Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. (Luke 9: 23-24)

Many of us find ourselves at crossroads in our lives, especially when it comes to our careers (maybe even more so at the new year). Uncertainty in the economy, the industry we are involved in, our role in our department, and how best to serve the Lord wherever we are can come into play in our minds and distract us. Many readers likely will have considered what God’s purpose is for them in their job or career.

In the course of my career, I was not overly aggressive in terms of getting the next promotion or big job, but I did strive to be acknowledged for what I did—either monetarily or through some other form of recognition. My jobs had descriptions of what was expected as well as annual bonus objectives or goals that contributed to my overall compensation. Between my career, being married, raising a family, and being involved in various groups, an overwhelming sense of “busyness” crept into my life. I was always on the move and not necessarily focused on the right priorities.

In retrospect, I don’t think I was unlike many in the workplace but certainly there was a peace that was missing in my life. I was raised in a Christian household and knew there were right and wrong ways to think and act. Yes, I made poor choices at times, but for the most part my intentions were good.

I have been in and around some form of production or manufacturing.
Character Counts
By Rich Preuss

To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. (Proverbs 21:3)

It had been a brutal year. Our firm had spent 6 months negotiating the sale of our benefits operation to a larger multinational firm. Provisions in our employment agreements with our producers allowed them to buy their business, if we did sell a division or the company. We were concerned about caring for our employees and being fair on all fronts. Everything lined up: no one would lose their job, employees would get raises, benefits opportunities would be the same or better, and every benefits producer was in favor of the deal.

Among our seven owners, negotiations were tricky. Three owners would be going to the new company and four would be staying with our firm. Not only were we negotiating to get the best price, but we were negotiating amongst ourselves on how the sale proceeds would be split. The owners who were staying wanted to be sure that our company was not put at risk by losing a third of the company’s revenue. The owners who were moving on wanted to make sure they got the best value in the buyouts, as this was essentially their retirement.

As the buyer dug into our books, the purchase price fluctuated wildly. Every time the ownership team decided how to split the proceeds, it seemed like the buyer changed the price. After months of back-and-forth, we got the final offer. Our analyst went over it with us, and it looked good. However, she pointed out the offer had a $300,000 mistake to our benefit.

The next morning our ownership team met for breakfast and I brought up the error. If we had $300,000 less, it was coming out of either the company pocket, the owners’ pockets who were leaving, or some combination. Within minutes, we agreed that we needed to bring this mistake to light, and allow the purchaser to change the offer. We determined a new allocation and the purchaser lowered the offer.

One of our company values is “do the right thing.” I am grateful to be part of an ownership team that stands by its values and works with integrity.

Rich Preuss serves as Chairman on the CIC Board of Directors. He has been married to his wife, Beth, since 1983, and they have 10 children. He, along with four others, is an owner of the Healy Group, a financial and risk management firm. He can be reached at richpreuss@alumni.nd.edu.

PRAY
Lord, help me to see clearly the path of correct action in accordance with your will.

REFLECT
Consider a time when you were faced with an option that was legal but perhaps not in the best interest of all parties.

DISCUSS
How do you experience an opportunity to do what is right, even when the consequences are not in your favor? How do you respond?
REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

The Work of Our Hands
By Miriam Rupprecht

May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands. (Psalm 90:16-17)

Working with children is unpredictable. So much of the successes or failures in my work as a pediatric speech-language therapist seem completely out of my control.

As the saying goes “The best laid plans often go awry.” We may look at our successes as the result of our hard work and preparation; and our failures as a result of the lack of them. But that is often not the case. Back in March, when all the preschools I worked in shut down, we transitioned to providing therapy through online sessions. I remember thinking: This will never work! I had never done an online session before and the whole situation felt so daunting and impossible. However, God encouraged me with little miracles each time a child would greet me with a smile ready to try to learn something new and each time they did. What a humbling reminder that no good work comes from me and my hard work but it comes from my God.

We can honor God by remembering where our successes and our joys truly come from. When things get difficult and we feel the weight of our failure, there too we can look to our God, who takes our burdens and offers his guidance and comfort. This is not to say we shouldn’t prepare and do our best, but that we shouldn’t get so lost in work that we forget who’s really in control—our God who loves us and grants us strength to meet each challenge and blesses us with unexpected moments of joy.

Miriam Rupprecht lives in Saint Paul, MN, with her husband, Ryan. She is a pediatric speech-language therapist in Minneapolis and she can be reached at mbrupprecht@gmail.com.

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

Aiming for the Unknown
By Peter Lonnquist

“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

Three years ago, I left a job to find something better. I spent three months job searching and pondering life, and eventually settled on a one-week temp job stuffing envelopes, while I kept searching. I decided to put my all into the opportunity. One task snowballed into another and I ended up staying for a few months, transferring the firm’s entire paper storage system into a digital database.

Eventually I accepted a position in the learning department at a large tax firm. I was nervous about how I would fit into this business work culture, as I’m more of a daydreaming artist but still I followed the opportunity.

I worked hard, brought innovative ideas, and was always honest. I respected opinions across all levels of the workplace hierarchy. Though there was tension at times, people saw the work that I produced, and I was trusted with larger roles.

I began to feel myself running into a wall regarding what I could do next. Feeling down, I reached out to a colleague. We had a good conversation, and he introduced me to powerful new software that I ended up diving heavily into. As COVID-19 hit, my department needed new solutions and I was able to use that software to build multiple tools to pull us out of situations we couldn’t have previously solved. With these new skills I was promoted and given a role focusing on innovation for learning.

I may hit more walls in the future. But the direction is God’s decision alone to make. Instead of living in doubt and anxiety I will live in trusting that God will lead me to where I am needed.

Peter Lonnquist is an Associate for RSM, USLLP. He also is a music composer. He lives in Minneapolis, MN, with his wife and he can be reached at lonnquist.peter@gmail.com.

PRAY

God, I thank you daily for the countless opportunities you have given me. Help me to see these opportunities clearly, so that I may honor you in my work.

REFLECT

How can I work toward putting my trust in God and letting him be in control?

DISCUSS

Look for hidden opportunities in your life. Have you honored God by taking advantage of those opportunities?
We are currently accepting article submissions for The Flame newsletter. Here are a few of the upcoming monthly themes:

- Work Life and Family
- Having Hope
- Influencing Workplace Culture
- Fruit of the Spirit
- Doing The Right Thing
- Overcoming Jealousy and Envy

If you have a workplace story that fits with one of these themes contact us at communications@worklight.org. Not a writer? That’s okay! We have writers who will help you share your story. These stories are so powerful and will help us gain greater understanding of what it means to be Christ in the workplace and live out our faith at work.
Continued from page 1

Making Time

engineering all of my career. At my core, I have always had a sense of trying to help people do their jobs better. At times, this desire would be at odds with “my” personal performance goals or objectives.

Mid-career, I started to realize that the Lord had given me everything I had and that he would never abandon me. It was through meeting with like-minded Christians (brothers and sisters in Christians in Commerce, now WorkLight) who wanted to live their faith in the workplace that I realized I had a higher purpose in my career. The distractions to my “busyness” had become opportunities to serve and support my coworkers. Invariably, when I took time to help others, I never ran out of time to get “my” work done.

Making time for others at work extended beyond the tasks and duties of the work. I started building more than just casual, work-related relationships. We started to share life – challenges and victories – and have more meaningful conversations. By denying myself the time to get “my” work done and “taking up the cross” of being available to others, I was following the model Christ invites us to.

As we start a new year, I invite you to join me in making time for others. If you see someone struggling – especially at work – offer some encouragement or help. If someone from your past crosses your mind or heart, take a few moments to text or call them. By honoring others with the time the Lord has given you, you will be honoring him.

Art Klaum has been a member of WorkLight and Christians in Commerce for many years. He and his wife, Geraldine, live in North Carolina and continue to seek ways to serve the Lord.

Beth Preuss is married to Rich Preuss, Chairman of the CIC Board of Directors, and they live in South Bend, IN. She is a member of The Flame editorial board.

Stress Resiliency

An Interview with Clark Souers

By Beth Preuss

Much of 2020 has focused on managing often unmanageable stress during unprecedented historical events—a global pandemic, violent ethnic division, a polarized election season, and economic instability. Clark Souers runs an HR consulting company, Expert Effect, that serves a wide range of businesses. New to his repertoire is “Stress Resiliency.”

Clark radiates authentic positivity, energy, and has a winning smile. His work reflects his personal and professional journey of trust, success, and the power of the Holy Spirit to the benefit of numerous clients and individuals. “I grew up with Psalm 23, The Lord Is My Shepherd, as the anchor of our household,” he said. “That psalm is actually all about stress resiliency.” As a young teen his life was filled with major stress. By the time he was a junior at Pepperdine University, the wheels were coming off the bus.

He had a good support system of fellow Christians and church brought him peace, but he was so driven to succeed that he was going nonstop. “I went into my junior year as class president, manager of the campus theater, manager of the volunteer center, wanting to get all A’s, he said. “My life was just too overloaded and all of a sudden, it flipped upside down and I felt incredibly weak.”

He took the semester off, started studying stress, and leaned into the Lord anew. By the time he returned to Pepperdine, he had a new set of tools and a new way to tap into God that changed his life. “I really believe that God has designed each of us for excellence, created in his excellent image,” he said. “We must be patient, knowing that excellence is going to come at the right time, after the right amount of foundational work. And, at times, that may appear as periods of really low productivity.”

“The challenge is to not allow success, productivity, or the pursuit of recognition to become an idol. Striking the balance requires quiet moments of stillness and unproductivity. It is in the stillness of fellowship with God that we experience the freedom to put excellence back into God’s focus and allow the Holy Spirit to guide the work.”

The goal of Expert Effect is not only to support businesses with HR but also to help people become more resilient to stress and to allow themselves to choose a different trajectory. The firm is not overtly Christian but is spiritually sensitive.

In describing the stress resiliency aspect of their work, Clark said, “We have this team of stress resiliency experts, a performance psychologist, nutritionist, a time-effectiveness expert, and it’s not a Christian based program. By adding a spiritual expert to the team; someone who runs with God, who knows God and who can help people go deep on the spiritual side of life, we address a big part of stress resiliency.” The spiritual component might only be an option, but it is often a helpful one.

Beth Preuss is married to Rich Preuss, Chairman of the CIC Board of Directors, and they live in South Bend, IN. She is a member of The Flame editorial board.
Bridging the Divide

By Steve Becker

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

Imagine the polarized world that framed Jesus’ call to be peacemakers—Sadducees vs. Pharisees, Jews vs. Gentile, slaves vs. free, Greeks vs. Romans. And, they didn’t even have social media to throw gasoline on the fire.

Yet Jesus was telling his followers, if they were going to be his children, they would need to be peacemakers in their highly-flammable situation. Sound familiar? The polarization in the United States and the binary “us vs them” nature of our world seems to put us on the same track. Yet, we are called to be his peacemakers.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to walk into the most contentious situations and bring understanding, respect, and love between individuals, neighbors, coworkers and fellow citizens? We could have a real conversation. We could be Christ bridging the divide to communicate God’s love and truth.

While this is a big and complex subject, I’d like to share a personal starting point that include two passages from Paul.

The first is the call to take on “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) and the other is to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:6). My thinking often clouds the “mind of Christ.” The more I let the Spirit discipline my own thinking, the more the mind of Christ will reign in my life.

Recently, I found a Braver Angels* course that provided a helpful personal audit. How often do you find yourself:

• Thinking about “those people” on the other political side without any regard for the variation among them?
• Assigning mainly self-serving or negative motives to the other group—and mainly positive motives to my group?
• Focusing on the most extreme or outrageous ideas and people on the other side, thereby making it hard to see how a reasonable person could remain in that group?
• Comparing the worst people on the other side with the best people on my side?
• Feeling a “rush” of pleasure with friends when we ridicule those crazies on the other political side?

The course addresses the “Four Horsemen of Polarization” – Stereotyping, Dismissing, Ridiculing, and Contempt. Each fuels the negative emotions of hate, disdain, and pity rather than respect and appreciation.

Behind every position is a person made in the image and likeness of God and loved by him.

This year my resolution is to learn strategies that take on the mind of Christ and discipline those polarizing tendencies that would cloud his thinking in me. I’d like to learn how to talk to others who don’t share my beliefs or views in a way that invites them in. And, finally, I’d like to be more of a catalyst for depolarizing conversations with my own “like-minded” friends and believers so that we could be better peacemakers.

Won’t you join with me?

—

*This is not an endorsement. Braver Angels describe themselves as a citizens’ movement to bring liberals and conservatives together on a grassroots level to find one another as citizens.

Steve Becker is a longtime member of WorkLight and CIC and serves on the Board of Directors. Retired from a career in advertising, he can be reached at stevan.becker@gmail.com.

President’s Note

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Dear WorkLight brothers and sisters,

Happy new year! This year more than ever, people seem eager to usher in a new year to replace the old. Such a hope can be affirming and inspiring if we are anchored deeply in Christ. For a new creation is not made by the flipping of a calendar page, but by the timeless sacrifice of Jesus.

As we move into 2021, how will you honor God in your work? We pray for you to answer the call to working for our Father 24/7. What a blessing that attending to such a call might generate yet another example of Christ in the workplace. May such stories flow abundantly in small groups, chapter meetings, Spark emails, and Flame newsletters alike. Come Holy Spirit!

At WorkLight we seek to act as the hands and feet of Christ in all we do, which includes the growth of our team. Thanks to the generosity of God through donors like you – we now have a Ministry Program Manager, Justin Lassen, on staff!

As of December 12, we have raised approximately $73,630 from 50 donors for the Annual Gift Campaign. And, our total goal of reaching $450,000 and 400 donors is just around the corner. Please consider becoming a part of our ministry as a donor if you haven’t already.

Looking forward to growing together in Christ as we move into 2021. May his light shine ever more brightly through you in this new year.

God bless,

Wes
FROM CHRISTIANS IN COMMERCE TO WORKLIGHT, 2020 IN REVIEW

During a historic year full of earthly challenges, we have come together in Christ to launch WorkLight in 2020. Only by the grace of God have we grown from the first Challenge Weekend in 1983 to a multi-generational movement of the Holy Spirit in workplaces across the world. Glory be to God!

NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020:

January
• Newsletter rebrand from Challenge Newsletter to The Flame Newsletter
• David Mazanowski joined the Board of Directors
• Hire for President, Wesley Farrow
• First-ever WorkLight StoryNight (in-person) held in Eagan, MN
• Implemented Bloomerang, a donor database solution that helps nonprofits, like us, stay in touch with our donors, increase efficiency, and facilitate a better user experience when giving.

February
• Vanessa Cooreman Smith joined the Board of Directors

March
• Hire for Director of Communications, Becki Lonnquist

April
• WorkLight Remote emails began to provide news, resources and help us navigate the isolation of COVID-19
• Brought on new partners to facilitate an overhaul of our constituent database, to better engage with our Christian family, accurately track our growth benchmarks, ensure nothing falls through the cracks, and generally get more done with less time.

May
• WorkLight launched first national Working for Our Father virtual event
• Weekly WorkLight Remote small groups launched for all to attend (join by visiting worklight.org/small-groups)
• Hosted an online-only GivingTuesday campaign, a day of giving that generated over $2,000 in donations.
• Name update: “Workday Reflections” to “Spark” reflections

June
• Virtual Program Consultant, Kathryn Elliot, contracted for work and development in our Programs department

July
• Name updates took place on all of our social media platforms from “Christians in Commerce” to “WorkLight”
• WorkLight.org launched on July 1
• National Working for Our Father event held on Zoom

August
• First-ever virtual WorkLight StoryNight held on Zoom and Facebook Live
• WorkLight Story videos created and available online and on Vimeo
• Phase 2 of WorkLight.org complete (this included Nine to Five podcasts, Blog, Start Something page and the Share Your Story contribution page).

September
• Phase 3 of WorkLight.org complete (this included the events page, event submission, event calendar, small groups page and small group map, WorkLight Stories page, Working for Our Father page)
• Event toolkits created to help host regional WorkLight StoryNight & Working for Our Father events.
• WorkLight Annual Census survey took place and had over 400 participants. Thank you to those who took our survey!

October
• Our communications department began using SMS (text messaging) promotion tools

November
• Annual Gift Campaign Kick-off! Theme: Ignite Your Flame & Let Your Light Shine Bright
• Video series created for the Annual Gift Campaign highlighting the importance of our stories, events & being in relation with one another as Christians.

December
• Hire for Ministry Program Manager, Justin Lassen (stay tuned for our introduction article in the next newsletter & welcome Justin!)

In 2021, we hope to accomplish even more, all by the glory and grace of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ!

If you would like to support this movement of the Holy Spirit, please visit our website worklight.org/support-us.
“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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