“I never told you he stole the bike.”

Such a simple sentence has so many potential meanings. Read it over and over but put the emphasis on a different word each time.

Now think of all the emails, texts, and tweets that you receive in a day. In our fast-paced work environment, the information comes at us quickly and all too often we make snap judgments about the content without having enough information.

You might think this is a modern-day problem since we live in the information age, but it is a story as old as the Tower of Babel. Good communication takes time and effort. It also entails assuming the best of others.

In our office, we have a rule that communication about difficult issues should be done face-to-face. Unfortunately, this rule came not from foresight, but after many a difficult conversation due to someone reading an email and assuming intent that wasn’t there.

In my haste, I have often sent emails that went straight to the point without giving much background or context. While I considered those emails efficient, others often viewed them as curt, aggressive or even outright attacks.

What usually happens next is that the recipient’s response is equally hasty. Ironically, our haste actually slows things down and creates inefficiency; the exact opposite of what we were trying to do.

Things tend to escalate quickly, and a cycle begins that must somehow be stopped.

Written communication is tricky. Studies have indicated that as much as ninety-three percent of communication is nonverbal. Face-to-face communication comes with much more context: tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, and eye contact. All of these things communicate information that isn’t conveyed in an email.

Years ago, one of my partners and I got sideways in our relationship. It was unpleasant and embarrassing because we were both committed Christians. Once we got sideways, we started assuming the worst of each other in our email correspondence. We had to break the cycle.

Looking back, a lot of the things we were assuming were actually kind of funny. I would say something like, “This is what I felt this email was conveying.” He would be surprised that I had read that into the correspondence. He too read things into my emails that weren’t there. What got us back on track was a consultant who asked, “What’s the problem here? Both of you want the same thing!”

Sadly, we live in a world that encourages us to make rash judgments all the time. This is what makes headlines, sells products and gets people to watch television. When we are constantly surrounded by sensational language, we easily fall into the trap of making rash judgments.

I have found some things that help me out of this trap: assuming the best of others, seeing them as children of God, seeking first to understand them, and not being attached to my own opinion.

I have not perfected these methods, but being aware of the situation has been a first step towards progress. Thankfully, my colleagues and I now know that any troubling emails will result in a call to the sender’s office with the request, “Do you have a minute to talk?”

Rich Preuss serves as Chairman on the CIC Board of Directors. He has been married to his wife Beth for thirty-three years, and together they have ten children. He, along with four others, is an owner of the Healy Group, a full service financial and risk management firm. Rich may be reached at richpreuss@alumni.nd.edu.

Nowhere in scripture will you find a verse telling you whether to become a doctor, an electrician, a teacher, a salesperson or an office manager. Nor will you find instructions on how to choose a career.

Praying for wisdom and discernment and seeking God’s direction can always help the matter at hand. More typically, however, he calls us to take on the responsibility of making good decisions about how to use our gifts in the world. Aligning your career to God’s mission no matter what you do is what matters to our Father.

We are God’s handiwork. He created our inmost being, and knit us together in our mother’s womb. Each of us has inherent gifts that God gave us and desires us to use in our careers. Aligning our careers to God’s mission is paramount. This will bring us satisfaction, it will bless and enable us to serve others effectively, and it will give glory to God.

This is why we do what we do as Christians in Commerce!

cassell@cicintl.org
(703) 205-5600
REFLECTIONS

Losing Focus
By Theresee Rosenthal

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. (Proverbs 16:3)

I am naturally a creature of habit. I appreciate routines, especially as someone with ADHD who has trouble staying focused. Routines help me to keep track of what I need to do next and to feel more in control. It is my ideal way to work. Unfortunately, very little of what I do these days is routine, and I rarely feel in control!

As a working parent, no two of my days are alike. Each week, half of my work is done at the CIC Home Office and the other half takes place at home as I care for my three young children. Not only does my schedule vary from day to day as far as where I spend my time, but also how I spend it, since no two days in either place ever look the same.

When you work for a large nonprofit with a small office staff, everyone inevitably has to wear many hats. While my official function is as a member of the editorial board and there are a few other roles that I fill regularly, there really is no knowing what else will come my way on a given day.

It will probably come as no surprise when I say that no two days with three children under age five are alike either! Depending on the day, my oldest might have preschool, someone has a doctor’s appointment, it’s laundry day, etc. And of course, there are always the unexpected spills, falls, fights, and temper tantrums waiting to interrupt!

There are many periods when I feel out of my element, struggling to keep track and keep up with everything. Losing focus causes me to feel less in control, and I often over-compensate by trying to shut everything and everyone out — including God — and just power through. I become very task-oriented, drafting detailed to-do lists and becoming frustrated if my coworkers or family take my attention away from whichever item I am currently trying to check off.

In an article from a recent newsletter, Brad Prose wrote, “God takes a back seat because I focus on getting through it all. Sometimes I feel like I’ve conditioned myself to work without God.” Reading those words, I was instantly convicted. I realized that when I respond in these ways, I am making my work about me, not God. Talk about losing focus! It humbles me to realize that while I have spent the last ten years working for a ministry whose entire focus is on bringing Christ to our work, I still have things to learn.

God doesn’t want me to “just get through” my time spent supporting the ministry of Christ in the workplace. He doesn’t want me to just get through the work of raising holy children. When I shift my focus from the life-changing work of CIC and think only about how many Workday Reflection emails I was able to schedule that day, I lose focus on the work our Father has for me. When I stop focusing on my children and the people I am raising them to be, looking instead at how much laundry I still have to do, I lose focus on the work our Father has entrusted to me. When I am so determined to feel in control that I reduce my vocation to a to-do list in order to make that happen, this is pride indeed.

I have learned that the answer, quite simply, is prayer. Recently, I have begun to notice a tangible, sometimes drastic difference in my work depending on whether I have prayed that morning, or even simply thought about the Lord. For example, I have found that if I talk to the Lord on my way to work, I am still thinking about him when I get there. I am then more likely to keep thinking about him, seeking and tempering my work to him throughout the day. The result is that I am more patient with my children, more supportive of my coworkers, and more in tune to the Holy Spirit in my work, whatever it may hold for me that day.

PRAY:

Lord, keep me ever mindful of your presence as I work, reminding me that you are the focus of all I do, and you are the one who is in control.

REFLECT:

What is my default reaction to feeling overwhelmed or not in control in my work? How does it affect my relationship with the Lord?

DISCUSS:

How can we keep ourselves mindful of God’s presence throughout the day? What kind of a difference would this make?

WORKING FOR OUR FATHER: WORKSHOPS BEING CONDUCTED

Many of our men’s and women’s chapters have now reviewed the Working for Our Father workshop, which we designed to help Christians align their careers to God’s mission. Some chapters have already facilitated this exciting new workshop themselves!

The four workshop presentations cover:
- Accepting the Father’s Gift of Work
- Triumphanting 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.

Theresee Rosenthal works at the CIC Home Office in Northern Virginia as a member of the editorial board. She and her husband Bryan have been married for five years and have three daughters, Sophie (4), Verity (2) and Esme (1). Theresee can be reached at thereseecicintl.org.
WEEK 2 • MEN'S REFLECTIONS

Personal Sacrifice
By Richard Finney

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden... In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5: 14, 16)

As members of Christians in Commerce we are called to be the light in our workplaces. At times this can be difficult. We may run the risk of being rejected or ridiculed for expressing our faith in Christ. So, many of us choose to hide our true identity; we go "undercover."

Several years ago I started to question myself in this area. As I grew in my faith I became more and more uncomfortable not expressing my love for Christ. I felt convicted. My identity was changing. I was no longer the person I was before giving my life to Christ. I was indeed a new creation.

As Christ followers, there will be times when a coworker, friend, or someone we don’t even know may see the light in us and ask us for help. This very thing occurred at my workplace. I was a fairly new Christian and, like many new Christians, I was full of the Spirit. It was a large company where many field consultants spent most of their time on the road.

One particular morning I received a call from a coworker I had known for many years. He was driving to work in tears, asking me for help. He had an addiction that was destroying his family life. He said he knew I was a Christian and that he could not fix this on his own, but did not know where to turn.

As time went by, I had more and more opportunities to share my faith with this man. He was able to experience the love Christ has for us, and I was able to grow each time I shared with him; a blessing for both of us.

Living a truly Christ-filled life means allowing our relationship with the Lord to spill over into all the places we go — even the workplace. So, be encouraged and let your light shine!

WEEK 3 • MEN'S REFLECTIONS

Making a Difference in the Workplace
By Richard Finney

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

The recession of 2008 was felt throughout America. Many businesses and families experienced financial difficulties. The auto industry was hit particularly hard and, as an employee of General Motors, it was the end of a twenty-three-year career for me. Suddenly, I found myself trying to put together a resume and wondering how I was going to market myself. I did the only thing I could do: pray.

One week after receiving the news of my release, I had plenty of time to do just that during a three-hour road trip. I had grieved and grumbled for the past week. Now it was time to trust and move forward.

As I drove and prayed, God taught me that it was fine to respond to a loss or failure with sadness, frustration, or even anger initially, but only if it’s fleeting. When tragedy strikes, at some point we need to accept that it has happened and that we cannot change the past. The Lord will provide us with the means to overcome the giants in our lives, so long as we put our trust in him.

Just before arriving, I suddenly felt certain that everything was going to be all right. This was simply going to be a new chapter for me. It was clear to me that in difficult times and trials, I needed to lean into my savior.

We cannot and must not allow Satan a foothold in our hearts and minds. Turning to prayer, fellowship, or scripture will make a real difference. God is committed to carrying on the work he has started in each of us. Call upon his name. Keep pressing forward on the journey to which he has called us.

REFLECT:
How do I weather life's storms? Do I react in fear, anger and despair, or do I lean into God? What can I do differently to completely put my trust in the Lord?

DISCUSS:
What can we do to be available, approachable, and intentional in our workplaces as followers of Christ? How can we be more missional in our efforts to draw others into "working for our Father?"

PRAY:
Heavenly Father, thank you for your presence and strength during the storms of life. Keep me focused on you. Help me to put fear aside and let my faith take over.

REFLECT:
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Holding Each Other Accountable

By Richard Finney

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

At our first chapter meeting of the new year, we had a discussion about changing habits. The leader began by talking about New Year’s resolutions. Citing a national survey, he listed the top ten most popular resolutions people make. Of course, dieting and exercising were and probably always will be number one!

During the group discussion time following the talk, I mentioned that I too fell into that “number one category” and earnestly wanted to make a change.

About a week later, one of the men from my group asked if we could meet for coffee. He had taken note of my comment and, feeling he was in similar “shape,” wanted to reach out to offer a solution. He saw a need and was moved to action.

This brother proposed that we form an accountability partnership with a mutual commitment to improving our eating and exercising habits. He was intentional and sincere. I shared with him that I had been praying for the Lord’s guidance and strength in this area for quite some time; I simply could not seem to get myself motivated.

By the end of the conversation, we had committed to supporting each other’s efforts. We created a spreadsheet and began talking and texting regularly about our progress and shortcomings.

The Lord has used this brother to answer my prayers, and in doing so, brought both of us into a closer relationship. Indeed, as believers we are to edify one another and build each other up. And as our bodies are God’s temples, I take this also to mean that we are to help one another literally build up our temples!

PRAY:

Father, thank you for Christians in Commerce. Bless this ministry with your guidance and love. Draw us closer together as brothers and sisters as we work to build your kingdom.

REFLECT:

Am I doing all I can to build up and support those in my chapter to the best of my ability? How can I be a better support to others? How can I let them be a better support to me?

DISCUSS:

How can we together provide greater love, support, and accountability in our Challenge Group or chapter? What adjustments can each of us personally make in our thoughts, words, and actions? In which area of your life would accountability be most useful?

CIC SOCIAL MEDIA – JOIN US!

We at the Home Office are excited to announce that we are increasing our social media presence! We want our various social networks to be a resource that helps keep you up-to-date on the latest happenings in CIC.

If you haven’t already, we encourage you to like our page on Facebook, add us on LinkedIn and Twitter, and follow our newly-established Instagram account. This initiative will help us stay connected with the chapters, help the chapters stay connected with one another, and make it easy for you to share about life in CIC with your family and friends!

Here’s a quick acronym to remind you of ways to promote our content on Facebook (especially info on our 2017 Annual Conference!):

C: “Comment” on our Facebook and Annual Conference pages.
L: “Like” our Facebook page and posts.
A: “Add” the Conference to your Facebook events. Click “Interested,” then “Going.”
S: “Share” the Conference event. Click “Invite,” then “Share Event.”
H: “Hashtag” Be sure to include the hashtag #cicconf17 whenever you post about the Annual Conference!

We’re very excited to see where this new venture will take us. We would love for you to join us on our journey and connect with us today!

- Facebook https://www.facebook.com/ChristiansinCommerce/
- Twitter http://www.twitter.com/CIC_Office
- Instagram https://www.instagram.com/christiansincommerce/
- LinkedIn http://www.linkedin.com/groups?about=&gid=1972375&trk=anet_ug_grppro
WEEK 2 • WOMEN’S REFLECTIONS

Personal Sacrifice

By Debi Wiskirchen

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

Life hands us lists of do’s and don’ts. Why do I always seem to focus on the don’ts?

While preparing a talk a few years ago, I was overwhelmed by all the things I couldn’t say that I felt frozen. After a painful first practice session, my coach suggested some things I might add to my talk to make it more personal and interesting. After that, I had fun experimenting with what I could say, not to mention the visual aids! Suddenly, the “can’ts” seemed to disappear.

I’ve had similar experiences when teaching. Instead of fretting over not being allowed to teach Roman numerals, I found a way to incorporate them into a history lesson. Rather than worrying about not teaching cursive until after the state test, I gave a brief tutorial while presenting a reading lesson from a book that contained some cursive writing.

Now in retirement, it seems that my physical capabilities are diminishing along with my income and social circle. So, I am learning to use my writing skills and my abilities as a group leader to remain active in this world. I am learning to focus on the positive and “bloom where I am planted!”

PRAY:

Father, help me to turn negatives into positives and “I can’t” into “I can.”

REFLECT:

When has negativity caused me to shut down? What could I have done instead to turn it around?

DISCUSS:

Share when you or someone else has turned a negative situation or conversation into something positive.

WEEK 3 • WOMEN’S REFLECTIONS

Redeeming Our Father’s Creation

By Debi Wiskirchen

The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” (Exodus 4:11-12)

Several years ago, I was a “dormitory mom” at a women’s retreat. My responsibilities included cutting ties to the outside world for the weekend.

One particular woman (I’ll call her Karen) kept sneaking back to the dormitory to check on business and make phone calls. As someone who hates confrontation, I tried ignoring Karen’s behavior, but when it became distracting to the other women, I knew I had to do something about it. So, I prayed that the Holy Spirit would guide me in what to say.

To my own surprise, I found myself sitting next to Karen and gently asking her what was so important that she could not focus on the retreat. She explained that she was a real estate agent and had a big deal closing that weekend. I shared that my husband is also a real estate agent, but he has partners who will cover for him when needed. Karen said she did have someone covering for her, but she didn’t think they could handle this transaction. When I asked if she didn’t trust this person, she paused then said, “Yes, I suppose I do.” Karen put her phone in her suitcase and did not take it out the rest of the weekend.

The change in Karen’s demeanor was noticeable. She relaxed and became an outgoing participant.

As we were packing up to leave at the end of the weekend, Karen thanked me for encouraging her to trust others. As a result, she’d had a very refreshing and renewing weekend. And, I learned that even though I dread conflict, the Holy Spirit can lead me in gentle ways so that everyone wins!

PRAY:

Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you.

REFLECT:

What comfort zone do you need to leave in order to further God’s kingdom?

DISCUSS:

Have you ever found yourself saying something with no idea where those words came from? Do you believe that God can indeed speak through his followers, even today?
The Fruits of Our Relationships as Sisters

By Debi Wiskirchen

… in quietness and trust is your strength.
(Isaiah 30:15)

A few months ago, I had an anxiety attack of sorts, though I'd never had one before. I suddenly became very edgy and felt an overwhelming need to get out of the house. But, I didn’t know where to go. Since we always seem to be in need of something from the grocery store, I decided to go there.

Upon arriving, I still didn’t really know why I was there, so I got a cup of coffee and sat “people watching” in the coffee shop area. After finishing my coffee, I got a shopping cart and began wandering through the store.

Before long, I bumped into a lady from my church. I’d met her at a training session a couple of years earlier but had not seen her since. I’d figured we must attend different services. She asked how I had been. Trying to make a long “sob story” short, I laughingly said that I had met my out-of-pocket medical deductible for the year. She said that she would be meeting hers in one fell swoop.

As it turned out, she was scheduled for a double mastectomy just a few weeks from then—at the same hospital out-patient center where I’d recently had a lumpectomy, and with the same surgeon! We exchanged phone numbers and I offered to drive her to any appointments.

A couple of weeks later, I saw her at church. She said she would indeed like me to take her to the surgery center since I knew my way around. Her mother was coming from out of state, but did not drive. So, on the day of her surgery, I picked her and her mother up at her house, got her checked in for surgery, and tried to calm both of their fears by explaining what would happen next.

Now I know that God can use my unexpected surgery and even an anxiety attack to get me moving!

PRAY:
Lord, thank you for using even my struggles to build your kingdom.

REFLECT:
If God brings you to it, he will bring you through it.

DISCUSS:
When have you allowed yourself to be there for a friend? When has a friend been there for you?
WORKING FOR OUR FATHER:
WHAT’S NEXT?
By Therese Rosenthal

Our exciting new workshop, Working for Our Father (WFOF), has officially taken off! In the past seven months, chapters in Minnesota, Arizona, and Indiana have all hosted the workshop at least once, and at least one more is scheduled. All of the presentations have been delivered jointly to both men and women, and the initial feedback has been very positive and encouraging.

Luke Cahill (CIC Board of Directors) helped to design the workshop with an eye to the younger generation and was part of a pilot program in Minnesota back in September. Several participants commented to him that the WFOF workshop challenged them to expect more of themselves as Christians in the workforce. Russ Shurts is one of those participants, and confirmed that the experience “changed my attitude towards work and my career.” Another, Joe Birkholz, told us, “I was inspired to bring my faith more fully into my work.”

Christine Ziegler (South Bend/Elkhart Women’s Chapter President) attended a presentation hosted by the South Bend Elkhart men’s and women’s chapters in January and found the videos “very compelling.” The Minnesota chapters also presented the workshop in January, which long-time CIC member Ginny DeSanto described as “relevant and meaningful.”

One theme that seemed to resonate with newcomers and long-time members alike was the need to shake off the “live to work” or “work to live” mentality. Most of the participants we spoke to said they could relate to both of these mindsets, noting it is often difficult to achieve a healthy balance.

Luke, Russ and Joe are all in their mid-thirties and part of a Challenge Group that formed out of the WFOF pilot program. Luke says many of the newcomers had no previous involvement with CIC or any other Christian outlets, and wanted to continue meeting together after the workshop had concluded.

Their experience is not unique. In South Bend, for example, the women’s chapter changed the time of one of its Challenge Group meetings in order to accommodate the schedules of some of the new women who had attended the workshop and didn’t want things to end there.

Ginny agreed with the importance of continued follow up. “I think many women would welcome (the idea), and need to process and share.”

“Sometimes it’s easy to become isolated from meaningful connections and support,” Luke added. “This is a group where we all appreciate being able to go deep, be vulnerable, and be guided in an applied and relevant way.”

Joe weighed in, calling the Challenge Group sessions “very fruitful,” and telling us that he has “experienced the power of inviting the Holy Spirit into me on a more regular basis.”

So what’s next for Working for Our Father? More new Challenge Groups? More new members? Ginny called it a “no-brainer” that the program is a powerful tool for growing our ministry. Time will tell if she is right!

To learn more about WFOF or to host a workshop in your area, please visit cicintl.org/wfof.
2017
MAY

“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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