Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert comic strip, annually publishes an open letter at Christmas for his fans, of which I am one. Adams is not a believer; his letters speak not to the Incarnation, but to an undefined sense of wonder at the season itself. And yet, in spite of himself, he nailed it in his 1998 letter. He explained the heart of Christmas.

Adams told the story of growing up in upstate New York, where snow and its removal is a major factor in everyone’s life. He had a job in the sixties shoveling snow for an elderly Greek widower named Mr. Panopolous. If it snowed overnight, Mr. Panopolous expected his sidewalk and patio shoveled before he went outside to fetch his newspaper. This required young Scott to rise before the sun, wrestle his body into a one-piece snowsuit and trudge through waist-high snow to shovel in the frozen dark.

Mr. Panopolous was an exacting customer. He wanted the snow shoveled three or four inches beyond the border of the concrete so that any sun-melt snow wouldn’t turn to ice on his walk. However, he paid the unheard of sum of $20 for each properly completed job – a fortune for a grade school kid in 1960 Buffalo. This generosity wore on young Scott. It was easily ten times the going rate in the neighborhood. So one day he summoned the courage to object. As Mr. Panopolous came outside with a $20 bill for his efforts, Scott said, “Mr. Panopolous, that’s too much! No one pays $20 for shoveling a walk. The job’s not worth that much.”

Mr. Panopolous stooped slowly down to Scott’s level.

‘And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.’”

Luke 2: 10 – 11

With a wisdom that can only come from over seventy years of hard living, he looked Scott in the eye and said, “You are worth it.”

That realization forever changed young Scott Adams’ life. He understood that he was valued, not for what he could do, but for who he was. From then on, he shoveled like a “fevered weasel” for Mr. Panopolous, returning the unmerited love he experienced.

And that is a great image of us all before the Father. The undeserved gift of his only son, the Incarnation, is too much – we don’t deserve it! And yet, the Father comes down to our level, looks us in the eye, and says yes, we are worth it.

How does one respond to such undeserved love? With devotion to the giver, like young Scott Adams; by doing our best every day for the God who loves us so much and is so generous to us who deserve it so little.

Jim Ganther is an attorney, entrepreneur and a member of the Tampa Men’s Chapter. He is the co-founder and president of Mosaic Compliance Services, LLC. Jim and his wife, Melissa, have seven children. His hobbies include tuition, curfews, and car insurance. Jim can be reached at jganther@mosaic-compliance.com.
PRE-CONFERENCE COACHELLA VALLEY VIP LUNCHEON

We conducted our first Pre-Conference VIP Luncheon at the 2016 Annual Conference, comprised of local Coachella Valley city officials, business and faith community leaders, and local media contacts.

The luncheon was hosted by Christians in Commerce (CIC) President Terry Cassell along with the local men’s and women’s chapter leaders. Terry spoke about the mission and purpose of CIC and how it serves the local communities where we have a presence.

Cathedral City Mayor Stanley E. Henry and Palm Springs Mayor Rob Moon were among those in attendance. We were blessed to pray with Mayor Moon for him and the local community as they mourned the recent loss of two police officers on Oct. 8, 2016. The video is on our CIC website and posted on our CIC YouTube channel at tinyurl.com/cicmoon.

WEEK 1 • LIFE PLEASING TO GOD

REFLECTIONS

On God’s Time

By Patrick Pingle

…You are no longer a slave, but God’s child… (Galatians 4:7)

For nearly twenty-five years, I have been a healthcare executive in senior living. The relentless work demands of this position have made me a highly effective protector of my time. I am also a father of five, music minister, volunteer at my church, and an occasional basketball coach when I’m not leading my organization of 190 employees and 280 plus residents. These responsibilities, coupled with a desire to do things at a high level, have made me overly wary of anything and anyone asking for my time.

I had been aware of CIC for a while and actually attended a couple events over the years, but was not open to joining for fear of the time commitment. Then a friend began to share how his life was being transformed through the work of CIC. His enthusiasm was contagious as he shared story after story of God changing lives through his emboldened willingness to share Christ in the workplace. Something stirred within my heart as he spoke. I hungered to be that kind of courageous spokesperson for my faith and knew the key was to surround myself with other people committed to the same cause. My friend invited me to attend a Challenge Weekend. I was polite but had no intention of coming because I was convinced I could not afford the time. Even so, God continued to pull at my heart to attend. As I struggled with the fear of what this might mean for me given the demands of my schedule, a thought occurred to me that I should ask for my wife’s discernment on the matter. After all, she clearly understood just how busy I was. I was certain she would confirm that I lacked the capacity to attend a Challenge Weekend.

After hearing all my thoughts and arguments, however, she stunned me by saying, “I think God is obviously stirring your heart and wants you to go.” The Holy Spirit spoke through my wife and I knew it. That night, as the clock neared midnight, I was still gripped by anxiety, but I knew this was an invitation I needed to accept. The moment I hit “send” on my confirmation email, I experienced a wave of peace that I had not known for a very long time. God began to show me just how much energy I was expending protecting my time. I had become a slave to fear of time commitments and had unwittingly made myself unavailable to God.

It was the beginning of a new freedom in my life to surrender my time and all my responsibilities to God. The Challenge Weekend was utterly transformative as others generously shared their time and lives in Christ with me!

A test of my newfound freedom came when, at the end of the weekend, someone asked for my contact information. Prior to that moment, that simple request would have evoked fear of a possible demand on my time. Now, the fear was gone and in its place only peace and joy at the thought of sharing Christ with others on God’s time. Shortly after the weekend, I knew God wanted me to start a weekly Challenge Group at work. This group has been a great source of strength and inspiration as we have shared our lives in Christ together.

Even in the face of extreme turbulence in the healthcare industry, God continues to break the chains of slavery to fear in my life. I have been more available to share Christ in my workplace as I learn to trust him more as a child of God.

REFLECTIONS

Patrick Pingel is one of the newer members of the South Bend/Elkhart Men’s Chapter. He has been married to his wife Beth for twenty-five years. They have five children, aged fifteen to twenty-two years. Patrick is CEO of Hubbard Hill Retirement Community in Elkhart, IN. He can be reached at patrickpingel@gmail.com.

On God’s Time

By Patrick Pingel

PRAY:

Lord, set us free from all fear that would stop us from giving all of our time and resources to you.

REFLECT:

What are the fears that may hinder me from living wholly for God?

DISCUSS:

When in your life have you felt the most available to God? Share about a time that you overcame fear to saying “yes” to God.

Patrick Pingel
WEEK 2 • MEN’S REFLECTIONS

Personal Sacrifice

By Joe Cramer

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus…” (Colossians 3:17)

I have been a financial advisor for five years. The first five years are the most difficult as you spend sixty to eighty hours a week building up your clientele, developing relationships with clients, and becoming established. Similar to starting any business, it is tough and focused work in those early years.

Starting this career requires a strong work ethic and a lot of focus. I often find myself focused so much on my practice, with my “nose to the grindstone,” that I push God out of my business because I am too “busy.”

But the Vision and Mission of Christians in Commerce (CIC) call me to be Christ in the workplace. I need to take a step back every day and make sure I’m allowing God into my work and business. Frequently I find myself so preoccupied with staying productive and efficient with my time that I find I haven’t spent any of that time in prayer. One of my brothers in CIC shared with me that “busy” just means “Being Under Satan’s Yoke”. Ever since I heard that, I have refocused my efforts on always including God in my business and my workday.

God wants to be in our work and our businesses. He wants to be at the center of our lives and a part of every aspect. So what does that look like? I view my financial advising practice as my ministry.

My job provides me with many opportunities to have intimate and meaningful conversations with my clients. When I start my day the right way, I pray a simple prayer in the morning: “Lord, open my eyes to how you want to use me today.” When I say that prayer, I find that I am more in tune to the opportunities the Lord provides me with throughout the workday. It is easier for me then to take a break to talk to God during the day, to be aware of opportunities to pray with clients, or to take time to listen to a coworker and be Christ to them.

PRAY:

Lord, open my eyes to how you want to use me this week. Keep me alert to those you bring to me to witness and be Christ to. Help me always be available to you and your children.

REFLECT:

Do I bring God into my workplace every single day? What keeps me from bringing Christ into my workplace?

DISCUSS:

What are some practical ways that you can bring Christ into your workplace? What can you do to make Christ more present in the work you do?

WEEK 3 • MEN’S REFLECTIONS

Making a Difference in the Workplace

By Joe Cramer

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2)

Back in June my job took me to the golf course for an outing. It’s nice when your office is a nicely manicured green lawn for the day! On one of the par 3’s an older gentleman was sitting in a lawn chair watching the golfers. We approached the green and started to chat with him. Immediately, I felt a prompting to pray with him. According to “the ten second rule”, if we are reasonably certain we hear the Lord prompting us, we have about ten seconds to act before we make an excuse not to do it. Here was my prompting from the Lord, but I was too sheepish to step out and pray with this man.

We finished the hole and drove off to the next tee box. On the drive over to the next hole, I chatted with a coworker who had had a chance to talk with this gentleman. He told me that the man had recently been diagnosed with MS. I wanted to kick myself for missing the opportunity to pray with him for healing!

A few holes later, the Lord in his divine providence gave me another opportunity. As we rounded the corner, there was this same gentleman. My coworker and I stopped our golf cart and asked if we could pray over him. He readily accepted, and we prayed for complete healing from his MS. We told him about CIC and gave him our business cards. This man called me a couple weeks later looking for some prayer warriors for his mother. He thanked us for stopping to pray with him that day, declaring, “Awesome, how God works in random ways like that!” We had clearly made a difference that day and I am glad we had enough courage in the Spirit to step out and pray with him.

PRAY:

Lord, help me to make myself available to you, and give me the courage through your Holy Spirit to act on your promptings.

REFLECT:

Have there been times where the Lord has prompted me to act on his behalf? Do I consistently follow through? What stands in the way?

DISCUSS:

Share a time where you have made a difference in your workplace by acting on a prompting from the Holy Spirit. Encourage and challenge each other to be bold in the Lord.
Holding Each Other Accountable

By Joe Cramer

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3:16)

My first Challenge Weekend was in March of 2015. After the talk about keeping your appointment (personal prayer time) with God, I shared with my group that back in high school my friends and I would all commit to having a prayer time in the morning. After we were done, we would send a one-word email to the group: “Done”.

Many of us who attended that weekend, along with some new men who have since joined our Challenge Group, have created a text chain to hold ourselves accountable for keeping our daily appointments with God. When we are done with our daily prayer, whether at 5a.m., 1p.m., or 11p.m., we send our “Done”s. It has been a great way for us to encourage each other to be consistent with our prayer times. Often, one of us will have a scripture verse or a word to share with the group, and sometimes those small words make a big impact on someone’s day.

There have been many days where I have been “too busy” to get a prayer time in, or haven’t felt like carving out twenty minutes to pray. As soon as I see those texts from the group, I am immediately lifted up, encouraged, and convicted to have my prayer time.

What a wonderful thing it is that we can hold each other accountable as brothers in Christ!

PRAY:

Lord, thank you for our brothers and sisters in CIC that keep us accountable and push us to continue to build your Kingdom. Bless the work of all the CIC chapters and members. May we always grow closer to you through deep and meaningful prayer.

REFLECT:

In which areas of my life could I use more accountability? How has my prayer time been going?

DISCUSS:

What are some ways that you can hold each other accountable as brothers in CIC to keeping your appointments with God? What has worked well for you in the past? What has not worked well?

GIVE CHRISTIANS IN COMMERCE APPAREL AS CHRISTMAS GIFTS!

In order to increase our ministry’s visibility and affect a larger surface area, we are providing you with the opportunity to purchase items of clothing that display our CIC logo. The items you can select from include shirts, jackets and hats, and are provided by a CIC vendor. The prices they are offering are at a discounted rate. Please click the pictures on this page to view a larger image, and our CIC logo.

To view these products, and for additional details, please visit: www.cicintl.org/cicwearables.
WEEK 2 • WOMEN’S REFLECTIONS

Personal Sacrifice
By Patrice Buffkin

The blameless spend their days under the Lord's care, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty. (Psalm 37: 18-19)

The past eighteen months have brought many changes to my life, but the Lord has taken care of me through it all. Within days of getting engaged in February of 2015, Jayson and I decided he would accept a job in Austin, Texas and a month later he began his new role. As anyone who knows us can attest, it was very difficult spending our engagement apart, but we knew it would be worth it.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2: 46-47)

I grew up with prayer being a part of every family tradition. Any time we started a road trip, each night as we went to bed, and every meal we had together, we always shared moments of prayer. My parents raised us to know a prayer life is not only something to have privately but is also something to share.

Our family tradition of prayer taught me that one of the simplest times to share with others in prayer is when sharing a meal. We all have to eat; why not also feed our souls by praising God with glad and sincere hearts while we’re at it?

Jayson and I have committed to saying grace together before every meal, regardless of where we are or who we’re with, in a simple act of strengthening our individual faith walks, our marriage and our fellowship with others. Whether it’s breakfast on our patio, lunch at Whataburger or dinner at a steakhouse, we aim to always thank God both for the meal we’re about to share and for other blessings in our life. If we are in a restaurant, a waitress may come to the table to refill our glasses, see we are praying, and wait nearby until we’ve said “Amen” before continuing with her duties. If we’re with friends and they haven’t had a meal with us before, they’ll know we are faith-filled and may be more likely to open up to us about their own walks with God.

Sometimes it’s at our workplaces when we witness with our public thanks, but it’s always within God’s marketplace. We never know who may be affected by our tradition, but we know we want to be a part of building God’s kingdom, one mealtime prayer at a time.

PRAY:

Lord, thank you for the times of famine you have brought me through in life and for the blessings you’ve revealed to me in these hard times.

REFLECT:

When in my life did I experience hardship that felt like disaster in the moment but was actually a period of faith building?

DISCUSS:

Share a habit or technique you use to stay focused on God’s blessings when experiencing challenging times in life.

WEEK 3 • WOMEN’S REFLECTIONS

Redeeming Our Father’s Creation
By Patrice Buffkin

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Sometimes it’s at our workplaces when we witness with our public thanks, but it’s always within God’s marketplace. We never know who may be affected by our tradition, but we know we want to be a part of building God’s kingdom, one mealtime prayer at a time.

PRAY:

Thank you, God, for allowing us to share your love with those around us. Use us to build your kingdom and to be stewards of your creation throughout our daily lives.

REFLECT:

What parts of my daily life can I commit to God to be used in redeeming his creation?

DISCUSS:

What do you already do that reflects God’s love, truth, and goodness in your environment to those you encounter?
The Fruits of Our Relationships as Sisters

By Patrice Buffkin

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)

Ashleigh was one of the team members who interviewed me for my current role. We quickly became friends after I started on the team this past spring. I knew she was a woman of faith but I didn’t understand how the Lord would use us to strengthen each other’s trust in God and our comfort to share him with others.

Recently, she called me to discuss jobs she had applied for, trying to decide whether any of the options were worth leaving our team. She began to share how one of the jobs would make her successful in society’s eyes and how well-suited for the role she would be professionally, yet something in her core simply didn’t feel right about the position. She quickly added without hesitation, “I know the feeling is the Holy Spirit!” She could have called any number of people to decipher why this role wasn’t right, yet she was led to call me. After this moment of clarity she sounded lighter and more confident in her choice to not accept a position with that company.

We have shared our faiths with one another before, but this moment in particular makes me even more blessed for her friendship and sisterhood in Christ. I may have been helping her out with a decision, but she helped me realize just how much I’ve grown in my faith and in my sisterly relationships over the years.

Patrice Buffkin was an active member of the Campus Club @ ASU up until her wedding in January 2016 and subsequent move to Texas. For five years Patrice has planned events professionally, including for MBA Admissions at the University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business. Patrice and her husband Jayson have recently moved to Dallas-Fort Worth and look forward to what adventures await them! She can be reached at Patrice.Buffkin@gmail.com.

Fruits of Our Relationships as Sisters

Father, we pray that you will provide opportunities for us to meet “outsiders,” so they may know of your incomparable love for them.

Have I made the most of the opportunities the Lord has given me to share his good news and the vision of CIC? To whom can I reach out with love and compassion?

When has the Lord placed someone the world would consider an “outsider” in your path? How did you engage with this person, and how did he or she respond?

HOPE FOR THE WORKPLACE – CHRIST IN YOU AT SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PRICING!

A standout gift for friends, colleagues or family members, Hope for the Workplace – Christ in You, by Bill Dalgetty is an inspiring book featuring fifty real-life stories about being Christ in the workplace.

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

Our special Christmas price of $12.95 ($2.00 off the regular price) is in effect now through December 25, 2016. Order today at www.cicintl.org/book16

All income is donated to Christians in Commerce.
The CIC Annual Conference, held on October 14-15, 2016 in the Palm Springs, CA area, was attended by 180 people. It was the first year for us at this location, and it was heavily supported by the local chapters, who offered hospitality to those who couldn’t secure hotel rooms and provided transportation and meals for many members not from the area. Here are some quotes from a few of those who attended, as well as photos from this successful event. For those of you who were not able to be with us this year, we hope to see you in 2017!

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Mission Viejo  
January 13-15, 2017

Orange County  
January 13-15, 2017

Greater Phoenix Area  
March 17-19, 2017

WOMEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Fresno  
April 28-30, 2017

Gilroy-Morgan Hill  
May 5-7, 2017

Please send your events and stories to:
Terry Cassell  
Fax: 703 205-0485  
cassell@cicintl.org

7515 Lee Highway,  
Falls Church, VA 22042

“The most important take away for me was the message that we all need to step up to the plate more with the younger people, as well as those who are drifting in the wind. We have a mission of bringing Christ to wherever we are, and we need to take it more seriously. There was a strong message of more prayer time and meditation to absorb the gifts of the Holy Spirit and spread the Gospel.”

“I feel there is a resurgence brewing in the growth and enthusiasm within our membership. The new video presentation (Working for Our Father) was extremely moving and well thought out.”

“Incredible speakers, stories, content and Emmaus Walk. Working for Our Father is a game changer. My passion and commitment to CIC is renewed.”

“The spiritual community of this conference brought a true feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood and created a unity I did not feel in previous conferences.”
CHRISTIANS IN COMMERCE PRAYER

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: Being Christ in the workplace
MISSION: To encourage and equip Christians to be God’s presence in the workplace by the power of the Holy Spirit, exercising faith, integrity, and excellence
VALUES: Christians in Commerce is an ecumenical organization committed to:
• Growing and being transformed in Jesus Christ
• Manifesting the gifts of the Holy Spirit
• Building strong brotherhood and sisterhood
• Serving God and expanding his Kingdom in all aspects of our lives

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”
Galatians 2:20