Building God’s Kingdom  
By Julie Bruber

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

If you had said to me five years ago that I was going to leave the company I owned to raise money for a small school in one of the poorest zip codes in the U.S. with the highest incarceration rate, make a meager living and live much less comfortably, I would have told you that you were out of your mind. But that’s exactly what happened.

I started a company over 25 years ago and it was thriving and growing. But that all changed when I started hearing the Lord whispering softly in my heart that he had something else for me to do. This lasted a long time.

I wasn’t sure what it was, and I was terrified by the thought of leaving what I knew, but I had become restless. I spent over a year in prayer and discernment.

I would pray, “Lord, I want to be used by you, for you. Make it clear to me what you have for me.” And I would ask him, “What’s on your mind, Lord? Speak plainly to me.” After a year of prayer and speaking to my spiritual director, I was sure that God had other work for me. I left my company and waited for the Lord. Within a year I received a call from the founders of Praise Academy, a small school in Louisiana.

I knew immediately that it was from the Lord. They needed someone to handle their marketing and fundraising. After praying for confirmation that this was what God intended, I took the job. I wish I could say it’s been a smooth and effortless transition. In fact, it’s been the opposite—raising money is the most difficult thing I have ever done.

I’ve had to combat doubts such as, “What have I done? What was I thinking?” Or, “I just made the biggest mistake of my life.” I often review my discernment process to regain confidence. I did discern well and I did hear the Lord, but God never told me that it would be easy or that I would have immediate success.

I have found myself on my knees more than I ever have before. A wise person once said to me that being at the end of your rope is the best place for you to be with the Lord. I never understood that until now.

I’m more at the end of that rope than I’ve ever been. I’m completely dependent on God—every day, every hour, and almost every minute. I have to rely on the Lord for everything and that’s a great place to be. I’m grateful that he has invited me to be involved in the work of caring for his children. It is pure joy!

Julie Bruber lives in Minnesota and is the development and marketing director for Praise Academy. She can be reached at julie.bruber@praiselakeside.org.

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Stewardship is taking care of something like a large household, the arrangements for a group, or the resources of a community. One example of stewardship is the responsibility of managing workers and maintaining crops throughout the agriculture industry. Another example of stewardship is the act of making wise use of the natural resources provided by God on earth.

Being a good and faithful steward comes in many varieties. The concepts of stewardship can be applied to the environment and nature, economics, health, property, information, and theology.

Here at CIC we are called to be good and faithful stewards of our resources, expenditures, talents, time, and money that serves and brings honor to God. Let’s all be good and faithful stewards at Christians in Commerce so we may enter into the joy of our Lord.

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Supportive Coworkers

By Jim Mysliwiec

“He said: ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.[a]’” (Luke 19:12-13)

In the above passage, a nobleman travels abroad and leaves his kingdom in the hands of 10 of his workers. What do people, small teams, or large organizations need in a leader? As business leaders, we understand the importance of meeting business objectives and leading the growth of our team members. As Christians, we are charged with using our time and talent for the sake of our sisters and brothers, and for building the kingdom of God.

One aspect of leadership in taking responsibility for a task, a small team, or a large organization includes “thinking for the team.” As a young manager at IBM, I learned this principle after I criticized a site executive for misstating a response during a town hall. A senior manager corrected me and told me that as a future leader, I could have cleared up the misstatement in a way that preserved his reputation and conveyed the correct answer. She said, “Think outside yourself, think and act as a leader for the team.”

Recently, I was asked to take training on a client’s business practices for a consulting engagement. I took the training and captured many notes. I realized that many others in our organization could benefit from the same training. I worked with a colleague to make the training more accessible and offered to help others get started.

Last month I was asked to take minutes for a client meeting on a subject that I was not familiar with. A coworker helped me to prepare and she explained how past meetings had transpired. She helped me get the minutes and actions properly documented. The client was happy, and I was able to produce the document and send it to her before leaving the room.

What opportunities do I have to support my team members and also propel our business forward in achieving its goals?

Lord, help me grow in awareness of how I can better think for my team at work.

My coworker then took some time off to care for her dying mother. I knew from experience that it was difficult to support a parent, especially a mother, toward the end of life. I encouraged my coworker to cherish each moment and conversation, and to consider any questions she might want to cover with her mother. I offered to pray and to listen to her story.

A few days later, I learned that her mom had died. My coworker appreciated the advice and support I had given her. We continue to support each other on difficult work tasks, going the extra step because of our personal connection in the workplace.

Jim Mysliwiec is an IT Consultant for Accenture Federal Services and has supported CIC since 1983. He and his wife, Margherite, live in Falls Church, VA. He can be reached at jbmysli@gmail.com.
The Power of Speech

**By**

**Gail Gaffney-Smith**

For it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (Matthew 10:20)

Working in the psychiatric field has many blessings and challenges. I have the honor of being the intake coordinator for our practice. Many people are uncomfortable when exposing psychiatric needs, so I often ask, “Hey, why’s a nice person like you calling our office?” The humor helps to abate their initial fear.

**PRAY:**

Thank you Lord that no matter our situation you are there to always bring hope and encouragement.

**REFLECT:**

Think about the times God brought you out of shame or isolation and put you into the lives of people who brought you encouragement and hope.

**DISCUSS:**

What are some ways to bring encouragement or hope to others?

Helped by the Holy Spirit

**By**

**Jim Mysliwiec**

Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household…? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. (Matthew 24: 45-46)

Recently I asked for more responsibility at work as the project I was assigned was winding down. I was asked to prepare for a client engagement on a topic of which I was not familiar.

**PRAY:**

Father, help me to call on your Holy Spirit when I am feeling insufficiently equipped for the tasks at hand.

**REFLECT:**

How have you responded when more has been required of you than you feel you have to offer?

**DISCUSS:**

Where have you seen the Holy Spirit move in power when you weren’t capable of doing the job by yourself?
Beyond the Comfort Zone

By Gail Gaffney-Smith

Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble, with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:4)

When I first became a nurse, I was shy and wondered how I could be an effective Christian in my new role. I prayed at the beginning of my shifts to be open to sharing God’s love. One day I had that opportunity and it changed my life.

A female patient was yelling at surgical residents to leave her room. As the team passed me, they were talking about the young woman’s outburst. I felt an inner urge to go see what happened. I argued with the urge but it persisted and the message, “I will give you the words,” passed through my thoughts.

I made my way to the young woman’s room and found her quietly crying. She said the doctors didn’t understand. They wanted to see how far the cancer had spread. She felt that God was healing her and that she would stand on her faith.

Fighting back tears, I told her that God does heal and I asked her to consider going for x-rays and asking God for proof that he was healing her. I also told her that maybe God was calling her home. The young woman started crying in earnest. “My baby! I just had a baby!”

My conviction continued, and I told her, maybe, just maybe, all God wanted her to do was bring this baby into the world and now he was calling her home. We don’t know his plans. But if he was calling her home, she should take this time to prepare. We prayed, and I left her room. A short time later she went for x-rays and was discharged later that day.

A few days later I overheard the surgical residents talking about her. She had been admitted on another unit the night before and died that morning. The conversation centered around the peace she displayed on the admitting unit. This mom was healed into God’s arms. I was healed too. No longer do I argue with an urge to share outside my comfort zone.

PRAY:

Lord, give me the courage to respond to the Spirit’s promptings.

REFLECT:

Have I felt an urge to encourage but not had the words first?

DISCUSS:

What happened when I entered a situation without the comfort of knowing what to say ahead of time?

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I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil 4:12-13)

Life's challenges can provide unique opportunities to grow in contentment. Given that a person spends 60 percent of life at work, aging and physical impairment can appear counterproductive and lead to discouragement. At 70, I am now almost completely blind, and I rejoice in working for our Father in ways I never dreamed.

I took early retirement from my profession as a teacher and rental property manager. In both professions, I was often able to extend mercy and generosity, even when it wasn't the most prudent business decision. Now, I am the humble recipient of mercy and generosity.

I was unhappy when I had to give up driving 11 years ago. However, I have not missed a CIC meeting, a social event, a bridge game, or other activities for lack of a ride. Family, friends, and many brothers and sisters in the Lord are constantly offering rides. Moreover, I've met many delightful Uber drivers. I rarely travel alone and enjoy great fellowship with many good Samaritans on the road.

When I started using the white cane, I felt like a fraud. With the prompting of the Lord and encouragement from my family and friends, I accepted my situation and tried to stay positive. I was lovingly reminded that without the cane I would likely hurt someone or myself. I tripped and fell many times. Without the cane I was often perceived as rude because I bumped into or cut in front of others.

After struggling with my pride the Lord helped me realize that I had received a gift in the form of my cane. I noticed that my need brought out Christ in others. People go out of their way to kindly assist me. Store clerks and strangers check to see how they might help. They open doors or touch my arm to let me know it's safe to cross the street. Even when I am confident of what I am doing or where I am going, I experience God's grace and love in accepting help. Through prayer, reflection, and Scripture I have learned that our need for help has always been part of God's design and that both the helpers and I are blessed in the exchange.

Accepting the Lord's plan has opened new opportunities in my life. Rather than dwelling on what I can't do, I have been able to focus creatively on new goals. Vision loss has placed new restrictions on life that highlighted all people's need for independence, mobility, and self-actualization. In the past I had, no doubt, taken these for granted. I have grown in empathy for others who struggle with limitations. My visual impairment has inspired me to reach out in numerous opportunities to mentor and counsel needy, as well as visually-impaired individuals.

One of the greatest challenges for the blind is isolation. At 94, my father is completely blind. I saw his need for interactive recreation with family and friends. With neuropathy in his hands, Braille has proven difficult for him to use. My dad loves cards. With a hole punch and standard playing cards, I invented a unique set of cards which enable the blind to have fun interaction. Seven years ago I started a nonprofit that has allowed me to distribute the cards throughout the U.S., Europe, and even India.

With encouragement from my daughters, I finally got around to writing and illustrating my children's beloved stories for my 13 grandchildren. Each one includes a scriptural moral which has allowed me to share with them verses and thoughts that are important to me.

I give the Lord all the credit because inventing, writing, volunteering, and using my cane were not on my radar 10 years ago. Without my disability, I would not have found these new ways to work for our Father. I am deeply content.

**Bill Blauvelt** lives in South Bend, IN, and is a retired teacher and counselor, and works with real estate investments. Married in 1970, Bill and his wife, Peggy, have three daughters and 13 grandchildren. He has been a member of the South Bend Chapter of CIC for 30 years. He can be reached at bpblauvelt@gmail.com.
How close our understanding of mission is to the New Testament’s may perhaps be in part judged by the place which we accord to suffering in our understanding of the calling of the church.

Mission entails suffering: faithfulness to the gospel of the kingdom will mean a missionary encounter with the idolatrous powers of our own culture. Loyal allegiance to our kingdom mission will mean a clash of comprehensive stories. The gospel makes an absolute claim on the whole of our lives. There is an incompatibility between the gospel and the story of our culture.

Every culturally embodied grand narrative will seek to become not only the dominant, but the exclusive story. If we as the church want to be faithful to the equally comprehensive biblical story we will find ourselves faced with a choice: either accommodate the Bible’s story to that of our culture, and live as a tolerated minority community, or remain faithful and experience some degree of conflict and suffering.

Ours is a mission of the cross. The good news may call forth opposition, conflict, and rejection (John 15:18-25). We announce and embody a victory that remains hidden until the final day. And so the embodiment of that victory often appears to the world as weakness, even foolishness. Yet the victory of the cross is assured in the resurrection.

The question that has been posed as to why the Western church is one of the few churches in the world that is not facing suffering and persecution. One answer that has been offered is that the church has adjusted the biblical story by setting up a dualism which would allow for a compromise with the secular grand narrative of rational progress which has shaped much of Western culture. There is undoubtedly truth to such a claim.

On the other hand, there is perhaps a more positive reason as well. Western culture, while increasingly humanistic and secular, has for centuries been salted to some degree by the gospel. This lessens the tension—but may also increase the danger and temptation for accommodation. In a day of growing neo-paganism where the impact of the gospel is felt less and less in public life, it may be an opportune time to re-emphasize the biblical teaching concerning faithfulness and suffering.

From the time God became one of us through his incarnation in Jesus and the pouring out of his Holy Spirit, his intention has been to dwell not in temples or buildings, but in us individually and personally. I met him one evening 40 years ago and accepted his invitation to dwell in me. Today, I experience his presence in many ways—the sacraments of my church, my daily prayer time, and in many of the people he places in my life.

There are times when I have neglected his presence or separated my words and deeds from his presence because I have put him in a box. The unfortunate thing when that happens is that his presence may not then be available to the people in my life who would otherwise be blessed by him. God created us with the freedom to accept or reject his invitation to dwell in us, but his desire for his creation and for his created, is that we not separate him from our lives and work.

Bill Dalgetty spent most of his career as an attorney and executive of Mobil Corporation. He published Hope for the Workplace - Christ in You about the Holy Spirit empowering us to bring hope and transformation to our workplaces. Contact Bill at bdalgetty@cox.net.

The idea that faith should be separated from most of the rest of our lives appears to have become conventional wisdom over the last 50 years. We hear the phrase, “separation of church and state” and apply it to other venues in our lives such as the workplace and the public square. We are told that our faith should be private and personal, not to be shared with others.

This perspective is 180 degrees contrary to God’s intention as evidenced in the words of scripture. Colossians 3:17 is just one example. Paul’s exhortation is not confined to what happens at church on Sundays; he is applying it to everything we do. Later he says, \textit{Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as if you are working for the Lord.} (Colossians 3:23)

This is a 24/7 exhortation meant for Monday as well as Sunday, the workplace as well as our personal prayer space or church. There are no boundary lines to Christ living in us and us in him. Once we invite him in, he is present in everything we do—working for our employer, taking our children to soccer practice, helping with the dishes, assisting a sick friend with yard work, testifying at a City Council hearing, helping our children with their homework, or listening to a work colleague share a personal problem.

God created us to work and care for the garden of his creation, including the physical world and one another. (Genesis: 2:15) This is how we make ourselves useful to one another and thus to God. It is a divine assignment.

\textit{WHATEVER YOU DO, WHETHER IN WORD OR DEED, DO IT ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.} COLLISSIONS 3:17

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\end{center}
As a young boy, Jesus grew up under the watchful eyes of Mary and Joseph surrounded by an extended family of relatives and neighbors and friends. I’m sure he saw his parents taking time each day to pray and to worship. He was learning the value of family, commitment, friendship, and putting one’s trust in the Father.

Scripture says that by age 12 he was aware of the idea that he was “working for our Father.” He said to his parents, “Don’t you know that I must be about my Father’s business?” It’s a perspective we emphasize in Christians in Commerce as coworkers in Christ.

Jesus was known as the carpenter’s son. From Joseph he learned the value of hard work and dedication. He observed how Joseph conducted himself in the work environment, dealing with customers and vendors, and with deadlines and expectations. And from Joseph he learned how to balance the priorities of work and family and God.

Jesus was well-versed in Scripture, starting as a young child. Prayer and the studying of the Scriptures were important to him his entire life. And when he finally stepped out at 30 to begin a purposeful, three-year journey, he not only knew Scripture, but when he spoke, the Scriptures and the promises of his Father came alive to his hearers. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me … and today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Satan tried to use Scripture to tempt Jesus, but failed. In Jesus the "Word became flesh." Jesus reminds us that not only are he and the Father one, but we too are one with him and the Father.

Jesus spent three years walking through villages and towns, from Galilee and Cana in the north, through Samaria and along the river Jordan, and the south through Jerusalem and Jericho. Jesus was on a mission, he was still “working for the Father.” The Father’s work, Jesus’s work, and our work are one and the same.

Our Father has been calling people to follow him and work for building the kingdom. He’s looking for people who will say “Yes.” Mary and Joseph said “Yes.” So did Simon, Matthew, and John. And now the Father is awaiting our “Yes.”

Kevin Weilbacher runs his own IT management company serving small businesses in the Tampa Bay area. He is a founding member of the CIC Tampa chapter. He and his wife, Susan, live in Valrico, FL. He can be reached at kw@kwsupport.com.
AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO DONATE
By Greg Aitkens

For those of you looking to support the wonderful works of Christians in Commerce, consider making a Qualified Charitable Donation (QCD).* A QCD offers an alternative method for donating to a charity of your choice and is a fabulous way to avoid taking additional income.

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian, payable to a qualified charity. QCDs can be counted toward satisfying your required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year, as long as certain rules are met.

In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, which is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.

Also, QCDs don’t require that you itemize, which due to the recent tax law changes, means you may decide to take advantage of the higher standard deduction, but still use a QCD for charitable giving.

CIC members who are over age 70½, and have tax-deferred retirement accounts, are required to take Required Minimum Distributions each year. A relatively new tax act from 2015 (Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes, or PATH) enables people with these tax deferred retirement accounts to donate some or all of their RMD amounts to charity, and avoid paying income taxes on these distributions.

Some advantages include:
1. Helps to avoid paying taxes on RMD distributions.
2. Taxable income helps determine the amount of Social Security benefits which are subject to taxes. Keeping income lower may help to reduce potential exposure to the Medicare surtax.
3. Tremendous benefit to charity organizations like CIC!
4. Avoids being pushed into a higher tax bracket by receiving additional taxable income.

Here are a few rules regarding QCDs:
1. A person must be over 70½ at the time of the QCD request.
2. Donations must come out by the RMD deadline, which is generally December 31 each year.
3. Donated funds must be transferred directly from your current IRA custodian to the qualified charity with a check made payable to the charity.
4. The maximum distribution amount in any calendar year is $100,000 per person.

*Please note that CIC does not endorse any specific investment strategy. Be sure to consult with your own financial advisor before making any financial decisions.

Greg Aitkens is a longtime member of the CIC Orange County Men’s Chapter in California and a former CIC board member. He is a financial advisor for Financial Management Network, Inc. (FMNCC). For additional questions, please contact him at greg.r.aitkens@gmail.com or 949-455-0300.

MEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS
Greater Phoenix Area
Casa Grande, AZ
February 22-23, 2019

Palm Desert/Palm Springs
March 8-9, 2019

Orange County/Mission Viejo
March 29-31, 2019

Fresno
April 5-7, 2019

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

Women’s Gilroy/Morgan Hill Chapter
February 16, 2019

Minneapolis South Men’s Chapter
February 19 & 26, 2019

SAVE THE DATE!
The 2019 CIC Annual Conference will be October 4-5 in Minnesota
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