Finding Your People
By Annie D. Stutley

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. (1 Timothy 5:21)

I have worn many hats in several industries. I’ve hustled the entertainment scene, pounding the pavement in search of spectators for the next big hit. I’ve pulled doubles in the hospitality industry to keep a product looking shiny and its numbers full to the brim. I’ve studied education trends to maintain an institution’s upper hand above the rest. I’ve learned industries I had no intention of entering, but within which I pledged to keep a specific image solid. And even today, as I have returned to where I started— writing—I find myself fixated on something specific: A certain person. To whom am I writing? What do they want to hear next?

We all have a circle of friends we consider to be our people. Has a drive for branding influenced our judgment of those outside our norm?

In every position I’ve held I’ve had an audience. Not just any group. A type. It can become an almost obsessive conundrum, determining what these individuals want. Quite often I catch myself streamlining all my instincts, which become more tailored to one specificity. And I completely bypass those whom I stopped studying years ago.

This morning at school drop off, I was chatting with several mom friends. Sharing many similarities we gravitated toward each other years ago. One of them mentioned my blog from the previous week. She doesn’t read it because we’re friends, but because she’s my audience. I write for her. Across the yard was another group with whom I’m friendly, but they aren’t “my people.” We don’t have anything in common beyond a school bumper sticker. They probably don’t know I write a blog. I never bothered to reach out in industry or personally. We are worlds apart—or at least that’s what my instincts tell me.

And this is when, as a Christian, I fail to remember that my work matters to everyone because in everything I do, I am helping build a kingdom where God shows no favoritism.

This is easier said than done in a world that focuses on the buyer. Whoever is paying is favored. Whoever shows up matters most. Whoever follows my blog determines the topics. If we don’t give our people what they want, they won’t return. And while this may keep the cash flowing, we can all be vulnerable to greed, thus training ourselves to forget the rest of our brothers and sisters.

On my walk home, I thought about this week’s blog topic: Juggling friendship with family. The other women clearly had families. Whether they are my audience or not, they are my people because we are members of the same kingdom where there is no judgement, nor favorites.

I wonder what they want to hear?

Annie D. Stutley is a freelance writer in New Orleans where she and her husband, Bill, are raising three children. She can be reached at anniednola@gmail.com and followed on Instagram: @anniednola.
REFLECTIONS: WEEK 1

Sales Director  By Will DeSanto

The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news... to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom. (Isaiah 61:1)

My wife and I are insurance agents and respond to requests for information about life insurance policies. We work county to county and meet with a variety of people from different economic and cultural backgrounds. The Lord has been directing us to dedicate our business to him, and to give every phone call and appointment to him. He has told us we are to bring hope, friendship, and encouragement to people, and not to worry about the sales. He told us to put him in charge of sales, and to let him know what we need and want and he will take care of it.

In doing this, we have been able to pray with people at times. Last summer, I called a woman who sent in a request for information. She was reluctant to meet with us. I talked to her as a friend and told her I would bring our credentials. We met with Amy and her mother; as we sat at the kitchen table, Amy told us she had switched from full-time to part-time work so she could care for her 75-year-old mother who has cancer. We could see their care for each other; the daughter in wanting to help her mother through this difficult time, and the mother wanted to make sure she had life insurance to care for Amy when she died.

We were able to cover the mother with a life insurance policy, and when finished, I asked if we could pray together. We held hands and prayed for healing for the mom, and peace and wisdom for the doctors and those who cared for her. We left as friends.

Another time I felt the Lord asked me to call someone and give them an encouraging word. I called two people that came to mind that I knew had major health issues to see how they were doing. We had not placed life insurance policies on them. I talked with Edward about his health. He could hardly speak but knew who I was. After hearing about his situation, I asked if I could pray over the phone with him. “Yes”, he said, and I asked Jesus to heal him and give his family peace. He thanked me tearfully for praying with him.

I called Mike, who we sat with a year ago. He told me about his eye problems, which are getting worse and are preventing him from driving and working. I told him I was calling to see how he is doing. He said he is accepting his condition but it is difficult. His faith has been stretched. I asked if we could pray together; we prayed for Jesus’ healing touch, and for peace and acceptance of God’s love.

Since we made the Lord our sales director a year ago, we have surpassed our initial financial goals and have set new goals in all areas of our life: financial, spiritual, and personal.

Lord, Jesus, open my eyes and heart to the needs of others that they may not see me but thee.

How can I best do my work today to reflect you, Jesus?

What are some of the particular ways I can act today in my workplace to bring hope, friendship, and encouragement to the people I work with?

Will DeSanto lives in Minneapolis, MN, with his wife, Ginny. Will has been involved in CIC since 1983. They have five children and one granddaughter. Will can be reached at wpdesanto@gmail.com

START A CHALLENGE GROUP

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

To learn more go to CICINTL.ORG/CGROUP
**Perseverance and Friendship**  
By Will DeSanto

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15)*

Sometimes people don’t answer the phone. That’s what happened when I called to set an appointment with a person who sent in a request for mortgage insurance. I called many times but there was no answer. So my wife and I decided to stop by and introduce ourselves.

The home was out in the country and we turned into a driveway with a barn, a fence with a gate around the front door and the sounds of animals. I knocked and a man came to the door. I showed him the form and said I’d been trying to reach him. He was glad I stopped by. He was caring for his mother, who had dementia.

His wife wasn’t home so we scheduled a time for the next week. He showed us around his hobby farm. He had names for all the animals and we got to meet them all. We met with Randy and Laura several times and helped them with insurance policies. They were happy to get coverage. It was a joy for us to work with clients who cared so well for each other, and for their animals. It was our favorite appointment this year!

Randy called a month later; we talked about their insurance and then he asked if I would meet with him to talk about God and understanding the Bible. I said, “Sure!” and we are now working on a time to get together. He is caring for his mother, selling another home, caring for the animals at his farm, and for his grandchildren, who visit often. I prayed with him over the phone and asked Jesus to give him peace and direction during this busy time and look forward to getting together with him at his farm.

**PRAY:**

Jesus, give me the direction and perseverance to do my work to please you.

**REFLECT:**

Do I bring joy and interest in others into my work as I go about my day?

**DISCUSS:**

What are specific ways I can do my work with excellence and help others be excellent in doing their work?
Your Own Good

By Jacqueline Magill Gamboa

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

One morning I began my shift caring for a woman who had overdosed the previous night. The team was observing her and assessing the damage, as well as making a plan for her continued healing. I took the time to listen to the distraught husband of my patient share his grief and anger, as well as answer his many questions. His wife, however, proved to be much more difficult to help. She fiercely denied having meant to attempt suicide and responded to my attempts to ensure her safety and assist her with violence and screams. Finally, though she was still very unhappy, the psychiatrist managed to assess her and arrange discharge plans for her.

Some months later, this same woman returned to my unit to be treated for another health complaint of much less severity. She stopped me as I began to care for her. She expressed that she saw now how badly she had treated me when I had been trying to help her after her suicide attempt and apologized. So altered was her behavior and demeanor that I had not even recognized her at first. I quickly reassured her of my forgiveness. Indeed, I had forgiven her long before and had known that I had done the right thing by protecting her, even from herself. I knew that day that the forgiveness I could freely give was just what she needed.

PRAY:

Lord, give me an understanding heart. Let me always display your mercy.

REFLECT:

Are there people I work for or with that need to experience forgiveness?

DISCUSS:

Share areas of tension that you’ve experienced in the workplace where God’s mercy needs to be shown.

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24/7

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Man’s First Calling

If we have a mission from God and we are made to live in community and to create, how do we find purpose in work as a barista, an electrician, an actor, a copywriter, or a construction worker? By understanding God’s purpose.

In the opening chapter of Genesis, God describes the purpose for which he created man:

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

In the next verse, he relates this mission statement to Adam and Eve:

God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

This passage, called the cultural mandate, calls all Christians to partner with God in his work. The cultural mandate calls us to fill the earth with God’s images and subdue it. It’s a mandate to create culture and civilization through families, cities, organizations, agriculture, art, beauty, and technology. In this call we are to seek progress and further develop, invent, and advance culture.

The significance of all of our work – in our jobs, homes, communities, and churches – is directly related to its connection with God’s work. It is by seeking this progress and advancement in the world through our work that we find fulfillment. Humans are made to create and work to God’s glory. In pursuing God’s purpose, we find fulfillment.

The Garden of Eden was God’s perfect design, but it was not finished. Adam and Eve would not have stayed there forever, even if they had never fallen into sin. Following the commands of the cultural mandate, they would have moved out into the world, filling it with God’s images and subduing it. The Hebrew word translated “subdue” in verse 28 (Hebrew kabash) literally means to make the earth useful for human beings’ benefit and enjoyment.

The idea behind the cultural mandate is that God entrusts us with something and expects us to do something worthwhile with it, something he finds valuable. This mandate implies an expectation of human achievement.

This calling is what you were made to do. It is where you can find purpose and fulfillment.

Man’s Job Description

On the sixth day of creation, God gives Adam and Eve their job description, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.’”

Nancy Pearcey writes in her book, Total Truth, that our purpose isn’t just to go to heaven, it’s to cultivate the earth and serve God. Working creatively in this way is part of our human existence. God gave the cultural mandate to Adam and Eve, and it still applies to us today.

Tragically, because of sin, men and women have abused their stewardship of God’s creation, lost their sense of the cultural mandate, and struggled to find purpose and fulfillment. But Christians, because of Christ’s redemptive work in their lives, now stand in the same place as Adam and Eve before the Fall. We not only know what God wants us to do, but we are also equipped by the Holy Spirit to fulfill this calling.

We can now approach work in our families, churches, communities, and vocations with a clear understanding of God’s mandate. You are empowered to exercise proper stewardship over God’s creation. This stewardship applies to your whole life.

The prophet Jeremiah understood this when writing to the Israelites who were in exiled in Babylon. In chapter 29, Jeremiah reminds the Israelites that although they are in a strange land living under adverse circumstances, they are still to continue to fill the earth with God’s images and subdue it.

Interestingly, Jeremiah describes subduing the earth as a type of biblical flourishing which is both missional and outward focused, motivated on spreading God’s glory.

This mandate intimately applies to your life. You can share God’s truth and exercise godly dominion over every aspect and institution of human society through your relationships at work and at home, at church, and in your community. You can do this as a handy man, a mother, a social worker, a graphic designer, an engineer, an architect – as whatever God has called you to be.

The cultural mandate was meant to govern everything Adam and Eve would do after it was given and everything we do as Christians today. The gospel calls all Christians to be faithful to God’s mission as expressed in the cultural mandate.

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The biblical view of creation as I understand from Genesis is that God created the earth and called it good. And it functioned well. Secondly, he placed humans in charge of caretaking for his creation. This is where things went downhill. I think historically, people and Christians included, have not understood properly the full emphasis of what it means to care for creation and as a consequence, we see the degradation of the created world around us.

This not only affects polar bears and butterflies, but it affects humans as well. Study upon study has shown that environmental degradation impacts those who are impoverished more than those who are not.

So, I think in our calling to love God and to love others we also need to love and care for the created world around us. This is a calling of all of us, of all people. But as a scientist, studying ecology, it’s also perhaps in some ways uniquely a calling for me.

There’s a lot of debate outside of science about climate change. The main questions tend to be “Is it real? What or who is responsible? Is it serious?” So I always like to frame it from within the perspective of science and people can choose to agree or disagree with the science, but the world of science is pretty uniform on the following points.

Number one, it is real. Number two, it is us. Number three, it is serious. Number four, it is going to get worse. Number five, there is hope if we act now. That is the essence of what science says about climate change.

So what I would like to do is encourage Christians to do is talk about it. We don’t talk about it enough. In my mind it is the existential crisis of our generation and if we don’t do something about it very soon, it could become catastrophic. I think it is really important for us to talk about it.

On a microlevel, I recommend that individuals think carefully about living a lifestyle that reduces consumption and the burning of fossil fuels and lowers their overall carbon footprint. Now, will this have any effect whatsoever on climate change? To be honest, no. But I’m not suggesting that people think this way. God has called us to care for this earth and I think reducing consumption and our carbon footprint is part of our role as Christians in caring for creation.

Excerpted from our Nine to Five podcast episode, “Biology, Ecology, and Christianity.”

Editor’s Note: Dr. Lindroth is a Distinguished Achievement Professor at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He has spent over 30 years there and currently is a Professor of Ecology and former Associate Dean of Research.
It is for our Father’s work in the world we have each been called, to join him in his love for creation and all those who he has created in his image and likeness. Each of us is given a unique and never-to-be repeated purpose. God has committed some work to each of us. We may never know it in this life, but it is a key part in his great work.

The world sets our minds on what we could be but are not. Christ on the other hand reconciles us to who we are and our call in the world. Only in him is it possible to be fully happy in who we are and what we do in the world.

Excerpted from a Snapshot podcast.

He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own design and grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began. (2 Timothy 1:9).

Jack is a business insurance broker in California. He often finds himself in situations where a customer, colleague, or even a stranger may have a need that results in Jack praying with them.

One of his customers called and shared that he would be closing his business and asked him to cancel all of his insurance policies. Jack said he could do that and then asked him if he was retiring. “Yes,” he was told. “I have Parkinson’s.” Jack asked him how his relationship was with God and received a positive answer. So, he began to pray for him over the phone. Another time a man in deep depression called him for help. The man refused to seek professional help, so Jack told him he’d call him every day until he was out of the woods. They talked daily and became close on the phone, always ending their time with prayer.

This man would tell you today that Jack saved his life. Jack will tell you God just loved the man through him.

One of the most common desires we hear from Christian men and women of all occupations and ages is the longing for what they do at work to align with a greater purpose. There’s a reason for this. All have been created for a purpose, with a purpose.

For a Purpose, with a Purpose
Greek word the New Testament uses to describe a representative "copy" of something—a sculpture, painting, or coin—that somehow has a share in the reality it represents.

"God creates humanity in reference to (according to) the likeness-image of God. That concept involves humanity’s special connection with God, which makes it possible for humanity to become a meaningful reflection of God.” John Kilner, Dignity and Destiny

In other words, says Kilner, the image of God denotes the special relationship human beings share with God and their vocation to represent God’s character and presence to the rest of creation.

So then, we are called to be “living eikons” of the wise and generous Creator. But how do we do this? Theologians have wrangled with this question for centuries, but we may draw out at least two implications for thinking about how we engage a broken and disjointed world: (1) to be an image bearer is to form and shape cultures and communities through wisdom, and (2) to create and build things that reclaim the beauty of the world from decay.

If we can grasp this truth, it has the potential to radically transform our understanding of work. It can give us purpose in the midst of futility and toil. It can give us an identity rooted in God.

"The Imago Dei is not simply a gift; it is also the task implicit in the gift."

(Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics)

Excerpted with permission from the “Why We Work” course found at www.scatter.org.

Curiously, the Bible never explains precisely what the “image of God” is. The concept has its roots in Genesis 1:26–27, where God created humankind “after his likeness” and “in his own image,” but the text doesn’t say exactly what that means.

So, what are we to make of this? At the very least, it indicates that we are to serve as living eikons. “Eikon,” pronounced “icon” in English, is the Greek word the New Testament uses to describe a representative “copy” of something—a sculpture, painting, or coin—that somehow has a share in the reality it represents.

“God creates humanity in reference to (according to) the likeness-image of God. That concept involves humanity’s special connection with God, which makes it possible for humanity to become...
THE HAND OF THE LORD TOUCHES UGANDA THROUGH CIC
By Aloysius Mugisa

In the fullness of time in 2006 CIC was introduced in Uganda at a Challenge Weekend for a group of 34 Secondary School Teachers. The Lord has since then continued to use CIC to transform lives, heal souls and mend broken relationships. The presence of CIC in Uganda has enabled powerful proclamation of the gospel through various evangelical events. We have listened to moving testimonies at Challenge Weekends and witnessed transformed lives. It is so fulfilling to see a people that once lived under the veil of sorrow and tears now savoring the joy of the lord.

Our preaching over the radio remains one of our most effective soul-winning tools. Our most recent survey indicates that we reach 65,000 people with the gospel message every week. Now we preach the gospel on two FM radio stations. We get many testimonies of how the radio preaching has transformed lives. “I like your radio preaching because of its ecumenical nature. It is very relevant to everyone irrespective of their religious or political affiliation,” said one politician recently. Through our radio evangelization, many people have come to love the Bible, have purchased one and are reading it seriously. One Catholic priest recently said, “I carry a small radio to the shower-room to listen to your radio program. It enriches my life and my homilies.”

I bless the Lord Jesus for healing and transforming marriages and family renewal program; domestic violence has been tremendously reduced; antagonistic couples have reconciled and are living in peace. “I concentrate on doing what makes him happy, and he, in turn, cares a lot about me. I decided to erase out of my life all the bad things he did to me because that record was only devastating my life,” said one woman.

We see children loved and respected in homes more than before. One day a 16-year-old girl rushed towards me and my wife and embraced us saying, “Thanks be to God for using you to change our family—now we can eat and sleep peacefully.” Her home had been devastated by a violent father. And since January 2019, 69 couples involved in our program have wedded in churches.

I also want to bless the Lord for the transformation of workplace situations.

We have reached many institutions with Hope for the Workplace Seminars (HFWP). Our emphasis is always on caring for, respecting and loving our brethren at the workplace, and balancing faith and work. We have seen improved workplace relationships between employees and employers and their employees. Our latest HFWP was at a teacher—training college from August 8-11, 2019. It was attended by 18 tutors, 34 teacher trainees and 14 support staff. The theme was Workplace Fraternity and the participants requested that there be an annual HFWP seminar for their institution. The hand of the Lord is very evident through CIC Ministry in Uganda.

CIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE
October 4-5, 2019

This year’s CIC Annual Conference will be held on October 4-5 at the Embassy Suites Bloomington, MN.

Building on last year’s success, the conference will be filled with inspiring lightning talks, Christ at Work stories, useful workshops, informative panel discussions, and fellowship with coworkers in Christ. Let’s come together and glorify the Father!
"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