

Wrestling with God

By Rich Preuss



At the CIC conference last October, I told the story of Jacob wrestling with God (Genesis 32-34). Jacob had spent 20 years in servitude to his father-in-law, Laban. He left to return to the land of his father, Abraham, but had to contend with his brother, Esau. Pressed on all sides, and trying to enter a new land, Jacob ends up in a wrestling match with God. Anyone who lives life in Christ experiences seasons of wrestling with God. We pursue what we think God wants for us, but we must be willing to put all at the feet of the Lord. Doing that can surely be a wrestling match.

As in the story of Jacob, we know that the Lord wants to bless us. "I will not let you go unless you bless me... Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." (Genesis 32: 26-28)

What does blessing look like? It usually unfolds slowly over time and often we don't see it until we look back at events and see the Lord's hand.

The CIC board has been wrestling with the Lord for years now. We have wanted to enter a new promised land teeming with thousands of members united in Christ to change the workplace. In prayer, we have discerned the the Lord calling us to move forward. Yet, the image we have had is one of driving through the fog; our vision limited to a short distance ahead. In that image, the Lord is directing us to stay focused. We cannot clearly see the end of the road and don't know exactly where it will lead, but we are committed. Considerable time and financial resources have been dedicated to this journey, and we are living on faith. It is a wonderful yet frightening place to be!

Out of this journey has emerged Working for Our Father and WorkLight. Both are designed to tap into the deepest desires of people who go to work every day. WorkLight offers tools designed to engage workers, who live in an increasingly disconnected society. By uniting

Continued on page 6

Refocusing Our Vision

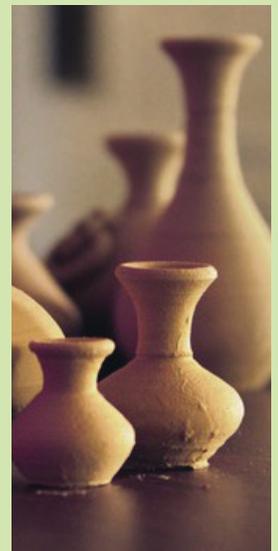
"Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand." (Isaiah 64:8)

Life is dynamic. Looking back we see where things have gone well and where they have gone badly. Sometimes it is due to circumstances beyond our control, sometimes we've been part of the problem, or a little of both.

Yet for those of us who love God and are responding to his call to be Christ in the world, then every thing, yes every single thing, works out for our good (Romans 8:28).

The best time for growth is when things don't go well and are personally challenging. It's a good time to refocus our sights on trusting in God and his faithfulness. We become softer and more pliable clay in his hands at times like these. It's in the challenging times where yielding to God's loving touch he's been able to most form us for his purposes and our own good.

The writers of this month's reflections share stories of refocusing in challenging times. Let us also continue to allow the Spirit to work in our present circumstances.



REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

A Call to Joy

By Catherine Pingel

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:11)

I recently moved to another department in our company. I did not wholly embrace the new position, but I knew the exposure to another realm of the industry would be beneficial. While adjusting to my new tasks and environment, I allowed myself to be perpetually on edge. During an early morning meeting, one of my coworkers said something that struck me as funny. I threw my head back and let out a hearty laugh. The department director reacted, "That's the first time I've seen you smile in weeks!"

That comment hit me like a ton of bricks. When and how did I let myself get to the point where my joy was

noticeably absent? I knew I needed to make an adjustment and began to think and pray of ways for that to occur. I realized that while most of my frustration was tied to the set of tasks within my purview, further reflection revealed my disengaged attitude with my coworkers.

While relaying this situation to a beloved cousin, she shared a striking image depicted in Father Jacques Philippe's book *Searching for and Maintaining Peace*. Father Philippe described a tranquil surface of a lake which reflects the sun's rays like that of a mirror. Should the surface be agitated, the sun's rays cannot be as perfectly reflected. So too with the soul, Father Philippe stated. Our souls can only reflect God's love and grace if they are calm.

Of course, the Lord can work in and through any spiritual state, but to be able to directly position oneself to more clearly reflect God's goodness and love is a profound call to action. I was convicted and leaned in more fully to the Lord in my prayer time.

In doing so, my engagement and interest increased, and I was given a new lens through which to view those in front of me.

Catherine Pingel joined CIC in 2017 and served on the Women's CIC Chapter Advisory Board for one year. Catherine lives in South Bend, IN, and works as a commercial real estate broker and property manager. She can be reached at catpingel@gmail.com.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, sustain us in our journey toward greater joy in you.

REFLECT

Is your joy noticeably absent in your workplace? What are ways to rekindle that joy?

DISCUSS

Share a time when the Lord inspired joy within you.

Help us reach new audiences with our **WorkLight** initiative. Join us as we spark a movement of the Holy Spirit so as Christians we are shining the light of Christ at work.

WORKLIGHT[™]

GO TO [TINYURL.COM/MEMBERGIFT2020](https://tinyurl.com/memborgift2020)

FUEL THE
MISSION

REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

The Irrevocable Call of God

By Jeremy Stanbary

God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)

In 2003, I jumped headlong into what I felt was a calling from God. Three years after earning a BFA degree in Theatre, I started a theater production company with a modest startup loan and a ton of ambition. I began writing, producing, and performing original faith-based plays and toured the country and internationally.

It was never easy, but God provided, which deepened my sense of mission and calling. In 2011, my wife and I decided to transition away from traveling theater and we started a local professional theatre in Minne-

apolis—Open Window Theatre. Once again, things were never easy, but the theatre was surviving and growing.

We had just welcomed our fourth child when Open Window Theatre was forced to close down in the summer of 2016. A yearslong dispute with our landlords was a devastating experience for us. The chances of the theatre ever coming back were slim.

My identity was shattered and my faith was rocked to the core. Maybe this wasn't my calling and I had wasted 13 years of my life. What was I going to do now? I had to rediscover my true identity as a beloved child of God, not a theater artist.

I had to learn a deeper level of surrender, trust, faith and love. Three years later, by the miraculous hand of God, Open Window Theatre is returning to full-time operation—bigger, better, and stronger than before. It's a beautiful example of the irrevocable call of God.

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

Giving Your Full Attention

By Catherine Pingel

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. (James 1:19)

In my recent prayer times, I've felt prompted to be more open to interruptions. Most of us don't welcome interruptions in our fast-paced environment. I am particular about the structure of my day; in the recent past I frequently responded to interruptions with irritation and perceived them as an inconvenience. They threw off my mental game and I would often need to adjust my intensity to a level more appropriate for conversation.

One day, a coworker came into my office to drop off some paperwork.

His movements seemed slower than normal and I realized that he wanted to talk. I asked him about his day.

He eagerly accepted this opening and conveyed the sobering news that a friend of his had taken his life the previous night. I gave him my full attention as he recounted fond memories of this friend. In another instance, during a conversation with a gentleman who tends towards extended interactions. After 15 minutes, I glanced at my inbox.

In that moment, I felt prompted to continue in the conversation with my full attention. I was so blessed by what he shared next. He expressed pride in his two daughters and sang the praises of his nephew's actions in a particularly rough situation. His nephew happens to be my supervisor.

I was grateful not only to have the opportunity to hear this honoring of my boss but also to give this man the chance to express his appreciation for his loved ones, thus affirming them and their actions in the world. People are often in search of a listening ear.

Jeremy Stanbary and his wife, Sarah, founded Open Window Theatre. A certified personal trainer, Jeremy started Crux Point Fitness and plans to offer classes and personal training at the new theatre space. He can be reached at jstanbary@openwindowtheatre.org

PRAY

Lord, help me to surrender to you and follow the path you have chosen for me.

REFLECT

Have you ever had a time of difficulty and then were surprised by the miraculous hand of God?

DISCUSS

Share a time when you followed the irrevocable call of God.

My prayer time has been essential in identifying that need and responding when prompted. I've found that patience is often required in these instances, but when I feel a sense of irritation arising, I gently remind myself that people are the real ministry, not tasks.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, give us the grace to hear and respond to your promptings amidst our distractions.

REFLECT

What was your last response to a perceived interruption? Can that response be improved upon?

DISCUSS

Consider a time when you were more focused on your work than in listening to a coworker in need.

Lens of Gratitude

By Luke Cahill

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

For a few years, I had it easy as the person in charge of business development for our small market research company. The bigger issue the company faced was capacity and making sure we didn't take on too much work to prevent burn-out and quality slippage. That all changed earlier this year when my job suddenly became hard.

Project opportunities would come and then they would go. The reasons for why we didn't land the projects varied, but that negative outcome was common. As our team spent more time than normal sitting idle without projects to field, the burden I felt

grew because it was my job to bring in the work. We worked hard with the extra time we had to develop new solutions and develop systems to stay better connected with our clients, the number of which had grown meaningfully over the years.

The lost opportunities continued and my anxiety continued to rise. I grew tired of the hard work with little production. I became drained by the regular rejection. I felt sorry for myself. I was scared about the present and even more scared about the future. I was focused on what I wasn't getting versus what I was getting.

Then I read that simple verse in Philippians that reminded me that God was present in the business all year and I needed to be grateful for all of it. As soon as I started thinking through a lens of gratitude, I realized all the amazing things we had accomplished and developed. We innovated and refined so many aspects of the business that will serve us well for years to come. That feeling of thanksgiving helped push aside

the anxiety, fatigue, and self-doubt. That struggle was a gift all along, I just needed the eyes to see it.

Luke Cahill has been a member of CIC since 2016 and is also a member of the CIC Board of Directors. Luke lives in Eagan, MN, with his wife and five children. He owns a market research company, REAL Insight, based in Minneapolis. Luke can be reached at lcahill@real-insight.us.

PRAY

Lord, help me to develop a spirit of gratitude and focus on the positive things in my life.

REFLECT

Do I continue to offer thanksgiving to the Lord, even during difficult times?

DISCUSS

Consider a time when you were struggling but refused to give in to fear and anxiety.

WORKLIGHT™

WorkLight.org is coming soon.

We hope it will spark a movement of the Holy Spirit by:

- Uniting Christians across traditions, occupations, and positions.
- Providing practical, on-demand resources.
- Assisting Christians in forming small groups.

To see an introductory video, go to WORKLIGHT.ORG



Matching Gifts Will Build on Your Donations!

This upcoming year is vital to CIC/ WorkLight moving forward. In order to spark a movement of the Holy Spirit we are asking for your support. We are delighted to share with you an opportunity to further our quest for others to take notice of WorkLight. As of today, we have a matching gift from generous donors of \$160,000! For a limited time, your contribution can be doubled.

Your pledge can be doubled in one of two ways:

- 1) If you are a first-time giver (or haven't contributed in the past two years)
- 2) If you are an annual giver, the amount that was increased from 2019 will apply towards our \$160K goal.

This gift can be given to us if we can raise an additional \$160,000 by **January 30, 2020**. One way to shine is to help us reach this next generation and financially support this matching gift offer. Help us ignite a new beginning, a fresh start in reaching out to this next generation, which for

some of us includes peers, our kids and grandkids.

A key ingredient to our success is in all our new WorkLight materials with personal stories woven into our workday reflections, newsletters, videos, and online resources. If you are able to help, you can either mail us a donation or go to our WorkLight website at: www.WorkLight.org

Radiating Christ

By Ed Hennen

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)

In order to reflect Jesus, others need to see Christ in us. Likely, our actions will speak louder than our words. In my work as a manager, employee performance reviews were required, and professional critique was part of the process. It was sometimes necessary to be critical, even up to the point of dismissing an employee. Although sometimes perceived as being too kind, I believe Jesus wanted me to share the truth about performance, while still providing the individual with an avenue for change.

A Strong Foundation

To reflect Christ in the marketplace, we need to start from a well-founded base. This means spending some time each day in prayer and personal reflection to get our mind in the right place. Before moving out into the marketplace, it's a good idea to check our image in the mirror to see if our face is saying what our mind is thinking. A deep or persistent scowl is unlikely to be a very effective reflection.

Our countenance needs to be peace-filled instead of angry. This doesn't mean we cannot be serious, but as Christians we need to be patient yet deliberant in our focus. It may require taking a strong position on matters of faith that not everyone will like,

while being truthful and honest without being cynical. It's often too easy to be critical, which limits our ability to be constructive.

The ability to share joy through self-deprecating humor has often worked well for me. Admitting my faults and foibles in a light, humorous manner has often been the opening for more serious conversation. Just as in the Parable of the Talents, when I am trusted by sharing the small challenges of my life with others, I may be trusted to address the larger personal concerns with them as well.

A Servant's Heart

In my volunteer work as a business mentor, I seek to reflect a genuine interest in others. Positioning myself to serve as Jesus starts by making myself available and using kindness and compassion in my approach. By planning to mostly listen and waiting to be asked to speak, I can help those I mentor understand their own challenges, ask deeper questions and help them come to better awareness. By speaking the truth, rooted in respect and love as Jesus did, the correct path can be illuminated, and clear direction achieved.

God gave us minds for thinking, emotions for feeling, wills for choosing and his Holy Spirit to empower us to act in love. If we eliminate any one of these gifts, or rely on only one, the quality with which we reflect Christ may suffer. In our work, we should act concretely each day to bring hope, friendship and encouragement to the people we encounter.

Continued from page 1

Christians in the workplace, we hope to foster small groups who can share, support, and strengthen one another as they do good work. It is a movement of the Holy Spirit.

Why change? Because to not change disengages a whole new generation of workers. We must learn to get the message out in the mediums that are most effective, most timely and most life-giving. Consider the life of Francis Xavier whose work failed at first in Japan. Upon self-reflection, Francis realized that the Japanese people had no respect for him because he dressed poorly. There was a real cultural disconnect. Later, when he returned dressed and acting as a nobleman, Francis gained the peoples' respect and Christianity spread.

We are like Francis. We need to focus on what moves people in this culture and time. It doesn't mean changing our mission or vision. It means intelligently engaging with a workplace that is seeking and needs Christ.

Implementing Working for Our Father – the podcasts, blog postings, and WorkLight has required a tremendous effort from our communications team, led by Steve Becker. These are new tools in our toolbox that can provide a more effective entry into the workplace culture. Let's continue to build on our foundation, utilize new tools, and make 2020 a pivotal year where WorkLight and the Holy Spirit can flood the workplace! May the Father's blessing be upon us!

Rich Preuss is the chairman of the CIC Board of Directors. He can be reached at richpreuss@alumni.nd.edu.

NEWS



WORKLIGHT INTRODUCTION UPDATE

This month's newsletter has a new name and an updated look. What is staying the same is the vision and mission of Christians in Commerce. In fact, we are building upon the heart of our ministry from its beginning—men and women being the light of Christ in their workplaces.

As part of the WorkLight initiative, we've renamed our monthly newsletter *The Flame*. We're also rolling out a new look and name for our workday emails—*Workday Spark*.

We're currently building out a new WorkLight.org website to serve our existing members and reach new audiences, especially the next generation. Our goal is to unite Christians to shine bright in their workplaces. We want to spark a movement of the Holy Spirit.

WorkLight.org will feature an expanding video library of WorkLight Stories, testimonies and first-hand accounts of God at work. Also available will be free resources including Workday Spark, Nine

to Five podcasts, past newsletter issues, and the Working for our Father video series. We'll also have Christ at Work devotionals—a selection of workday reflections from past workday emails and newsletters.

This website is devised to do three things:

- Use the power of personal stories of the Gospel being lived.
- Provide practical, adaptable and on-demand resources.
- Foster small groups across traditions, occupations and positions.

Everything is created to be faithful to the intentions of our founders and as Christians in Commerce who serve the greater Christian community. At the core of our founding has been the call to be good and faithful stewards in our work, to build Christian unity, and to foster the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The site is being designed to be friendly with a wide variety of devices and ADA compliant. We plan to launch it some time in the first quarter.

EVENTS

MEN'S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Orange County
January 10-12, 2020

Monterey
March 20-22, 2020

Salinas Valley
January 24-26, 2020

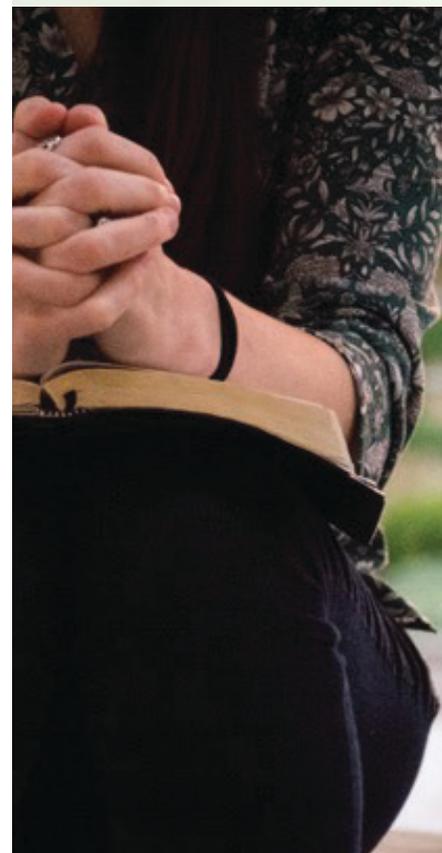
Salinas Valley
May 1-3, 2020

Salinas Valley
November 13-15, 2020

WOMEN'S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Gilroy/Morgan Hill
April 17-18, 2020

Fresno
April 24-26, 2020



2020

JANUARY

*"I have been crucified
with Christ and I no
longer live, but Christ
lives in me."*

Galatians 2:20

THE FLAME

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

The Flame is published monthly for WorkLight by Christians in Commerce International. WorkLight is an initiative of Christians in Commerce. All material is copyrighted and owned by WorkLight and Christians in Commerce International. Material may be utilized when WorkLight is formally acknowledged as the source. All scripture taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version ©1978 by the New York International Bible Society, used by permission.

FOUNDERS

Louis Grams
John Mooney
Cyril Rose

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rich Preuss (Chairman)
Stevan Becker
Luke Cahill
Jennifer Frankenberg
Art Klaum
Dan Kuplic

CIC STAFF

Therese McNichol, Director of Administration
Sharon Teitelbaum, Editor
Margaret Crimmins, Membership
Beth Preuss, Communications Associate

CHALLENGE NEWSLETTER STAFF

Managing Editor: Therese McNichol
Editorial Board: Stevan Becker, Sharon Teitelbaum
Design/printing: Andy Grams Design Solutions

For further information about CIC call or write:
Christians in Commerce
7515 Lee Highway, Falls Church, VA 22042
Phone: (703) 205-5600
Toll Free: (877) 205-5600
Fax: (703) 205-0485
info@cicintl.org