

P.S.

**ONE OF THE LARGEST** money management houses in the City of London was recently the target of a preaching campaign by one of its employees, a committed evangelical Christian. Since the purpose of money management houses is investing, the employee in question (a financial analyst) wrote and printed a leaflet called **Investing for Life**. The hook was famed investor Warren Buffett. Regarded as one of the great heroes of the profession, Buffett allegedly has a number of core principles according to which he invests his money and which have brought him success over a long number of years. **Investing for Life** took those principles and showed how they could be applied, not just to filthy lucre, but to spiritual matters as well. If you invest in God now, you will reap the rewards. An investment in the spiritual opportunities God offers is the best investment you can make.

I read the leaflet out of interest, and didn't think it was that great. Aside from the obvious doctrinal errors that one would expect, it all seemed a bit laboured. The initial hook, and the concept of spiritual investing for the future, were probably good ideas—"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" is, after all, a Scriptural quotation—but beyond that the campaign was mediocre.

But the tale is not about the leaflet itself, it's about what happened to it. One lunchtime the man began the process of putting a copy on every desk of the institution where he worked, which had more than 500 employees. Very shortly after lunch he was summoned by his Human Resources department and given a severe reprimand. He was ordered to go round to each desk and collect all the leaflets he had distributed. Should he refuse to do so, the threat of dismissal was dangled before him.

It was certainly an unconventional approach to preaching. Was his firm too heavy-handed? If you work, what would your firm have done? Was the man abusing his employer's privilege? Perhaps it would have been OK if he had asked permission first. How far can and should we go in preaching in the workplace? Do our colleagues know the things we stand for? And have we made any or sufficient attempt to testify to our faith? I suspect many of us would feel that his particular method went one step too far, but his action may nevertheless highlight the relevance of the last question. If such an exercise in mass leaflet distribution in the workplace is too

## Would you dare?

presumptuous, have we (which really means, for each of us, have I) gone far enough?

Let me make it clear. This piece is in no way intended as an appeal that we all distribute leaflets in such a manner in our firms. Yet the incident poses questions (at least to me personally) which are quite penetrating. Whether or not it is or was a 'good' thing to do, would I have dared do it? Would I have been too ashamed to be spotted handing out leaflets to people I know so well? And, had I felt in my conscience that it was theoretically a good idea, would I have dared ask my manager for permission? I might have been bold enough to put a leaflet on everyone's desk when they had all gone home from work, when no one could have spotted me, and no one would have known the day after who had done it, but would I have had the courage to show forth what I believed while everyone was watching? And to live appropriately afterwards, now that some at least would be searching for hypocrisies and inconsistencies in my behaviour?

The outcome of the incident was quite interesting. Our leaflet-writer went around the office once more that afternoon, gathering up all his leaflets. The collection caused more of a stir than the distribution, with many colleagues insisting that they kept the leaflet and read it to find out what all the fuss had been about. Many of them clearly thought that Human Resources had been a bit overbearing and that it was perfectly fine for someone to express their views on spiritual matters.

I have heard of the occasional Christadelphian who has been similarly up-front in preaching in the workplace, but it is a matter which must remain for personal conscience and conviction. What the episode illustrates for me is that, although there are genuine reasons why one might not pursue a particular method (such as abusing our employer's privilege), there are other reasons (such as being ashamed of showing what we believe in front of people we work with) which are clearly less appropriate. While we each have personal traits and characteristics that will render some approaches more or less appropriate for us as particular individuals, we must all strive, in whatever way it is, to hold our head high and share our conviction of the wonderful things God has done and will do upon the earth.

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