

A person in a dark suit is carrying a black briefcase. Inside the briefcase, a laptop and a Bible are visible. The Bible has the word "HOLY" written on its cover in gold lettering. The person's hand is visible, holding the handle of the briefcase.

# Christ in the Workplace

## *Seven Habits of Highly Successful Christians at Work*

While it's a 5 o'clock world, for many Christians it's a lonely Sunday life. It's easy to get caught up in the 9 to 5 grind and fall into the habit of keeping Christ and career separate, professing our faith on Sundays and proclaiming our workaday dedication Monday through Friday. But in truth, faith can play a major role at work, and for many, it's an indisputable contributor to their success and how they do business.

"It's doing unto others as you would have them do unto you," says Mark Reynolds, Vice President of Investments at Wells Fargo Advisors in Decatur. "I keep it in mind when I'm going through investment recommendations and advice. It's about trust."

Indeed, knowing your faith can offer customers as much comfort as it does you. "Clients love to know I have strong faith," says Glenda Williamson, owner of Decatur's Glenda Williamson Realty. "Even if they are of a different faith, they like to know that's how I do business."

Still, even for those who go to work with Christ every day, it isn't necessarily an instant or easy effort. "Just like my walk with Jesus gets stronger, I have gotten better at being able to bring Christ into the workplace," says Mark.

Wherever you are in your walk or your work life, from executive to entrepreneur, there's a place for Him at your desk. It's just a matter of figuring out how He fits in. Here are a few thoughts from local businesspeople who keep Christ in their workplaces every day.

## Pray.

A seemingly simple idea that's easily pushed down the priority list in a hectic workweek packed with deadlines and demands. But prayer can make the difference between chaos and calm, whether it's scheduled in or spontaneously enjoyed throughout the day.

Prayer can be put on the calendar. "We start our Monday meetings with a prayer or a Bible reading," says Glenda. "My staff likes it."

Or it can be an improvised meeting with Him. "Whenever I've had someone across the desk and I don't know what to say to them, I pray to give me the right words to say to this person," says Mark. "It makes you think."

## Give Thanks.

"My niece, who works with me, always says, 'Are you praying again?' I constantly give thanks for everything He does," says Mike Carman, owner of Decatur's Elite Shoe Care.

Just a few years ago his business was on the brink of failure until local businessman and customer Larry Cunningham came in the shop one day. When he left, there was enough money on the counter to pay the rent and utilities.

"I thought God was closing a door," says Mike. "But Mr. Cunningham came in through it. God does things in His own time. He may not come when you want Him, but He'll get there right on time."

## Keep It in Perspective.

This too shall pass. Somehow when we're closer to God, that's easier to remember, whether in our personal or professional lives.

"In my business, things can be very stressful because you work on commission and your paycheck is based on people making investments with you," says Mark. "I've found that my work life is more comfortable the closer I am to God."

Even in the midst of pipes that freeze almost daily and working out of what's surely one of America's smallest storefronts at 130 E. Prairie Ave., Mike Carman heartily agrees. "I don't have any



Glenda Williamson

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Mike Carmen

true worries. There are things that pass, but it's just a whisper," he says. "I give them to Him in prayer."

It's all about perspective, Glenda explains: "You react differently; you don't let things that aren't important throw you that much. Rely on Him whenever there's a tough situation; rely on Him in prayer."

when we sit back and let the plan happen, the results are indisputable.

It's an idea Glenda, a breast-cancer survivor, is no stranger to. Three years ago she scheduled a full work day around her biopsy, having no idea just how painful the procedure would be. Returning to work was a struggle, to say the least. But prayer and comfort were waiting for her in her next clients: Her new pastor and his wife, who'd just moved to town. "Isn't He amazing?" Glenda says.

### Spread the Word.

Reaching out doesn't have to take on the mammoth proportions of a mountaintop profession of faith. Indeed, talking about faith can be a natural part of water cooler talk everywhere.

"You can talk about something you did at church; it will come up in conversation—it's just natural," says Glenda. "It's easy to mention what you're doing in your life, and you don't have to do it deliberately."

For Mike Carman, it's as natural as breathing. "I encourage people who don't know God to come to God every day," he says, bidding customers leaving the shop goodbye with a "God bless you" or "Have a blessed day."

### Let Go of the Reins.

"I have to move my office, and I don't want to leave downtown," says Glenda. "But everybody here is so excited; there's a whole new energy. It's not always our plan and we don't always understand it, but if we sit back, we can see where His hand was involved in it all."

For many of us, letting go of the reins proves one of the biggest challenges we face. "I try to take direction from God, though it's hard to do at times," say Mark. But



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Consider it part of the job description. "It's our job to be the hands and feet of Jesus," Glenda says. "Whatever our profession is, is secondary."

### Know the Boundaries.

Much of the world's beauty lies in its diversity, and that's often no stronger felt than in the workplace. Especially for those serving the public, knowing when to profess and when to find solace in silence becomes integral.

"I'm very sensitive to people not being comfortable with religion or Christianity. I'm still praying; they just don't know it," says Mark. "And [by the same token] there have been people going through death or divorce that I've prayed with."

### Show the Love.

You don't have to tattoo God's name on your arm, but you can, nevertheless, show your love every day with reminders and messages in your office. There are as many ways as days.

For Mark Reynolds, it's a picture on the wall of George Washington kneeling in prayer next to his horse and a business card holder on his desk with Proverbs 16:3,

"Commit thy works unto the Lord." I use them not only to profess my beliefs to my clients but also as a reminder to myself," he says.

For Glenda Williamson, it's a much-beloved painting of Christ sitting at a desk with a businessman.

And for Mike Carman, it's the Good Book itself, kept at the ready under the counter and pulled out frequently as he passionately speaks about his love for the Lord.

Whatever you need to remind you of your walk, there's a place for it, home or work.



Mark Reynolds

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men..."*

Colossians 4:23



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