

Good Kind of Difficult

By Annie D. Stutley

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

He was considered abrasive, cocky, and definitely on the road toward curmudgeon. Brown-nosing would be useless—he was too sharp for such nonsense. If I were to remain in his favor in my role as a writer, I couldn't just work for him, I'd have to learn from him. He was a visionary who measured a person by how far outside the box they were willing to go. To him, "the way we've always done it" was a curse. "Make them feel restless where they are," he'd say during brainstorming. And I watched with complete awe how gradual shifts of the norm ushered in changes people didn't even realize they wanted. But it wasn't always so sweet.

One August afternoon in a heated meeting, he bellowed, "You've got to work with a sense of urgency, like this could be taken away tomorrow." I left his office fighting back tears. How could I work under threat? Oh, I hated him that day. Then, Hurricane Katrina hit and shut everything

down. When I finally reached him by phone he said, "It was almost all taken away." I remembered that horrible meeting and realized I'd misunderstood the message. My job was never threatened. It was an impassioned charge to never take for granted our purpose. To this day when I find myself apathetic, I whisper, "Be urgent. All of this could be taken away."

No work was worth doing for him if the results weren't excellent. He had a "why bother" attitude when presented with weak effort. I was in my mid-twenties then, and entirely too fragile. Over time, I learned that excellence wasn't perfection. Excellence stems from diligence, long hours, and grit. "Don't try. Do," he once told me. Now I say that to my kids.

Yet, he never sought a pat on the back. Whenever he had a speech to give or an editorial due for publication, he'd ask for my opinion before going to press. "Sounds great" would be insulting feedback. He wanted my tangible, devil's advocate point of view. This cultivated a back and forth, between my desk and his, and a shared effort for the very best. I didn't know it then, but "What do you think?" is an opportunity for collaboration, not personal gain.

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INSIDE: REFLECTIONS

Having Hope

May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you. (Psalm 33:22)

As those who love the Lord, we have confidence that nothing that is happening comes as a surprise to him. In fact, all is being put to good use and toward his end.

Our certainty rests on the fact that Christ is risen, that Christ is Lord, and that Christ is making all things new.

What seems like a trial, tragedy, or even a catastrophe will be used to serve his purposes. No situation is beyond him, this is our hope...what we know will be.



He is permitting the particulars of our current situation and it's where he wants us. He invites us to surrender, seek his will, and cooperate with his grace.

While we must pass through the circumstances of a fallen and broken world, our God transcends it all. We must wait until the superficial and passing moment has produced what his eternal gaze sees and his immense love wills.

April Reflections: Pg 2-4

REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

Sharing Our Hope

By Josh Fuller

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15)

Just over a year ago I was asked by a manager to mentor one of his newer sales reps. I met the rep and we began to discuss the prospect of engaging in a mentoring relationship. I asked him what he needed to have happen so that after a year he could consider it a success. He wanted to talk about what that would look like, so we jumped in.

I shared some important guiding principles for this to work: He had to guide the topics and make an effort to schedule a time to talk; we needed to be will-

ing to move past surface-level conversation and get real with each other, and I shared that I am a passionate follower of Jesus, and wanted the freedom to talk about his impact on my life.

I then gave my colleague an out. I said, "If any of this makes you uncomfortable or hesitant, we don't have to do this mentoring thing. I won't hold a grudge or be angry; you're free to go. But if you're OK with those guiding principles, then I'm all in to help you become the best possible version of yourself."

Eight months later, after weekly hour-long conversations, my colleague shared that he also wanted to follow Jesus. Since then, we have been studying the Bible and learning from the Scriptures about servant-heartedness, humility, forgiveness and how to emulate Jesus in the workplace.

Josh Fuller and his family live in Michigan, where he serves as an elder

at his local church, leads a small group with his wife, and teaches classes on evangelism. Josh is a sales rep with a global pharmaceutical company. He can be reached at fullerdad78@yahoo.com.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, help us to always recognize opportunities and be prepared to share your name with others so that they too may come to love you.

REFLECT

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you opportunities to share Jesus. Be ready to share our living hope with gentleness and respect.

DISCUSS

Do you have the opportunity to mentor or share wisdom with others? How can you bridge the conversation between Jesus and work?

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.

REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

Hope & Perseverance

By Gail Cardwell

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

Pre-COVID, I assisted students in writing essays for their college applications. I first met Kenny at a student group session. At the end of the assembly, he asked for my help.

Kenny was shy, kind-hearted, and humble. He chose to write his essay about his experiences as a “military brat.” His father had faced combat in multiple tours. His family moved across the country every few years. This frequent uprooting bred perseverance, but for Kenny, it posed hardships. He strug-

gled with social insecurities, making it difficult to initiate and sustain friendships. These constant changes in his environment left him feeling powerless and without hope. During his teens, these anxieties heightened, as social pressures to fit in increased.

Kenny’s mother, a compassionate woman of faith, encouraged him to tackle problems head-on. He began to share his adventurous stories with his peers. They admired his authenticity. One day, he was invited to compete in an onstage performance. He won first prize. Over time, his strength was renewed with each new experience.

As he drafted his essay, Kenny displayed an inner confidence, as he shared his stories with me. He also expressed concerns over finances for his college education. I told him I believed that his family’s hope, sacrifices, and service to others would be rewarded. I thanked him for confiding in me and was confident in the quality of his essay.

One year later, I texted Kenny to check in on him. He told me he was attending the

college of his choice and had received a very generous leadership scholarship.

Gail Cardwell has been a long-standing member of WorkLight and Christians in Commerce and is a former board member. She is the Teaching Director of a local teen ministry. She and her husband, David, live in Virginia.

PRAY

Father, help us to hope in you alone when we face repeated obstacles in our lives.

REFLECT

Have you ever felt hopeless in your work environment? How did you respond?

DISCUSS

When has the Lord renewed your strength in areas where you felt weak?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

Through God’s Eyes

By Gail Cardwell

And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)

After my former employer reorganized several years ago, I assumed responsibility for affordable housing issues, despite my unfamiliarity with this finance niche. Mike was renowned for his expertise in this area. When I met him, I asked for his help in learning this new area of concentration. Thanks to Mike’s subject depth, I learned a great deal. After some time, he became reluctant to share information.

He would cut me off in conversations and speak loudly over me when I expressed an opinion. His tone was abrupt and condescending. I continued to rely on him for advice, but our interactions left me feeling humiliated. I prayed daily for healing in our work and personal relationships, but eventually, lost hope.

One day, Mike chastised me in front of a crowd. That night, I knelt and prayed passionately, “Father, please open my eyes so I may see Mike the way you see him.” Months later, I attended a conference where Mike was a speaker. I attended his session. The room was empty. Suddenly, I was overwhelmed with compassion for Mike. I saw him as a little boy, terrified of everything – people, rejection, falling short of expectations. He was visibly sweating during his presentation.

After he finished, I walked up to him and complimented him on

an excellent session. I told him I would write glowing remarks in his evaluation. We walked out together and talked at length. It was the beginning of a long-lasting friendship. Indeed, hope has not put us to shame, as the Lord poured out his love into our hearts.

PRAY

Father, help us to see others as you see them, and to have faith in your power to heal.

REFLECT

Have you ever given up hope on a relationship, only to find the Lord stepped in to heal it?

DISCUSS

How can we use difficult situations in our workplaces to grow in faith and hope?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 4

Choose to Bloom

By Annie D. Stutley

“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)

I’m not a fan of the word “journey.” I think that pop culture, social media, and those wooden plaques at Hobby Lobby have abused the word by giving weighty meaning to actions that simply aren’t an expedition. Working on a presentation or retiling a bathroom are no more a journey than walking my 56-pound golden retriever puppy around the block—maybe the printer doesn’t have the right cardstock or the grout is the wrong shade of white or you step in another dog’s mess while picking up after your own dog. Aggravations? Yes. Journeys? No.

I recognize that sometimes you don’t have to be an explorer or a pioneer to experience a journey. Road tripping with three children, getting a flat, and waiting for Triple A on the side of a highway in the middle of nowhere Alabama with one 20-ounce bottle of Dr. Pepper and a bag of Doritos to share between you? That could be the start of a journey.

As could cancer. Recently, I was diagnosed with rectal cancer. The prognosis looks good, and still I am tempted to raise my fist at God, and cry out, “Why me, God? Why?!” The week waiting for the results of biopsies and scans involved a lot of fist raising to heaven. I have three young children. I’m only 42. I felt abandoned by God. I lost all hope. Then I saw a small wooden sign in a history classroom where I was subbing. “Embrace the journey,” it read.

God is a loving father and loving fathers don’t abandon their children. So why would God abandon me? Knowing why I face this trial won’t

make it go away. But knowing that God is at work in me, even during cancer, has the power to prosper me as I become the daughter of Christ I was born to be. I have a choice. I can either scream at God or I can bloom where I’m planted and embrace the journey.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, grant me the courage to embrace the journey you have chosen for me.

REFLECT

What journey are you being asked to embrace right now? What is it that you hope God has at work for you in your journey?

DISCUSS

When have circumstances in your life seemed difficult only to turn out to be God moving you from one place in life to something better?

WORKLIGHT

REMOTE SMALL GROUPS



These groups are led by WorkLight staff, and are open to all who wish to attend.

WorkLight Remote Men’s Group
Led by Wesley Farrow, WorkLight President
Tuesdays @ 12 pm Central

WorkLight Remote Women’s Group
Led by Becki Lonquist, WorkLight Director of Communications
Thursdays @ 12 pm Central

For more information on small groups check out the group map online by visiting bit.ly/WLgroups.

Don't Let a "Good" Trial Go to Waste

By Steve Becker

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11)

These are tough times for all of us. A pandemic overlaying the normal challenges of life is a trial none of us have ever experienced.

What beats within the heart of a true disciple of Jesus? The answer can be found in the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with a counterintuitive list of eight characteristics each promising God's divine favor.

Jesus is describing his own heart, a heart completely one with his Father. Called Beatitudes, they form a self-portrait of the incarnated God. In his own life, each beatitude would be lived out to perfection, even to the point of death.

His life was only the beginning. Pentecost would open the way for Christians to have a new heart—the heart of Jesus.

Taking on the Heart of Jesus

He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them we may participate in the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4)

As Christians, we now participate in this divine nature. We are called to be Christ in the world, and like him bring forth the Kingdom of God. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to form this very same heart in us. As we grow in these beatitudes, they create a beautiful place for him to feel right at home.

Poverty, meekness, mourning, hunger and thirst for God, mercy, purity of heart, fostering peace, joy in persecution—the Holy Spirit alone can make our human heart capable of understanding and living them.

As disciples, these beatitudes have the power to transform us profoundly and impact those around us. They enable the new heart promised by the

did. It is the blessedness he shares with the Father and the Spirit. As we participate in their life, we share also in the divine happiness they enjoy.

Steve Becker, a long-time member of CIC and on the board of WorkLight, lives in Minnesota with his wife, Carolyn.



prophets to become a reality in us. The very heart of Jesus.

The individual reward of each beatitude is actually part of the same reward—inheritance of the Kingdom of God. Each looks at an aspect of the Kingdom from a different direction.

Breathing Divine Life

The beatitudes are realized in us only by participating in suffering, sharing in the difficulties of life. Growth and formation don't come in good times, but when our faith is put to the test and we take up our cross.

We have three options when this happens. We can resent the trial, we can resign ourselves to it, or we can embrace all that the Father has for us. It is the latter that will transform us and bear much fruit around us.

We grow as true believers, beating with his heart and breathing his divine life into the world, just as he

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Good Kind of Difficult*

One Christmas he gave me a dream catcher—a charming gift from such a tough guy. Across a crescent moon with a mythical woman holding a blue jay, it read: “What would you attempt if you knew you would not fail?”

He was the most difficult man with whom I have ever worked. And it was my absolute pleasure. The truth hurts, but we need to hear it. As Christians, we know we are imperfect. It's tempting to run from criticism, but in doing so, what do we learn? Yet with Christ, we know we will not fail any challenge—even curmudgeons.

Annie Stutley is a freelance writer living in New Orleans with her husband, Bill, their three children, and three dogs. She can be reached at anniedstutley.com.

Financial Ministry

By Patrick Jacobeen

My journey from church ministry to the secular financial field is a gift. God has brought me from a ministry supporting people in their life in Christ to a ministry of supporting financial life in Christ by teaching financial processes and fiscal responsibility. And most importantly, I have learned the blessings of financial discipline that makes for rich stewardship.

I was always encouraged to consider that one doesn't have to work in ministry to evangelize. In college I studied theology with the goal of becoming a teacher and worked in ministry following graduation. Happily, my marriage is one of the greatest gifts of my years in ministry, and my wife helped me recognize the unique plan God had for me in the secular field of money.

My work with the Lost Millionaire Movement provides financial education to middle-income earners around the United States and Canada. As we

educate, we support our clients in their financial choices, help relieve financial anxiety, and give them the opportunity to be good stewards of God's money. Often, God teaches through personal experience and mistakes. My wife and I found ourselves financially unstable and benefiting greatly from the gift of financial education that got us on track and redirected my approach to money as a Christian provider.

I was moved by the organization's message and started working part-time in the financial world at a time when we found ourselves experiencing financial discouragement. Income was not coming and I was full of anxiety. My wife spoke two words of truth to me. She reminded me that God doesn't bring us to a critical point to watch us fail; learn perhaps but not fail. She also reminded me that God is never going to leave his people and he should always be trusted. Our job is to trust always, give our best effort and know that he will provide. Excellence in work glorifies God and I work hard to use financial education to restore hope. When one has hope, they can share it with others through their generosity.

I know a family who had been saving up for a grand family vacation for several years. They had saved over \$10,000. Just as they were planning

the details, neighbors knocked on the door seeking help. They had hit financial rock-bottom and were facing bankruptcy. The family made the choice to give their vacation savings to the needy neighbors out of love for God and his provision.

As always, God is not outdone in generosity. The next month, out of the blue, the husband received a work bonus that equaled the amount they had given away. Stories such as this have shown me that doing my work well is a ministry that the Lord uses. I find joy in helping families understand expenses and budgets and respond to the opportunity to share the Lord's bounty with others.

Restoring hope in individuals' financial discipline and cultivating generosity is one of the greatest blessings of my work. I am blessed by this work and I know that God is always ministering to his people.

Patrick Jacobeen was a speaker at the most recent WorkLight StoryNight and this is the story he shared. To watch the video, go to worklight.org and select "WorkLight Stories."

PRESIDENT'S NOTE



For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. (Galatians 5:5)

Having Hope

The word "hope" appears over 50 times in the New Testament. In the original Greek,

"elpis" suggests a state of eager anticipation. What are you looking forward to today?

At the Home Office we have big hopes for 2021. Expanding our audience by 3,000 subscribers. Doubling the number of participants in our programs. Launching a Kingdom Builders campaign for legacy gifts. Finding a way to be together for an Annual Conference in the Fall. Please join us in prayer and anticipation for what is to come for WorkLight. Come Holy Spirit!

We pray that you will be encouraged by this month's stories of Christians

finding hope in the face of adversity. May our struggles be a reminder that our greatest hope lies not in earthly results, but in the everlasting Jesus. Thanks be to God for the many ways he shows his goodness to us in this life. Above all, let our hope rest eagerly in the righteousness by faith that awaits us all in Christ!

God bless,
Wes

NEWS

**GROWING CHRIST
IN THE WORKPLACE**

Sharing the real-life experiences of fellow Christians, WorkLight provides first-hand accounts of living the life of Christ in the workplace. The materials we create foster discussion and encourage action personally and together; building a sense of shared life as followers of Christ.

This year WorkLight is focusing on growing and reaching new generations of Christians in the workplace. We are doing this through thoughtful, prayerful, and considerate plans. One of our goals is to add an additional 3,000 subscribers to our email lists (Spark Reflections, Announcements & Events, and the digital version of *The Flame* newsletter).

We know the stories that we share have the power to transform lives, as we have seen it happen. Many of our readers have experienced this change in themselves. We ask you now to join us now in prayer, and consider how you might be part of spreading the word and sharing these resources with others.

Consider creating a challenge for yourself to invite three people—from your friends, family, or coworkers—to sign up and receive our reflections by:

- Forwarding a reflection email that you think would be impactful to someone else you know
- Sending an email linking them to our website where they can find the recent *Flame* issues. (worklight.org/flame)
- Sending a message to someone who doesn't know WorkLight and leave a personal note about what these stories mean to you and send them to worklight.org/stay-connected.

Each day as you read the Spark reflection email, ask the Lord to bring to mind others who might benefit from it. Pass it on with your own encouragement and/or how it has made a difference in your life.

WHY EMAIL?

Email is currently the best way to provide our subscribers with access to all of our free resources and offerings. It helps them to get to know us better and eventually develop a relationship with one another in a “noncommittal” kind of way.

With your help, we can provide new subscribers with stories of Christ in the workplace that may lead them to attend an event or program, and

toward a path where we can illustrate what it means to work for our Father and bring Christ into the workplace.

If you aren't currently receiving our emails, we encourage you to sign-up now at worklight.org/stay-connected.

**EMAIL RESOURCES &
ENCOURAGEMENT****Spark Emails**

Sent straight to your inbox each morning of every workday, these short reflections share how God is working in the lives of Christians in the workplace. They also provide our latest encouragement through blogs, story videos, podcasts, and more!

The Flame Newsletter (physical/digital)

Provides weekly reflections, insights through testimonies, stories of living a life of faith in the workplace.

Announcements & Events

Stay tuned for the latest updates, upcoming events and other announcements.

Sign-up now at worklight.org/stay-connected



Did you know Christians in Commerce and WorkLight is a charity listed in Amazon Smile?

If you list us as the charity of your choice, **Amazon donates .05% of the funds from your purchase!**

Just visit smile.amazon.com and search for Christians in Commerce.



2021**APRIL**

*"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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