The Face of Jesus
By Jan Craiker

The righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’ (Matthew 25:37-38)

I teach for one of the largest and most diverse school systems in the country. In our building of over 1200 faculty, staff, and students, I face numerous daily challenges. Personal needs can easily be overlooked with the pressures of covering curriculum, teaching in a data-driven culture, and having limited resources of both time and energy. It is tempting to keep my nose to the grindstone and to shut out any distractions or time-consuming conversations.

This year, our superintendent challenged each of us to really look and see the face of each individual that we encounter. He challenged us to let no one feel invisible or unvalued. I felt the Lord ask me to take that directive one step further. The Lord reminded me that each encounter we have in our daily walk is an encounter with the face of Jesus.

Steve is a career switcher who came into teaching after many years in the IT industry. We have been on the same team for over a decade, and I have learned to accept his gruff exterior, which is often off-putting to others. He is a brilliant science teacher; however, Steve has earned the reputation of being a complainer and long-winded.

When I have taken the time to really listen to Steve, with the ears of Jesus, I have discovered that most of his concerns are well-founded. He truly wants the best for his students. Steve has no family and carries a deep-rooted suffering due to the death of a parent at a very young age. Not many are willing to break through his rough edges of pain and anger. He responds to kindness, affirmation, and encouragement. Steve is hungry and thirsty to be heard. In his suffering, I see the face of Jesus longing to be validated.

Sophie is a student who came into my class with her defenses up, projecting an attitude of non-compliance from Day 1. She resisted any attempts I made to engage her, refused to do her work, and quickly established herself as a negative leader in my classroom. After being put on academic probation and required to stay after school, her hostility reached a boiling point.

After doing some investigative work, with the help of our Spanish interpreter, I discovered why Sophie was so resentful about being told to do her work at school. At the age of 13, she is responsible for the care of a younger brother with special needs, while her single mother works long hours. Her older brother has stopped speaking Spanish, so he is no longer able to communicate with their mother. Sophie serves as the interpreter between mother and brother. She essentially has been thrust into adult responsibilities, and the required after-school time only added to her anxiety. I was able to offer her a compromise and relieve some of the pressure. Sophie alienates others so she and her needs can remain a stranger, one who is invisible. In her burden, I see the face of Jesus longing to be understood.

Where do we encounter the face of Jesus today?
Reframing your Reaction  By Hannah Couch

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2)

Children's education is dear to me and I have had the absolute joy of fundraising for two different schools. The great thing about this from a fundraising perspective is that on the one hand, you are dealing with very invested donors. On the other, you are dealing with very invested parents.

From time to time, I find myself in difficult situations when parental emotions come into play.

After one such situation, I came into my coworker’s office and tearfully retold the story of a meeting I had just had with a parent. It was the most recent in a series of meetings where I took the brunt of their negative emotions. While I didn’t like repeatedly turning into a puddle after these encounters, I didn’t want to harden my heart, either. I couldn’t see a way forward and needed advice.

Over the course of a few conversations, my coworker mentored me to “not conform to the pattern of this world” and helped me “renew” how I handled these encounters. She suggested that I work on quickening my recovery time so that, if I could become familiar with the healthy steps required to work through my reactionary emotions and run through them more quickly, I would save myself from getting emotional.

She also invited me to consider accepting that these situations were just a part of working at a school.

In what ways do you experience others’ negative emotions in your work life? How might the Lord be asking you to change the way you think about encounters with others that include negativity?

Hannah Couch lives in South Bend, IN. She and her husband, Sean, have two children. She is a Development professional at The Montessori Academy. She can be reached at Hannah.Couch.16@gmail.com.

We are coworkers in Christ working for our Father. This is the mission we’ve been given to foster and fuel. Support us in helping the next generation shine bright and light the darkness.

To learn more about how you can support this effort: go to CICINTL.ORG/AGC19
Accompanied on the Journey  
By John Patrick Minerella

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

A couple of years ago I met a young man, who was “living his Cursillo.” I was a member of the Cursillo Team and provided ongoing support throughout the 3-day weekend experience. He was encouraged to commit to this spiritual weekend by his girlfriend’s father—it was a rite of passage for anyone in a relationship with any of this family’s 13 children. Following that weekend, he reached out to seek guidance on connecting with others in order to continue this spiritual journey. He had been awakened. Our connection morphed into an informal, yet long-term mentorship. At 30 he was accomplished in his work life. His Achilles’ heel was his personal life. He struggled with promiscuity, excessive partying on the weekends, and a well-armed, outwardly inflated sense of himself.

Our time together was spent exploring the root causes of his admitted failure to be his best self. He recognized the hypocritical nature of his trying to reconcile his spiritual life with his personal actions. I confess that I related all too well with his situation. In my younger days I wrestled with accepting the deepest value of walking with Christ.

I majored in accounting, not fundraising. Those two fields are far apart. I stumbled into this field seven years ago and haven’t looked back. I love it but turning into a fundraising professional from an accounting professional took some training, a fair pinch of humility, and mentoring.

I learned that fundraising often involves events, which my accounting major gave me very little experience in coordinating. So, I was paired with a coworker who had been an event planner to help me pull off one of the biggest events of the year. My time with her was invaluable. She had the ability to lovingly—with big doses of humor that sends me into laughter many years later—guide me through the event-planning process.

She taught the way the Father teaches me, by asking questions and serving, not by telling or assuming. Her questions ranged from “have you thought about a vegan option” to “have you over- or underestimated the mingling time,” and through them she slowly trained me to think like a hostess. When the events grew near and my anxiety rose, she taught me the invaluable tools of grounding by asking me the time of day, the day of the week, the score of the most recent Minnesota Twins game, where my feet were, and importantly asked me whose daughter I was (“a daughter of the King,” I’d reply and she’d exclaim “that’s right—princess!”). The way she mentored through these questions improved both my health and the well-being of the event. They gave me the tools to successfully dance in high-stress environments, with as little anxiety as possible. She helped me adjust to my new role, not lose sight of the fact that I’m a daughter of the King and learn to cast my cares on him. I am forever grateful to her.

I am so grateful to be a child of God. Thank you, Lord, for lovingly receiving my cares and anxieties.
Dual Agency

By John Patrick Minerella

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:9)

It all starts with listening—really listening; finding the silence within and allowing the auditory sense(s) to dedicate themselves to the speaker. We all want and need to be heard. I had an internal longing for a mentor probably spurred by the fact that my own father chose to leave my life when I was young. Despite my longing, I never sought out a mentor even though there were many worthy candidates.

The Art of Listening was a cornerstone of my success throughout my business life, as a mortgage banking professional and beyond. I learned in my mid-twenties through extensive sales training, that information was key, and listening, as well as being observant, were proven soft skills, foundational to building all relationships.

Years later I began to understand the correlation between the effects these basic tools had on my everyday experiences. I became a “go-to-guy” in many forms. I dispensed opinion and guidance, and only when asked. I became a trusted resource to coworkers, friends, and family. God is ever present in any and all the sharing and wisdom I may convey.

One coworker approached me to air grievances regarding a transaction and the parties associated with it. I listened. Our time together evolved into lunch meetings, which at first were work-related; however, quickly extended to personal and troubling circumstances. I listened. As we formed a bond, I offered practical analysis focused on my coworker’s personal and professional development. I began to share Christ with him and the re-introduction of Christ into his life was profound.

My coworker chose Christ. In turn our good shepherd has provided love, security, and peace to him and by extension to a loving, supportive family and beyond to a greater community. Was it me? No, it was the Lord! I've been blessed by this relationship. I am committed to continue mentoring, knowing that I am graced to listen and to guide those who are unable to see clearly, toward a loving, much greater relationship with God.

PRAY:
Lord, please help me to listen to those who need to be heard and to offer guidance and support when it’s needed.

REFLECT:
Can you share your expertise and mentor someone toward the life the Lord wills for them?

DISCUSS:
Have you ever had to turn down a request to mentor a friend or coworker?

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
Over 2000 years later, when financial/relational loss, sickness, even death strike at the core of our being, God challenges us to believe the words with which he left his disciples: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Mt. 28:19-20)

At the October Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Louis Grams, one of the founders of Christians in Commerce, spoke on both of these subjects. Since his dramatic healing in 1997, Louis has written, spoken and championed the Lord’s faithfulness to intercession, to the work of those in medicine, and to the power of the Holy Spirit. Quoting those 1997 conversations with physicians, “Visits to my medical doctors ended with them in tears. One said, ‘You are completely healed. This is not the result of medicine. Our treatments almost killed you. This is a great gift from God.’”

Ten years later, Louis, his family and friends again found themselves at the mercy of God and his coworkers. Out working in his garden, he felt a pop in his back. Months earlier, he had endured major spine surgery that fused 12 of the vertebrae and held them in place with two steel rods, screws and assorted hardware. With rest, the pain subsided. And, the trial began.

Soon, Louis experienced numerous strange issues. He could no longer exercise. His blood pressure swung rapidly between dangerous highs and lows. Standing for more than a couple of minutes left him unsteady and faint. Soon, every system in his body was causing trouble.

Those close by and those around the country who had witnessed his healing in 1997, began praying for another healing. He returned to his routine of numerous doctors treating his barrage of symptoms, without any explanations.

A Terminal Diagnosis

Louis’s cardiologist, convinced that the symptoms were all related, ran an extensive series of tests that ultimately revealed a serious autonomic nervous system disorder that wreaks havoc on all the major organs and bodily functions. Eventually, testing led to the diagnosis of Multiple System Atrophy (MSA); a rare disease: untreatable, incurable and ultimately, terminal. God’s people continually prayed.

Subsequent back surgery in 2009, revealed to the doctor that the bottom screws, implanted four years earlier, had pulled out. The result was a constant leak of spinal fluid, which explained Louis’s non-stop headache during the previous three years. Moreover, spinal nerve damage seemed an apparent trigger for MSA. God used Louis’s physician to reveal where nature had gone awry and the people rejoiced.

Four Years To Live

Though the headaches subsided after surgery, everything else continued to decline. Breathing capacity failed and he was put on oxygen 24/7. Meanwhile the second neurologist confirmed the diagnosis of MSA and reminded him that there was no cure, no treatment, and the disease is terminal; perhaps, four years.

Now dependent on a walker, MSA caused urinary and digestive failures that resulted in his producing hundreds of kidney stones a day. Five years and the valiant efforts of three surgeries brought no break in the pain. Louis embraced the cross. Prayer faithfully continued and medical teams continued working.

In 2017, Louis was losing sensation in his arms and hands. He underwent two spine surgeries that completely restructured his lower spine, rebuilding the excellent work from 2009. However, the recovery from surgery was very rough. Although Louis regained full use of his arms and hands, and six inches of the height, he suffered more excruciating pain than ever anticipated.

A Divine Intervention

Louis and his wife, Nancy, exhausted from it all, cried out to the Lord for relief! His medical team proposed a spinal injection to block nerves that were causing the trouble. Thankfully, man and God continued to work.

By the end of May 2019, Louis was again moving with his walker. Friends in his fellowship group prayed again, as they always did. That night, something changed. Jesus said, “I am with you always. . . .”
In early June, with no walker, Louis was at a gathering standing without support for the better part of an hour. He, and all of his friends were amazed. That marked the last day he used the walker. "The Lord hears the cry of the poor."

Between God and man, the healing continues.

**Louis's List Of Firsts**

Louis shared his list of firsts for the last 13 years:

Louis walks up to two miles without his walker. He ascends and descends stairs normally. He stands for two hours without aid. He can sing again; a passion he thought lost. He has no more kidney stones. He has lost over eighty pounds and no longer requires diabetic medications.

Many firsts, thanks to God and man.

Recently, Louis’s primary care doctor sent him a note, "This hasn’t happened in the way your healing did in 1997, but there is no doubt that this is a miracle all the same."

Louis praises both the Lord and all his workers. He knows that the steady stream of prayer, while humbling, has given him more expectant faith than he could ever have willed on his own.

And it’s clear to him that God was working on many fronts. The talents, care and training of the medical staff and surgeons gave him the recovered mobility. But there was one thing no one could change—the reality of the disease and its terminal diagnosis.

Louis acknowledges grace through these years of suffering. He has learned to live peacefully with pain; to live largely within physical limitations; to see God in his ever-shrinking world.

**In 1997, God Came Through. In 2019, He Did It Again!**

When he arrived at the CIC Conference, it was after a weeks’ long journey to Montana, high altitudes and travelling by train, Louis found he miraculously did not need the portable oxygen he had taken, just in case.

He walked, conversed, prayed and praised God for the amazing love he has been shown; and contemplated how best to use it for God’s glory!

Louis says, “I did not expect the Lord to heal me again. I beg for his forgiveness for that. I thought I had used that card up the last time around. I’m painfully aware of the fact that I have done nothing in my life that could possibly deserve so much mercy and grace. I am a weak and sinful man, subject to the vagaries of pride and selfishness and all the rest. I’m a sparrow being counted as precious by the Lord, just as he counts each one of us as precious.”

Louis is equally grateful to God and to his servants for the merciful care he has received. Well aware of the power of the Holy Spirit, he says, “We should never hesitate to ask again and again and again, however long it takes.” To all those who have served him medically and prayed for him daily, he says, “Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, all my brothers and sisters. Thank you for persistence. Thank you for knowledge and care. Thank you for mercy. Thank you for healing. Thank you for love.”

The Mission of God’s People

Do you have a life mission statement? Are you on a mission? God has a specific mission for his people—one that can transform the way you look at your daily work.

God has called you from death to life, from darkness into his glorious light, for a reason. Part of that reason is what he wants you to accomplish in the here and now. To know what God wants you to do with your life, go back to where God’s grand story starts—Genesis 1.

When Moses wrote the opening chapters of Genesis, he was trying to prepare God’s people of his day for the mission they were created to fulfill, a mission we are still called to accomplish today.

God created man in his own image to care for and rule over the earth. He assigned this mission in the very beginning of creation for all of humanity. We have the same responsibility of Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over the earth.

This is man’s original calling. The gospel call is a redemptive return to a lost and forfeited calling: to being God’s image bearers in the world, a calling that has never had anything less than the entirety of God’s original, good creation in view.

In Genesis 1, God created the heavens and the earth ex nihilo, out of nothing, and all he made was good. It is clear that God delights in the work of his hands.

As man made in the image of God, the process of creating is a form of worship, a way for creatures to express the divine image in them by creating something out of something. Through our work we are called to be creative and productive, imitating our Creator. We should enjoy not only the work of God’s hands, but also that of our own.

Work is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible. Work is what you were created to do. The work in your daily vocation sustains the mission for which you were intended.

We should be on a mission, and that mission is to be who God intended us to be as we live and work in his world for his glory.

Do you delight in your work? What are the implications of today’s devotional material on your view of work?

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Father. The Father and Son want to engage us in their conversation, the Holy Spirit gathers us into the conversation. They want us to speak openly and freely with them.

Seeking God’s Will

Living as Christ takes courage, obedience, and humility. Jesus surrendered all in response to the call of the Father. The apostles did it as well. We can expect no less.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)

Seeking God’s will isn’t about obtaining a detailed plan. God responds to what is happening around us. He doesn’t always operate in a straight line.

Often we’re afraid of making a wrong turn, or bad choice, and being left out, missing the boat. It’s more about trusting God and responding to the choices in front of us.

“And we know in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

There’s a lot of free will going on we can’t control. There’s a lot happening behind the scenes we’re not aware of. Remember God is bigger than our jobs, bigger than our worries and bigger than our challenges.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insights. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5)

Finding God’s will is more about learning what God desires and pursuing that. If we do, our decisions are going to line up with his plans. And, we can trust the outcome to him.

Daily Appointment with God

Our relationship and friendship with Jesus is our doorway to a relationship with the Father. We need regular conversations together. We need to grow in understanding and affection.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them will bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

If we are to live in Christ and he in us, we must come to a new level of intimacy with him and our Father. The Father and Son want to engage us in their conversation, the Holy Spirit gathers us into the conversation. They want us to speak openly and freely with them.

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Enjoy some highlights from the Annual Conference in Minneapolis. We’ll share more details in the December 2019 Challenge Newsletter. The theme this year was “Shine Bright—Light the Darkness!” Learn more about WorkLight, our new outreach initiative introduced at the conference.

MEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS
Greater Phoenix
Coed Commuter Weekend
Nov 1-2, 2019
Santa Cruz
November 1-2, 2019
Salinas Valley
November 15-17, 2019
Orange County
January 10-12, 2020
Monterey
March 20-22, 2020

WOMEN’S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS
Greater Phoenix
Coed Commuter Weekend
Nov 1-2, 2019
Gilroy/Morgan Hill
April 17-18, 2020
Fresno
April 24-26, 2020

STAFF CHANGES
We say goodbye and wish Alex Soholt well as he begins a new position with a public relations company specializing in social media. Beth Preuss will be stepping in and helping us as a Communications Associate for the foreseeable future.

WorkLight.org is coming soon.
We hope it will spark a movement of the Holy Spirit by:
- Uniting Christians across traditions, occupations, and positions.
- Providing practical, on-demand resources.
- Assisting Christians in forming small groups.

To see an introductory video, go to WORKLIGHT.ORG
2019
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