Aligning Your Career to God’s Mission

Chasing the Dream

By Pamela Garcia

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. (Colossians 3:23)

Each one of us likely shares a different attitude about work. In my childhood family, we were constantly indoctrinated with the mantra: work hard, be successful. My dad modeled that by working three jobs for many years and eventually owned his own business and became very successful, attaining “the American Dream.” Following that pattern, I started my first business at age 29, ran it for 10 years, and sold it. Then my husband and I started a business together.

Chasing the American Dream, I became entrenched in my work, sought to become the best in my field, like my dad, but to a fault—lived to work. My business became my life, my identity, and it gradually consumed me. My life was completely out of balance and unfulfilled.

There was always that next proposal to get out, the next sale to make, the next marketing opportunity, the next award to attain. There was always one more rung to climb on the ladder of success. I found myself working an average of 12 hours a day, 6 days a week and sometimes even more.

Meanwhile, my family suffered, and I missed the opportunity to impart Godly character into my children’s lives and others around me. I was working tirelessly, for what seemed to be all the right reasons, but in retrospect, not unto the Lord or for my family, but mainly for myself.

Pamela Garcia is the president of Simmitri, Inc., a Silicon Valley roofing and solar energy company, established in 1995. Pamela has been married to Richard since 1972. They have two children and nine grandchildren. She is a member of the CIC Gilroy Chapter. She can be reached at pgarcia@simmitri.com.
God Challenges Our Status Quo

By Steve Dalgetty

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

In the midst of a fast-paced career and a raising a family it’s rare to slow down and ask why we do what we do. Over 12 years, I built a career in technology consulting and had a lot of financial success. I moved into my dream home by age 32, drove a nice car and was providing a comfortable life for my wife and three kids. However, I was also sacrificing invaluable time with my family. I was working lots of around-the-clock days. I communicated with bosses and clients on nights, weekends, and vacations. If I wasn’t working I was tired and just wanted to be alone.

In 2017, on a train ride from DC to New York for a weekend get-away with my wife, we asked ourselves the question, “Why?” Is this the life God intended for our family? Is there another way? We concluded that we were settling for a lesser life. I had chosen the typical trajectory of the corporate world to get ahead and to hustle with everything I had. It meant we had little time together as a family and had little time for God to work in our lives. We called an audible right then and there.

Fifteen months after that train ride I quit my job and my wife and I turned our part-time business as wedding photographers into a full-time family business. After a year in business together there was a lot more financial uncertainty for our future but there were also wonderful blessings:

- Our family prays together every evening
- I have a lot more interaction with my kids and don’t feel like I’m missing out on their lives
- My wife and I have the chance to talk daily, and not just when we’re exhausted

PRAY:

God, give me the courage to step back and ask if the path I’m on is the path you desire.

REFLECT:

Is there any disorder in your life as a result of your career? Are there ways you can allow God to work through your work and relationships?

DISCUSS:

It’s hard to step back from the chaos of life to challenge whether the path we’re on is the right path. Are there changes we can make today to allow God more room to work in our plans?

WORK FOR YOUR FATHER

“What is God’s call? What is the purpose of work? Discover the fullness of God’s mission by conducting a Working for Our Father series with your coworkers.

To learn more go to BIT.LY/W4RF SERIES
Finding Joy
By Alana Busekrus

Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

In early 2018 I left a dream job. It was a hard decision, but one that made sense. I was leaving a local organization that was struggling financially to work for a national company with an excellent reputation, stability, and opportunities for professional and personal growth. My new peers were professional, efficient, and effective health care providers. Yet the approach to patient care seemed philosophically different than what I had practiced over 20 years.

Almost without realizing it, I settled into a despair that caused me to focus on what I didn’t like—having to clock in and out, entering and sorting data on every patient interaction. Soon, this negative focus robbed my heart of joy. The Lord delivered me from this despair with a bright yellow library book called How to Be Happy at Work. It reminded me that God had led me to this new job and that he would use me for his glory if I would open my heart to the joy he wanted to restore. I began the process of journaling daily, taking time to reflect on and record something that went well, something I had learned or was proud of, and some way I had positively impacted someone. Reflecting on daily blessings led to growing gratitude and joy.

What or who is the hardest situation/person to be grateful for at work?

Thank you Lord for my job and for each coworker/manager/partner/supervisor (name him/her).

Responding to Unethical Leadership
By Steve Dalgetty

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

From 2011 to 2016, I worked for a small digital agency in a DC suburb. I joined as the second hired employee and we grew to about 75 team members while I was there. Our small team was full of brilliant engineers and designers, and we were working on cutting edge technology projects. I truly loved the work and the mission of our team.

However, as I moved into a leadership role I witnessed questionable ethics from my boss. He maliciously turned on employees at the drop of a hat, fired people for minor mistakes, and slandered those employees with ruthless language if they became displeasing to him. He had zero empathy or forgiveness. All people were expendable.

The treatment of employees was increasingly at odds with my Christian faith. I eventually chose to leave and accept a position doing less enjoyable work. I was stunned at the next company by how well people were treated. It was an amazing contrast going from a toxic management culture to one with true servant leadership. I had turned a blind eye many times to the unethical treatment of coworkers before I had the courage to walk away. God desires that our career and our work glorify him. We need to pray for strength from the Holy Spirit to stand up to injustice and support the dignity of all people.

What are five specific things I can list in gratitude about that situation or person?

Are there relationships or policies at work that are unethical or immoral?

Lord, by your grace, speak through my actions and my words that I can serve you and the people you’ve put into my life.
Moments that Matter
By Alana Busekru

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! (Psalm 139: 14 & 17)

As a diabetes nurse specialist, I work daily with patients who have an opportunity to use lifestyle efforts and medications to manage their chronic disease, with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes and minimal complications. Most everyone with diabetes has this goal. However, many patients are labeled as ‘non-compliant’ when they are assessed to be disinterested in making lifestyle changes or using medications as prescribed. Unfortunately, this label often leads to less effort by health care providers to engage these patients.

As a nurse in a busy specialty, I value the need for efficiency in patient care. Yet, as a Christian, I recognize that humans are worthy of respect and love with every interaction. Often the choices patients make or don't make are based on more complex reasons than a chart label can describe. Being Christ as a diabetes nurse means being creative: finding moments that matter most to patients.

Laka wasn’t taking his medication as prescribed and was starting to develop nerve, kidney, and eye damage. After an ER visit, I spent time getting to know Laka. I learned that many of his relatives died of diabetes complications shortly after starting this medicine. He was afraid he would speed complications and death in using this same treatment. By explaining the disease process and medicine action in simple terms I was able to help him understand his body and options for treatment that acknowledged his fears.

He now has well-controlled diabetes and has stopped the progression of complications. As a Christian, I pray daily to see each patient with the eyes of Jesus, knowing that each moment can matter if love is involved in the encounter.

PRAY:
Lord, help me to see each client with your eyes, fresh eyes, with each encounter.

REFLECT:
Do I give people a new chance, a fresh start, even if they've made choices I don't agree with?

DISCUSS:
How can I show those I encounter that God's mercies are new every morning?
Generous in Hard Times

As anyone who works in small business can attest, work often ebbs and flows with the economy and client/customer needs. Trusting in the Lord and continuing to produce excellence is key to long-term success. Creating a work community of mutual respect, kindness, and integrity is also integral.

Brian is a partner in a Minneapolis marketing firm. Economic downturns have at times proven challenging for the agency he runs with two other Christian partners. “Marketing firms sell time—for design, branding, marketing strategies—so they are at the mercy of client engagements. The nature of the work ebbs and flows, sometimes for longer cycles.” He said, “When the economy is down, we feel it early.” Moreover, “We are somewhat helpless to change the circumstances.”

Dependence on God

Facing economic downturns are always challenging, but can also be tender times. Brian is reminded of his dependence on God. “I realize again and again that I am called to be faithful to doing well the work that is put before me but ultimately, making it grow is up to the Lord.”

In 2008, the bank cut the firm’s credit line by 80 percent. It was emotionally distressing. There was concern about layoffs. The firm owners went to the Lord in their churches, in personal prayer, and together as owners. They prayed for trust and provision and were led to Proverbs 11:25. “A generous person will prosper; he who refreshes others will be refreshed.” The message they clearly heard was: “Don’t focus on what you don’t have, but rather focus on giving. There is always more to give.”

It was a pivotal moment. Pulling the staff together they discussed how business was tight, but then launched the idea that they could use the time to do good for others. They decided to take the opportunity to give of their talents to others who were struggling. Brian’s firm offered their services pro bono to two small businesses that were also facing dire straits.

“These are good Christian people and good friends. We realized that what we do as a firm could be a tremendous blessing to them, and to us. We had an opportunity to be used by God to bless others.”

Turning It Around

While counterintuitive from a business perspective, the opportunity to give rather than receive, to put others first when the bottom line was lagging behind, resonated deeply with the staff and changed the whole firm’s perspective.

“Coming out of the staff meeting,” says Brian, “we felt the weight of the burden of the downturn was lifted. Our path gave everyone something good to do. It gave us an opportunity to do good work, even though we didn’t choose the circumstances. It brought all of us great refreshment and I think that was because it is true to the Gospel.”

Everyone embraced the idea of generosity and started looking outwardly with hope instead of disparagingly inwardly.

“What God has created,” reflects Brian, “will stand. His work will be done and he invites us to participate. He made us to be conduits of generosity which is a great opportunity for joy.”

As is often the case in workplaces, tent-making—the non-ministerial work people do day in and day out—can seem inconsequential from an eternal perspective.

“This felt important! And I know that caring for these two businesses and their families was transformational for them, and for our whole staff. We were all uplifted and affirmed by changing from self-focused to others-focused,” recalled Brian.

The talented team not only created new value for clients, but internal enthusiasm and energy skyrocketed. The opportunity to do good work as a team was a key differentiator that pulled them all out of the slump. Generosity to others and ability to work together for the good, proved profitable in so many ways. Moreover, pro bono work for Christian organizations and outreaches has continued to grow as an aspect of the firm’s labor for the Kingdom.

Brian Dahl was interviewed on a Nine to Five Podcast. To listen to the full interview go to bit.ly/WorkingTogetherCIC

Sign up today for our Workday Reflections: bit.ly/WorkdayReflections
I work for a small local bank as a loan officer providing small business loans to the business community. The environment is largely secular. The workplace is filled with distractions that make it difficult for me to recognize my need for God or to allow God to be a part of my work.

Through CIC, God showed me that I have a role in his creation and he put me in my position to help others by using my talents. I am most grateful I can use my faith, calling on the Holy Spirit, to make daily decisions and pray for my clients and colleagues. I personally have witnessed the benefits of calling on the Holy Spirit at work.

When you think about how in debt we are to God and what he has put us on Earth for, it only makes sense to spend every second trying to serve God. It doesn’t make any sense for us to go to work and not spend one waking moment thinking, “How can I do this for God?” Many times we may ask ourselves “Should I be in this position? Should I be doing this work?” My advice would be to ask yourself, are you pursuing God? Is what you’re doing biblical? And are you being led by the Spirit? If the answer is yes, than stop questioning yourself and move forward and pursue God.
God’s presence was surrounding me and lifting me up. Walking daily into the industrial park was at times lonely and discouraging. One morning, when my feet were dragging, I asked God, “Where are you, Lord?” At that moment, my phone started playing a song, “Have a Little Faith in Me” and as the sun broke through the darkness, I knew the Holy Spirit was strengthening me to be strong, resolute, and to finish the project.

The first project was not a financial success and I was not lauded at the home office, but months later, we began Phase Two with the same company. I went into that challenge armed with greater confidence and faith that in truth, God is with me always. The “Jesus Loves You” billboard across from my hotel room, was a constant mantra and I experienced the Lord’s grace and success by “giving it to God!”

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Luke 11:9-10)

I was working for a third-party logistics firm specializing in transporting large construction equipment. My workplace was not known for its outstanding interpersonal relationships. I experienced a well-established combative and adversarial relationship with management which produced high levels of personal anxiety.

On short notice, I flew to Texas to survey a multi-million dollar project. I was in charge of the logistics for loading and transporting millions of pounds of equipment from there to the Midwest. The responsibility was daunting. Moreover, the rigging company proved difficult to work with and altered the project in such a manner it precluded our ability to make a profit.

I was in a dark place and I found myself pleading with the Lord to help me. I remembered a phrase used in my Challenge Group gatherings, “Give it to God!” In the midst of mounting anxiety and stress, I got on my knees and prayed often and intensely.

Christ showed up in the kindness of a soulful woman working the guard shack. She greeted me each morning with a smile and kind word. Over the weeks, we began sharing our stories in Christ and, in the end, I was able to tearfully express my gratitude to her for the grace-filled interactions we had had.

Christ showed up in the friendship extended by a forklift operator named Francisco. He had my back when transport problems occurred. Moreover, he shared with me that on weekends he ministered at a prison and was a Spanish radio pastor. We prayed together and shared Scripture passages as we worked to untangle the complications of the project. I was working alongside the Lord.

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Taylor Garcia is a logistics brand planner for a consumer goods company and a Christian whose fire wasn’t really sparked until she entered the workplace. “After college, I took a job in Iowa,” Taylor said. “For the first time in four years, no one around me had preconceived notions of me. I felt free to be whoever I wanted. I had had a desire to be a Christian since a sorority sister in college defined grace for me, and for the first time, that’s what I chose to be.”

After going through Biblical counseling and re-establishing her identity in Christ, Taylor was challenged to live out her faith in her workplace. “I was slowly freed from the need to be a people-pleaser,” Taylor shared. “This, combined with a conviction to be authentic, really allowed me to share the Gospel at work.”

Taylor once heard a few comments from her boss that made her realize that her superior was not inclined toward Christianity. “I decided that I was not going to tell her that I am a Christian, and I told God so. I was going to do anything I could to avoid telling her.”

God had other plans.

“I ended up blurting it out in a really awkward way,” Taylor said. “It was a very uncomfortable situation, and I remember coming out of it thinking, ‘Why did I do that? Why am I so awkward?’”

However, it seems that God wanted her boss to know about her faith. “It ended up opening a doorway for communication between us,” Taylor stated. “Because of my honesty, she now feels comfortable asking me questions about Christianity, and I am able to share the Gospel with her that way.”

God was able to start a good work through Taylor’s openness and authenticity. “I had to ask myself, ‘Do I care more about what these people think of me or about their eternity?’” Taylor said. “Once I realized that it was the latter, I was able to start truly being Christ to my coworkers.”

This reflection is based on a recent Nine to Five Podcast. Listen here: bit.ly/FaithAuthenticity
LETS GET VIRAL
By Alex Soholt

In the next few months, our Workday Reflections audience will hit 3,000 subscribers. Every weekday morning, from the east coast to the west coast of the United States, to the United Kingdom, and India, individuals are beginning their day by reading one of our reflections. In the last year alone, we have added an additional 300 new subscribers, illustrating people’s desires to read and learn from others’ real-life experiences in the workplace.

Similarly our Nine to Five podcast audience has continued to expand. We have recently released our 30th episode and surpassed over 10,000 total listens. Our podcast listeners come from all 50 states and extend globally across numerous countries. The last six months has seen significant growth for the podcast. We went from 600 listens in November to over 1,000 in April.

While a significant portion of these listeners are coming from our Workday Reflections, we are seeing people find our podcast through social media platforms such as Facebook and Linkedin, as well as other websites that have featured specific episodes to their own followers. This growth demonstrates the need that people are seeking to learn more about building God’s kingdom in their workplace.

Join us in spreading the word and sharing these resources with others. If each one of you encouraged three friends, family, or coworkers to sign up and receive our reflections, our audience would expand to almost 9,000 members. It may be as simple as forwarding one reflection that you think would be impactful to someone else you know. Each day as you read the reflection, ask the Lord to bring to mind others who might benefit from it. Pass it on with your own encouragement.

You can also easily spread the word about our Nine to Five podcast in a variety of ways. With all the episodes being featured on our website, you can quickly share the web link to the podcast page across your social media and personal email. Many people listen to the interviews during their commute to and from work as helpful insight that they can replicate in their own workplaces. Facebook and LinkedIn make it very easy to do.

Let’s think of each story and interview as mustard seeds that God can use to touch lives and open up conversations that would draw others into his service as a coworker in Christ.

2019 Annual Conference

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

Building on last year’s fresh approach, 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!

For hotel room registration and information: CICINTL.ORG/CONFERENCE
"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

Galatians 2:20