



FALL EXECUTIVE FORUM 2021

FAITH IN THE MARKETPLACE SNAPSHOT:

2021 TRENDS IN THE CFI ECOSYSTEM



JULY 2022 // PREPARED BY THE CFI RESEARCH TEAM



WHO IS ON THE TEAM?

STEPHEN CHUA '22

BIOLOGY

"I believe God is calling me to be a steward and light of His word and reflecting His image wherever He calls me to be. Whether it may be working as a medical doctor, a pediatrician to serve children."

NAH LEE '23

BUSINESS/ECONOMICS

"My mission is to show genuine help and care for others in a position and in the place where God has put me in this world."

MC MCCULLERS '23

COMMUNICATION - RHETORIC AND CULTURE

"I believe that God has put me on earth to advocate for those who are oppressed."

BEN NORQUIST

LEAD INNOVATION MANAGER

"I seek to serve God, the church, and the world through research and teaching."

ELIZABETH ROESNER '24

GERMAN STUDIES

"God has brought me into difficult places so that I can bring the strength of empathy to others no matter who they are and where they are from."

TAYLOR RUDIN '22

ECONOMICS

"My calling as a follower of Christ involves serving and loving the individuals within my arm's reach. Vocationally, this translates to analyzing the impacts of economic development on environmental health and women's rights and advocating for sustainable solutions."

THERESA STANGER '24

COMMUNICATION - INTERPERSONAL

"I believe God has called me to clinical research or pharmaceutical sales. In the long term, I would love to help build churches and hope centers for women in international countries.."

HANNA STOLZE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CFI

"In all of life and in all my work, I endeavor to serve God and others with wisdom that is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

TITUS WALKER '23

BUSINESS/ECONOMICS

"I seek to live and work in a way that makes an everyday difference in the lives of people and brings glory to God."

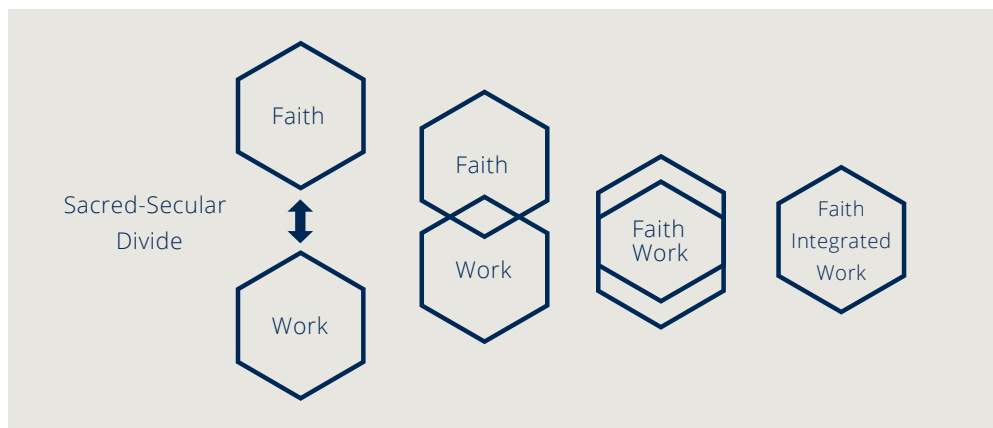
CELINE WIDJAJA '23

PSYCHOLOGY & BUSINESS/ECONOMICS

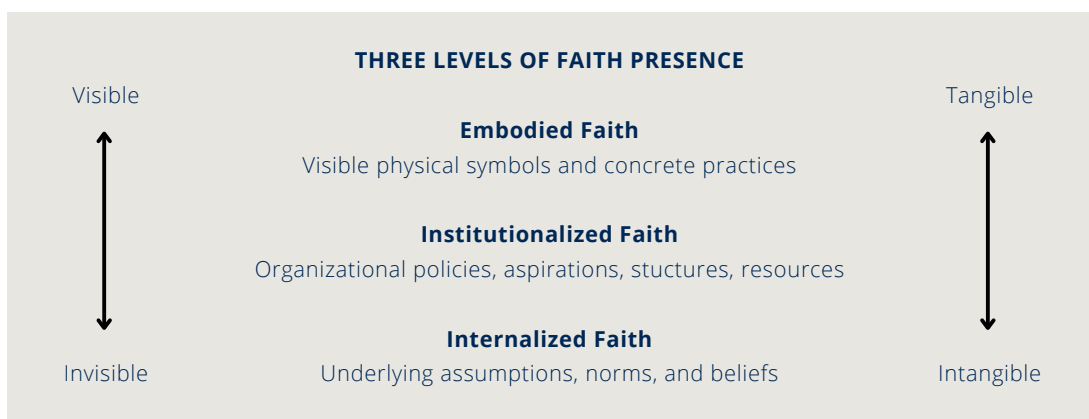
"My life mission is to use creativity, empathetical listening, and analysis to meet needs of healing, empowerment, and human flourishing"

WHAT IS THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND BUSINESS?

The goal of the fall executive forum is to gather Christian leaders in the marketplace; to inspire, listen, and build a community of discipleship to encourage one another forward as we partner with the work of Christ in the world. Over the years at CFI, we have found that believers are on a continuum in their journey of integrating their faith with their work in business. The continuum ranges from a total sacred secular divide to a fully integrated approach to all of life where work becomes an act of worship.



Across this continuum, faith is expressed and present in work through invisible and intangible norms such as corporate culture, values, and everyday language. Faith is also present in visible and tangible symbols and practices at work such as Bibles, crosses, corporate prayer and Bible studies.



Integration takes place when the spiritual gifts, understanding, and knowledge that shapes our faith informs and motivates the skills, understanding, and knowledge that enable us to do our work with excellence. The best way to inspire integration is to walk in community. We serve a God who is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Made in his image, we are also best able to live in righteousness when we have the counsel and encouragement of fellow believers. God created a garden for humanity to tend, a good ecosystem. Yet, the world we live in is a broken ecosystem--creation cries out for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19-23). When we grasp the hope of the gospel, we have an opportunity to be transformative, to play a part in the restoration of the world.

WHAT IS THE SNAPSHOT REPORT?

CFI LISTENED, SUMMARIZED, AND REFLECTED ON WHAT WE HEARD FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

Each year a community of Christians with executive experience in business gathers with the Center for Faith & Innovation to learn and grow together. During this Fall Executive Forum, the Center engages these participants in a series of structured conversations about how faith enters into and interacts with their approach to business leadership, their values, and their day-to-day decision-making. The center captures and synthesizes these conversations into research outputs and insights for Executive Members.

Who participated?

The reflections in this report are based on the Fall Executive Forum focus groups, held November 5, 2021 in Wheaton Illinois. Fifty executives participated in these focus groups representing the Midwest and Great Lakes (34), Western states (3), Southern states (12) and Eastern states (2). Executives represented a range of leadership positions such as CEO (2), VP (10), Founder (5), Chair (5), and Director-level positions (6), among others.

As a collaboration between business practitioners, business researchers, and Wheaton College students, this research is disseminated back to participants at key points throughout the analysis and writing. This report is the second of several research deliverables to come out of the 2021 Fall Executive Forum conversations.



Over the winter and spring months, CFI researchers poured over transcripts from our discussions, bringing students into the reading and exploration, reaching back out to members for additional reflection, and developing new reports, tools, webinars, and other deliverables. As we did this work, we held an unwavering commitment to understanding the challenges, opportunities, and values of our participants.

The CFI team

WHAT WE HEARD YOU SAY

*Excerpt from the student reflections report on the
2021 Fall Executive Forum*

Explicit Faith Expressions

Many of you talked at length about whether and to what extent you should make your Christian faith and values explicit in your places of work. As one of you put it: "Do we say faith is part of the company, or do we let our values drive the company in the background?"

Influence of Faith on Corporate Culture

Some of you work in secular companies. Some of you own or lead companies with explicitly Christian values. In both cases, participants mused about their relationship to company culture. How can we make positive contributions and heal divisions regardless of what kind of culture we work in?

Relationships at Work

Polarization is hitting some of our communities and companies hard. There are divisions between Christians and non-Christians and between Christians of different backgrounds too. Some of you are looking for better ways of nurturing healthy, substantial workplace relationships.

Spiritual Challenges

A few of you reflected on the spiritual challenges of your personal relationship to work. For some, work has taken over too much of the rest of your life. Business outcomes might rise or fall—in either case, it's important to listen carefully for the Lord's voice.

Organizational Practices

A few of you mentioned specific practices that help express faith in your companies:

- Service trips
- Triple bottom line
- Prayer meetings as work
- Employee care programs



Top level
T H E M E S

One of the greatest themes we've noticed in our work with Christians in business over the last few years is the rate at which the business environment is changing. Macro-level challenges arise faster than solutions do, and Christians, who see themselves as stewards of God's resources, are hungry for insight as they seek to serve their employees, customers, and partners. In short, the business ecosystem is dynamic and yesterday's policies and practices are not sufficient for today's needs.

This report is a case in point. The conversations this report draws on took place at the Fall Executive Forum in November, 2021, and new realities connected to supply chains, inflation, and regulations have emerged since then.

At CFI, we believe that this rate of change calls for more than standard innovation processes that just are not fast enough on their own. What it calls for is a return to wisdom and community. Christians in positions of leadership throughout the marketplace must redouble their commitment to seeking God heart and mind and to do so across companies and industries. When these leaders grow in these ways, they are better equipped to make wise decisions at the pace that the ecosystem requires.

The good news is that we think our members are already looking for that wisdom. What we saw at the Fall Executive Forum was a group of thoughtful Christians asking good questions and expressing a commitment to learning, growing, and connecting together.

Here are a few of the conversations we noticed across the discussion groups:

- **There was a continued focus on people.** This theme was a top level finding from last year's report as well. Our participants want to build relationships, bless people, and serve their business communities and ecosystems not just as a strategy, but as an objective.
- **Christian leaders want to be a good witness for Jesus in the marketplace.** They are cognizant that their ability to represent the gospel of grace is tied up in many of their business roles, relationships, and decisions.
- **Participants are hungry to connect with wise people.** Some expressed experiences of isolation from other Christians who don't understand their business context and from colleagues who don't understand their faith commitments. The emerging interest in Christian Employee Resource Groups is one way their desire for connection is manifesting. The interest in the community surrounding the Center for Faith & Innovation and other such networks is another way Christian leaders are seeking to plug in.

- **There is an interest in concrete ideas that actualize Christian wisdom.**

Participants who have participated in faith-based conversations are ready to build new approaches and plans. They are looking for models and ideas for *how* to bless people, *how* to be a witness to the gospel, and *how* to integrate their faith in their decisions. We see this in the eagerness with which participants ask each other what they are doing in their companies.

In the report that follows, CFI draws on our close reading and analysis of the conversations from the Fall Executive Forum to present the ideas, models, and insights that emerged as patterns across the data. The word cloud below represents the words used most often across these conversations. Notice the centrality of words like people, faith, good, kind, time, life, love, work, respect, hear, money, share, culture, relationship, calling, values, and building.



In the following pages, we describe and elaborate on five themes that came up time and again in the transcripts, conversations we are calling:

- ***People are paramount (page 8)***
- ***Relationships at the center (page 10)***
- ***Spiritual practices belong in business (page 12)***
- ***Culture impacts lives (page 14)***
- ***Stewardship requires excellence (page 16)***



THEME #1: People are Paramount

Celine Widjaja '23 and Dr. Ben Norquist

Christians in the marketplace are well-intentioned in looking to model Christ in how they live as individuals and in communities. They observe and experience fear and mental issues in themselves and those around them. Workplaces lack psychological safety, where people feel comfortable enough to show their vulnerability. This is contributing to the rise of mental health problems. Well-intentioned individuals do not know how to properly respond to the pain and vulnerability of others. Although workplaces often acknowledge the importance of physical and mental wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing is not given enough attention. Furthermore, individuals often suffer loneliness because of their faith.

“More lives will be lost from depression, anxiety, suicide, and addiction. And one of the biggest reasons is that our workplaces are trauma producing because we don’t know how to be with people and suffer.”

The brokenness that exists in these spaces drive individuals towards God and orients them towards acts of love and care through showing curiosity and attention, building relationships, fostering diversity, and having intentional conversations. Love and care begin from listening deeply to our ecosystem to notice underlying needs and unlock potential.



Listening from a space of love is a force that transforms. Listening to our ecosystem also involves listening to ourselves and to God. Fostering diversity looks like building relationships with people of various backgrounds and stories, demonstrating sensitivity to different religious backgrounds and helping others develop different perspectives. By loving others, Christians are able to be the safe space in workplaces for others to lean on. Loving breaks the stereotype of what Christianity is and demonstrates to the world what Christianity is really about.

HIGHLIGHTS

Ideas that came up over and over again that participants connect to this theme.

- Christians in the marketplace are well-intentioned looking to model Christ in how they live as individuals and in communities.

FEAR AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Christians observe and experience fear and mental issues in themselves and those around them.
- Workplaces lack psychological safety, where people feel comfortable to show their vulnerability and this deficiency is contributing to the rise of mental health problems.
- Well-intentioned individuals do not know how to properly respond to the pain and vulnerability of others.

SUFFERING ALONE VS. COMMUNITY BELONGING

- Christians often feel alone in their faith.
- Loneliness is also a characteristic of contemporary culture, inside and outside of work.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

- The brokenness that exists in the workplace drives individuals towards God.
- Christians seek to model Christ in how they live as individuals and in communities.

LOVE

- When talking about love, Christians use the language of loving one's neighbors and loving others like Christ.
- Christians also refer to loving as our core purpose.

LISTENING

- Love and care begin from listening deeply to our ecosystem to notice underlying needs and unlock potential.



THEME #2: Relationships at the Center

Nah Lee '23 and Dr. Ben Norquist

Relationships are the key foundation of all business. It is crucial for the businesses to view every transaction with their clients as an opportunity to build relationships with them. Relationships should be built based on love, trust, and care. In order to show love and care towards others, it is important for us to view matters from another's perspectives and respect their perspectives despite potential disagreements.

"Leaders who are tending their ecosystems grow people by pollination instead of planting. Think about the difference between a bee and a farmer. Bees hold their resources openly, they learn the connections between resources, and they play the long game."

In addition to that, communication is the key to building meaningful relationships. In order to communicate well with others, it is essential to listen to others well with respect and show love and support through that practice. Faith within a community is also a core value that brings meaningful relationships. Faith can be shared through sharing personal faith stories or the Gospel story. Also, showing empathy and compassion toward others allows others to see our faith reflected on those behaviors.

“ Direct Quotes

"That's the chance I have to show people that I love them, is when I slow down and listen to them and take the chance to build a really authentic, deeper relationship with them."

Relationships Are Pathways to Impact

"We can't really have any impact on anyone in their core beliefs, like their faith, until we've built a meaningful relationship."

"Even people I work with who say they are Christians, maybe there's an opportunity for us to help them get to a deeper level [of faith] to maybe have that personal relationship [...] This [relationship] may be the only church they will ever know."

HIGHLIGHTS

Ideas that came up over and over again that participants connect to this theme.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE CORE

- Relationships are not only important for individuals but also for businesses. Building a relationship is the foundation of business and therefore, all business should be built based on relationships.
- Viewing all transactions in business as building relationships with clients/customers is important. Business should not be seen just as a collection of transactions, but instead as opportunities to build meaningful relationships with customers.

LOVE AND RESPECT

- Relationships should be built based on love and respect. Respecting others' perspectives is an essential practice as we try to build meaningful relationships, no matter whether we agree or disagree with others.
- We should be curious about other people and pay attention to them to show our care and support of them. This practice helps companies build a working environment/organizational culture that promotes learning and self-development. Having that strong and meaningful culture that will not be shaken easily is crucial for the business.

PRACTICAL APPROACHES

- Relationships can be built through time spent listening to each other. Therefore, how you would listen to others matters. Listening can be used to show love and respect.
- Communication and conversations are the key factors for success in business. It is also important to keep in mind that good listening is essential for those two practices.
- Relationships also involve learning how to handle tension among different people and show love towards those whom we may not agree with. Because there are times when we either agree or disagree with each other, learning how to handle the tension led by disagreements is essential to living together in this world.

COMMUNITY

- Faith can be both individual and communal. Faith can be found in the community as people share their personal faith and the story of the gospel with others within the community.
- Faith can also be expressed through showing empathy and compassion toward others. Practicing those through the actions we take, helps others see faith in us.



THEME #3: Spiritual Practices Belong in Business

Theresa Stanger '24 and Dr. Ben Norquist

Integrating space for prayer and the Holy Spirit into the workplace is not supplemental but integral for our work to hold meaning and align faithfully with God's purposes. While each of us are called to minute roles within God's Kingdom and stewardship of a particular set of spiritual gifts, the outcomes of our effort and investment are out of our control and rest in God's hands. Through our work pursuits we pursue faithfulness rather than success. Faithfulness includes loving and serving the people around us and acting on faith beyond the walls of church buildings. When considering our definitions of success, we must continuously reconcile worldly forms of success with divine success. Oftentimes, God's blessing does not assume fit into typical human expectations that prioritize financial and material security.

Everybody knows in my large corporation, that I'm part of the Christian ERG [Employee Resource Group], [that I'm a Christian]. Now people are coming to me and want me to pray with them. People are coming to me with their difficult situations, with their brokenness."

Spiritual practices not only repurpose our work but also create measures of accountability across the global Church. As faith is openly represented, Christians carry responsibility to represent the love and light of Christ within the world. Engaging the Holy Spirit and consulting fellow believers are ways to align our work with God's Kingdom and remain on the path of righteousness in a world filled with outside voices and temptations that question our chosenness as God's children.

Leadership is integral to instilling spiritual practices in a workplace or creating space for employees to feel comfortable bringing their whole self to the workplace along with their faith regardless of beliefs. Maintaining openness allows for conversations to take place across religious backgrounds, and engage more deeply with one another as we uncover personal worldviews and work together to meet daily challenges and goals.

With the Christian lens, work takes on a new, integral purpose to love one's neighbor and serve the God who gives us life and redemption. As we lean into this truth, work is reframed to not only meet our needs, but create beauty, foster new love, and institute light that points people's attention to God's divine revelation and coming Kingdom.

HIGHLIGHTS

Ideas that came up over and over again that participants connect to this theme.

PRAYER

- Leaders at many privately held companies talked about leading prayers during meetings and ministering to employees through prayer.
- Participants use prayer to ask for wisdom, to seek solutions to problems, and to provide resources for their businesses. They also talked about using prayer to ask God to meet the needs of their employees.
- There are organic prayer networks of leaders across companies.
- In some publicly held companies, participants described that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies provided cover for voluntary prayer groups.
- Confidentiality is important for individuals who share sensitive prayer requests.
- Christian employees who pray together generate evangelistic opportunities as colleagues observe their prayers.
- Some participants described the importance of being open to movements of the Holy Spirit to prompt prayers.

READING THE BIBLE

- Christians often feel alone in their faith.
- Loneliness is also a characteristic of contemporary culture, inside and outside of work.

SERVICE

- Some companies provide opportunities for employees to engage in community service or international service trips. These trips are generically faith-oriented.

Some companies offer coursework through their company for employees, families, and community members, courses such as *Financial Peace University* and the *Alpha Course*.

THEME #4: Culture Impacts Lives

Taylor Rudin '22 and Dr. Ben Norquist

Culture is a guiding force for company success. Oftentimes, we consider it a key indicator. While culture is something experienced on macro levels, it is formed between individuals through their particular values and preferred methods of embodiment. The potential effects of people's individual value sets fluctuate depending on their level of influence. Leaders of companies, organizations, or people groups are visible to numerous individuals. Therefore, the priorities of leadership greatly influence those of the company employees and the motivations behind their work.

When values, whether religious or personal, become more visible in the workplace, differences between individuals also become more apparent. While this process allows workers to bring their full selves to work, it requires added grace and courage to simultaneously acknowledge differences and seek continued harmony. Certain companies and organizations prioritize protocols that do not allow faith to enter the work sphere, introducing challenges for individuals who root their identity in their faith and the desire to share it openly. As discussed at the forum, questions actively circulate in Christians' minds as they try to balance respect for the culture of their organizations and companies, and the values and priorities their faith introduces.



Direct Quotes

"We have tensions in our objectives. One is to honor God in all we do, but another is to grow profitably. You have to hold onto both and find a creative third way."

Cost of Bringing Faith to the Culture

"There's a price to be paid for bringing faith into the workplace."

"When we follow spiritual principles, the wisdom that's found in scripture, a lot of times leads to success, but a lot of time it doesn't. Spiritual growth is often the inverse of business growth. Doesn't have to be, but it can be"

Building relationships and trust is integral to establishing company culture. Only after relationships form and trust is established can minds and hearts be open to encountering and prescribing to the christian life of walking alongside christ and living open handedly. Values should be embodied and utilized in building relationships. If the values discussed drive action, they foster confidence in individuals as they

HIGHLIGHTS

Ideas that came up over and over again that participants connect to this theme.

CULTURE & VALUES

- Several participants talked about how they can't use religious language to evangelize their co-workers, but they also saw making positive contributions to the culture of the organization to be a form of evangelistic witness.
- In companies where speaking overtly about faith was not an option, participants tended to use language of values to express their faith.
- Some participants talked about the importance of a culture of understanding and grace for helping assuage employee fears. These discussions highlighted that it is important for people to be able to fail without feeling like they needed to hide their mistakes.

LEADING CHANGE

- There is a recognition that it is mostly leaders who get to set the values that shape organizational culture. Middle managers might have some influence as well.
- Participants recognized that there are people of good character who make positive contributions to company culture, who represent multiple religious communities, not only Christians.
- Defining your values is the first step toward bringing your company into alignment with them. You cannot operate according to your values unless you can articulate what they are.

CULTURAL CHALLENGES

- Some representatives from Christian companies said that some employees thought that meant they could take advantage of leader's compassion and get away with lax performance.
- In some companies, the ability of people to engage in religious speech is still misunderstood from a legal standpoint. As a result, employees might sometimes self-sensor more than the law requires or managers may improperly suppress employee speech.
- As in previous years, participants continued to wrestle with some of the issues connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

THEME #5: Stewardship Requires Excellence

Titus Walker and Dr. Ben Norquist

Participants understand their resources, companies, and opportunities belong to God. As business leaders, their roles are as stewards, and care takers of these divinely-held properties. Even participants from publicly-held companies approached their positions in this way, framing the idea in terms of their Christian duty to strive for business excellence. As stewards of God's resources, most participants expressed that this identity anchors a responsibility to be extremely wise and strategic as they manage these resources.

**"Lord, we like to think we are problem-solvers. With can-do confidence, a record of accomplishment, and a work ethic to match, our lives are marked by achievement and success. But the forces before us today are too powerful and the darkness too deep, our faith too small."
- CFI Prayer at the Fall Executive Forum, 2022**

Ideas about success also appeared in these conversations. Multiple participants spoke about a Christian duty to be excellent in business, but there were different perspectives about the relationship between faithfulness and success: for some, success would likely follow from being faithful. For others, faithfulness may lead to a reduction in success as defined in business metrics.

“Direct Quotes

"Excellence is about doing nothing short of your best. And that's what it means to be a good steward of God's resources."

Stewardship Requires Excellence

"I've been placed in this position to serve others. I'm here to serve with excellence, as unto the Lord."

I don't hide it. It's inherent in everything I do, but God has a careful design in what He created us to be. I'm more excited about working with non-Christian-led companies and invoking a sense of excellence and them going, "Something doesn't add up here. You're a Christian and you strive for excellence."

HIGHLIGHTS

Ideas that came up over and over again that participants connect to this theme.

SUCCESSFUL VS. FAITHFUL

- Christian business leaders like to think of themselves as successful, intelligent, and competent. Sometimes they think of themselves as especially lucky or blessed as well.
- Some participants talked about incentives in their companies that are misaligned with their faith.
- Christians are called to be faithful to God regardless of the degree to which that value contributes to business success (or takes from it).
- Multiple participants spoke about a Christian duty to be excellent in business, but there were different perspectives about the relationship between faithfulness and success. For some, success would likely follow from being faithful. For others, faithfulness may lead to a reduction in success as defined in business metrics.
- A handful of participants suggested that much of business is strategic and amoral, so faith does not give specific guidance for these kinds of decisions, although they did acknowledge that they want to honor God in their work.

COSTS OF FAITHFULNESS

- In some discussions honoring God in business and growing profitably were considered in tension. In these discussions, participants suggested that it was the job of Christians to hold both of these values in tension.
- Several groups talked about costs of faithfulness in business. Although some of these costs related to the idea that outspoken Christians might be persecuted or discriminated against, others spoke about how faithfulness to Christian ethics would lead Christians to make business decisions that increased cost to the business.
- Some participants spoke about the power and resources they have access to and as Christians, they thought they were responsible to use these for the benefit of employees, neighbors, and the disenfranchised.



2022 CFI Prayerbook

Reflecting on the rich conversations we are having with Christians in business, the CFI team writes new prayers every year. We introduce these prayers at each Fall Executive Forum and then use them to pray with our students, our members, and our partners throughout the year. We include them here with a warm invitation to use these in your own devotional life and communities.



PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Most Righteous and Holy God,

We confess that we have been hiding from you again.
We thought we could nibble the fruit of sin without harm,
but we now stand exposed in our self-deception,
our chins dribbling with the whispered justifications
we used to qualify your commands and license our rebellion.

We confess that our sin has left us numb to our shame.
We have drugged ourselves with busyness and been distracted
by the glow of our screens and the ding of notifications.
We have not rested as you have commanded, and so
our passion for you has been muted and our devotion impaired.

We confess that we have found many things more compelling than you.
We have been obsessed with gaining and spending and consuming.
We have entrusted our futures to ourselves rather than you,
and so we have tried to secure as much as we can as fast as we can.
This has left us anxious rather than obedient.

We confess the many ways we have failed to do what is right,
mostly because we have stopped being ashamed.
As hatreds have been shouted and lungs have filled with fluid,
we have gone about our business, pretending that we do not
know where our brother is, all the while pointing fingers.

We confess that we often pretend to be ready to obey you,
but that this rhetoric masks our fear that things might change
and that you might ask us to change.
But today we acknowledge that we cannot pretend anymore.
We have been stripped of our lies and stand open before you.

Because you know everything—you know it all.

And yet you remain with us. You know us and do not turn away. You tell us that you are a God who works through broken people, that you saved the world through a nation of homeless slaves, that you called a small boy with a sling to save a kingdom, that you gave a young virgin the highest calling in history.

You tell us that the King of kings was born in lowly manger, that he was not beautiful and had no pedigree, that he drew crowds but never for long, that they all abandoned him, that he was betrayed and lifted up and exposed in front of the world while hatreds were shouted and his lungs filled with fluid.

You tell us that he gave up his life because of love, that he was raised from the dead and sits at the throne of the Father, that he is interceding for us and sends his Spirit to call us to repentance and obedience, so that we can do the work he has given us until he comes again.

And you tell us to stop hiding, to stand at ease, unguarded before you because we have been clothed his righteousness. You tell us that the secrets that have seemed so powerful for so long have been emptied of their strength, because he is faithful and just and has forgiven us of our sins.

And Lord we believe—we believe it all. Help us in our unbelief.

Amen.



PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION

Lord and Creator,

You are the one true God,
the one who turns chaos into order,
forms the lands in the midst of waves,
shapes the winds into a stream,
turns winters into springs,
and forms babies in their mother's wombs.

We ask you today to remember the words spoken over us when we rose from the waters of baptism and were welcomed into a new creation:
"The old has gone; the new has come!"

Give us a taste of this newness, Lord,
because the shadows of old creation
have been chilling the air through
fears that have been used to manipulate us,
relationships that cannot be repaired,
hopes that have been disappointed,
pain that has yet to be healed,
sin that holds us in bondage,
and guilt that does accept pardon.

Lord, we like to think we are problem-solvers,
with can-do confidence, a record of accomplishment,
and a work ethic to match.
Our lives are marked by achievement and success.
But the forces before us today are too powerful,
the darkness too deep, our faith too small.

Transform us, God, so that we become
like the wise men who left everything so they
could lay their treasures before you.
Fill us with your Spirit, so that we can be
delivered from our naive self-confidence,
aware of our limitations, and open about our vulnerability.
Form us into willing learners who yearn for wisdom
and desire that which only you can give.

God, we remember when Jesus went to the mountain
and showed his confused disciples his glory
and a glimpse of things to come.
Show us this glory, Lord, and give us the courage
to follow you into the future.

Amen.



PRAYER FOR INTIMACY

Holy God,

We ask you to rescue us from ourselves, because we are lost again. You say that you have called us to life-giving work, to vocations marked by the rhythms of planting and cultivating and creating and serving. But all we know is that this call has been twisted into something sinister, a power standing against us, holding us in its grasp until our lives drain away.

We see its effects in our eyes as we look into the morning mirror: the displacement that comes from our wandering to pursue possession, pleasure, power, and purpose; the alienation that arises from our striving for the security that will set us free us from anyone or anything; the estrangement that surprises us even after years of outsourcing our love to texts instead of touch and gifts instead of time; the loneliness we feel whenever we hold part of ourselves back from our friends because they are also our rivals; and the regrets that rise in the moments when we have to face ourselves and confess that we have settled for shallower dreams.

And we, who were unable to stay awake with you even one hour, have no one to blame but ourselves. And we confess that, from within the crowd we can taste the words of denial on our lips, and that we are tempted to join its cry for a world where violence is vindicated, power determines justice, and the lowly are expendable as long as we and ours can be warm and happy and safe.

But we also see you standing there, silent before your accusers, the God who told us that it is not good for us to be alone; who mourned the blood of Abel on the ground; who heard the cry of slaves above the din of Egypt's productivity; who sent prophets to proclaim that that the hungry would be filled; who warned about building bigger barns in the presence of moth and rust; who praised the widow who gave away everything she had; and who taught us that the image of Caesar on our coins need not become our own image, because you are remaking us in the image of a King who puts the poor in the seat of highest honor.

So, Lord, rescue us today from ourselves
and overrule the powers who stand against us.
Free us to reclaim our vocations by dismantling
the deceptions that have misled us into isolation.
Help us to come to our senses, so that we might turn way
from our swine's supper and instead desire the feast you have prepared
and all the ones for whom you have prepared it,
so that our days are marked by belonging, sharing, and the intimacy
of relationships bound not by our blood but yours.

Amen.



CENTER FOR

**Faith &
Innovation**