

By My Side By Paula Lent

Growing up, Michele Wang had a first-hand view of the hard work and courage it takes to run a small business. Her parents, who immigrated to Hawaii from Taiwan, worked tirelessly at multiple jobs for minimum wages in order to save enough money to open their own jewelry store.

After 16 years in business, they went under due to large corporations entering the market. Though her parents were experts in what they did, like many small business owners they lacked the knowledge and resources necessary to last. Witnessing this had a lasting impact on Michele.

During her career, she successfully worked her way up to senior director, global operations for the Motion Picture Association, representing the American movie and TV industry domestically and abroad, and the chief strategy officer for a media and entertainment for an acquired tech startup. Then Michele transitioned to founding and working with technology startups while consulting with both large and small businesses. While she was working with small business owners, she noticed a huge knowledge,

resource, and experience gap compared to mid-to-large-sized companies.

Then, while working for a startup, Michele was asked to do something she didn't feel morally comfortable with. The internal culture was extremely toxic, and while the founder knew how to tell a great story, when you looked behind the curtain, they weren't really living the mission. She reached out to her friend and mentor, Jack Borja, for advice.

The two had met through mutual friends and fallen into an easy mentorship relationship. Jack, whose life had been changed by WorkLight (then Christians in Commerce) in the late 1980s, had professional and spiritual experience and wisdom Michele always valued.

This time when she came to him, she shared how uncomfortable she was working with a company and founder that she found morally questionable. Michele also shared her long-held dream to create a startup to help small businesses, and how much that path was calling to her despite fears of failure.

His advice on that call changed the trajectory of her career.

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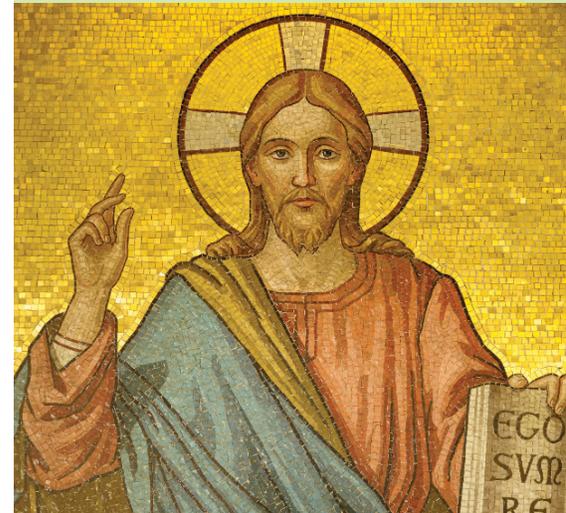
INSIDE: REFLECTIONS

Christ in Me

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ... In this world we are like Jesus. (1 John 4:12, 17b)

God doesn't ask us to "feel love for all." We have discovered this first-hand throughout our walk with him. He does call us to let his love become complete in us. John, in Chapter Four of his First Epistle, makes it clear God's love is made complete in us by loving one another.

Love is defined as seeking the good of the other, for the other. It isn't about our feelings or preferences. It's about the choices we make to do good.



Christ in me is literally letting the love of the Son be made complete in us, fully loving as God is himself, and bringing that love to life in our encounters.

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." (1 John 4:16)

February Reflections: Pages 2-4

REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

Mother-in-law Challenge

By Joe Blanco

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

When I came to Christ I had a lot of animosity, but I had a great mentor, Rueben, who helped me find love in my heart for others. One day, he challenged me to write a list of all the people I've hurt, or who've hurt me.

After I shared my list with Rueben, he challenged me to call the people on it. I was mad and felt he had tricked me; but eventually, I started calling people. There was one person I didn't want to call: my mother-in-law.

To be fair, she didn't like me either. In retrospect, it was probably for a good reason. You see, my past wasn't pretty, and my future mother-in-law hired a private investigator to find out more about me when I was dating her daughter.

She told her daughter that if she married me, she would never receive anything. And that's what happened—no visits, no presents on birthdays or at Christmas, no communication.

We moved on with our lives, got married, and had children; but we did not have a relationship with my wife's parents for 25 years. It wasn't for a lack of trying, but every time we did, it was cold and difficult.

When my father-in-law passed away, we went to the family's home for the service. My kids, all on their own, helped in every way possible—setting up, cleaning up, and helping their grandma when she was exhausted from talking to all the guests at the service. And I guess that opened her eyes to what she'd been missing.

I went back to that list and Rueben's instructions, and I called her. The first thing I did was ask for forgiveness. Then I told her about my mentor's challenge. She said, "you're a different person now," and at the end of our conversation, I asked her if I could call her again.

We have talked every Thursday night since then. She has visited our home. We've gone to church together and she

asked me to baptize her, which I did. Even though she treated me with contempt for many years, I tried my best to treat her with love as Christ did for me.

Joe Blanco attended his first CIC/WorkLight event 23 years ago. He and his wife, Angelique, have been married 33 years, have three children, and live in Chandler, Arizona.

PRAY

Lord, help me to seek the good in others and put aside my feelings. Help me to love others so that you can live in us.

REFLECT

Do you have a list of people you've hurt in your life? If you could call them up today, what would you say?

DISCUSS

What can be done to mend your broken fences from the past? How can you reconcile your past and love someone who doesn't love you?

WORKLIGHT

CHALLENGE WEEKEND

Awake the Dawn.

Host a Weekend.

Free from pandemic restrictions, 2023 is our year for Challenge Weekends. Our National Conference introduced a new look and new resources. Schedule a weekend now so a new generation in your area can experience its power.

Learn more at WorkLight.org/Challenge-Weekends

"The night is over, the day is almost here." Romans 13:12



REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

New Friendships In Christ

By Greg Aitkens

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:11-12)

I met Clarence a few years back. He is part of a local service club in our town. We are both members.

I noticed quickly that Clarence loves to talk, and pontificate on a range of issues and topics. He likes his own bombastic and lofty ideas, which to me are coming way out of left field. I find these long-winded diatribes to be rather obnoxious and frequently not well thought out. I also find it disturbing that Clarence does not

follow up on projects he promises to do. Frankly, I just don't trust the man.

Over the years, I've learned that I regularly need to "endure" certain people. I pray a lot about living out several "fruits" of the Holy Spirit—especially patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. My human tendency is to want to blast Clarence (and others like him) and tell him what I really think of him and his ideas. So far, I've maintained my composure.

I have also come to realize that certain people just go about life in a very different manner than my own. Their styles, process, approach, focus, and methods are about 180 degrees opposite to mine.

Finding the Christ in me can be challenging. I find I need to fully recognize that there are certain people with whom I am going to be incompatible. I need to constantly look for the good in those people and cut them some slack—even give them the benefit of the doubt.

client. How do we maintain our proposed course of action in the face of emotional discontent and adversity? We serve the client.

One thing a WorkLight mentor taught me was to be aware of how the seven deadly sins are stumbling blocks to the grace that is abundantly flowing to us from God. For me, one of the sins I'm tempted by is pride. As a general contractor, I'm responsible for more than 80 items from beginning to end, and if I think I have all the answers, my pride will overshadow my ability to serve the client to the extent that they need. But it is they who are taking on the financial burden.

On a given project, I might work with a client for 18 months. During that time, I may see their flaws, and experience their anger or anxiety. I face the temptation to be offended, vindictive, or less committed.

But, because I have learned to be aware of the Lord's grace and love throughout my workday, I've had an inner transformation. Instead of intentionally reminding

Greg Aitkens is a member of the editorial team who lives in Cambria, California, with his wife Ginny. He can be reached at greg.r.aitkens@gmail.com.

PRAY

Thank you Father for Clarence, and all his ideas, and his style. I pray that I can humbly set aside my own pride and judgments about him, to develop a new friendship in Christ.

REFLECT

How do we do better at enduring the people around us who are very different from ourselves?

DISCUSS

Can we look past the faults we see in others, to discover their hearts of gold and dignity as another child of God?

myself to put aside my pride, I'm more inclined to make that effort naturally, as an outpouring of God's love and Spirit in my life.

Larry Favor is a long-time member of the Santa Cruz Chapter in California, where he owns and operates Favor Construction. Larry can be reached at lfavor@sbcglobal.net.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, please pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, increasing the measure of your love within us.

REFLECT

What is a temptation to sin that you struggle with most in your work life that you can invite the Lord to change?

DISCUSS

Share a story of when you experienced the Lord's love flowing from you to affect a situation.

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

Maintaining Harmony

By Larry Favor

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

I've been in the building business for many years. As a general contractor, I'm responsible from start to finish. In our industry, there are only two occasions that we enthusiastically celebrate: the day we break ground and the day we complete the project. The balance of the in-between process is burdened by two stress factors: the project timeline and overall cost. These stress factors for the client are always lurking and potentially overwhelming.

Maintaining harmony throughout the project is my primary responsibility as the builder and advocate for the

Finding Hidden Gifts

By Michael Lacognato

“... I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.” (Luke 10:21)

There is a saying that you are never too old to learn something, and I find it to be more valid as I age. Sometimes the greatest knowledge can be gained from the people you least expect.

I have been working as a substitute teacher for a local elementary school. It’s not my area of expertise, but I enjoy teaching, love kids, and I trust in God’s planned path for me.

One day, I was assigned to a fourth-grade class to work with two students

who required special assistance. One of the students, Charlie, had difficulty in reading comprehension and focusing on the task at hand. The other student was deaf, so I knew that trying to teach the same assignment to both students would be difficult.

As I prepared, another student in the room kept glancing over at me. Adam initially looked like he could be trouble, so I was prepared to tell him to go back to his seat. When he got to the table, I was surprised by a look of compassion and care in his eyes. He smiled and asked if he could help me with Charlie. He said that he had worked with him in the past, knew his routine, and enjoyed helping him.

As I worked with my other student, I saw Adam share in Charlie’s joy when he got an answer correct, and his heart-warming patience to help Charlie when he made an error. What a wonderful example of Christ’s love. What I expected was not what I received. Adam was a gift to me that day, and after watching him engage with Charlie, I knew Adam was a gift to our school.

Jesus taught me that a helping hand can come from anyone—even a 10-year-old boy.

Michael Lacognato worked in a marketing capacity for over 30 years and is currently a substitute teacher in South Bend, Indiana.

PRAY

Father, please give us the heart to be open to your presence everywhere, and to extend love and mercy always.

REFLECT

Are you quick to rule people out? Or do you assume the best?

DISCUSS

Recall a time the Holy Spirit prompted you to give someone a chance. How did you encounter the Lord when you did?



Christians in Commerce and Pope Benedict XVI

In 1985, the late John Mooney and I were invited to a conference in Vatican City being held as part of the information gathering process for Pope John Paul II’s encyclical on the laity in the Church. John and I were invited as representatives of Christians in

Commerce. Three hundred business leaders—mainly from European countries—gathered for talks, discussions, and input giving sessions.

Meals always involved encountering other new people from mostly business backgrounds, but also university professors, lawyers, and others. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who eventually became Pope Benedict, was one of the speakers at the conference and a regular visitor to our sessions, but with 300 participants—I didn’t expect to meet him.

One day, during a break between sessions, John and I were sitting on a window bench in a long hallway outside of the conference auditorium. No one else was there, until a door at the far end of the hall opened and in walked Cardinal Ratzinger. When he spotted us, he smiled and headed straight for us. He reached out his hand to shake ours, and said in his

soft, German accented voice, “Ah, you are the Americans from Christians in Commerce, No?”

We told him that we were indeed, and he proceeded to tell us how much he appreciated our work—spelling out things we were trying to accomplish. He knew that our organization was an ecumenical organization and he told us how important this was for the work and for the Church.

We were astonished at how much he knew about what we were doing and by how encouraging he was. I had expected a certain kind of severity or formality in his manner and approach, but he was incredibly kind and charming, and the immediate warmth was disarming.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI died December 31, 2022.

– Louis Grams



Q&A Coworker Challenge

THE FLAME: Can you tell us a little about the thinking behind the Coworker Challenge that was initiated at the National Challenge Weekend?

WORKLIGHT: On this weekend, we were able to pair new igniters with re-igniters. To support them we created the Coworker Challenge. Building on the popularity of the Emmaus Walks, it creates conversation and community over a two-week period while familiarizing them with the resources and support available through WorkLight.

THE FLAME: Why is this important to happen?

WORKLIGHT: We've all learned that for a Challenge Weekend to be effective there are two conversions that need to take place. There is the "big C" conversion of committing our lives to Christ and yielding ourselves to life in his Spirit. There is also the "little c" conversion of uniting together to support and encourage each other in our mission to be Christ in the world. By using the tools of the Coworker Challenge, we hope the Spirit-fueled transformation from the weekend continues as they re-enter the routine of their work week.

THE FLAME: What are the elements of the Coworker Challenge?

WORKLIGHT: Beginning on the Monday morning after a Challenge Weekend, the two Emmaus Walk Coworkers receive an email for two consecutive work weeks. Each email offers a conversation starter designed to inspire more reflection and connection between coworkers. In

addition, each email has a link to a brief video by another WorkLight member sharing a particular aspect of our WorkLight resources and experiences.

THE FLAME: What are we asking the participants to specifically do?

WORKLIGHT: Upon receiving the work-week email each would take a few minutes to reflect on the content, dedicate some heart and mind space to consider the message, focus on the feature scripture, and pray. Secondly, they would connect with their Emmaus Coworker via phone, FaceTime, text, or in person to discuss the daily conversation starter and pray for each other. We also encourage re-igniters to take their igniter out to breakfast or lunch within the two-week duration of the Coworker Challenge.

THE FLAME: How difficult will it be for the individual chapters to implement a Coworker Challenge?

WORKLIGHT: Very easy. Emmaus Coworkers can register on our website at <https://worklight.org/coworkerchallenge>. The emails will be automatically sent to their designated inboxes. The important part is to get in the habit of connecting with one another as often as possible. Scheduling coffee or a get-together toward the end would be a big help.

THE FLAME: Is there anything more you'd like to emphasize?

WORKLIGHT: Too many men and women have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit on a Challenge Weekend only to return to a life without family and community in Christ. The end goal

of the Coworker Challenge is simple and powerful. It is to foster ongoing brotherhood and sisterhood, and to build the WorkLight community so we can shine with the light of Christ.

By My Side

Continued from page 1

"I'll never forget this," she recalls. "He said, 'God's on your side. God's got your back and I've got your back. So don't be scared. The devil will present himself in various ways, and if you don't feel like your current situation is right, get out of it. Don't feel that you don't have another route. Whatever you need, your brother's got you.'"

The next day, she turned in her notice and started working full time on her small business consulting startup, Sagely, building the first performance maximizing platform for small businesses and early-stage entrepreneurs. The platform, which launched in June of 2022, is bridging the knowledge and resource gap by going to market with a subscription-based advisory platform that connects small businesses with vetted experts for on-demand personalized advice. Their service, likened to an affordable board of advisors, helps small business owners and entrepreneurs navigate the journey of starting, running, and growing a business with confidence.

"Jack really embodies WorkLight's mission in his work and personal life," says Michele. "He's done some amazing things and been through a lot, both in life and work, so his advice is raw, real, and always comes from a wealth of experience. He doesn't leave out the ugly stuff and speaks to me like he understands me to my core. He's been my guide in life, work, and now spiritually, which I will forever be grateful for."

Paula Lent is a member of WorkLight's Editorial Team and lives in South Bend, Indiana.



Connecting Christians in Gilroy

By Diane McGinty

Working people have daily contact with their coworkers, and the workplace is their natural place for building trusting relationships and inviting fellow Christians to meet as small groups on their own time.

Our communities also offer an opportunity to pray with others and talk about living our faith at work.

In Gilroy, California, our chapter heard God's call to invite everyone to stop for a moment at 3:00 p.m. every day to pray for our city. We pray for city leaders, firefighters and police, businesses, schools, teachers, students, families, churches, hospitals, doctors, nurses, and the homeless, poor, people who are discouraged, sick, or lacking faith.

When people set their phone alarms to go off at 3:00 every day, it provides the opportunity to invite others who hear it to pray with you for your city. Ask them to set their phone alarm, too. Or take the opportunity to talk about your faith and WorkLight.

This kind of city-wide campaign gives us a nice way to meet pastors from different churches. While some pastors may be reluctant to send their members to events sponsored by other churches or other Christian ministries, most are open to encouraging their members to pray for their city. This initial positive meeting with WorkLight members could lead to future openness to collaborate with their church members to be the light of Christ in their workplaces.

Another outreach option is to focus on one group in your community.

After we met the fire chief at a community coffee sponsored by our mayor, we asked how we could pray for his department. As a result of this discussion, our chapter members prayed for the fire department and forwarded one of our beautiful prayers to the chief.

During COVID, the fire captain met weekly with other Christian firefighters all bundled up at 6:30 a.m. in a Starbucks parking lot, essentially like one of our Small Groups. We brought lunch to the firefighters and several copies of our current monthly Flame newsletter, read that week's article together, shared one of the reflection and discussion questions, and prayed for one another's needs. We left some of the connect cards for men and women, encouraged them to invite other firefighters to meet with them, and suggested they go out for coffee with a coworker as a way to build deeper relationships and to share their faith.

We continue to seek out Christians within local workplaces and will provide them with our WorkLight resources. We are eager to share our deeply rewarding way of life throughout our community! Glory to God!

Diane McGinty lives in Gilroy, California, with her husband Kevin, and has been involved with CIC/WorkLight since the 1980s. They are blessed with five grown children and 15 wonderful grandchildren.



Salinas Event Attracts 145

When a faith community is united, it creates a powerful difference for citizens of that city to create unity, peace, and strength through lasting bonds.

The Salinas WorkLight Chapter took that challenge to heart by planning a city-wide Prayer Breakfast last fall. Some 145 people attended, which included 20 local pastors. It presented an opportunity to meet and develop relationships with faith and community leaders and foster a greater formation in Christ.

As an ecumenical group established to encourage and equip Christians to be God's presence in the workplace by the power of the Holy Spirit, we have always invited community members to our events. But the Prayer Breakfast was the first time the Salinas Chapter sponsored such a large gathering.

As a result, we gained more insight and formed bonds to work together to build a stronger faith-based community. Our WorkLight chapter recognized that their witness and leadership in Christ with other community groups is crucial. We are already planning to host another Prayer Breakfast in 2023.

Steve McShane and Vince Chabarria

NEWS

WHO ARE YOU CONNECTING WITH THIS YEAR?

It's sometimes easier to hide behind ideas and plans than it is to pray for action. For years WorkLight Chapters and Small Groups have pondered strategies of growth and recruitment. This year we invite you to keep it simple. Who in your life might the Holy Spirit be nudging you to build a relationship with in Christ? Start with a conversation, break bread together, and see if sharing your testimony might get them curious enough about WorkLight to join an upcoming Challenge Weekend. See Luke 10 for inspiration. Come Lord Jesus!

WORKLIGHT COMMITTEE OPENINGS

You may know that WorkLight is governed by a Board, which is informed by committees that pray over and lead our Program, Finance, Governance, Fundraising, and Communications efforts. But did you know that the ministry now encourages non-Board members to serve on these Committees? We are in particular need of new members for the Finance, Fundraising, and

Governance committees. Are you an experienced board member looking to use your gift to shine the light of Jesus into the workplace?

CHALLENGE WEEKEND TOOLKIT

Thanks to the hard work of the Program Committee, National Growth Council, and Bryan Beck, we now have an updated Challenge Weekend Toolkit. Not only are all the fundamentals here to host your own weekend, but we now have a list of experienced re-igniters ready to assist with everything from administration to speaker support and from promotion to worship. Learn more about the expanded resources and support available at <https://worklight.org/cwetoolkit>.

BOARD UPDATES

The WorkLight board has been expanding westward with the additions of Jules Miller (Orange County, California), Larry Favor (Santa Cruz, California), and Ned Sickle (Phoenix, Arizona). Hallelujah! And speaking of praise, please offer a special thanks to God for longtime Board member and Treasurer Dan

Kuplic who ended his Board service at the start of 2023. Once a Board member, always a brother in Christ, and prayerfully a local re-igniter in 2023. Glory!

CHAPTERS HOSTING 2023 CHALLENGE WEEKENDS**Salinas Men's Chapter**

- April 28-30, Mission San Antonio De Padua, Polon, California
- November 17-19, Mission San Antonio De Padua, Polon, California

Palm Desert Men's and Women's Chapters

- March 10-11, Sacred Heart Church, Palm Desert, California

Fresno Women's Chapter

- April 28-30, St. Anthony Retreat Center in Three Rivers, California

Minneapolis/St. Paul Men's Chapter

- May 5-7, Dunrovin Retreat Center, Stillwater, Minnesota

Check out these events and more at <https://worklight.org/events/>. Join the team and schedule your local Challenge Weekend.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

**Abundance of Jesus in You**

Each morning when I came down for breakfast as a child, I saw large letters on the kitchen wall that read:

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:36-39)

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Too often we attempt to fulfill this second commandment without following the first. The "golden rule" can be a source of blessing, but it is entirely insufficient on its own. We must start with Jesus teaching us that the complete love of God is the first and greatest commandment.

Lots of people these days talk about "burnout" or "compassion fatigue." When we set out to accomplish or provide care on our own, we end up exhausted, out of fuel, and at our wits' end. But if we commit to work for

our Father and to share the love and light of Jesus, suddenly we become an overflowing cup of abundance.

God didn't stop with creating us in his image, he also gives us the capacity to love one another as Jesus would. So, let us first acknowledge the Lord with love and then let such love overflow into the world around us. Don't go it alone. Come Holy Spirit!

With you in Christ,

Wes

2023
FEBRUARY

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

Galatians 2:20

**THE FLAME****WORKLIGHT PRAYER**

Father,

*Fill us with your Holy Spirit
that we may be made new
and bring the presence of Christ into all we do;
That we may grow in love for you, and for all;
That we may be humble and wise stewards of your creation;
That we may bring your light into our workplaces;
That we may lead all to unity in you;
Through Jesus, our 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 (DBA WorkLight) 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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