When the disciples were accused of not following Jewish law and eating with unclean hands, Jesus told the Pharisees “nothing that enters a person is what defiles them,” but “what comes out of a person is what defiles them.” (Mark 7:21). Jesus was referring to our words and actions.

In today’s tabloid culture, what comes out of our mouths is often gossip. From Hollywood to Washington, the news of the day often takes the form of gossip, innuendo, and tearing others down. “Gossip Girls,” a celebrated TV show, glorified that behavior, especially among teens.

It’s easy to develop a habit of saying unkind things or spreading rumors. Many employees discuss their bosses in negative terms. “Did you see what she was wearing?” “What was he thinking when he said that to a client?” “I heard he was out with a woman who wasn’t his wife.”

As a public affairs firm in the nation’s capital, our office often has CNN or FOX on and the staff hears the vitriol and negative discussions 24-7. Cable news outlets pit a Republican against a Democrat and the conversation often times devolves into innuendo.

The problem is when gossip becomes a daily habit. As a Christian, it’s my responsibility to set a good example and not delve into the salacious. Gossip is disruptive to office morale and unity and hurts the person doing it. It can be difficult to avoid and it requires a conscious effort to refrain from talking about a fellow employee or a client.

When I’m hiring, I look for candidates who are reserved, mature, and confident in their abilities.

But the temptation to disparage someone else is always there.

Some useful tips for discouraging gossip include:

**Holding your tongue.** I try to hold my tongue and be an example. If I’m tempted to gossip, I try to remind myself that the person I’m disparaging or spreading a rumor about is also a child of God, worthy of respect and dignity. No one looks better by pointing out someone else’s flaws.

**Encouraging your subordinates.** I try to encourage work subordinates to not speak ill of others—especially coworkers and clients. If it happens in a staff meeting or business function, I try to gently correct it. My coworkers know I don’t curse. When they curse, they are sheepish and realize it might be offensive to me. If only they had the same awareness when crossing a line with gossip.

**Holding an intervention.** Gossip among employees may require an intervention. A few years ago, two young women were very close and another employee tried to join their group. They rolled their eyes and had plenty of conversations about the other girl. I stepped in and encouraged them to include her. After moving offices, she was finally accepted, but the damage had been done.

Ultimately, it’s important to search for the good in people, and you won’t find it through gossip.

**Diana L. Banister** is president and managing partner of Shirley & Banister Public Affairs, a Washington based public relations, crisis management and government affairs firm. She can be reached at dbanister@sbpublicaffairs.com.
Jesus at the Water Cooler

By Zach Busekrus

So even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than tearing your down, I will not be ashamed of it. (2 Corinthians 10:8)

Jamie is one of our most talented marketing strategists. Her superpower is thinking deeply and critically about what content assets and associated promotional strategy will deliver the best results for our clients. This said, Jamie struggles with self-confidence and the ability to make quick decisions. A few weeks ago, I had a performance review with her to learn more about why she struggled to make decisions in a timely fashion. Two minutes into the meeting, Jamie started to cry. She expressed that she felt as if she was failing her account team and disappointing our leadership team.

After listening to her and subsequently affirming her, I asked her to think about why she felt the way that she felt. She told me a story about her previous employer. She described the environment as bureaucratic, isolating, and toxic. Two days into working with us, she recognized our culture as empowering, collaborative, and fruitful.

Jamie went on to say, "Here, I am valued. Here, I am known. And one some days I’m terrified that I’m going to mess it all up. I’m scared that one day my authentic-self just won’t be good enough."

Today’s workers value a culture where they can be listened to, mentored, and empowered – fertile territory for real invitation to discipleship. Millennials in particular are searching for a space where they can be nurtured and trusted to nurture – and at the same time. Church was once the place for people to find purpose, identity, and community. As society grows more secular and regular church attendance hits an all-time low, those attributes are still sought after, but they’re often being looked for at the office.

If we have a culture that promotes a healthy reciprocity of teaching and learning in our organizations, I believe we have an opportunity to not only transform the business space, but positively affect the culture of family and faith in our communities. The next wave of Christian discipleship starts in the conference room. The next generations might first encounter the love of Jesus at the water cooler.

Work can provide an opportunity for people to find dignity. Work is community. Work is the new mission front. We have an entire generation knocking at the door and asking for a professional life of purpose, value, and balance. Will we answer?

**PRAY:**

Father, help me to lift others up and guide them toward your loving embrace.

**REFLECT:**

What steps can I take at the office to share the good news and the reason for our hope?

**DISCUSS:**

What would it be like if we introduced Jesus as a person and not some abstract idea the secular world thinks he is?

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**2018 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN**

We continue 2018 with a **BOLD VISION** for a **BRIGHT FUTURE**. With a goal to influence 20,000 lives by 2020, let’s invest in our mission together with prayers, financial support, and personal effort.

We’ve opened doors to thousands of Christians at several large corporations. We continue to grow our social media outreach. The Annual Conference will provide inspiration and a sense of renewal for attendees to face future challenges. We have launched the Nine to Five podcast series. Join us in realizing this bold vision to support others in being Christ in their workplaces.

**How can you help?**

Encourage a new generation of Christians to meet the call to align their careers with God’s mission by donating online at www.cicintl.org/agc18. Thank you for your continued prayers and support!
Inspiration Lives On  
By Deb Merriner

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. (John 15:13)

Years ago when I re-entered the workforce, I was fortunate to join a young attorney’s start-up company. Even though we didn’t share the same political or religious beliefs I liked her from the start. Still, I wondered how our differences would play out as she mentored me in helping to run her business.

In her home office, immigrants were assisted getting status; disabled folks received much-needed dignity; parents of mentally-ill children were supported; and, jobs were created for people in need. She let it be known that our mission was to do our best to get the assistance our clients needed or find someone who could.

Colleagues frequently sent her their toughest cases, and in most cases she was able to help. These people were not “cases” to her, but individuals who deserved her compassion, faith, and help towards a solution. Working with her I was both impressed and inspired.

One day a caller asked if we were a Christian company. I said that our business owner may not self-identify as Christian but she sure loved like one.

She loved everyone, especially the marginalized. Then came some unexpected news.

Late last year, she learned that her teenaged daughter had befriended a troubled teen who was affiliated with a fringe hate-group. The news devastated my boss. She and her husband decided to confront the young man, and it cost them their lives. The world lost a great lover of souls and an advocate for those who need a voice.

Even though this loving woman was struck down by evil, she showed me what Christ looks like in the workplace. Her uncompromising dedication to love of neighbor as oneself inspired me to carry on many of the causes she embraced. Inspiration came to me in a job I did not expect and I have been blessed beyond measure by the example of her life.

Walking with Coworkers  
By Zach Busekrus

“The student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.” (Luke 6:40)

Over the past several years, I’ve been obsessed with two trends that are reshaping the workplace. The first is a shift in how we value work, and the second is a decline in meaningful, Christian discipleship.

Consider Veronica’s situation. Whenever she steps into a room, sadness leaves. Her smile and laugh are contagious. Nearly two years ago, she and her boyfriend moved from Boston for a job he had accepted in the DC area. She left family, friends, and a job that she loved. Soon after they arrived, Veronica interviewed at our company and was quickly hired.

After a few months, her boyfriend decided his job wasn’t the right fit. He bounced between odd jobs. Six months ago, Veronica walked into my office with tears in her eyes. Her boyfriend wanted to move back to Boston. She asked me and my counterpart what she should do. After much discernment, we were able to offer Veronica a remote-working situation.

Soon after, Veronica called again. Her boyfriend was still unhappy and jobless. She asked for guidance about whether she should end the relationship. Although she is not Christian, I told her that we would be praying for her and encouraged her to ask herself what she wanted and what was best for them as a couple.

Recently, Veronica notified us that her boyfriend had moved out. She wanted to move back “home” to DC. Our company had become a family—we supported her, encouraged her, walked with her, and believed in her.

Veronica is much happier. She’s returning to DC this fall and we look forward to welcoming her home.
Thank you, Father, for showing me yet again your faithfulness. Help me to trust in that more and encourage others to do the same.

PRAY:

Thank you, Father, for showing me yet again your faithfulness. Help me to trust in that more and encourage others to do the same.

REFLECT:

Am I willing to risk looking silly or naïve in front of my peers to give God a way to do his work?

DISCUSS:

Are there situations at work where things seem hopeless? How can we guide others to trust God to come up with the answers we can't seem to find?

Greeted by God’s Love

By Deb Merriner

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

I love my work with older adults. There’s so much to gain from their wisdom and many opportunities to grow in empathy, seeing up-close the crippling effects of aging in mind, body, and spirit. One particular client teaches me aspects of this every week as she struggles to deal with life as she would never have planned it.

After a recent accident, Diana found her already small world shrink even more when she became confined to a wheelchair. Our movie, park and deli outings became a thing of the past. She looked to me to provide her some respite and it was getting hard to find ways to make our time together happy and hope-filled.

One afternoon was very dark, and I prayed for the cloud to be lifted, if just for a bit. Inspired by a thought to challenge her to find God’s love for her in the goodness, beauty, and truth around us, I started a game by pointing out a gorgeous fresh flower arrangement beside us. Unfortunately, she wasn’t interested and soon wanted to go up to her room.

I couldn’t blame her, yet I knew God had something in store for her. So on the elevator I asked her to give him one more chance to show her his love between the time we left the elevator until we got to her room. Diana reluctantly agreed.

When the elevator door opened, we immediately encountered a gentleman who cheerily greeted her, telling her how he missed seeing her. He asked about her accident and talked to her at length, then gave her his puppy to hold. The look on her face could only be described as pure joy. I will always remember that moment and I pray Diana will as well. We both got to witness an answered prayer in the goodness of the greeter, the beauty of his gesture, and the truth of God’s deep and personal love for her.

Deb Merriner works for Buckley’s for Seniors. She lives in Annandale, VA, and she has been married to Bob since 1974. They have five adult daughters.

CONDUCT A WORKING FOR OUR FATHER SERIES

The Working for our Father series helps Christians align their careers with God’s mission.

Engaging videos open up a world of possibilities when we are working for our Father, as coworkers in Christ–filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Conduct the series in a single four-hour session or in four separate sessions. Topics include:

- Accepting the Father’s Gift of Work
- Triumphing Over Toil, Trials, and Temptations
- Aligning Your Career to God’s Mission
- Operating in the Fruit of the Spirit

Twenty brief podcasts complement the series and share firsthand accounts of Christians encountering faith in the workplace.

To learn more, preview a sample, or to register to host a series, go to www.cicintl.org/WFOF or contact the home office at info@cicintl.org or (703) 205-5600.
Bob calls himself an Uber Missionary. As long as I’ve known him, he has been a professional photographer. In July 2015, in addition to this long-standing career, he added a new “vineyard” to labor in. He became an Uber driver.

“How I was to serve the Father in this new field had already been impressed on me a year previously,” Bob recalled.

While paying for breakfast, he was standing beside a very overweight man who was buying an assortment of extremely large, but delicious looking caramel rolls. Bob had thought to himself, “Those rolls can’t be good for him.” Suddenly, he heard a voice in his head saying, “Don’t judge that man!”

Turning to the man, Bob then said, “Those rolls sure look good.” The man responded, “You know, I can’t have these rolls, but every time I come here, I get them for my neighbors.”

All Walks of Life

Bob said, “Since that time it has been ingrained in me not to judge people. Now, as an Uber driver, I especially keep this in mind as I pick up passengers from all walks of life, race, and creed. I pick up the poor, the rich and the downtrodden, young people going to drug treatment, laborers, and professionals. My prayer is that, by God’s grace, I would not pass judgment on any of them.”

“I know he loves each of us and calls me to love as he loves. For me, this is a blessing and an honor to be Christ to all these people.”

Since July 2015, Bob has given more than 6,800 rides to thousands of people, including:

- A university student who wanted to be baptized but said she had too many sins.
- A prostitute from California who said she needed to grow up first before changing her ways.
- A young man who had gone to a Christian school but when he came out as gay said family and friends rejected him.
- A bouncer from a downtown strip club.
- A woman who said she was a stripper.
- A 21-year-old meth addict who was going back into treatment because she had used the night before.
- A woman who said it had been a “night of shame” and felt convicted of her wrongdoing.

“Give me your words, Lord, that they might find you.” Hopefully, the words that come from my heart and mind in these short rides are seeds planted by him.”

“Keep three things in mind for my riders. First, show interest in them by asking questions and being a good listener. Second, let them see my joy by sharing something about me for which I’m grateful and gives me happiness. And finally, honor and encourage them wherever I see goodness in what they share with me. I’m amazed how their hearts become open to God.”

“By not judging them and, as Christ, loving them all, we are the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Why Are You So Nice?

One early morning as dawn was breaking, Bob picked up a man who had just finished a night on the town. The first thing the rider told Bob was that he had nothing extra for a tip. Bob replied, “Not a problem.”

After a little more conversation, the man asked, “Why are you so nice?” Bob just laughed. The man asked again, “What’s the difference between you and me? I’m not really a very nice guy. In fact, I’m a mean guy. What’s the difference between you and me?”

Bob recalled, “It was a really short ride and I’d never been put on the spot like that. By this time, I had already pulled up to his apartment.”

The man said bluntly to Bob, “I’m not getting out of this car until you tell me the difference between you and me.”

Bob thought, “Okay buddy, you asked for it. Here is the difference between you and me!”

Bob told him his story, with details leading up to and ending with his surrendering his life to Jesus Christ in 1973. He finished with his favorite close, “And that my friend has made all the difference!”

“There was no response nor any indication he was at all impressed by what I had shared,” Bob remembered. “I often don’t know what impact I have. However, he did demonstrate for me the real hunger and desperation in our society for truth, beauty, and goodness.”

Like Bob, may we all be the breath of God to any and all we meet, and may they all breathe deep.
TRIUMPHING OVER TEMPTATIONS

An excerpt from our Working For Our Father Series

What are the idols we are tempted to worship at work, idols that take the role rightfully belonging to our Father?

We make idols out of our career, our money, our position, our popularity, our talents, even our opinions. All are man-made. When they are at the center of things, they become idols we worship. They leave God and his plans on the outside. We try to use them for our own pleasure rather than trust in God. That is idolatry.

Possessions, power, and pleasure offer the illusion of happiness and personal freedom. But we know the world’s freedom is actually slavery. It’s a happiness it can’t deliver, a happiness that doesn’t last and is never enough. Futile pursuits come at the expense of our devotion to the Father.

“Do not love the world or the things of the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride of riches – comes not from the Father but from the world. (1 John 2:15-16)

Money

Probably the greatest idol in a consumerist society is where money is happiness quantified.

Wealth isn’t evil. But dangers lie in prosperity. Wealth can be its own toxic potion. We can isolate ourselves. Accumulating more and more for our own enjoyment, we become indifferent to the needs of the less fortunate, fooling ourselves to think we did it on our own and not through God’s good grace.

Greed isn’t reserved for the rich. The less fortunate can covet what they don’t have. It’s a matter of the heart.

Where is our treasure? Where are the desires of our heart? How does our behavior at work help answer these questions?

God doesn’t want us preoccupied with avoiding temptation and not sinning. He wants us to turn from them and to him, joining him in his mission to restore all things, free to focus on working for our Father.

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

“You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap is holiness, and the result is eternal life.” (Romans 6:22)

We have confidence in three truths:

• We are personally responsible for our sins. The world, the flesh, and the devil may have influenced our decisions, but they are our decisions.
• God is slow to anger, rich in compassion and mercy. He wants to set us free.
• The Father washes us clean in the blood of his Son, who he gave for our sins. His forgiveness is free for the asking.

As we turn from our sinful, self-centered tendencies, we give ourselves to our Father and offer our service in the restoration of his creation. Sin is no longer our master, for we are now under God’s great grace.

As Christians we have confidence in God’s story of redemption for his created world. We work with all of our being and do not get discouraged when we find thorns and thistles breaking through the soil. We know our work is not in vain.

We are free to serve as stewards of his creation. And, focus on working for our Father with faith, integrity, and excellence.

The Working for Our Father series uses professionally-developed, engaging videos to capture the imagination of attendees, opening up to them a world of possibilities in working for our Father, as coworkers in Christ, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the videos, the program is complemented by 20 brief audio podcasts that draw insights from first-hand accounts of faith in the workplace.

If you are interested in previewing the series and learning more go to www.workingforourfather.com/wfof-series
Russ studied engineering in college, and he was lucky enough to land a job in his field soon after he graduated. But it didn’t turn out the way he imagined. The office environment was difficult, and he felt lost. He even wondered whether he’d made a mistake in choosing his degree.

So when a youth ministry position surfaced, Russ jumped on it. He thought it was a way he could do something “spiritual” while earning a living. For a while, it was the right place to be: he learned a lot about his faith, he met wonderful people, he was building the “church” – and it got him out of that tough desk job he didn’t like.

Russ knew, however, that he didn’t want to stay in youth ministry long-term. Enjoyable as it was, youth ministry had its own challenges. As he looked toward the future, he couldn’t imagine fostering family life with the demands of his nights-and-weekends job.

More importantly, Russ felt the Lord was calling him back to the field he’d been avoiding. Did this mean that his secular work couldn’t be spiritual?

Russ entered a master’s program in software and leadership, and he found another job in the technical world. And with the help of a Working for Our Father series, he was able to see the dignity, significance, and purpose of working in a secular environment using his God-given talents. God was in his work. He just needed to see him there.

It’s easy to believe that unless we’re employed by a church or Christian organization, our work has no spiritual meaning. But our Father created us to do everything in his name, whether it’s marketing or youth ministry or software development. Work is where we care for God’s creation and one another.

Making the most of our gifts and education, treating coworkers as children of God, and finding opportunities to serve God and one another throughout the workday are challenges we will all encounter – no matter what we do from nine to five.

This article was adapted from the Nine to Five Podcast episode, “Where Do You Want Me?” To listen to the full episode go to bit.ly/NinetoFive

**Whatever You Do**

By Laura Loker

*Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

**Colossians 3:17**
(Love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:7)

Paul’s description of love is not only a list of ways that we should love, but a description of the way that Jesus actually loves. It is empowering, encouraging and liberating to reflect on the depth of Jesus’ love for us. Jesus poured out his love for us so that we might live in him and show his love to others—even at work. God cares about the work we do and the way we do it.

There is a desperate need for Christian love at work. We are called to bear, believe, hope, and endure all things in the workplace, as we love our colleagues.

Envy, deceit, and selfishness have no place in the Christian’s life at work.

Love Bears All Things.
The verb to bear has two related meanings, to hold up and to cover—something like a pillar holding up a roof. The pillar holds up the roof and enables it to withstand the wind. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this image. He covers and protects us. In a lesser sense, we are also to be pillars for our colleagues.

Love Believes All Things.
The object of our belief is the Lord Jesus Christ. We trust that he is alive, seated at the right hand of the Father, and interceding for us. This is the transformative truth that allows us to see everything differently. If God is for us who can be against us?

Love Hopes All Things.
We live in an age of cynicism. Cynicism prevents us from having genuine hope in God’s unfolding plan. In our worry and doubt, we can fail to see the glorious things God is doing in our midst.

Love Endures All Things.
The workplace can be a test of patience. Frustrations and anger can lead to sustained bitterness. The Holy Spirit walks beside us and enables us to have peace even in the face of trouble.

Published with permission from the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics blog. Find the original article at https://tifwe.org/four-practical-questions-about-love-at-work/ Subscribe to the IFWE Daily Blog at https://tifwe.org/subscribe
OPEN HANDS, OPEN HEART, OPEN GRACE
By Tim Rowland

Twice a week I recite the CIC Prayer in Phoenix and Scottsdale. The prayer states, “That he may teach me stewardship of the talents, time, money and possessions given me. A stewardship that serves, is generous, and brings honor to your name.” I want to share what this means to me and how I try to live it out.

First, bring “honor to his name.” I want my actions, words, and thoughts to glorify God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But how? I use my talents, time, money and possessions to invest in his kingdom. I use the word invest because we are to love, rule, and increase as illustrated in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:20). For me, this represents “open hands, open heart, open grace.”

Open Hands
Open hands illustrate a desire to connect, to help, and to foster. When one of my granddaughters reaches out to me with an open hand, I know she wants me to pay attention to her, to interact with her, to be present to her.

Are your hands open or closed with your time, talent, money and possessions?

Open Heart
In Matthew 6:21 we learn: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” A common saying is, “Where your money is so is your heart.” When my heart is open to God and his plan for me, I can never go wrong. One fruit of declaring him Lord is a generous open heart. In my life, I have found when I am generous, God’s grace flows. Kingdom building requires capital. Yes, donating our time is important, but joyfully giving financial resources is expected of me as well.

Open Grace
God’s grace cannot be outdone, but it can be squandered. He expects me to invest in building his kingdom. There is something due! As stated in 2 Corinthians 8:7: “But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”

I have been called to invest in CIC’s future by contributing both my time and my money. Christians in Commerce needs resources to develop the content and communication strategy for the next generation. It’s something I am blessed to do. Are you investing in building the kingdom with your financial resources? I pray you are open to God’s grace of giving. He waits for you to invest.

Thanks to all of you who joined us for an inspirational weekend in Minnesota for the 2018 Annual Conference. It was a great turnout with lots of new faces. Highlights to come in the December issue.
2018
NOVEMBER

“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

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For further information about CIC call or write:
Christians in Commerce
7515 Lee Highway, Falls Church, VA 22042
Phone: (703) 205-5600
Toll Free: (877) 205-5600
Fax: (703) 205-0485
info@cicintl.org