Change is Constant

Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, once said, “Change is the one constant in life.” It can be difficult to imagine any constant in our lives other than change. Despite this, many of us fear change. As David F.K. Mpanga states in Embrace Change, It Is the Only Constant:

“Some people fear change because it may mean that they lose their livelihood. Some people fear change because they believe that it may come with a loss of status or face. Other people fear change because they think that it will come with disruption, violence and instability. Some people fear change because they worry about facing the consequences of things that they have said or done. Some fear change just because they fear the unknown. …”

How, as Christians, should we deal with change in our lives and in the workplace? Should we look at it with fear, worry, anxiety, and negativity or instead should we take a step back and embrace it as believers knowing of our future with Christ? Change gives us an opportunity to bring the one and only true constant—our Heavenly Father—even more front and center in our lives and in the lives of those around us both at home and in the marketplace.

I was once asked to assist a company that within months of my arrival lost 60% of its market share when overnight its two primary customers changed direction due to new leadership. The loss caused the company’s revenue to plummet and wreaked havoc with its service model, profitability, and community reputation. The most immediate and sensible solution was to cut staff, refocus the sales team on potential new customer relationships, and streamline service delivery to create greater efficiencies.

Knowing that it would take time and create uncertainty amongst the staff, we brought everyone in the organization together, clearly outlined the issues and our plan, and asked the staff to help us revise and strengthen the company’s Christian based mission, vision and values. By including them in the beginning, being transparent about what had happened and the changes to come, we enlisted their help in creating a positive future direction for the company.

In Rethink Life by Rodney and Michelle Gage, they said, “From the very moment we wake up thoughts begin to fill our mind and they form the attitude and altitude of our day. We have the opportunity and responsibility to choose the direction of our thoughts. Today choose to replace those thoughts of worry, anxiety and negativity with the truth of God’s word.”

All of us know that we live in an ever changing and fallen world. A world where change is inevitable and is often difficult. Yet, as Christians, we know that change is one of God’s many gifts. As Paul promised in Roman 8:12 “… all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.” We have the ability to accept and embrace this gift with an attitude of forgiveness, for it is in that acceptance that we can reach an altitude that will bring us ever closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ—the original true constant.

Rick Slager is the founder and CEO of Acacia Living, Inc., an organization that provides healthcare options for seniors. He is also a founder and former leader of two national healthcare trade associations, and is a former board member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). He earned his undergraduate degree and law degree from the University of Notre Dame. Rick can be reached at rick.slager@me.com

C. S. Lewis once said, “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”

On December 1, 1997, 12 students were gathered for their daily prayer meeting at Heath High School in Paducah, KY. As they said their final “Amen,” a 14-year-old boy suddenly walked up and opened fire. Three of the students died, and five others were seriously wounded.

From this tragedy, an amazing story of forgiveness emerged. Melissa Jenkins, one of the injured 15-year-olds, learned that she would most likely be a paraplegic for the rest of her life. Melissa wanted to convey a message to the shooter.

Did she say she hated him or that she hoped he would get his due in the end? No. This Christian teen said she forgave him.

As stated in Ephesians 4:31-32, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

As followers of Jesus, we’ve been given the gift to both forgive and be forgiven. Amen.

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REFLECTIONS: WEEK 1

Righting a Wrong
By Kelli Fitzgerald

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. (Ephesians 3:20)

As a manager of a busy and often chaotic fast-food restaurant, I oversee employees whose wages come mostly from tips. If we are short staffed or fall behind, customers tend to tip less and the employees become frustrated. They complain to me in a less than Christian manner that is often critical, filled with gossip, and weighs heavily on my spirit. I try to listen, knowing they have bills to pay, and I recognize their disgruntlement. But it’s a real cross for me to bear and rarely do I hear a “thank you.”

I prayed about this situation and asked the Lord to show me what to do. One day a worker became extremely upset and wrongfully accused me of things that I had not done. Others coworkers asked, “Do you know what he’s saying about you?” They seemed to have no problem repeating these false allegations.

I told them that it hurt me to hear the comments repeated. Whenever I tried to defend myself, it led to a conversation that included gossip about this person. I knew the Lord didn’t want that either, so I asked him to help me keep my heart pure and to show me how to defend myself without gossiping.

I thought of the scripture from Genesis 50:20-21, “… You intended to harm me; but God intended it for good…” I felt it was from the Holy Spirit. I needed to release this man to the Lord from my heart and forgive him and the others. Then the Lord would show me the good that he was going to allow to come from my painful situation.

After I prayed for this young man, the other employees stopped talking about him almost immediately. Three days later, our regional manager visited. Completely out of the blue, he offered me a raise. I smiled because I knew it was from God.

Ephesians 3:20 states, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” This scripture really resonates with me now. All I had asked the Lord for was to stop the gossip and to receive a simple “thank you.” Although God answered my prayer, he had something even better in mind.

Thank you Lord for forgiving my sins and showing me how to forgive others. Thank you for allowing good to come from all situations.

REFLECT:
Think about your relationships with coworkers and employees. Do you need to forgive anyone?

DISCUSS:
Why does it seem so easy to engage in gossip about others when they hurt us instead of focusing on forgiveness?

START A CHALLENGE GROUP

Bring Christian coworkers together. Start a small group. Our Challenge Newsletter and workday emails help you support and encourage one another.

To learn more go to cicintl.org/cgroup
Exiting with Forgiveness
By Ed Karbowski

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:37)

Many years ago, I had a manager who was fairly inexperienced. Many of my coworkers wrongly claimed that he had gotten his job because he was not capable in his previous position. They were put off by his communication style and his tendency to micromanage.

The following year, I was discerning whether to leave for another job. There were many reasons for my departure, but my manager was not among them. As I prepared for my exit interview, some of my coworkers asked me to complain about our manager, hoping that one final complaint might force a change in the organization.

As I ended the exit process, the HR manager asked me about my manager. In that moment the face of Jesus gazed on me and convicted me with the right answer. Although I had had some irritations and misunderstandings with my manager, they were not unreasonable, and they did not prevent him from doing a good job. I said that my experience had been positive. I defended his effectiveness, work ethic, integrity, and a genuine care for his direct reports.

I conceded that he could improve his communication skills and connect better with his staff. I told her that the poor reputation he had acquired years ago had followed him unfairly. She thanked me for my time and my honesty.

Years later, I ran into my former manager. Still with the same company, he had been promoted and continues to grow. Sometimes all we need is the goodwill of others to forgive our mistakes along the way.

Sorry for Snapping
By Kelli Fitzgerald

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” (Matthew 6:14)

As I arrived at work one day, a coworker began yelling and complaining about anything and everything. After working with this woman for several months, I found it difficult to deal with her anger issues. Once she was so upset with a customer that she said, “You better make sure you have some place safe to hide when I get off work tonight.” I explained that she couldn’t talk to the customers like that and she began to direct her anger toward me. Frustrated and feeling like I couldn’t deal with it any more, I began yelling back at her. She started yelling over me and stormed off.

I said to the Lord, “This is so unfair.” I was mentally drained from dealing with her anger daily and I didn’t know what to do anymore. I asked the Lord, “Show me how to forgive her and how to deal with these situations.” After my prayer, all I could think about was how I had snapped at her. I felt like the Lord was putting it on my heart to apologize to her. “Seriously Lord? After everything she has done you want me to apologize?”

As I approached her she began shouting again. When she stopped, I tried to apologize but she started talking over me. I said, “I want to apologize for snapping at you. I didn’t mean to do that.” I had to say it three times before she stopped yelling and realized that I was apologizing. She seemed taken aback, yet appreciative.

She asked me if I was okay and if anything was bothering me. After that, we were able to have a pleasant conversation and work well together. My apology has had a positive and lasting effect on our relationship ever since.
Coffee Confessions  
By Ed Karbowski

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

I’m one of the millions of teleworkers who regularly conducts business at local coffee shops. Years ago, I was having coffee with some friends and the conversation turned ideological. I argued with another man at our table over issues we were both passionate about. Being young, immature, and sinfully arrogant, I said whatever it took to win the debate. There was an emotional outburst followed by this man leaving our coffee group permanently. Just like that, my lack of humility and control had ruined something good. Over time I grew consumed with regret over my actions. I prayed often for the offended friend, and I wished I could ask for forgiveness. A few years later, I was working from the same coffee shop. In God’s providence, my friend also came in to telework. We flagged each other down and decided to share a table, even using the same chairs as the day of our argument. I asked for his forgiveness and tried to explain the depth of my remorse. He waved it off as if it never happened and offered a counter apology. We ended up talking for several hours before returning to our actual work.

There was a great healing from God that day. Sometimes humility can only be learned through humiliation. I’m grateful for the opportunity to have experienced the tremendous gift of forgiveness.

PRAY:
Lord, teach me to listen more and speak less. If I sin against another, remind me to run to them for forgiveness and to make things right.

REFLECT:
Have there been times in my life when I was too proud to admit my mistake and ask for someone’s forgiveness?

DISCUSS:
Do you find yourself arguing more in today’s polarized culture? Are there people who disagree with your ideas that you may need to treat more like a child of God and ask for their forgiveness?

SNAPSHOT PODCASTS
These brief podcasts bring to life experiences of coworkers and offer helpful insights.

Brighten your commute or workout.

To learn more go to bit.ly/w4rfsnapshot
I press on toward the goal for the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

Challenge Groups have been a foundational element from the beginning of Christians in Commerce (CIC). These small group gatherings are key to encouraging and supporting each other in living out our surrender to Jesus Christ in all areas, especially the workplace.

We named them Challenge Groups, because like Paul, we wanted to be stretched in our abilities to grow in his grace and our faithfulness.

Effective Challenge Groups don’t just happen. All members should embrace three key aspects that can transform their lives. They will be critical to enabling them to steward their responsibilities and impact their work environments.

**All Three Are Needed**

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity. (Hebrews 6:1)

CIC’s mission is to encourage and equip Christians to be God’s presence in the workplace through the power of the Holy Spirit, exercising faith, integrity, and excellence.

To stay on task, Challenge Groups work together to be missional, formational, and relational. All three elements are needed. When a group begins to fall apart, lose its effectiveness, or become less important to its members, it’s usually because one of these aspects is being overlooked.

**Missional, Formational, Relational**

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

Christianity is missional. It is the personal application of God’s call brought to life in each individual’s particular situations and circumstances. As coworkers in Christ, together we bring the Gospel into a culture that is increasingly individualistic and self-centered—even hostile to Christianity.

How can we radiate Christ in a way that does not compromise but is still visible, attractive, and admirable? We want to be used by God as positive and effective influences on our coworkers and in our workplaces.

Christianity is formational. We want to grow our ability to fully participate in the life of the Spirit; to experience freedom from sin and the victory that Christ has gained for us. We recognize that we are vulnerable to our fallen nature. We support, encourage, and strengthen one another. That is where God is at work and where we learn what is “his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2)

Christianity is relational. We become friends. We build brotherhood and sisterhood. We may sometimes be an odd mix of people and often can be people we wouldn’t normally choose. In Christ, we learn how to embrace the other, letting go of preconceived judgments and stereotypes. We learn to seek the good of others. We learn to love.

The purposeful friendships that are possible in CIC Challenge Groups help sustain our ability to be coworkers in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and always working for our Father. Join or start one today!

**Best Practices For Challenge Groups**

Let’s be clear. Challenge Groups are a particular type of group. Each group works together to be missional, formational, and relational.

Challenge Groups are ideally meant to support and accompany each member in the long-term, deep and personal application of and growth in our Christian commitment. We’ve called them “Challenge Groups” because we want to challenge ourselves in living out our faith 24/7, especially in our workplaces.

Our experience tells us that Challenge Groups work best when they cross traditions, occupations, ages, and positions. The best groups are designed for deeper personal support in our walk with Christ. They should foster openness, transparency and intimacy and therefore are encouraged to be gender specific.

In our culture, the gender specific suggestions can be sensitive. However, by organizing Challenge Groups by gender we provide for one another, good and safe soil for trust, accountability, honesty, and openness to flourish. This is what will help us grow as coworkers in Christ.

Much of what impacts our lives has to do with being in a world that is busy resisting God. We want to be different. We want to be fully surrendered to him. We need his grace; we need each other; so, we join together. We know from experience, growth in holiness is less painful when we are not alone.

In Challenge Groups, we talk about our mission to be Christ in the workplace; we share accounts about where it’s going well and where it could be better.

We solve problems, share friendship, tell and hear each other’s stories, learn from one another’s experiences, gain new perspectives and confidence; walking together through the storms and victories. We talk about what really matters, what we love, our accomplishments and struggles, and especially what God is doing in our lives.

We grow in our ability to be transparent because we’ve found a safe and secure place. We’re not trying to impress anyone, and no one’s trying to impress us. We are here because of God’s love and grace.

Learn more about our challenge groups: [BIT.LY/W4RFGROUP](https://bit.ly/w4rfgroup)
“Wherever two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”
(Matthew 18:20)

Challenge Groups are not the only reason Christians come together. This is especially true if we’re going to promote the Gospel, influence our coworkers, and impact our culture.

There are many good reasons to form groups including accomplishing specific tasks and projects, growing in experiences, expertise with skills, socializing together around shared interests or occupations, and networking and addressing challenges and problems in the workplace.

Unity in the Body of Christ

“As Christians it’s especially important to come together as the body of Christ across traditions, occupations, backgrounds, age and gender especially when there’s need to address real challenges and problems at work.

We need his direction, grace, and strength. And, we need the gifts, talents, experiences, perspectives, and diversity that the Spirit draws together in the body of Christ.

In voluntary groups, participants are free to choose what their purpose, duration, and configuration will be. In the end, it’s up to them.

We have created a wide variety of materials, including video series, workday reflections, blogs, and podcasts. All can be used in a variety of ways and with different groupings of people.

Our hope is these materials will unite Christians for the building of the kingdom of God in their workplace. This means proclaiming the call to align our occupations with God’s mission and help right what is wrong with the world he has made.

It takes a shared effort, our cooperation with God’s grace and wisdom to set things right and our action.

Restoring All Things

God calls us to restore all things. What needs to be restored in our industry or where we work?

• What is good that we can encourage and build on?
• What is evil that we can eliminate?
• What is not working that we can fix?
• What is missing that we can help bring about?

The work begun by the disciples continues in our day. Over the centuries it has been done well; it has been done poorly. Doing what is right is a long and unfinished process.

What if we joined together with the Christians we work with to support each other in working for our Father and living a life of faith, integrity, and excellence? We would take a constructive, serving, humble, and shared approach—one that emphasizes the dignity of work and the dignity of the worker.

Would we not hear our Lord say, “Well done good and faithful servant… Come and share your master’s happiness!”? (Matthew 25:23)
Taking Advantage of Experience in Challenge Groups

Joe Cramer
I think the mix of ages that we have is incredible. We had talked before about splitting off and having all the younger guys form a millennial challenge group.

I remember Peter and I were considering that we didn’t know if we wanted that. We can rub shoulders with each other, but how much wisdom are we really going to gain? We only have a small amount of work and life experience and the older guys we are currently grouped with have significantly more.

So, it’s been great because every single week I walk away with some nugget of wisdom, guidance, or different perspective about how to think about a certain issue or challenge that I am currently dealing with today. These experiences show me that I don’t have to do this alone. I don’t have to do life, my faith walk, or my business walk alone because I have all of these awesome, more seasoned guys that have years of wisdom and experience to glean from.

Peter Staffelbach
I wouldn’t be part of a challenge group if it was all millennials. As Joe said, I don’t think there is much to gain from that in terms of growing as an individual. Seeing all the men around me and being able to ask real questions is helpful. But also, their conversations are ones that I would have never thought about.

They talk about parts of their lives that they are going through and I have the ability to think about my own future and say that’s a real concern and I can start thinking about it now while I’m young and still growing in life and experience. If this group was just made up of young people we would all say a lot, but in the back of our minds we would all be thinking, “but they don’t really know what they’re talking about, cause I don’t either.” So I’m glad that it’s diverse in age, because every meeting is meaningful.

In terms of my own business, in my first leadership meeting with Christians in Commerce, one of the other members, Joe Grabil and I were walking out the door together and talking about my tutoring business and my next steps. I had told him that we were looking for office space and hopefully that would be the next move in growing the business. He told me that he happened to have some office space available and at a really great deal. He gave me his phone number, I called a little later, and within a week, we had office space that we could afford. That was huge for me. Prior to that discussion, the idea of my own office space was more of a future goal, if it managed to fit in the budget. That was significant in helping me develop my business and that came from a simple conversation with a man who had the experience and resources to help a younger individual like me.

An excerpt from our Nine to Five Podcast episode, “Millennials and Challenge Groups”
My wife Jeanne and I, together with four of our children, lived in Switzerland from 1965-66. Seeing the ancient cities, experiencing older cultures, and learning new languages were a few of the benefits. I even managed to overcome my fear of heights enough to climb to the tops of magnificent cathedrals—if my children were dragging me!

There is a great cathedral in every great town in Europe. In fact, there is a great cathedral in nearly every town in Europe, great or small.

Near the end of one exhausting trek to the top of a cathedral spire, I paused to catch my breath while the children ran ahead. A small ray of light caused the dust we raised to dance above my head. I stretched far from the narrow staircase, craned my neck around and looked through a slender opening to the outside. The cars below seemed smaller than ladybugs. I realized that no one on the street could see me at so great a height.

Then, looking out and up, I saw a magnificent statue tucked into a niche in a small turret to my left. It could only have been seen from the precarious spot where I was standing. I suspect I am the only person who has seen it in hundreds of years.

Why put a beautiful statue where no one can see it? Because the only one who was meant to see these things was the Lord of all creation. The builders, the townspeople, the sculptors, the artists all did the work for God, for his pleasure. The whole building, and thereby in fact most of the town, was built for God.

What is the motivation in our lives? Why do we accumulate the things we do? Why do we spend our energies on the projects we do? Our lives may very well contain things, done for God, which no one else ever sees or admires. These especially should give us delight, for we know they are exceedingly pleasing to our Lord who sees all things.

I suspect I am the only person who has seen it in hundreds of years.

I am not advocating building more churches of stone and mortar. I am suggesting that Christians see the Lord, the master architect, for a plan for the cities we live in. We should be building a Christianity within our cities that will someday tower above and give meaning to everything else our hands have made. It would be a Christianity that strangers couldn’t help but notice as they enter our cities, one which would move them to look heavenward for inspiration of our labors.

In order to make that kind of difference, we Christians have to put our talents in common. We have to work according to the plan the Lord gives us.

Even When No One Will See
By Paul DeCelles

My wife Jeanne and I, together with four of our children, lived in Switzerland from 1965-66. Seeing the ancient cities, experiencing older cultures, and learning new languages were a few of the benefits. I even managed to overcome my fear of heights enough to climb to the tops of magnificent cathedrals—if my children were dragging me!

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2019 PLANS FOR CIC IN UGANDA
By Aloysius Mugisa

Praise be to God for the introduction of CIC in Uganda. This year we are planning 74 evangelical radio talk shows on two FM radio stations. We will also conduct 12 Challenge Weekends, three sessions of week-long Marriage and Family Renewal Conferences, and 12 Couples’ Renewal Weekends. We will continue giving food aid to 45 families as in 2018. We also intend to hold Bible rallies and purchase 1,000 Bibles to give to those in need.

This year Uganda CIC is planning to hold two Youth Gospel Conferences, which have been very effective. Also in 2019, we will visit the homes of the very needy and hold five Leadership Training Workshops for CIC challenge groups. If resources allow, we will also conduct three Hope for the Workplace Seminars.

Through CIC Ministry, the Lord has touched many souls in Uganda. Marital and family stability is one evident fruit. Many couples are now living together in peace. Children are respected and loved. There are improved livelihoods in CIC families. Hundreds of couples have solemnized their marriages in church.

Our Challenge Weekends have changed many lives. Many people are baptized in the Holy Spirit and accept salvation. They have a new outlook on life. Hundreds have returned to church and personal prayer. The general Gospel Conferences we do have refilled churches. Many pastors have testified to this, including Raphael Murungi who said, “With the introduction of Christians in Commerce in this church, the church hall fills up with entire families, husband, wife and children. So many men come to church with their wives. This is phenomenal.”

The CIC Bible Ministry in Uganda has turned many—especially Catholics—to the word of God. It is now common to see people carrying their Bibles to church and they read the word of God.

Our radio evangelization reaches about 70,000 listeners. We have several testimonies of people whose lives have been changed by our radio preaching. And hundreds of people come to our programs when invited over the radio.

There is much to be thankful for!

MEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS
Palm Desert/Palm Springs
March 8-9, 2019
Orange County/Mission Viejo
March 29-31, 2019
Fresno
April 5-7, 2019
Minneapolis South
April 5-6, 2019
Salinas Valley/Santa Cruz
April 26-28, 2019
Salinas Valley
November 15-17, 2019

WOMEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS
Monterey/Santa Cruz
March 30-31, 2019

WORKING FOR OUR FATHER SERIES
Salinas Valley Men’s Chapter
March 2, 2019

“ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER DAILY.” HEBREWS 3:13

WORKDAY REFLECTIONS

Work life can be demanding and stressful. We support and encourage each other with our own experiences. Sign up today for our workday emails.

Sign up at CICINTL.ORG/WDR
"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

Galatians 2:20

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