

A Paradigm Shift for the Better

By Jeff Kohler

A sign hangs at the employee entrance to our dental practice. My wife and partner, Kate, gave it to me when I finished dental school. Both of us being Notre Dame grads, it encourages all of our team to: “Heal Like a Champion Today.”

I wanted to make my own path and initially pursued electrical engineering. My dad was a dentist. It was a good life, but I initially thought I should do something different. It took a particularly awful day, a mile walk in 110-degree Arizona heat to recover my towed car, and the growing realization that I wanted to use technology to directly help people, that moved my compass.

As I sweated through that walk, I reflected on the work/life balance I longed for, the need to work with my hands, and thoughts of my father. He was always present for dinner, helping with homework, and coaching our teams. I hoped to marry Kate, which I did, and wanted to be there for my family. I chose my father’s path.

Dentistry allowed me the opportunity to use the electrical engineering equipment (my first degree) with real patients and provided both the technical challenge and hands-on experience. After six years (two for prerequisites and four for dental

school) while Kate worked as an RN and got her Nurse Anesthetist degree, we were stationed at Offutt Air Force Base. The Air Force scholarship had provided funds for the degree as well as the opportunity to serve the airmen as a dentist and hone my specialty skills. We were then stationed in Fairbanks, AK, at Eielson Air Force Base. This gave me more opportunities for specialty work, which provided a framework for my current practice.

After five years and three children, in 2016 we settled in the Twin Cities to start our practice. I realized, working for the Air Force and dental organizations, that I needed to own to be able to provide quality control for the highest standard of patient care. In everything from the modern equipment/technology, to the types of materials used for fillings/crowns, to the practice of Anesthesia and other dental specialties, we create an environment where we can excel and where our patients receive excellent care.

These past three years, I have seen God plant little gifts in the nooks and crannies of my life. Our current location was a gift. We were looking for a place that presented a need for our services. An abandoned bank building fit the bill and when I walked in I knew it was the place. We opened our

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INSIDE: REFLECTIONS

Work Life and Family

Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work. (Colossians 1:10)

WorkLight recognizes we have one vocation in life. We are working for our Father, 24/7, 365 days a year. Through it all, we are to be coworkers in Christ bringing forth his Kingdom. Within this mission, we have many roles and responsibilities.

In a world that pursues work-life balance, it’s easy to think of our roles as jars needing to be properly organized. Each sitting there in good order waiting to be individually addressed. Each with their own priority and varying degrees of importance. This is not a helpful perspective.



Working for our Father helps put things in the right perspective. Life isn’t well-organized containers. As coworkers in Christ, his Lordship supports and guides us in all we do. We always join him in doing the will of our Father.

It’s not a balancing act, it’s a relationship. It’s relying on God’s grace and direction to show us the way and integrate all into a life pleasing him in every way. Come Holy Spirit.

March Reflections: Pg 2-4

REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

Work Life and Family Life

By Vanessa Cooreman Smith

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

One issue that defined my 30s was “work-family life balance”—a battle that most working parents know all too well. The desire to get this balance right has plagued my heart for years, and I fight to ward off “mom guilt” as I navigate the competing needs of my growing business and my growing children.

This issue hit me hard as I transitioned from maternity leave with my firstborn back into the workplace. At the time I sold real estate, with demanding hours on evenings and weekends. My husband was also a realtor with the same demanding schedule. I eventually quit my job to stay home with our son but my strong entrepreneurial spirit felt stifled, so I went back to work.

I started a company and worked even more hours but closed it when we had a second baby. Then I started another company, and we had a third baby. By then I knew to give myself the grace of a real maternity leave and then arranged to return to work. Fifteen years into this tug of war, I feel like I finally have some clarity from the Lord.

If I could go back, I would tell my younger self, “The Lord loves you. He made you just as you are. He formed the desires of your heart. He knows your talents, dreams, skills, weaknesses and more. The Lord also made your children uniquely for you, and they are not lacking as long as you follow God's call. You were designed to be their mother. Listen to the Lord to guide your steps, and do not be distracted. Rather, look to the Lord as your North Star. Love your children with all your being. Pour out Christ's love into their minds and hearts. Teach them truth and make your time with them quality time.”

For too long a balance seemed elusive. Finally, I realized that the right balance is having faith to follow the Lord's call for your life. What really matters is love. When my workdays feel too long, instead of beating myself up or making huge changes, I focus on grace for myself and love for my husband and children. When I discussed this struggle with my nanny, she looked at

me and said, “Your children know they are loved. It is incredibly obvious.” My heart exploded with joy. That is the real measure of success...not how many hours I did or didn't clock in at home.

Vanessa Cooreman Smith is a member of the South Bend-Elkhart Women's Chapter. She also serves on the WorkLight Board of Directors. She lives in South Bend, IN, with her husband, Steve, and their three sons. Vanessa can be reached at vanessa@flourishinteriors.net

PRAY

Heavenly Father, help us navigate through the challenges of this world and listen to your calling and nudges for us to do what we were meant to do.

REFLECT

Try to avoid hyper-measuring your successes and failures and see if you find a different definition of success/balance.

DISCUSS

Consider an area in your life that would be more balanced if you followed God's plan instead of your own.

Nine to Five Podcast

Nine to Five podcasts are conversations with Christians who are actively seeking to align their careers with God's mission. They are meant to challenge and encourage others through personal testimony and sharing.

Listen and learn how you might bring Christ into your workplace.

To learn more go to bit.ly/9to5-Podcasts



REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

Every Call

By Dawn Erickson

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)

A clown soared through the air at Cirque du Soleil. Even though my husband and I had been anticipating this performance, neither of us could focus. A member of our congregation had undergone major surgery the week before, and before the show we learned that she had taken an abrupt turn for the worse. We knew that at any second we could get the call that she had passed away, which would trigger an all-too-familiar sequence of events—family members to counsel, a funeral to plan, arrangements to make, venues to book. And our vacation would come to a swift end.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to do God's work in that congregation, but it was hard for our relationship to take a back seat so often. We felt guilty that while this other family was going through such a horrible time we were worried about our vacation. This was the work we had chosen—and were called—to do. But a long string of disappointments and cancellations was taking a toll on our mental health.

We are called in Scripture to be good stewards of what God has given to us—including care for belongings, careers, and physical blessings. But God has also entrusted us with families and gave us instructions to care for them as well. To love our spouses as Christ loved the church, to train up our children in the way they should go. Mistakes are inevitable as we juggle myriad responsibilities, but we remember in those times that we are loved by a forgiving God who sacrificed himself for us, forgive ourselves, and continue trying to do better: striving in every call God has given us.

Dawn Erickson works as a librarian at a Christian collection. She and her husband have worked on numerous domestic and international missions and they have two young children.

PRAY

Lord, please help us to do your will and recognize your calls, no matter how large or small they may seem to us.

REFLECT

How is God calling you in your life and how can we honor him in each of these areas?

DISCUSS

When you have many responsibilities do you give them to the Lord? When you make a mistake, do you ask for forgiveness and do you forgive yourself?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

Going Back in Time

By Stacy Bohl

If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. (Hebrews 12:8)

There have been dramatic changes for everyone this past year. Both of our children had been away at college for a couple years. We were used to being “empty nesters” and had changed one of the kid's rooms into an office. Shortly after the pandemic hit, our children finished their studies for the year, and we made the tough decision that they would stay home for 2020–2021 school year.

My husband and I both switched to working at home, so we are all at home, together, almost 24/7. I had

gotten used to not having the kids around. After the kids had left, I often spent many hours working at my main job and my side-business, sometimes working 10–12 hours.

My daughter kept coming into my office and asking me when I'd be done. On lunch breaks she'd ask me if we could go out and do something. My other daughter would accuse me of working too much. I would make excuses and even get angry when they came into my office while I was working.

When our kids left for college we were sad to see them go. Our family is close, and we would call each other often, but I never dreamed I would have them back at home. Why should I be angry that my kids wanted to spend time with me? That's not what God would want for me. I decided to recognize this change as a gift from God.

I adjusted by scheduling “family-only” time on my calendar. It has helped me to make sure I don't work longer than I should. It works!

Stacy Bohl lives with her husband and their two daughters in Des Moines, IA, where she works as a consultant in risk management.

PRAY

Jesus, remind us to love and be considerate of those you've placed in our lives, especially our family. Help us to use your love for us as a guide.

REFLECT

How do you make time for the ones you care about?

DISCUSS

If there areas in your life that you might be putting too much or too little time, how might you make a change?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 4

Blurred Lines

By Billy Brophy

Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

“It’s not supposed to be like this!” I said. “Men are supposed to be at work. We weren’t meant to be at home with our kids all day.” That’s why I lost it. I was looking for someone to blame, as I often do.

I had been in the middle of a code deployment. I had an after-hours business development meeting coming up soon, with three hours of work to follow. My expectant wife was trying to make dinner, but our three kids were fighting with each other and wouldn’t leave her alone.

Unfortunately, I lost my temper with the kids. I convinced myself it was because of the crazy stress of teleworking with kids at home, but eventually I took ownership of my actions. I started taking long prayer walks and one Scripture that kept coming up was Psalm 127.

I began reflecting on the time before COVID-19. Sure, I was able to focus better at the office, but was all my time at work spent intentionally?

What about my time between tasks or time spent at the water cooler, going on walks, lunches, and the commute? Was the Lord really in the work I was doing? Was he “building the house”?

As humans, we like to compartmentalize our work and our home, our labor, and our leisure. But from my time working from home, I’ve realized that this distinction, at least on the spiritual level, can be somewhat artificial.

There is no part of our lives that is not part of our vocation. Our leisure time is no excuse to take a break from walking with the Lord.

When teleworking, and the divide between work and life more blurred, each moment is a mission or task from God. This blurring of lines motivates me because rather than “enduring” work and counting the hours until I can go home, I realize that each moment—whether it’s designing a business process/strategy or tackling a home repair or changing a diaper—is a mission God has given me.

In this way, I have found myself excelling in my job while becoming a more

attentive parent and caring husband, all while growing closer to the Lord.

Billy Brophy is a Senior IT Management Consultant and Business Systems Analyst. He lives with his wife, Becca, and their four children in Fairfax, VA.

PRAY

Lord, show me that every moment is a gift, an opportunity to serve you, whether in work, in parenting, or in leisure.

REFLECT

Our entire life is vocation. When do I imagine or act like there are times outside of my vocation?

DISCUSS

How can I use prayer to center my focus so that each moment is lived intentionally and consciously with Christ by my side?

WORKLIGHT™

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. MATTHEW 5:16

2021
ANNUAL GIFT
CAMPAIGN

IGNITE
YOUR FLAME

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BRIGHT

WORKLIGHT IS SPARKING
A MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WORKLIGHT.ORG/SUPPORT-US/

- ▶ Using the power of personal stories of the Gospel being lived
- ▶ Providing practical, adaptable and on-demand resources
- ▶ Fostering small groups across traditions, occupations and positions

Unlikely Disciples

By Russ Lyons

My company builds mission-style furniture by rebuilding lives. We hire the hard to employ. The company's purpose goes well beyond the tables and chairs we create; we work with God to create new disciples.

I first met Eric when I was a street evangelist in poor neighborhoods. Influenced by the area's great need for jobs, I trained as a furniture-maker so I could hire from the community. I consistently ask the Lord how best to minister, to encourage, and to help overcome the demons and difficulties that impede work and freedom for this population.

In the factory, our conversations often turn to God. We might find ourselves in moments of prayer, where we sit and wait and listen—open for something to hit us. Not long after Eric started working for me, he and I experienced one of those moments. He said, "Hey, I asked for a mentor once, back in January." He scrolled through his phone and showed me the calendar memo. Since then, I had become his mentor. He was excited by the realization that God was listening to him—something he'd never experienced before. "God is listening and I can listen to God," he said.

The next day, we were in the paint booth spray finishing furniture pieces. He said, "I had some spare time this morning and so I did what we did. I listened. I asked the Lord and I had this image of all my friends. I think my purpose is to help people!" he said. For 45 minutes he told me about all those he has buried in the past year and the direction they needed but didn't have.

It was a breakthrough for us but there are always hurdles on the path to becoming a disciple. Part of our work involves training and teaching through mistakes. When Eric made a mistake,

I went over the steps to correct it and asked him to complete the job. I was surprised when he stared past me and said that he was done.

"Whoa," I said. "You're a little behind but a bit of effort and you're right back in the running. What's up?" I asked.

He claimed he didn't need the job and he had other streams of income. He said he couldn't make any money at it and it wasn't fun anymore. His perception and the reality of the situation clearly didn't match.

I told him that it's a job and it's not supposed to be fun. "I pay you, right? This job is to train you to work and pay you for good work," I said. As I was praying, he was fuming.

I encouraged Eric to take the afternoon off. "But, I want you to write down the top three things you want to see different in your life and let's talk about them tomorrow," I said.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, I said, "Eric, hold on. I like you, man. I like you being here. I enjoy you working here." He softened and said, "Okay." I wondered if it was the first time he heard that someone genuinely liked him.

The next day, Eric described the negative thoughts that crowd his mind: all his failings, being constantly overwhelmed and alone. "I hate myself," he said.

I realized that he needed to be freed from the garbage that filled his life and that Jesus wanted to free him. I talked about calming storms and driving out demons, and we prayed. I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Dude, God loves you, man. He doesn't want you to be like this; he's got a better way for you."

As we finished praying, Eric leaned back. "Wow," he said. And for the first time since I've known him, he smiled.

Russ Lyons was a speaker at the most recent WorkLight StoryNight. He is also the owner of Custom Cottage, a furniture shop in Indianapolis, IN. He can be reached at indy@customcottage.org



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A Paradigm Shift

doors with all the latest and greatest equipment and zero patients. We have grown organically, by word of mouth and by being present to those who need us, and now have over 2000 active patients. They are all gifts.

The practice has its challenges and the stress levels take their toll. My focus has largely been on dental work, the technology, and the equipment used to provide care. It provides a fair amount of adrenaline; it's really exciting. But day in and day out, it's not sustainable. The anxiety can easily build.

My WorkLight group and "Working for Our Father" have changed my framework. The message that our work matters to the Father; that there is a greater purpose, has clarified my vision and filled me with gratitude.

My prayer time before heading into the office brings me great peace and joy. My team and I are instruments of God's healing. Whether it's the average filling or replacing an 8-year-old's front teeth after a scooter accident, our hands are Christ's hands and that understanding makes all the difference. Caring requires 110% effort. The change of framework makes the work happier and gives me greater energy and strength.

Jeff Kohler is in a WorkLight Small Group and he lives in Eagan, MN, with his wife, Kate, and their four kids. Together they own and run the Lakeville Advanced Dental practice. After 5 years of active service in the Air Force, Jeff continues to serve in the Air National Guard. He can be reached at jkohler@alumni.nd.edu.

The Next Right Thing

By Vanessa Cooreman Smith

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (James 1:19-20)

Recently my husband and I experienced a challenging season of conflict with a beloved business partner. We own a real estate brokerage firm and after years of doing business with this partner, who had mentored us and trained us, we came to a serious crossroad. The partner was upset about what he perceived to be a conflict of interest.

He demanded we give up another project and business relationship in order to continue doing business with him. A sizable percentage of our total revenue came from this contested project and we had worked for almost

5 years to procure it. We were faced with almost an impossible decision.

For several weeks we talked about our options, we pleaded our case with our partner, and imagined what it would be like to pick between the two options. Both were meaningful to us and vital to the health of our business. One evening as I was praying, which in my humanness probably sounded more like worrying aloud to the Lord, I heard his voice.

It was a simple response that the Spirit planted in my mind's ear. "Do the next right thing," he said to me. I remember thinking this was an oversimplification. But I tried to take stock of this word, and even shared it with my husband.

As I look back it made perfect sense. In the frustration of being backed into a corner, we contemplated just walking away from the partner and giving up. But that didn't feel right. On the other side, we considered giving into our partner and letting go of this other relationship in order to please him. This also didn't feel wise. So, in lieu of having a real answer or plan, we followed the Lord's advice and did the "next right thing".

Every time we spoke with our partner we reassured him of our loyalty and desire to figure out a path forward. For the most part we acted with love and patience and even sought out the advice of several respected councilors. We left town for a vacation right after Christmas with the situation still up in the air.

On our way home from Florida, our partner called us. He had been to see our mutual councilor while we were away and had come to some profound realizations. He had worked out a plan to move forward and had decided to let the situation go. He sounded like a free man and it was clear that the Holy Spirit had brought peace to his heart.

Now, as we move forward, the situation is close to resolved. We are so glad we did not act rashly, but instead kept doing the next right thing in every conversation and moment with our partner. As I look back, I see that what God was really asking of me was to have faith in his plan instead of taking the reins. Perhaps sometimes having faith is allowing our problems to remain unsolved for a time and leaving them in the capable hands of our Savior...while we just keep doing the next right thing.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE



I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phillipians 4:13)

Work & Family Life

Seeking Christ in the workplace doesn't mean leaving Christ at work. Since the year after I was born, the Holy

Spirit has been alive and moving in this ministry. Countless relationships that started with a professional introduction have been transformed by God into life-changing brotherhood and sisterhood.

When Paul the Apostle wrote to the Phillipians that all is possible through

Christ, there's a reason he didn't say "some" or "most". Whether at work or with family, let us remember that all is possible through our Lord Jesus.

This month's *Flame* explores the theme of work and family life. Sometimes family feels like work, and in blessed moments sometimes work can even feel like family. In some way we all struggle at work. And in some way we all struggle with children, spouses, parents, siblings, or even our Christian family. Yet we are all one in Christ.

Like mixing work and family, this issue is overflowing with God's abundance! Stories from working parents, an

invitation for your Chapter to work with Justin Lassen, our new Ministry Program Manager, to host local WorkLight programs, and updates on how the Lord is using our 2021 Annual Gift Campaign to reach the next generation. Come Holy Spirit! We pray that you are encouraged and equipped by these stories to shine bright both at home and in your place of work.

God bless,

Wes

NEWS

WANT HELP HOSTING AN EVENT?

In last month's newsletter we welcomed Justin Lassen, WorkLight's new Ministry Program Manager. Justin is eager to work with members, Small Groups, and Chapters. He would love to get to know you. If you have a group that is interested in hosting a Working For Our Father or a WorkLight StoryNight event, Justin will be available to support in hosting.

What does that mean exactly?

Justin will help by:

- Using and following WorkLight's turn-key toolkit to keep details and planning in order
- Utilizing technology (like Zoom) to make the event seamless virtually
- Support your group in their event promotion efforts
- Be present and available for questions that may arise.

- Partner after the event to debrief, celebrate successes, and plan for the future

This is a great opportunity, especially if your group has never put on an event or a specific event (like WorkLight StoryNight). Please reach out Justin right away if you're interested. justin@worklight.org.

WORKLIGHT PROGRAMS PLANNING TEAM

WorkLight is looking for individuals who are ages 25-45 to connect and be part of a program planning team that will specifically work to reach young professionals in the workplace. This group will be a place for brainstorming and will prayerfully utilize the individual gifts and skills of each member of the team to grow and expand programming across the nation. If you have been impacted by WorkLight and Christians in Commerce and want to be part of

reaching others in the workplace for Christ, this is your opportunity!

This group will be focusing on three main questions to start with:

1. What are the most effective ways to reach and increase participation with younger audiences?
2. How can we maximize our gifts to grow our sphere of influence?
3. What is currently working, and where might the Holy Spirit lead us next?

If you are interested in joining this group, know of someone we should contact, or want more information, please contact WorkLight Ministry Program Manager, Justin Lassen at justin@worklight.org.

Share your story: The Flame Newsletter

We are currently accepting story submissions for *The Flame* newsletter. Here are the upcoming monthly themes:

- Influencing Workplace Culture
- Fruit of the Spirit
- Doing The Right Thing
- Overcoming Jealousy and Envy
- Humility at Work

If you have a workplace story that fits with these themes and would like to share, please contact communications@worklight.org.

Not a writer?
That's okay, we can help!
Your story has power, we want to give your story a voice.

2021

MARCH

*"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

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