



Challenge Newsletter

Christ in the Workplace

Sit at Jesus' Feet

by: Steve Smith

At our March Challenge Weekend just a few weeks ago, Talk 2: What Stands in the Way? had been given and I was alone with my thoughts. With a heavy sigh I asked, "Lord, what is standing in the way in my life?" The thought came to my mind in reply, "Where do I even start?"

The Lord began to help me realize my priorities were completely upside down.

1. "How is your relationship with me?" I haven't written in my prayer journal for about 40 days, Lord. I haven't set aside time to read scripture and allow your thoughts to reach my heart. "What if you didn't talk to your wife for 40 days? What kind of relationship would that be?"
2. "Speaking of your wife, how's your marriage?" Considering I slept on the couch last night because we had a fight, not so good. I worked the last 28 days 12-14 hour days with no break. I am exhausted and empty at the end of the day and have nothing left to offer my wife.
3. "How is your relationship with your son?" Well, I haven't seen him since Monday since I've gotten home each night after his bedtime. We've had no time together on weekends because I am always working.
4. "I've called you to love your parents and siblings well and be a part of their lives and have a relationship with them. How's that going?" Well, I ask a lot of them but I'm so busy I have no time to give them anything in return.
5. "Your business - you dedicated it to me, and I asked you to meet the needs of everyone who comes to you. Are you doing that well?" No, Lord, I am exhausted and over-extended and my clients are frustrated with me. I'm well-intentioned but my clients aren't getting what they need.

6. "I've called you to CIC. Are you bearing fruit by being Christ in the workplace? Have my precious children received my love through you, my messenger?" No, Lord. I've been trying, but no, there is not much happening there.

"Why are you looking for love? Why are you still searching as if I'm not enough? I have what you need, but you keep on searching. I've done all the work, but you keep on working. Leave it all behind and come to me, sit at my feet and rest a while."

The Lord has been breaking down my walls and kicking out the idols I set up at the center of my heart that I didn't even know were there: a fear of "not enough"; that I don't do enough, I don't make enough, I'm not good enough, that God is not enough. He spoke with authority into my heart, "I AM enough." Everything changed in that moment, and yet nothing was different!

The Lord is changing it all, redeeming it as slowly and steadily as I surrender and lay it at his feet.

He wants us to stop all this striving, this trying. Just stop! Here, now, wherever you are, surrender and, like Mary (Luke 10:38-42), sit at the feet of Jesus. Only one thing is needed: to sit at Jesus' feet by setting a daily appointment with God.

Show up and watch what he will do!

Steve Smith has been a member of the South Bend-Elkhart Chapter since 2009 and currently serves as Chapter President. He lives in South Bend, IN with his wife, Vanessa and son, Christian. They own a residential real estate business, Irish Realty, and a women's clothing boutique, Flourish Boutique. Steve can be reached at ssmith@cooreman.com.

Being Christ in the Workplace

Galatians
2:20

June, 2014

Upcoming Events

Men's Weekends

Greater Phoenix Area

July 26-28, 2014,
September 26-28, 2014
November 14-16, 2014

South Bend/Elkhart

September 19-21, 2014
Salinas Valley
November 14-16, 2014

Women's Weekends

WCIC-Fresno

August 22-24, 2014

Annual Conference

October 17-18, 2014

Christians in Commerce News

Uganda CIC Conference

Snapshot: Living the Life

WCIC-Fresno Day of Renewal

Please send your stories to:
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Life Pleasing to God

week 1

Finding the Way in Grief

by: Jerry Wilkowski

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)

My life and relationship with the Lord changed dramatically when my wife and best friend went to be with him in August of 2012 after 46 married years and a friendship that began two years earlier.

Marcia Sue had been hospitalized following life-saving surgery in Phoenix where we had travelled to attend our second son's graduation. Sue had fought the ravages of diabetes and end-stage renal failure for years. Her passing was not unexpected to anyone but me. I was in complete denial!

The loss left me both angry with God and guilt-ridden. In my mind, I had not done enough for Sue and had made bad decisions concerning her medical care. Along with others, I had prayed intensely for her recovery. Being in denial of her true condition, I expected everything would work out.

From my perspective, God robbed me of my wife and companion. He did not give me the perfect closure I wanted. Satan took full advantage of my state of mind. He preyed upon my anger.

It was beyond my comprehension that God had taken my wife. Family and friends surrounded and comforted me. Still, I felt alone and isolated. A life built around loving and caring for my wife evaporated. Life wasn't fair and I was angry!

My enthusiasm for life waned. I was merely going through the daily motions. The "why" question dominated my psyche; answers were not forthcoming or evident in my tormented state. Where was God when I needed him? It was hard to hear him answer because of my self-absorbed anger. Satan was present to feed my anger and despair.

Satan also fueled my guilty feelings, which had been fermenting, with a vengeance. My mind was bombarded with the "if onlys". If only I had been more attentive to her medical condi-

tion. If only I had made better medical decisions during her extended hospital stay. If only I had placed her needs ahead of mine. If only I had expressed more fully my love and what a special gift God had given me. On and on!

Then came Satan's most devastating accusation: God will not forgive you and you are incapable of forgiving yourself for all the wrong decisions and actions you made while married to Sue. Of course, these thoughts were irrational, but they were believable in my depressed state.

It was after I started counting our blessings, remembered all the good times we'd had, and acknowledged I am not a perfect human being but the offspring of a loving Father, that I experienced God's forgiveness and was able to forgive myself.

My anger evaporated only after I finally acknowledged that Sue was a gift from God and after seven months of bed-ridden suffering he had brought her home. His decision, not mine; his judgment, not mine. Finally, I began to trust again.

Pope Francis' recent words reinforced my peace and release: "Our daily problems and worries can wrap us up in ourselves, in sadness and bitterness... and that is where death is. That is not the place to look for the one who is alive! Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend, with trust: He is life!"

The path to re-establishing a loving and trusting relationship with Jesus Christ continues to be a daily challenge. I routinely ask God how long my grief will last.

Every day I must force myself to "recall that God himself came and took up the heavy burden of a painful, miserable, horrible death by torture. While we complain, we know that he has suffered this before us. It does not answer all the questions, but the Cross puts them in perspective." (Benedict J. Groeschel)

Jerry Wilkowski lives in Vienna, VA. He has been a CIC member since 1986 and is currently the President of the Northern Virginia Chapter. Together with his late wife he has four children and 16 grandchildren (nine boys and seven girls) with a 17th expected in July and an 18th in November. He can be contacted at jwilkowski@verizon.net.

Pray: Lord, may death remind us of the reality of life everlasting with you. Strengthen my faith, that in the midst of this changing world I may always come closer to you, who never change.

Reflect: Consider your experience grieving for the loss of loved ones or with ministering to others grieving a loss or significant change.

Discuss: How can you serve those who are grieving? Discuss your own experience with grief and what mattered the most to you. Share any experiences with blaming God for a situation.

Men's June Reflections

week 2

Personal Sacrifice

by: Doug Demetre

If one falls down his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up. (Ecclesiastes 4:10)

I was asked to be a speaker to a "transition group" at a home for men who have lost their jobs due to illnesses, divorce, disabilities and other reasons. They are required to attend two-hour life training session once a week. With much trepidation, I went to the meeting.

Through prayer and the working of the Holy Spirit, the first half of the meeting went from feelings of nervous anxiety and distrust among us to ones of trust and support.

The second half allowed for further growth of that trust, love and understanding as the men began to realize that God was present to each of them. We talked about how they could assist each other during the weeks ahead. I was looking forward to the next meeting.

Between meetings, my wife purchased me a new pair of slippers that ended up being too large. Rather than "Goodwill" them, I thought one of the men at the home could use them. I just didn't know who, and wondered about those who wouldn't get anything.

Fifteen minutes before the next meeting, I had a desire to go to the closest store for no real reason. While wandering around, I picked up a couple of items. In the checkout line, one of the men said, "Don't I know you? Aren't you supposed to be at the meeting?" It was one of the men from the first meeting. He didn't have a ride. The Holy Spirit had led me there to take him.

As I got in the car, I saw the slippers and asked, "What size do you wear?" They were his size. In fact, he needed a new pair and had been saving to buy some!

The Holy Spirit works in my life, even in the small things, when I am open to him.

Pray: Gracious Father, help me to recognize those you want me to assist and to act promptly when doing so.

Reflect: How have you listened to what the Lord wants of you?

Discuss: Share where you have seen God work unexpectedly to build your faith or how God has surprised you in a call to serve others. What did you do and what did you learn about yourself?

week 3

Making a Difference in the Workplace

by: Doug Demetre

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid... It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. (Psalm 118: 6, 8)

Recently, we received a call from a man who wanted to use our Lease Option Company to sell his home. At our first meeting, as we talked about the business, the conversation turned to faith and the seller's acknowledged lack thereof, but did not progress beyond that at the time.

While we quickly found a buyer, the process between buyer and seller was laborious and took many hours of contract writing and rewriting due to both parties' issues. The transaction was taking our time away from other business and we were falling behind in needed income. We started to count on this transaction to make up the difference.

During the multiple daily conversations, it became clear that the seller was confused, lost and did not have the stability of faith. I realized that I too was fearful and not trusting the Lord for all he had to offer my family and me. After much prayer, I turned everything over to him - mind, body and soul - to trust him with all. Shortly afterwards, the buyer and seller realized they could not come to terms. The deal was cancelled.

The following Sunday, I received a call from the seller. We talked about the experience and he quickly stated he was feeling so desperate that he had even tried asking Jesus to come into his life. He said, "Nothing happened." I pointed out that just desiring and being open to conversion is the important aspect. God will work.

For me this was confirmation that this transaction hadn't been about the money or the deal; it was about trusting in God.

Pray: Lord, infuse us with your grace to build our trust in you daily.

Reflect: What anxiety-raising issues have you recently faced in which you had to rely on God?

Discuss: How and with what have you struggled recently as far as trusting in God? Share the situation and how it is progressing, or what the outcome was.

Men's June Reflections

(continued)

week 4

Holding Each Other Accountable

by: Doug Demetre

He has saved us and called us to a holy life. (2 Timothy 1:9)

Me, called to a holy life?

For 21 years while being involved with CIC, the weekly Challenge Group meetings are where my spiritual growth has taken place. The experiences, sharing, love, support, prayers, the standards my brothers expect of me... all have changed me from the man I was to the deeper follower of Christ I am today. I have learned to live in the present so I can be ready to respond when the Father calls.

I wouldn't have been able to mentor the Wednesday night transition men (see Week 2 article) if it hadn't been for what I learned in the sessions with my Challenge Group. The Wednesday night transition group has gone from men merely existing in the same house together, to one of men caring for and supporting each other.

Within a few short sessions, the group began to interact differently. When one of the men had surgery, the others prayed for and visited him in the hospital as well as the rehab facility. They would not have done this before.

Another man was without work. The men prayed and he obtained work. He shared that he even prayed before the interview. Another person's truck broke down; one of the other men repaired it. This behavior of support, trust and prayer is an incredible change. Everything isn't perfect in the transition home, but the transformation in the men is nothing short of astonishing.

I am now able to pass on the spiritual growth, group prayer and support I learned from my weekly Challenge Group to other men. They appear to be much quicker learners than I! Two of them attended our last CIC morning meeting. Praise God!

Doug Demetre has been a member of CIC since 1993 and is currently on the Sacramento Service Council. He is a California Realtor and co-owner with his wife, Caren (Co-chair of the WCIC Board), of a nationwide Lease Option Company. They have three children and nine grandchildren. Doug can be reached at dougdemetre@sbcglobal.net.



2014 Annual Conference: October 17-18, 2014

... and that life was the light of all mankind. (John 1:4)

Join with us as we grow in living the life of Christ - a life that is the light for those we meet in the marketplace. There is a new wave of the Spirit and evangelization sweeping across our land! We are a part of this as we build his kingdom and share his Gospel in our workplaces.

The 2014 Annual Conference will take place October 17-18th at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in San Jose, CA. Go to christiansincommerce.org/2014EarlyBird to register now and get the Early Bird discount!

Pray: Father, please continue the work you started in me on my path to being holy.

Reflect: Identify three things you have learned from your Challenge Group about supporting others.

Discuss: How have you or can you share those lessons with others to expand the Kingdom of God?

Women's June Reflections

week 2

Personal Sacrifice

by: Pat Gangi-Drechsler

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8)

"What do you mean I'm being laid off? I was only promoted to this position nine months ago... and my husband is retiring in four days!" It wasn't supposed to be this way. In my perfect world, Rob would retire and I would keep working for at least two more years to help ease the transition to a lower income. Now we were facing an immediate 75% cut in income. God had always provided for us, but it was hard to remember his faithfulness the midst of this unexpected news.

Worse yet was the thought of re-entering the job market just shy of my 62nd birthday. One reason for seeking a promotion last year had been the promised training in new technologies. Learning the technology on my own wasn't an option due to the price of the required software. However, I was laid off right before training started, so I faced a job market where my skills weren't cutting edge and job openings were often listed as "seeking recent graduates."

But the Lord had other plans. Not long after I was laid off, I received the following offer:

"Pat, one of our prayer group members is purchasing a home in north central Arizona for a house of prayer and healing. We know that you and Rob thought you might be called to serve at a retreat center when you retire. We need a couple to move up there in about three months to be caretakers for the house and to start laying the foundation for this ministry. Would you and Rob be interested?"

We almost held our breaths, thinking that this was too good to be true; and we certainly never thought it would happen this soon! As you read this, I have filed for early retirement and we are packing to move ahead with God's plan, which is always so much better than we could ask for or imagine!

Pray: Lord, help us to remember that your love for us has no bounds and that you always want the best for us. Help us to see each challenging event in our lives as another step on the wonderful journey that you have prepared for us.

Reflect: When something difficult happens unexpectedly, is your first reaction usually thanksgiving or fear? Why?

Discuss: When has a difficult situation turned out to be a blessing in disguise?

week 3

Redeeming Our Father's Creation

by: Pat Gangi-Drechsler

... Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

I thought my client, whom I will call Jane, had invited me to breakfast to talk about my next project for her company. "Pat," she said with unusual nervousness, "We've worked together for a long time and I feel like I need to tell you something. I'm gay and in a serious relationship." I asked why it seemed so hard to tell me. Jane said, "Because you're a 'good' girl." She knew I was an active Christian because when we traveled together for business, I sometimes skipped breakfast to go to church.

Responding to Jane was a challenge as her company had provided the majority of my consulting income for the last few years. If I told her what I truly believed, could I lose this business? At the same time, I had to be true to my values and beliefs. I said a quick silent prayer and told Jane that I did not support active homosexual behavior or gay marriage. However, I did accept, respect and value her as a good person, a talented colleague, and a generous client. I didn't see the news changing anything in our relationship.

The result? Jane respected my honesty and remains a client and friend to this day. Once when traveling, she became quite ill and allowed me to pray over her in the Spirit. Jane was completely better the next morning and I've heard her share about this healing with colleagues. So, while not a practicing Christian, Jane shares the work of the kingdom because we built our relationship speaking the truth to each other in love, not judgment.

Pray: Lord, when our core values are challenged, may we always remain steadfast and speak the truth in love.

Reflect: Think about a time when you had to choose between holding fast to your values and protecting your income, relationships, or lifestyle. What did you learn from that experience?

Discuss: Talk about a time when you were challenged to stand up for what you believed in spite of potential serious consequences.

Women's June Reflections

(Continued)

week 4

The Fruits of Our Relationships as Sisters

by: Pat Gangi-Drechsler

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

I've been involved with Women's CIC since the first WCIC Challenge Weekend about 17 years ago. The ministry has come a long way since then, and in October 2013, the first WCIC Board of Directors was installed.

When I was invited to lead the Board, I hesitated. I've always been better at helping others become great leaders than I've been at leading. As athletes know, the best coaches are rarely the best players. I'm not naturally organized and I work best under pressure, two traits which can create uncertainty and anxiety for the rest of the team.

How could I lead the Board given my work style? I prayed and God provided a great gift in a co-leader named Caren Demetre, a talented sister who has also been involved with WCIC since our founding retreat. Caren has great leadership gifts and is a superb organizer. I can count on Caren to keep me on track, to make sure meetings are scheduled, paperwork is filed, and notices are emailed. More than that, she is devoted to seeking God's vision for WCIC and has a great heart for all the women touched by this ministry. What a blessing it has been for God to provide me with a sister who not only keeps me accountable but adds so much value and grace to our team!

I agreed to serve in the capacity as co-chair of the Women's CIC Board for one year and will step down after the October Annual Conference. I am delighted that my gifted co-chair Caren will become the sole Chairperson, supported by a wonderful team including: Vice-Chair Diane McGinty, Secretary/Treasurer Cathy Glover, and members Sheri Donaldson and Joan Mangino. Please pray for us!

Dr. Pat Gangi-Drechsler is one of the founders of WCIC and a member of the WCIC-Phoenix Chapter. She and her husband Rob are retiring this year and moving into full-time ministry work as caretakers of a house of prayer and healing in Cornville, Arizona. Pat may be reached at drgangi@cox.net.

Hope for the Workplace – Christ in You by Bill Dalgetty

Bill Dalgetty, former Christians in Commerce President and Chairman of the Board, draws from his extensive experience in business and ministry to examine the challenges faced by Christians seeking to live out their faith in today's workplace. Readers will discover practical tips for:

- Dealing with a difficult boss or colleague
- Maintaining integrity and ethics in business decisions
- Balancing family and career
- Seeking excellence in one's work
- Caring for co-workers

To purchase the book, visit the Zacchaeus Publications website at www.zacchaeuspublications.com.

** Bill has generously offered to donate all profits from the sales of this book to the ongoing ministry of Christians in Commerce.*

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for sending us your strength in the form of sisters and brothers who willingly receive your gifts and even more willingly offer them in generous service.

Reflect: What gifts and talents do you possess? Which do you lack? How willing are you to ask for help in your lack and to offer service in your giftedness?

Discuss: Talk about a time another sister or brother's gifts helped you to better follow your own call.

Christians in Commerce NEWS

Christians in Commerce
Prayer

Uganda CIC Conference

by: Aloysius Mugisa

In January, the Uganda Service Council agreed to do a CIC Conference. As Chapter President, I approached the local pastor and told him that CIC had a pastoral contribution to make to his parish.

The pastor welcomed the idea and set out to organize together with the chapter. "I know about CIC, and I trust you are going to help our Christians a lot. I have heard good testimonies from people who have attended your Challenge Weekends," he told me. The theme chosen came from Luke 15:18: *I will set out and return to my father.*

The church hall being too small, we arranged to rent tents and chairs. Several cooks were invited to assist in the food preparation. Use of the CIC radio program assisted in the promotion. On March 27th, we had a loud speaker system in place and began to praise the Lord around 2 p.m. By 4 p.m., close to 50 people had gathered. By the morning of March 29th there were around 140 people!

The teaching on repentance and reconciliation moved a couple who instantly decided to legitimize their marriage. On Sunday March 30, 2014 they were wed at the conference.



Snapshot: Living the Life

In honor of our 2014 Annual Conference theme, "Live the Life", here is a "snapshot" of one of our members doing just that! Send your "Live the Life" snapshots to info@cicintl.org.

CIC has assisted me in my spiritual development over the last two decades. It started as a Wednesday morning ecumenical gathering of men to delve into the Word. After a talk, we would break into small groups to share our thoughts and feelings on a

Challenge question. I realized that whatever grouping I was in, there was both a commonality as well as different ways of approaching the question.

After several months, I attended a Challenge Weekend. I've attended about seven over the years. Each weekend was a blessing, and I saw my level of faith growing, as well as many miraculous events. Before one weekend in particular, I was looking forward to attending, but the Holy Spirit asked me to remain at home and pray instead. I did so and missed a miraculous spiritual healing. I realized that my prayers that weekend were needed for this event to take place.

- Frank Murawski, Mesa Chapter

WCIC-Fresno Day of Renewal

By: Lucy Vasquez

Do you feel you are an active disciple of Christ? What crosses are you being asked to bear at this time? Are you aware that Jesus is by your side?

On Saturday, May 3, 2014 the WCIC-Fresno Chapter held its first Day of Renewal. The Reflection of the Day was, Holy Women, Our Inspiring Disciples. Susan Cabrera from the WCIC-Santa Cruz Chapter drove 150 miles each way to lead the day. The above questions were the first ones she asked the 50 women attendees, 64% of whom were new to WCIC.

Our Service Council voted not to charge a fee to the event. The response of attendance proved this to be a wise decision. By developing community business partners for event, the food, coffee and table cloth rentals were covered by sponsorships.

The day focused on the concept of discipleship using examples of holy women who were close to Jesus when he walked on earth.

Here are some comments:

"... The content was very meaningful and provided me with much for reflection... Today provided the spiritual boost I needed, with a well-balanced approach that included prayer, scripture, and testimony..."

"Beautiful morning! Loved the theme and message from our speaker. Loved the heartfelt sentiments expressed in our circle."

Father,

You are my Lord and Creator.

You entrust me with a place of stewardship in your creation.

Fill me with your Holy Spirit:

That he may teach me to pray and live in Christ and as Christ;

That he may teach me love for family, friends and all people. A love that is selfless, humble, and wise;

That he may teach me stewardship of the talents, time, money and possessions you have given me. A stewardship that serves, is generous and brings honor to your name;

That he may teach me faithfulness to your call to Christians in Commerce. A call that unites us and builds your Kingdom in the marketplace.

Through Jesus Christ who is Lord.

Amen

Vision

Expanding the Kingdom by being Christ in the workplace.

Mission

We encourage and equip Christians to live the life of Christ by releasing the power of the Holy Spirit that is in them. We challenge them to be Christ to the people and circumstances in their workplaces by bringing his truth, love, healing, justice and excellence to the marketplace.

Values

As Christians in Commerce, we are an ecumenical organization united with the body of Christ to:

- Know, love and serve God and others
- Embrace the beliefs of the Nicene Creed
- Release the power of the Holy Spirit in worship and work
- Share the time, talents and resources God has entrusted to us
- Enrich member participation in prayer, scripture, family and church life



Christ
ALIVE!

Galatians 2:20
“...I no longer live, but
Christ lives in me.”

www.christiansincommerce.org



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