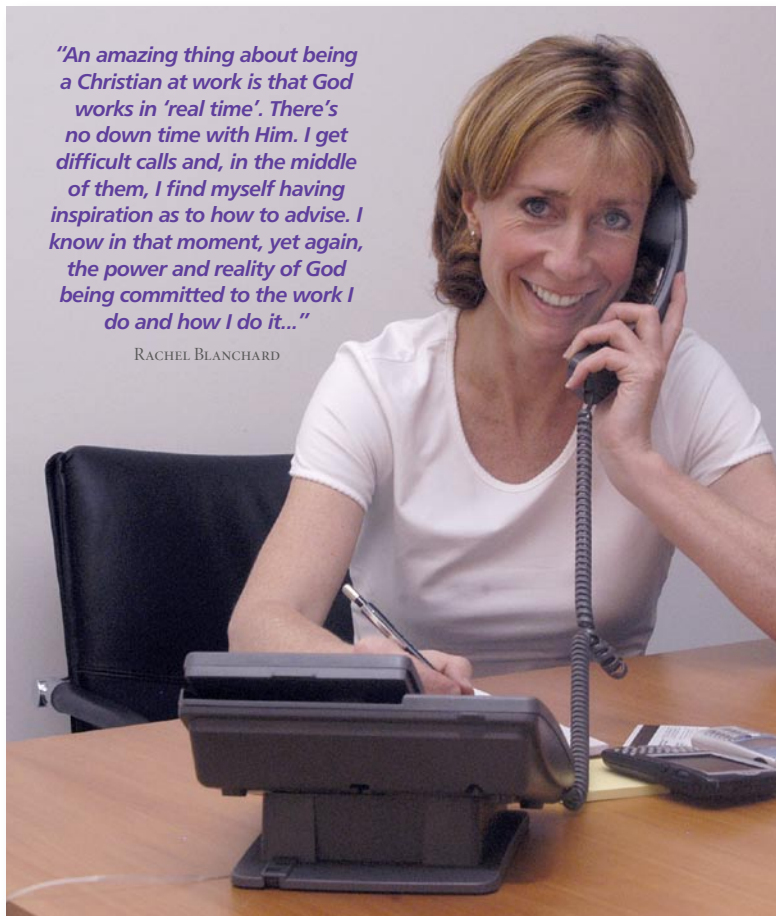
LICC Word for the Week/Connecting with Culture. Pithy, free, bi-weekly e-mail service that alternates between taking a passage of Scripture and applying it to today's world and taking an event, film, book or trend – and reflecting on it biblically. Stimulating and encouraging. To subscribe, email: mail@licc.org.uk



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"An amazing thing about being a Christian at work is that God works in 'real time'. There's no down time with Him. I get difficult calls and, in the middle of them, I find myself having inspiration as to how to advise. I know in that moment, yet again, the power and reality of God being committed to the work I do and how I do it..."

RACHEL BLANCHARD



"It's so encouraging to be with a group that prays specific prayers and gets specific answers, and to see one another grow in Christ, in confidence and in faith."

SANDEEP

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www.licc.org.uk

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www.beingchurch.com

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Credits

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