One busy Friday afternoon, a former employee stopped in to visit. She had previously abandoned our firm during a busy week, leaving the burden of her responsibilities to me and the rest of the employees. There were hard feelings. The time invested in training her had gone to waste. I felt annoyed and betrayed as she stood in my doorway.

Crew members were watching to see how I would react and deal with her. If I devoted time her way, other employees would have to cover my responsibilities. I prayed silently that she would leave but she did not. So I led her back to my office and asked what she wanted.

She said that as a believer she knew she had done the wrong thing by quitting and that she had come to apologize. My heart softened! She then asked if I would pray with her - the real reason for her visit. Her fifteen-year-old daughter was pregnant and the baby's father was treating her harshly. In addition, this woman's own husband was not supporting her, causing more hard feelings. She was overwhelmed by anger and unforgiveness towards everyone involved.

I asked her to share about the young man in a relationship with her daughter. She explained that he had been on his own since age ten. Though his heart was kind, he was also quick to anger. I suggested that perhaps God wanted her to train, guide and nurture him so that he could learn how to be a husband, a father and a man.

She replied, “How can I do that if I cannot stand him?” I explained that Christ would give her courage. “You want me to forgive him? I won’t do it,” she insisted.

I shared with her some wisdom my father had passed on to me when I told him I had been born again in Christ. My father had said, “Being humble is a great virtue, but to be truly repentant is to be humiliated for Christ’s sake.”

Holding her hands, I encouraged her to recognize that holding onto anger and unforgiveness was a sin. I reminded her that, as a believer, she had an obligation to put her faith into action. After praying together, she was on her way.

Early the following Monday, she returned to my business with her husband, their daughter, and the young man. After a short greeting, she excitedly told me what had happened after we had prayed together that day. She had gone home and suddenly remembered a time I had offended a woman and had gotten down on my knees to ask forgiveness. That memory, she said, had given her the courage she needed.

She then turned to her daughter, asking for her forgiveness. Though surprised, the girl embraced her mother as they both sobbed. The mother immediately felt a new surge of affection for her daughter and the unborn baby. She turned and, seeing her husband in tears, sought his forgiveness also. Finally, she approached the young man. Kneeling before him, she asked him to forgive her as well. The youth fell to his knees in front of her, tears streaming down his cheeks, and begged her to forgive him.

I praise God for allowing me to play a part in this family’s powerful story of forgiveness.

Joe Blanco is a member of the Mesa Men’s Chapter in Arizona. He and his wife, Angelique, reside in Chandler, Arizona, where Joe is the owner of Catalina Cleaners. He can be reached at catalina cleaners@msn.com.

Are we accepting the Father’s gift of work in our lives?

Whether retired or in the workplace, we are in the mission field 24/7. How do we spend our time there? Are we being the best at what we are doing at that moment? Life is a gift, work is a gift and our gift back to God is simply to serve him, no matter where we are or what we do.

As it says in our new “Working for Our Father” workshop series, “Daily choices are the chisels that sculpt our character.” Our choices shape and form our relationships at work. They embody the spirit, skill and quality of our work. Our choices make us or break us and they answer the question, “Are we accepting the Father’s gift of work in our lives?”

Yes, Lord, we accept this gift of labor you have given us. We want to hear you say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” here and now, right where you have placed us.

Joe Blanco

Joe Blanco is a member of the Mesa Men’s Chapter in Arizona. He and his wife, Angelique, reside in Chandler, Arizona, where Joe is the owner of Catalina Cleaners. He can be reached at catalina cleaners@msn.com.
WEEK 1 • LIFE PLEASING TO GOD

REFLECTIONS

For the Team By Luke Cahill

Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Starting with just two people, our market research firm has grown to twenty employees over the last six years. My focus had always been on the clients, making sure we met their needs and exceeded their expectations. After all, a delighted client will not only keep doing business with us, but also spread the word about us to others. Although this was good for business in the short-run, it was unsustainable to only focus on the clients’ needs without considering the needs of others - my team’s, my family’s, or my own.

Out of necessity and through the grace of God, we found a way to rework our goals so that both excellence and life balance were priorities. We learned to delegate and build the team so that we all had opportunities to do exceptional work without getting burnt out.

While the company thrived, however, I began to struggle with my own role.

My consideration had always been for the client and how to serve them. Now that I had limited client interactions, what was my purpose? In an almost audible voice, the Holy Spirit answered me, “You are here to serve your team now. If you take care of them, they will take care of your clients and ultimately, the business.”

On the face of it, there can appear to be a conflict of interest in looking out for your employees or coworkers over your clients. If a deadline is tight and someone is feeling under the weather, how do you balance consideration for the deadline with genuinely wanting to care for the coworker who is sick?

In my business, we address these challenges in a variety of ways – maintaining reasonable working hours and time spent traveling, offering the flexibility to work from home, and awarding bonuses, to name a few. Overall, we have a very generous and flexible approach. With my new calling as caretaker of my team, these are gifts that are freely given, but also a benefit to the success of the company.

Here is one example of how this played out.

A project director on our team was exceptional and loved by clients. She had a young son who was diagnosed with severe allergies, requiring many doctor’s visits to formulate a treatment plan. It was a busy and distracting time for her. We cared for this employee by lightening her workload and giving her flexibility as to when and where she worked. This enabled her to be an advocate for her son in the way she needed to.

Life has since normalized for her and she has continued to be a rock star for us! During a recent review, she shared that during that hectic time, she had been offered another job, which would have meant a lot more money and an exciting new challenge. She had turned it down because she felt so cared for at our company. As a result, both our clients and the business will continue to benefit from her excellent work.

I am grateful to the Holy Spirit for providing me with the perspective that my new role is to care for my team and giving me the grace to authentically love my coworkers without agonizing about what that generosity is costing me.

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Luke Cahill has been a member of the Minneapolis-South Men’s Chapter for about a year. He is also one of the newest members of the CIC Board of Directors. Luke lives in Eagan, MN with his wife and four young sons. He owns a market research company, REAL Insight, based in Minneapolis. Luke can be reached at lcahill@insightrealized.com

When has my love and compassion for coworkers shone through? When could I have shown more empathy?

For the Team

When have you been torn between supporting a coworker and making sure the job gets done? What should be done in those moments?

WORKING FOR OUR FATHER: NEW, IMPACTFUL WORKSHOP

Working for Our Father is designed to help Christians align their careers with God’s mission. Written and produced to impact all age groups, particularly the next generation, this series utilizes professional, engaging videos that have captured the imagination of attendees, opening up to them a world of possibilities in working for their Father by the power of the Holy Spirit!

There are four presentations:

• Accepting the Father’s Gift of Work
• Triumphing Over Toil, Trials, and Temptations
• Aligning Your Career to God’s Mission
• Operating in the Fruit of the Spirit

For more information, visit cicintl.org/wfof.
Personal Sacrifice  By Steve Smith

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29: 11)

In January of 2015 our small business, Flourish Boutique, was flourishing indeed, having become the number-one boutique in our local market. Now, with a rapidly growing online business, we were preparing for the next level. We leased a warehouse, built a better website and hired key employees. All the while in our personal life, we had been

PRAY:

Lord, help me to trust in your goodness, that you have a plan and a purpose, especially in the midst of hardship. Teach me to lean into your love and look for your hand in my life.

REFLECT:

How have sacrifices that the Lord has called you to make really been blessings in disguise?

DISCUSS:

In what areas of your life are you holding on too tightly to your own plans? What specifically would it mean to give the Lord control and authority in these areas?

Making a Difference in the Workplace  By Steve Smith

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12: 18)

As a realtor, I often run into conflicts between buyers and sellers in the course of purchasing a home. In one recent transaction, a buyer had completed her due diligence and closed on a home that had been substantially remodeled in an older section of the city.

PRAY:

Father, give me your heart for all those who are hurting around me. Help me seek first to hear rather than to be heard, to see rather than to be seen.

REFLECT:

What people/situations is the Lord putting in your path in which you can be a peacemaker?

DISCUSS:

How does pride get in the way of putting yourself second? What examples can you share about working for our Father in your workplace?
Holding Each Other Accountable

By Steve Smith

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

It has been my great fortune to be in a committed Challenge Group for six years. During that time, I have been through dramatic shifts in circumstances, from surviving a brutal recession to a rapid return to prosperity, from both unemployment and under employment to running a team of eight professionals.

Through all of these changes, my brothers have sustained and encouraged me. We keep a daily message thread to hold one another accountable for our daily appointments with God. Many brothers share scripture verses and encouraging words. I always find myself built up by their faithfulness. It calls me on to “pay it forward” in my workplace.

Our chapter recently hosted the Working for Our Father series over a four-week period. It began in January and I found myself busy with the holidays, family and many other demands. However, my brothers were still finding time to meet and prepare to share God’s desire to transform the work lives of many in our community. Once again, their faithfulness called me on to make time and prepare as well.

We put the time in and prayed that the Lord would send men and women to the workshop. We ended up with forty-five attendees and are planning to launch new Challenge Groups from the hungry hearts that are tuning in to the Lord’s desire for the workplace.

I give thanks for these men the Lord has put in my life as brothers to work the soil and get our hands dirty in the Father’s fields!

PRAY:

Father, thank you for the men and women you have put in my life who encourage me daily and call me on by their example of faithfulness. Strengthen and renew us as we work for you.

REFLECT:

Am I setting a loving example in word and deed so that others might come to know our Father’s love through me?

DISCUSS:

How can I play a role in hosting a Working for Our Father series in my chapter? How can I share the gifts I’ve been given with others?

2016 PRESIDENT’S “YEAR IN REVIEW” ONLINE

CHRISTIANS in COMMERCE

PRESIDENT’S UPDATE

There has been much excitement within the CIC community this past year! We have made tremendous strides in our Vision and Mission of “Being Christ in the Workplace.”

Thanks to you and all your time, talents and efforts within your communities, CIC is reaching more people than ever before. Our goal has always been to transform people’s lives so they can transform their workplaces. We are to be Coworkers in Christ in all that we do.

The Vision and Mission of CIC are realized when we as Christians reflect the power and attractiveness of the gospel, drawing fellow brothers and sisters into serving the common good in our ordinary, daily lives, whether at home or at work.

In the past year, we have had so much to be thankful for! Here are a few of your accomplishments:

- Multiple CIC Town Hall meetings across the country
- “Doing the Right Thing in Business and Government” seminar
- Four-week “Living the Vision” series
- Bill Dalgetty’s appearance at ExxonMobil Alpha program
- New Campus Club at Fresno State University
- Trip to Uganda
- Working for Our Father Video series introduced
- Annual Conference: “Come to Me All You Who Labor”

To read and download Terry Cassell’s 2016 President’s “Year in Review,” visit cicintl.org/review2016.
**WEEK 2 • WOMEN’S REFLECTIONS**

**Personal Sacrifice**

By Ellen Tarantino

“For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things…” (Luke 17:24-25)

I was moved by a sermon about God’s wish for all his children: the salvation of their souls. I immediately said to myself, “SOS! Jesus is my SOS! Jesus is the Salvation Of Souls!” Because God wants all of us to be with him in heaven, he sent his son Jesus to show us the way. Jesus, knowing and trusting our Father, followed his wishes. Was it difficult? Of course. He knew his destiny and he still said yes.

**PRAY:**

Jesus, you are my SOS. Please grant me the strength to carry my crosses with the courage you showed us. May I be a beacon of the Holy Spirit, lighting the path for others.

**REFLECT:**

How can I be a beacon to draw others to the foot of the cross and tell them the good news of salvation?

**DISCUSS:**

What are some ways we can bring God creatively into our lives? Share about a time you have been filled with courage by the Holy Spirit to share him with others.

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**WEEK 3 • WOMEN’S REFLECTIONS**

**Redeeming Our Father’s Creation**

By Ellen Tarantino

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Eight years ago, I was asked to lead a team on an important program. I was honored to be asked to lead this assignment, which turned into a two and a half-year stint away from my husband and two young daughters.

I think now what I must have missed during those precious years. My heart was pained when my little ones started calling me “Dad” during the one weekend a month I was home. Those weekends became harder and harder, physically as well as emotionally. I was exhausted. I’d thought I was doing the right thing– providing for my family – but I began asking God whether this was really where he wanted me.

I got my answer one May morning. I awoke in pure panic and a pool of sweat. My sleep had been almost nonexistent for months. My heart raced as I caught a glimpse of the clock out of the corner of my eye. It was after one o’clock! But, I couldn’t move. I was cemented to the bed. I couldn’t even speak or call out. Lying trapped in my own body, I silently screamed, “God, what is happening to me? I’m scared! Help me!”

It turned out I was suffering from Celiac’s disease. My morning coffee and bagel were literally killing me. It’s been a long and difficult journey, but I am finally back home and back on track. I’d been taking promotions and climbing the ladder because others believed in me, but I hadn’t been asking God whether this was his path for me.

I now coach other professionals in their pursuits. I truly believe God has a purpose for each of us, and that this is mine. Ellen Tarantino’s God-given purpose is to energetically bring the heart back into business, one life at a time!

**PRAY:**

God, give me the wisdom to discern my life’s purpose. I am open to surrender to you. Thank you for your gifts. Help me share my strengths for the good of others.

**REFLECT:**

What are the gifts God has given uniquely to me? How can I best use them to serve others?

**DISCUSS:**

Share with your sisters a time when you used your gifts and felt God’s presence in that moment.
The Fruits of Our Relationships as Sisters

By Ellen Tarantino

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

I wasn’t feeling very Christian that day. I was irritated with a new teammate. I didn’t feel like going to my CIC meeting, but I didn’t want to go home without working this out.

Our evening reflection was on outcasts, and I shared that this individual was making me feel like the outcast of the team, to which I was a newcomer. She seemed rude and unprofessional.

My sisters inquired about the makeup of the team. I told them that working in aerospace, most of my coworkers are male, and this particular team is all male except for me and “Benita,” who hosts the calls. One of my sisters wisely observed that as the only woman on her team, Benita had “broken the glass ceiling” by becoming team leader. She suggested that the micro bias of adding another woman to the team may have been a factor. There can be a sense of competition between women when one of them has attained a level of authority in a male-dominated field.

I mentioned that another thing bothering me was Benita’s tendency to let meetings drag on for an hour when we only needed thirty minutes.

My sisters asked about Benita’s life. All I knew was that her family was across the country and she often worked from home. Then it hit me. These calls were her time to connect with others.

Armed with this new awareness, I returned to work ready to make a fresh start with Benita. I have worked on rewording my input, trying to come across less forcefully, and praising her frequently for her good work.

I will continue to pray for tolerance, mercy and Christ’s peace for my teammates, myself and of course my CIC sisters!

Ellen Tarantino is a member of the Orange County Women’s Chapter. She works as a program manager for Strategic Product Affordability at the Boeing Company and has over twenty-five years of supply chain experience in aerospace, defense, security, and services. Ellen is currently completing her certification through the International Coaching Federation. Contact her at elletino@hotmail.com.

PRAY:

Jesus, help us seek to support others in our daily lives. Your humility is the inspiration that teaches us to walk lightly and bring a helping hand to those we meet. Help me to see inside the hearts of others so that we may build each other up.

REFLECT:

When has Christ helped you through another person to bring his wisdom to a difficult situation?

DISCUSS:

Are there areas of your life in which you are looking to be accepted? How can we use Jesus’s teachings to help us support and accept one another?

2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION & WORKSHOP VIDEOS ONLINE

Our 2016 Annual Conference was filled with insights, first-hand witnesses of the life of Christ, and examples of its theme: “Come to Me, All You Who Labor.” Christianity is not just about another religious idea; it is the gospel being brought to life in each of our lives. No matter what position we hold, we are equipped to influence our workplaces and share our experiences in ways that are admirable and attractive. We learned more about living the life of faith, integrity, and excellence - a life that will draw others to it.

General Session presentations:
www.cicintl.org/gs2016

• Working for Our Father
• Falling in Love with Jesus
• Establish the Work of Our Hands
• Come to Me, All You Who Labor

Workshop presentations:
www.cicintl.org/ws2016

• Personal Mission: Fulfilling My Call and Vocation in the Workplace
• Being a Difference-Maker: Equipping the Laborers
• Commerce and Culture: Dealing with the Workplace Culture
• Exercising Religious Freedom in the Workplace and Everyday Gatherings
UPDATE FROM UGANDA
By Aloysius Mugisa

In Uganda we have witnessed how transforming marriages and family lives translates into transforming public and workplace lives. Healthy marriages and families produce good public servants. I would like to share about our recent ecumenical Annual Couples’ Conference that occurred from January 16-22, 2017 and was attended by 220 couples.

It was a Spirit-filled event! Fifty-seven of the couples who attended were catechists, which are lay church ministers in their respective churches. It is one of their responsibilities to prepare couples for marriage. They attended the conference both for their own personal enrichment, as well as in order to be better equipped to support the couples they serve. The catechists are the ones who provide the direct connection between the local pastors and their congregations. They were excited about what they experienced in the program and promised to mobilize other catechists to participate in CIC.

In addition to myself and Olivia (my wife), there were nine couples who facilitated with the talks and discussions and another ten who worked in hospitality and the kitchen. It was a very expensive program to feed so many, and very tiring as well, but we all found it to be deeply fulfilling. We were so blessed and happy to see the Lord healing marriages and families in such a mighty way!

It was a very blessed program. The Catholic bishop of the Fort Portal diocese visited us and addressed the congregation. A day before the end of the program, thirteen of the couples solemnized their unions by being married in the church. Of these couples, seven had had no intention of marrying prior to the conference, but after listening to the talks, they made an instant decision to wed while there.

Some of the couples who came to this conference were separated and living apart. As a result of the conference, they reunited and went home together.

The testimonies shared with us at the end of the conference were so many that I could not record all of them! Here are a few:

“I feel guilty that I reversed the scripture by leaving most of the work to my wife and only helping her some of the time. Now I know I should do most of the work, for she was created to be my helper, and not the reverse.”

“My marriage has been hell because I have been very selfish... I did not care about the feelings of my wife. In seeking pleasure for myself, I have been hurting her and being hurt by her in return. From now on, I will always take care not to do what hurts her emotions.”

“Romans 12:21 is going to guide my life and my relationship with my husband. I will strive not to let evil defeat good, but will instead defeat evil with goodness. I have always paid my husband with the same currency for every hurt he brings me and this has been escalating hostilities between us. From today on I will pay hate with love.”

“I want to repent for speaking to my children evil about their father. Though he has not been treating us well, I will never again tell our children his failures because this made them hate him. I will try to clear his image among our children.”

“After learning that marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman and God, I realized I was living in a rebellion against God by living in an illicit marriage. I told my husband we should not return home rebellious as we had come. Fortunately my husband was of the same mind as I, and we instantly decided to wed. Long live CIC!”

Please send your events and stories to:
Terry Cassell
Fax: 703 205-0485
cassell@cicintl.org
7515 Lee Highway,
Falls Church, VA 22042
“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