

A Bag of Conflicts

By Louis Grams

When Nancy and I moved into our condominium we were looking forward to a simpler and quieter life. Our first homeowners' association (HOA) meeting was an eye-opener. The tension in the room was electric.

A past board member had an argument with the president of the board. We watched as it escalated into a shouting match which included a threat of physical violence. The next monthly meeting was more of the same. This time the former board member stormed out of the room and later apparently "keyed" the wood panels in the elevator.

Afterwards, we were able to meet a board member who was a treat to be with. She and another woman had been regularly walking the halls of the building and praying for peace and for the people. We told them we would

support them and join them in prayer. However, at the next board meeting she announced she was leaving the board. The conflict and stress were just too much for her.

The president asked for volunteers to take her place. "How much time will it take?" I asked. "Maybe two to three hours a month." I knew better, but I said, "I can do that," and was elected to the board on the spot.

It was a three-member board; but not for long. Within three weeks the other two resigned to move back into single family homes. By default, I was now the president of the HOA.

The bag I was left holding was filled with conflicts I had not been part of. The owners didn't trust the former board, and there was a lawsuit against

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INSIDE: REFLECTIONS

Being Christ to Others

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15: 5-6)

Being Christ means taking on the mind of Christ. Paul's letters encourage us to unite in mind and thought, have the same love, and bind together in unity.

This is a big contrast to our independent culture where everyone does their own thing and the loneliness and alienation that results. Our Small Groups and Chapters are "greenhouses" of learning how to be Christ not only to each other but to the world around us.



We don't "hoard" the strong brotherhood and sisterhood God has built through the years of this ministry. We take it into our homes, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, and our Challenge Weekends. Along with the power of the Holy Spirit, this is what makes our life in WorkLight fruitful. We invite new attendees to join together in the experience of Christ and his transformation.

July Reflections: Pages 2-4

REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

Get Out of the Pews

By Larry Favor

... Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. (Philippians 2:2)

Years ago, if you had asked me how my business was going as a contractor, I would have responded: It's like eating dirt. It was not satisfying. I built beautiful things and met great people, but there was a lack of connection.

But after I started attending Challenge Weekends, and with the continued work of the Lord in my life, my work has been transformed.

I realized that I needed to get out of the pews, instead of compartmentalizing my walk with the Lord to my spiritual and church life, and not the business world. God was in my heart, but I didn't bring that awareness into my daily

work life, in part, because I hadn't been shown how to do that.

Before my mother passed away, she gave me the gift of connecting me with WorkLight member Al DaValle. He called me up one day to meet and he asked me general questions, but I had a feeling that our discussion was going to go somewhere else. When we met again the following week, he invited me to attend a Challenge Weekend.

The weekend was fabulous, and I have never been the same since. I loved the retreat center in the country, and I saw masculine men raising their hands in the air during praise and worship. I was insecure about doing that myself at the time, but I've since come to understand the opportunity to physically show our love and gratitude to the Lord.

I realized that grace was abundant and overflowing, I just had to become aware of it, seek it, and take advantage of it. The Lord was not going to force anything. Grace is always available. Instead of allowing myself to be a stumbling block for grace, I learned to be an open receptacle.

Larry Favor is a long-time member of the Santa Cruz Chapter in California, where he owns and operates Favor Construction. In his down time, Larry enjoys spending time with his family and his horse. Larry can be reached at lfavor@sbcglobal.net.

PRAY

Lord, I pray that you will help me to find grace in my work life, and to use it to express my love and gratitude to you through my words and deeds.

REFLECT

How can you break down the walls that separate your work life from your spiritual life and create a connection that guides your daily life?

DISCUSS

Is there someone you feel moved to invite to WorkLight? How might you reach out?

Join Our Editorial Team

Help us reach out to our members to tell their stories in our Flame newsletter and Spark workday reflections. Join us in illustrating God at work by illuminating the light of Christ in our stories and insights.

If you love to write and would like to share your gift with WorkLight readers, contact us at communications@worklight.org.

"Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." Matthew 5:15



REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

Taking a Chance

By Chris Horneman

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another ... (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Often times when we can't help a coworker within a quantifiable timeline, we lose interest and move on. But sometimes all that's needed is time and a mentor to walk on the journey.

During a company restructuring my friend from work kept his job but had to take a more entry-level role. He had been with the company for 10 years and was previously a field supervisor, but now was essentially doing the same job as the people he was supervising.

Rightfully so, he wasn't happy about the situation, but he was still grateful

to have a job. After being in this role for three years he was getting tired of it and hoped to get a promotion to a corporate position.

We started working together on his resume and interview preparation. Then, we spent time on the phone so he could learn how to confidently speak to his resume and past experiences. This required me to be patient and really pay attention to where I thought he could improve.

Although he interviewed for a few different roles, he got no job offers. He felt "stuck." I encouraged him to keep his head up and continue to put himself out there and something would work out in his favor. Eventually, he applied for and was selected for a very important role.

Sometimes it is difficult for people to take a chance because there isn't a destination in sight. But by being patient we ended up challenging each other, and we both accomplished more than we thought.

Christopher Horneman is a beverage demand analyst living in Richmond, Virginia. With his wife and son, they recently welcomed a new baby daughter to their family.

PRAY

Lord, help us to take a chance on a coworker by listening, encouraging, and offering solid solutions to their problems.

REFLECT

When have you helped a coworker out but found yourself losing interest when the goal was not met according to your expectations? How did you overcome the urge to check out of the conversation?

DISCUSS

What does it mean to be a good mentor?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

Remorseful

By Joe Blanco

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

When I first talked with JB, he told me straight out: "We can talk about anything, except God or Christ."

His sister told me he'd been living a hermit's life and would not talk with any of his ex-wives or children. He also harbored some internal pain from serving in the Vietnam War, so to say the least, our first conversation was very arduous.

Almost a year after we began our regular conversations I asked God, "How do I bring you up?" and he responded, "Be bold." So, I said to JB: "I love you, man." I think he was so dumbstruck that he didn't know how to answer, so then I said: "I desire nothing but the best for you."

The next week when I called, he didn't answer the phone. Two weeks later, he finally answered and said: "I'm ready now."

We talked until midnight, and he told me some of the terrible things he'd done and seen. We prayed together and he cried for a very long time. He asked, "why would God allow this?" I told him God forgives all his children, to which he said, "Do you think he'll forgive me?" Then, "do you think my children will forgive me?"

I told him there's only one way to find out—call them. We eventually met with one son and a grandson. But while he was reaching out to his children, JB received bad news that his cancer was worse, and the doctor didn't know how much longer he'd live. Two weeks after coming to Christ, JB died. But he had the opportunity to ask forgiveness from his loved ones and express his remorsefulness.

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 us to reach out to the broken hearted and help them to heal their wounds through your divine power.

REFLECT

Is there someone in your life who needs help binding up their wounds? What can you do to help them find peace?

DISCUSS

How can you relate to a person whose beliefs are totally different than yours? By connecting to them through their interests, and not yours, how can you grow and learn and be more like Christ?



REFLECTIONS WEEK 4

Transformed

By Paula Lent

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Working in customer service for a local medical center, I often encounter people who are not at their best. Many are angry, at the end of their ropes, or looking for a fight. I used to be nervous about who would be on the other end of the phone. This changed one day when I came into work feeling like I had nothing to give.

Coming off a busy Thanksgiving weekend, I was completely spent. So, I asked the Lord to provide what I needed and felt moved to start praying “Come, Holy Spirit,” before each call.

The first call was a man who was very upset. As he was yelling, I had the grace

to be patient, just helping him with what he needed. When we finished, he was quiet for a moment, then took me completely off guard when he said, “That was outstanding customer service! Usually, the gals get snippy with me, so I get snippy back, but you didn’t!” I was moved that the Lord had been in the encounter and pointed it out to me so bluntly.

Now, praying “Come, Holy Spirit” has transformed my work, and brought new life to it. Not only have I become free from anxiety about encounters, but I notice the fruit of the Spirit more, especially joy and peace.

Going from one call to another, I can easily adjust to each person. I laugh more often with customers, take the opportunity to pray with them, and have the peace to be unphased and gentle when faced with anger—which enables me to love and accompany people better, and not get drained by the more challenging calls.

This has transformed what might otherwise be a challenging job into one

where I’m excited to see how the Lord will show up throughout the day.

Paula Lent is a writer who has been a member of WorkLight’s Editorial Team. She lives in South Bend, Indiana.

PRAY

Come Holy Spirit! I pray you will be with me throughout my workday so that I can act with love and peace to help those around me.

REFLECT

When have you felt the Holy Spirit guide you in an encounter at work? What was the result?

DISCUSS

When work is challenging, what do you do to handle the stress? How does prayer and the trust you have in the Lord help you through those tough times?

PRESIDENT’S NOTE



I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Ephesians 3:16-17a)

Be Christ Together

Have you ever felt alone? Life can seem lonely at times. Physical loneliness when no one is around. Intellectual loneliness when something doesn’t make sense. Emotional loneliness during times of loss. Relational loneliness when loved ones are estranged.

But have you ever actually been alone? If you’re in relationship with Jesus,

then you are not just a child of God. You are a brother and sister to all children of God. We have an intimate connection to the creator Father through the risen Christ. Oh, and by the way, it comes with a diverse yet unified global family. Not so lonely anymore, are we?

Christianity is more than a set of individual beliefs. It is a faith of being and doing together. When we share the love of Jesus, Christ is with us and among us—whether we are sharing that love effortlessly with our children, intentionally toward a stranger, or through struggle with those who are hard to love.

Isn’t it amazing how Jesus shows up in difficult moments? From forgiving

the stranger who talks too loud on their cell phone to finding peace with the person in your life who is difficult to love. If we are attentive, there is no storm that can’t be calmed by our Lord and savior.

No one can be Christ on their own. We are called to be Christ together, that those who know the Lord personally can unite to build God’s Kingdom throughout the world.

Look and pray about your life today. Are you trying to do it alone? No better time than now to find a coworker in Christ.

His Kingdom come,
Wes

Salinas: A Busy Chapter

By Greg Aitkens

“Can you tell me the color of their eyes?” is a common reminder that members of the Salinas Chapter use to guide them as they evangelize and bring others into the life of Christ.

Connecting with others by inviting them to Chapter events is a common thread; however, because the lives that are being transformed are unique, members are always mindful that everyone has different experiences at Challenge Weekends, weekly luncheons, and within their Small Groups.

Since the mid-1980s, the Salinas Chapter has been influencing the lives of many people. The chapter sponsors two Challenge Weekends every year and co-sponsors a third one with the Santa Cruz chapter. A team of 10 members plan each weekend with prayerful preparations at least two months in advance. As a result, each weekend draws between 20 and 35 men, and many are new to WorkLight.

Chapter President Steve McShane said the hard work to put together Weekends plays into the success of the Small Groups, which have been a hallmark of the Chapter for decades. Six or seven groups meet weekly, either in person or via Zoom. Each group has four to 10 people, and some meet as early as 5:15 in the morning to accommodate members who work in the produce industry and need to start early.

In addition, the Chapter offers a monthly “Saturday in the Spirit” session for about two hours to provide more opportunities to grow

with the Lord. A good portion of these programs are devoted to praise and worship, along with relevant teachings and sharings from members of the Chapter.

The Chapter also plays host to a weekly luncheon at a local church that regularly draws between 20 and 40 people. Bob Stewart workshops every speaker for the weekly lunches, and every presenter for the weekends. Bob likes to ask some hallmark questions: How are you doing in Christ? How are you really doing? This results in a lot of “iron sharpens iron” within the group—with mutual encouragement and spurring each other on to grow closer to Christ every day.

The Salinas Chapter is blessed to have many experienced leaders, many of whom have been involved since the 1980s. They include Clem Richardson, Al Parolini, Curt Montgomery, Bill Pelich, Tony Brigantino, Bob Stewart, Tomas Henry, and Bruce Parkison.

“The Chapter is committed to growing and it is clear that all of our activities have created a strong brotherhood and supported many in their walk with the Lord,” said Steve. “We have grown thanks to the widespread embrace of both youth and diversity, and we directly credit our growth to successful weekend retreats.”

As for the future, Steve believes that the strong relationships that are being built will continue to reach young men and women in the Salinas community, create a strong community of believers, and inspire others to be like Christ.

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.

A Bag of Conflicts

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the previous management company that had filed a counter suit.

I found two residents, one a Chinese national who was a lawyer and a teacher of law. The other was a naturalized citizen from Ukraine. What they had in common was heavy accents. They were wonderful to work with, but in personal and association meetings it was very difficult to understand them.

My thoughts, my time, my life, and my prayer time were becoming consumed with condominium affairs.

We decided all meetings would be open, transparent, and give everyone the chance to give input. The previous board had operated in secrecy and manipulation. We knew we needed to build trust quickly as our legally required cash reserves were below the needed amounts. An increase in association dues was needed and would not be well received.

That meant more time and planning, much longer meetings as well as tedious, emotional discussions. But fairly quickly, people realized we were serious, conscientious, and began to come in with better input.

We knew the Lord found us this home when we moved here, but we had no idea why he landed us here. Going forward we knew he wanted us to live out his life in a very diverse and challenging situation. We didn’t need to preach the Gospel, so much as live it.

Louis Grams is one of three founders of our ministry. He and his wife Nancy have lived in their Burnsville condo since 2011.



Sent to be Witnesses

By Steve Becker

Eight men, six in their 30s and 40s make up our WorkLight Small Group that started more than 12 years ago with the help of another brother, Bruce.

These younger men are the next generation we keep talking about. It's an ecumenical group, covering multiple traditions. And, recently they've agreed to run Challenge Weekends together and recruit more igniters from their network of friends. Their first is planned for this October at one of our members and his brother's cabins.

Things have changed since my first weekend in 1984. The culture was more favorable at that time to Christianity. These brothers are being sent as strangers in an even stranger land. It's an urgent time as re-igniters to be mentoring and supporting brothers and sisters like these. In "From Christendom to Apostolic Mission, Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age,"* the authors illustrate what is at stake without our support.

"A Christian institution in a non-Christian or anti-Christian cultural environment can only maintain its distinctively Christian character by energetic resistance to conformity with the wider atmosphere. Not to exercise such concerted activity is to lose the institution's original purpose ...

"It is the difference between floating a canoe with the occasional guiding push (in Christendom mode) or steering upriver against the current with energetic strokes (the apostolic mode). What happens when the rowing stops is quite different in the two cases. Those who think the current is going their way—when in fact it is against them—will be surprised to find themselves rushing along in a direction they did not intend.

"In an apostolic time, institutions need to be more self-conscious about their mission, their aims, and their inner spirit. Those who lead and inhabit them need to know with greater clarity what they are doing, why they are doing it, what the likely

consequences of taking certain kinds of decisions will be, and how the inner culture of the institution is best maintained against the tide." (my emphasis)

WorkLight's call is to row together against today's cultural currents to avoid drifting off course. In the power of the Spirit, we are sent to be an ecumenical witness in word and action by being Christ with faith, integrity, and excellence.

Like the 72 sent out to their fellow Jews, we re-igniters have a responsibility to pass on the legacy of the WorkLight vision and mission. We are sent into the world to glorify God and sanctify our spheres of influence. Over 60 percent of our waking hours are spent in the workplace.

Bruce and I are blessed to be united with these young men. They feed our souls and give us hope. Let us support and encourage a whole new generation to be his witnesses at work. We each have benefited greatly by the men and women who have stood alongside us in this ministry.

Tell the Lord you're available to be used in mentoring a new small group of the next generation. How can you go out two-by-two like Bruce and I did?

*©2020 by the University of Mary and Monsignor James P. Shea. pp. 43-44.

Steve Becker is on WorkLight's Board of Directors and is currently volunteering as the managing editor of *The Flame* newsletter and *The Spark* emails.



Join our Community of CONTENT CONTRIBUTORS

We welcome stories for both *The Flame* and our Spark Workday Reflections. Go to worklight.org/contentguidelines for details on contributing.

NEWS

CHALLENGE WEEKEND MOMENTUM

In Arizona we saw over 50 people sign up for a Challenge Weekend when the new CWE promo video was shared after church. In California we saw a Challenge Weekend with five igniter/re-igniter coworker pairs of parents with their adult children. In Minnesota, the old-timer re-igniter chapter is passing the torch to a small group of new mid-career igniters to plan a weekend themselves for later this year. What else is going on out there? Let us know so we can spread the good word!

UPDATED WEBSITE AND FIRESTARTER KITS

Have you visited the Challenge Weekend page lately? From the updated video to recent toolkit upgrades (based on your input), see how God has been blessing our efforts toward 500 by 2025. If you're ready to host a local weekend let us know so we can share it on the calendar and mail you one of our newly developed Firestarter kits.

TRANSFORM OUR WORLD CONFERENCE: OCTOBER 26-28

From Thursday, October 26 until Saturday, October 28, brothers and sisters in Christ will be gathering at the 33rd annual Transform Our World Global Conference at the

Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara. Learn more and register here: transformourworld.org/events/global-conference/

Use code GROUP2023 for discounted CIC/WorkLight registration.

Looking for a payment plan? Other questions? Contact Stephanie@transformourworld.org for support.

DID YOU KNOW?

By the grace of God there have been Challenge Weekends every single year since 1983. Even in 2020 there were five Challenge Weekends and in 2021 there were three. But in which year did the most Challenge Weekends take place? How many were there?

Last month's answer: Challenge Weekends have been hosted in 15 U.S. states.

GROUP COACHING AVAILABLE NATIONALLY!

Is your Chapter serving Christ as hero makers? Could your Small Group use support in living a Jesus-shaped life? Ever wondered how to establish a transformational discipleship program? Our Group Coaching pilot program is now available nationally via Zoom. Want to learn more? Reach out to dan@worklight.org.

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK IN LOCAL CHAPTERS & SMALL GROUPS?

Please let us know if you have a story you might be willing to share to encourage and equip one another to build God's Kingdom. Glory!

UPCOMING CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Gilroy Women's Chapter

- July 22-23 at Saint Francis Retreat Center in San Juan Bautista, California

Santa Cruz Men's Chapter

- September 29 - October 1 at Villa Maria del Mar Retreat Center, Santa Cruz, California

Fresno Men's Chapter

- October 21-22 at St. Anthony Retreat Center in Three Rivers, California

Orange County and Mission Viejo Men's Chapter

- October 27-28 at St. Kilian Catholic Church in Mission Viejo, California

Salinas and Santa Cruz Men's Chapters

- November 17-19 at Mission San Antonio De Padua, Jolon, California. *This is our Spotlight Men's weekend for 2023. If you're looking to travel for a weekend, we hope to see you!*

Check out these events and more at worklight.org/events/.

Fan the Flame

By partnering with the National Christian Foundation, WorkLight is able to accept planned and complex gifts from donors. Business owners, property owners and families have multiple options to fan the flame for future generations through their generous giving.

Learn more at WorkLight.org/Legacy

2023

JULY

*"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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