Agents of Joy

By Elizabeth Argus

In the serious pursuits of the workplace, joy is an often overlooked virtue. But we are called to be joyful in all circumstances, and joy is a gift we are called to share with others. As Paul advises, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all." (Philippians 4:4)

We are buoyed by the joy of colleagues, and their joy calls us on to excellence. Conversely, we are weighed down by joyless colleagues: their negativity can be a burden to the whole staff.

It’s important to develop an awareness of actions and attitudes in the workplace that can rob us of joy so we can work to avoid or correct them.

Obstacles to Joy

Navel Gazing
When we are focused on our needs, above the needs of others, we can become prone to fear. We compare ourselves to others, and work becomes a competition, with winners and losers. We lose our sense of humor and the ability to laugh at ourselves.

Pride
Our desire for admiration and respect can drive us to insist that we are always right. We can be inflexible, and not open to input or change—especially change that challenges our way of doing things.

Isolation
We can see work as a means to earn money and hold our colleagues at arm’s length. Relationships at work are superficial and impersonal. We associate only with members of our rank or department. We exclude others.

Actions and Attitudes that Nurture Joy

It’s easy to be joyful when we’re happy with how things are going. But how do we maintain joy when we’re not happy in a given situation? The following habits of mind and heart can foster joy in us, regardless of our circumstances.

Kindness
Kindness takes a little extra time. When we take time to communicate our faith in a coworker, especially one who is young and inexperienced, their struggles can become labors of joy. When we bring comfort and solace to coworkers who are suffering, we strengthen the bonds of friendship at work.

Playfulness Rooted in Faith
The ability to laugh at ourselves and our situations is an undervalued gift. A sense of humor steadies nerves and calms emotions. This is linked to our faith in our wise and loving Father, who is working with us to get the job done. “… She can laugh at the days to come.” (Proverbs 31:25)

Gratitude and Humility
What if instead of saying, “I have to work,” we said “I get to work”? It’s important to remember that work is a privilege and a gift. Gratitude goes hand in hand with humility. We’re all dependent on our Father, who cares for us. We recognize our colleagues as equals, regardless of their rank, talent, or experience level.

Ultimately, we can choose love over fear. And where love abounds, joy abounds. Where we practice kindness, playfulness, gratitude, and humility—there we find joy.

“… I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:11-12)

Elizabeth Argus is a singer and actress. She chairs the Fine Arts Department and manages the Performing Arts Programs at Cabrini High School. Liz and her husband, John Meehan, live in New Orleans with their two children. She can be reached at eargus@cabrinihigh.com.

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Have you ever experienced frustrations, stress, or anxiety at work? I think we all have at some point.

A good perspective on work-life peace can enable us to feel more in control of our working lives and can lead to:

- Increased productivity
- A happier, less stressed atmosphere
- Improvements in health and well-being
- A more positive perception of ourselves and our work
- A missional perspective to our work
- More self-awareness of Christ at work through us.

We can spend a lifetime searching, but we will only find perfect peace in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. He alone can give us the peace we seek. Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” (John 14:27)

He further counsels that our hearts need not be troubled nor afraid. Therefore, let’s walk and work without fear, and let’s receive the gift of peace he offers.

cassell@cicintl.org
(703) 205-5600
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 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 1:3-4)

Last summer, I was working on my certification for online instruction. I spent countless hours in the computer lab renovating my curriculum. My colleague, Josh, is a tech guru, and he graciously allowed me to work in his office in case I needed his help. He provides tech support for the entire college and it was almost exhausting to see him in action throughout the day.

Josh was facing a challenging week. He lives an hour away in the mountains. His wife was recovering from a medical procedure and someone was caring for their four-year-old son. Josh was battling his own health issues, and had doctors’ appointments he couldn’t miss.

One Friday afternoon, Josh let out a big sigh and said, “What a week!” He was done and 5:30 couldn’t come soon enough. By 5:10, the campus was turning into a ghost town. Josh started to pack up and I followed his lead. Suddenly, we heard a child in the distance say, “Nobody here, Mama!” We heard doorknobs clicking and little feet echoing in the hallway. Overlapping voices grew closer. Our eyes widened when we realized they were heading our way.

Josh and I suspected that whatever they needed was going to take us past 5:30. A flustered young mother walked in the door with children yanking her clothes for attention. She needed a computer to apply an electronic signature to her Financial Aid application that was due that day. It was clearly a desperate situation. With genuine compassion, Josh asked her if it would take longer than 15 minutes. She said no, but in our hearts, we knew the truth.

Josh grinned at me and said, “You can keep working, Sophia…looks like it’ll be a while.” Not once did Josh complain. Instead, he chatted with the little ones and assisted the woman whenever she hit a glitch. The next sigh I heard was one of relief from the distraught woman who needed to be shown grace.

She didn’t finish her application until 6:45, but Josh and I were re-energized because we had been able to support someone who needed help. This was God’s kingdom work. Josh made it a priority and there’s no doubt that his gift of service made an impact on the young family. Knowing that he made a difference brought an undefinable peace. God painted us a new portrait of “work-life peace” that we all need to strive for every day.

**PRAY:**

Lord, convict my heart whenever I look at my time as an owner and not a steward. Making your kingdom work the first priority is what truly brings balance to my chaotic world.

**REFLECT:**

When have I experienced the compassion of God in the workplace? How often do I extend that compassion to others?

**DISCUSS:**

What is your call to help bring compassion to your work environment?
PRAY:
Lord, remind me to look within and remember that I am not above receiving from those I serve.

REFLECT:
How often have I viewed my interactions with others as one-sided?

DISCUSS:
Consider some ways we can reach out with a heart to bring peace to our community and workplace.

God’s Way to Peace

By John E. Daly

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7)

The legal case I had been hired to work on did not go as I expected. My clients did not want to follow my advice. I was confused and not at all at peace with their decision.

I had researched the law on an insurance policy in which their deceased father had named an ex-wife as a beneficiary. I had determined that she was not entitled to the money under the law and that my clients should be given the funds as part of their father’s estate. I told them the good news and they told me they had decided not to contest the issue and to let her have the funds.

I was not happy with their decision, but there was nothing I could do without their consent. Soon after, I heard a homily that mentioned that love is greater than the law. I felt this word applied to my case and I let go of my lack of peace with their decision.

Six months later, my clients shared a letter from the ex-wife. She was so thankful for the funds. She had been desperate to make repairs to her home and the money came at just the right time. She was so grateful for what her ex-husband and his family had done for her. My clients’ love and generosity had brought a healing and peace to the family.

I learned that God’s peace was far better than anything the world and the law could offer.

Spiritual Poverty

By Sophia Norman

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves…” (Philippians 2:1-3)

For the 2018 Annual Conference, CIC is prepared to combat an epidemic that has affected many professionals who have fallen into the trap of working-to-live or living-to-work. Both can lead to spiritual poverty.

A few months ago, my congregation was challenged to commit several hours of community service over a two-week period. One of our projects focused on providing food and resources to aged-out foster youth. One of the questions in our reflective journals prompted us to think about the dynamic that should be occurring between the volunteers and those we were serving. It was not intended be a one-sided experience.

I discovered that a false sense of superiority had crept into my heart. Even with good intentions, I was behaving as if I was the only one who had something to offer in these interactions. Hearing the youths’ stories provided me priceless learning and spiritual edification. I had tearful moments and discovered that I was not that much different from those I was serving.

Many of us lack a sense of peace because of poor or non-existent relationships with God, family, friends, or coworkers. Once we level the playing field, our hearts can open to compassion. I considered my leadership role at work. Have my interactions with my colleagues been one-sided? Even when I thought I was “helping,” I may have missed opportunities to place value in others.

We live because God lives in us and it is up to us to bring peace into the workplace and shape the culture with compassion. Peace is essential to extinguishing poverty in all areas of our lives.

Sophia Norman has been a member of the WCIC-Fresno Chapter since 2012. She serves on the 2018 Annual Conference Committee. She is a high school teacher and a part-time adjunct instructor in the Fresno area. She can be reached at slnorman73@gmail.com.
Blessed are the Peacemakers

By John E. Daly

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (Romans 14:19)

I had just finished working on a case that had taken over a year to bring to settlement. A good friend’s sister had been seriously injured in a car accident and their father had been killed. They invited me to attend a prayer meeting where the family was going to give a sharing on all that had happened to them as a result of the accident.

I sat near the back of the auditorium and listened as they told their story of God’s healing and grace during the ordeal. They described how frightening the whole process had been—the months their sister was in the hospital, the bill collectors calling for their father’s unpaid bills, insurance company representatives calling about the accident and many other unresolved issues.

At one point, they stated that their attorney showed up in the process and this had brought them some “peace.” I had never in my legal career heard that said before. I did not see myself as a “peacemaker.” I was a litigation attorney who sued people. Their words changed me. I realized that my clients wanted their attorney to help bring peace to their lives which had been so disrupted and changed by some horrible event.

I began to see my career as a vocation to bring peace to every client who sought my legal help.

With God’s help and the Holy Spirit’s guidance I would seek ways to find a pathway to peace and be used by God to bring them the peace they desired. With this approach and new understanding I too found peace in doing God’s will in all I do.

John E. Daly has been married to his wife, Peg, since 1979. They live in Minnesota and have two married sons and five grandchildren. John has his own law firm and is a member of the Twin Cities Chapter of CIC. He can be reached at jedalylaw@gmail.com.

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.
And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

Sitting by the well in the hot midday sun, Jesus is alone. A woman slowly approaches; she thirsts. All her life, the Samaritan woman has looked for happiness. Five husbands haven’t been the answer; they’ve only made life more complicated. The man with her now doesn’t hold much promise. All any of them have left her with are regrets and shame. She is surprised to find mercy waiting for her at the well.

Mercy is close to God’s heart. In the beatitudes, Christ says the merciful are blessed because they will receive mercy.

Like the Samaritan woman, we all thirst. Unfortunately, we look for fulfillment in the wrong places. We want to satisfy our worldly desires, but they won’t be quenched. What we pursue can’t deliver. And, these pursuits only leave us damaged, broken, and burdened. Mercy is sympathetic to our plight and waits for us, as Jesus did by the well for the Samaritan woman.

We long for admiration, pleasure, comfort, and security. We look for things and people to provide what they can’t give. Mercy is empathetic and it waits.

We have been reconciled with Christ. He has not held our sins against us. We are ambassadors of this reconciliation and called to give Christ’s compassion a human face.

The Relentless Persistence of Guilt

In a culture that has lost its moral mooring and denies sin, guilt still has a relentless persistence. Guilt and shame will not die easily. This leaves an opening for mercy. It is the doorway to repentance and reconciliation.

Just as God loves us, he loves our coworkers too and is reaching out to them right now. We must not to be indifferent to their pain and suffering, their guilt and shame. With our lives as an example, we want to draw them towards the warmth of God’s love and into his mercy and grace.

We’re there to serve him in his desire to have a meaningful relationship with all and gather them into his divine community of love. Only Jesus Christ can remove the stain of sin and the shadow of guilt it casts.

The forgiveness Jesus gives came with a price. The Father’s standards were not compromised; justice and mercy set us free. We have experienced the warmth of Jesus’ merciful embrace. God’s justice is cloaked in mercy.
Hugh Whelchel, the executive director of the Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics, often speaks at Christian colleges. He states, “I frequently ask the audience, ‘Think about what you did yesterday. What percent was secular? What percent was spiritual?’ I have never gotten an answer of 100% spiritual.”

Hugh goes on to explain, “Many people have this idea that secular things have to be kept separate from spiritual. They think that the secular is not necessarily bad, but just that God doesn’t care about it. Nothing could be further from the truth. God cares about every aspect of our lives, and everything we do should be done for his glory. That is what we were created for.”

God gave Adam and Eve their two-part mission when he first created them. In Genesis 1:28, he tells them to “fill the earth and subdue it.” As Hugh explains, God is telling them to fill the earth with his images and help them to flourish.

“We often get caught up in the first part of that mission and forget the second part,” Hugh points out. “We make images of God through discipleship, evangelization, church, and many other means. These are all good and important things. They produce a lot of fruit. However, they are all focused on the first part of man’s mission when the second part is just as important.

“This second part of our God-given mission is where we find value in our work. Many people view their work as nothing more than a means to evangelize. We should always look for opportunities to share the Gospel, but our work is so much more than that. There is intrinsic value in the work we do. Through our work, we are making the world a place where human beings can flourish.”

Whether you are an insurance agent putting people’s minds at ease or a grocery store cashier helping a busy mom feed her family, every job has meaning in itself, not just in the way we serve our coworkers. We just have to orient our minds so that everything we do brings glory to God.

This reflection is based on a recent Nine to Five Podcast. Listen to the full episode at bit.ly/InclusiveCall
UPDATE ON CIC MINISTRY IN UGANDA

By Aloysius Mugisa

What a blessing CIC is to Uganda! Individual lives have been transformed, and marriages and families have been healed.

Yesterday a woman called and said, “I would like to send my friends, a couple, to the CIC marriage and family program. My friends, a married couple who came to that program, are living a very happy married life. Before they could not fit together.” I felt happy and praised God for that testimony.

The Challenge Weekend programs have been a remarkable life-changing tool for Uganda. Since January, we have held 14 Challenge Weekends. At our most recent weekend, a man testified that for the past 18 years he had never seen the sense in living. He said after Talk Seven, “To live in Christ,” life had meaning for him. He said he has a reason to live, a mission to accomplish on earth. He said now he loves his life, his children, and wife and he said he realized God gave him a family to raise and bring to him.

CIC has greatly transformed lives through the provision of clean drinking water to very poor villages. More than 80 poor African villages now have clean drinking water. Every construction and commissioning of a well in a poor village is an opportunity of parading Christ to the people. We tell the people that the love of Christ has brought you this clean drinking water. A lady once said, “if it is for their God that we have this clean water, then I want their God to be my God.”

Hope for the Workplace is another CIC life transforming tool in Uganda. Since January we have held nine Hope for the Workplace seminars. One woman at a Hope for the Workplace seminar in a school said, “I have been to catecumenate, church homilies etc. but I had never met Jesus as a real person as at this workplace seminar. I have understood that I am here not just to earn a living but to live out my faith in Jesus, to be another Jesus here.”

Since January, we have been supporting 47 families with food and other basic survival needs. This ministry started in 2007 and has been expanding. There are many families that CIC has saved from death. A Northern Virginia CIC family has built two latrines for two needy communities.

CIC has also touched many lives through Bible Apostolate. We encourage people to meet God in his Word. The Word of God is the mind of God. We have distributed many free Bibles to enthusiastic readers who cannot afford Bibles. Since January this year we have held three Bible Rallies.

We are very grateful to the CIC Board of Directors and all our generous American brethren for enabling us to continue this ministry. Without your financial support we would not accomplish much.
“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