

Answer

Business Men's Fellowship International

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Taking Care of Business God's Way

THE JONATHAN SHAW STORY • Parry Sound, Ontario, Canada

As the weeks dragged on with no apparent movement in the contentious labor dispute that hit our family-owned business, the thing I feared the most happened.

One day in a meeting, the hardened, old-school labor leader and spokesman for 45 strikers made this declaration: “We need this much money in the new contract and we will absolutely not settle for one cent less.”

Ever get into a situation where both sides dig in their heels and nothing gets accomplished? That’s what it felt like as we watched the dispute linger for months that stretched into years.

It was tough, but God helped us find ways to keep going.

Still, nothing can test a businessman’s soul more than this kind of contentious situation. Although located in a hotbed of union activity, we strove for a family atmosphere. The strikers didn’t believe it,

but we had their best interests at heart.

From their view, we were being stingy. But our mining equipment company had to face reality — Canada was mired in a deep recession. We needed to hold the line on wages and benefits to enable our firm to survive.

No explanation satisfied the union leadership. After the battle lines were drawn, the disagreement landed in the lap of Ontario’s Labor Relations Board.

It’s a little different here than in the United States, where each side has incentives to settle more quickly. Backed by a healthy fund, the strikers were prepared to wait us out. We were ready to hire new employees and move on.

Still, we had to resolve the impasse. As the head of human relations, negotiations fell into my lap. I spent endless hours in courtrooms and back-room meetings with senior union officials.

Calling this “a struggle” would be an

understatement. More than once we made an offer we felt was fair and generous, only to see it quickly rejected.

I found myself questioning who was right and where God entered this picture. It reminded me of a messy divorce, where trying to determine who did what to whom is impossible.

As much as we prayed about this, I saw this was a murky picture, one made more difficult by the strife. In a town of 6,000, it wasn't unusual to walk down the street and see strikers on one side of the street, glaring at employees still working on the other.

As the stalemate continued certain people dragged our family's name through the mud. We became the subject of physical attacks. Shots were fired at our headquarters and more than once our cars were defaced.

I'll never forget coming out of our house one morning to see my new Pontiac Firebird sitting on four flattened tires.

Naturally, angry impulses arose. The verbal insults had become personal.

Suddenly, Jesus' words from Matthew 5:44-45 went through my mind: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

In that moment, my long-held belief in Christ became very real and practical.

"Well, it's just a car," I thought, then

walked back inside to call one of my brothers for a ride to the office.

Through this ordeal, our family learned how to demonstrate our faith by not retaliating or taking aggressive action against the strikers.

Even though at times we wanted to lash out in anger or revenge, we had to remember that God created them and loved them, too. Where they would spend eternity was more important than when they returned to work or what we paid them.

Ironically, we reached the point where the dispute no longer centered on money. After agreeing on wages and benefits, the sticking point became how to bring back striking workers.

After four years, some employees we had hired during the walkout had worked for us longer than the strikers. Union leaders wanted these "scabs" fired before they returned, but we had a plan to integrate both forces.

"No dice," said the union leader. Another

impasse.

This snowballed into an unbelievable situation that made no sense. Once again, I found questions swirling through my mind:

Were we being fair?

How do we honorably look out for the interests of strikers and new employees?

What was the right thing to do in such a complicated situation?

Although I prayed a lot and sought



advice, ultimately I found few places I could go for godly counsel. Through this, I discovered the vital need for support and prayer from Christian brothers. They can help us when we're in the midst of difficulties and can't see the forest for the trees.

I'm sure there were times when things were drawn out longer because of my actions, just as sometimes blame fell on the other side. But finally, after five years, the strike settled amicably.

Despite people who said, "You'll never be able to put that factory back together with a mixture of strikers and scabs," we did just that.

I believe one reason we did — and have had peaceful labor relations ever since — was because we sought God. He is able to turn bad situations into good when we trust Him.

This principle has guided our company throughout its 40-year history. We didn't just follow Christ through three labor disputes, we try to honor Him in all our business dealings.

For example, our products are used in various endeavors by companies around the world. We sell to customers in such places as China, India, South Korea and Taiwan. In a number of nations overseas, bribery is considered a natural way of business.

However, we took the view that God was our supplier. Since we could trust Him to bring us contracts, we refused to resort to under-the-table payments to get them.

More than half a dozen times we have pursued contracts when the issue of people expecting to pad their pockets cropped up at the last minute.

One time, our proposal had worked its way through the finance department,

technical department, and purchasing officer. Just as we thought we were going to agree on price came the demand, "For \$100,000 in a bank account in Singapore, the account is yours."

We refused — and lost the contract.

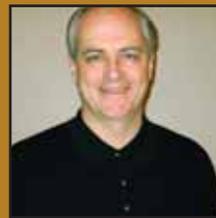
On another occasion, the man in charge wanted a new car, refrigerator and washing machine, all delivered to his home.

Again, we said "no," but got the business anyway. Most importantly, we maintained our integrity.

Companies saw that we were serious when we told them, "We are Christian men. We don't believe we need to do business that way, even though that's the culture. We just won't do it."

The bottom line: we survived and continue to operate in a way that we believe honors God. That doesn't mean we're perfect, just as I am not perfect in my personal life.

But through prayer and following Christ as my Lord and Savior, I have learned that when we put God first in our lives, He always takes care of our business.



Over two decades, Jonathan Shaw worked his way up to CEO of Shaw Almex, which

manufactures and services conveyer belts for bulk materials handling. He still serves as a director and part-time consultant. Jon and his wife Brenda have four children, ages 13 to 20.



God's Love Reaching

THE STEPHEN JEFFERIES STORY • Whitley Bay, England

The call from my mother-in-law's next-door neighbour shook me out of years of complacency and self-centeredness.

"Your mum's been acting rather strangely the past few days," she told my wife. "I think it would be a good idea if you come visit her and see if there's a reason for her odd behaviour."

That evening Margaret drove 64 miles to Jedburgh, Scotland, and brought her mother back to our house. Apart from being flushed in the face, Ella appeared quite normal.

However, a couple of nights later my wife woke up and found her mother unconscious. We called for an ambulance and Margaret accompanied her mother to the hospital.

The next morning I took our two teenage daughters to see their grandmother - only to discover she didn't know us!

After six weeks of exhaustive tests, a specialist said, "She's suffering from rapid, senile dementia. She'll never recover."

We closed up Ella's home and moved her into a nearby nursing home. This unexpected turn of events made me question my views and thrust me into a search for a meaning to life.

The eldest of three children, I was born in South Lancashire. As a young teen, my father moved to Pakistan to manage a factory while my oldest sister and I went off to boarding school.

This forced me to grow up quickly. I saw self-reliance as the path to independence and significance.

After completing my basic schooling, my philosophy of rugged individualism found fulfillment in science. I started out studying electrical engineering but wound up in mathematics.

After earning my university degree, I became a teacher. Starting as an instructor in math and computing, I became the head of a high school mathematics department by age 30.

Within several years I applied for

Answer

several deputy school headships. Although I made final interviews, I never landed the job – although superiors often told me they knew I could fulfill the role.

Inside, I knew that I didn't "fit" because of my personal life, which must have given itself away in my body language. Deep down, I knew the reason lay in my self-loathing.

By age 40, having failed to advance in my career, I felt extremely disillusioned.

I was also a dedicated "loner." Although a consummate professional, I had no close colleagues or friends. I never did anyone a personal favour without expecting a payback.

However, disturbed by my mother-in-law's sudden illness, within a couple months I surprised Margaret by visiting her church.

As I investigated various ideas, a man my age agreed to study the Bible with me. He was part of a Christian businessmen's group that had dedicated themselves to tell other people from all walks of life about Jesus.

The first night I went round to his home he said, "I'll only do the study with you on the condition that you accept the Bible as truth."

Now, he didn't know that during university I had examined numerous philosophies and made a commitment to follow Christ.

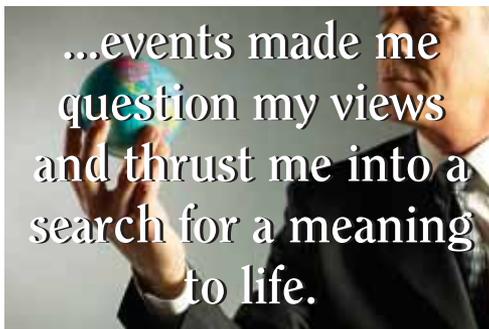
But I soon discovered that my training in scientific thinking was at odds with the

Bible. When no fellow students could adequately answer my questions, after six months I threw the Bible aside and embraced humanism.

However, all that led to was a sour, bitter outlook. Now, intrigued by the idea there could be a God, after connecting with

this businessman I studied the Bible with a new, humble openness.

My steps toward God occurred gradually, culminating with attending meetings sponsored by that Christian businessmen's



organization.

I attended their dinners for six months, checking to see if members lived out what they proclaimed in their literature. They did.

Finally, I couldn't resist any longer. One night that man led me in a prayer. I renounced everything I had done the past 20 years and told God I was sorry for walking away from Him. I believed Jesus was His Son.

Through their teaching, example and practice, the men in that chapter and another men's group in my hometown helped me grow in all aspects of Christianity.

In fact, they were so open that for the first time in years I relaxed my guard and made friends.

My decision paid huge dividends in our home, as my wife went from being merely religious to a much deeper faith in Christ. We also saw God answer prayers, particularly

for Margaret's mother.

Although Ella stayed in the nursing home, she made a full recovery amazing her personal doctor and the specialist who told us her recovery was a miracle. She lived until 2003, dying at 81 with complete use of her faculties!

However, my new-found faith put me in conflict with England's national teaching curriculum, which is steeped in humanism. Based on Greek thinking styles, it has no basis in the Bible.

For example, evolution is not taught as a theory, but as solid science. Personal and social development classes encourage promiscuous behaviour and "alternative" lifestyles. Even some religious education classes are taught by people who have no faith.

Despite my misgivings, I remained in that job so I could be a living example for Christ and tell others about Him whenever opportunities arose.

Finally, in 2001 – nine years ahead of schedule – I was released from my job with full pension benefits.

At a staff meeting in February of that year, the head teacher said the school had overspent its budget by 38,000 pounds and asked if anyone wanted to voluntarily retire. Two other colleagues and I raised our hands.

Still, I told God if He wanted me to remain I would be happy to stay. In prayer, I asked Him to let me know what He wanted. A few days later I woke up one night and "heard" myself giving my farewell speech. I knew it was my time to go.

In May, the school told me I was the one who had been granted a release.

Since that time, I have devoted my efforts to working with Business Men's Fellowship. In addition to assisting the

national office, I have travelled to various places in Europe and Africa with other colleagues to help start other chapters.

For example, several months after retiring, I went to Riga, Latvia to develop BMF. I had a thrilling experience there, praying for a woman who had just lost her son. Married to an alcoholic, she saw no hope in her situation.

Suddenly, I began to cry. Silently I asked God why. I sensed the Holy Spirit say, "You are feeling some of her pain."

That experience showed me how little I knew about the depth, strength and all-encompassing compassion God has for His people.

I know this love is real, because God reached out to me when I didn't have a friend in the world.

If that's your story, stop resisting God's love. All you have to lose is loneliness.



Stephen Jefferies volunteers as Business Men's Fellowship's National Administrator for the United Kingdom and is also Treasurer of the Newcastle Chapter. He and his wife, Margaret, have two daughters. They attend North Shields Evangelical Church.

Following a Divinely Engineered Plan

*THE RICK STOFFEL STORY
Spencerport, New York USA*

The clock told the story: another late night. More than once, I had fallen asleep sitting in front of my computer.

I had earned my real estate license as a possible buffer against getting laid off by Eastman Kodak Co.

However, after surviving two downsizings, I was juggling lunchtime cell phone calls, trying to meet my family's needs and working on real estate after everyone went to bed. The pace was killing me.

One night, I realized this second job was again going to prevent me from spending time the next day with our three sons. Something inside of me broke.

Raising my fist, I slammed it on my desk — so hard that splinters went flying. I sat in stunned silence as I pondered what I had just done.

“You know what?” I thought. “This has got to go.”

The next day, I told my wife, Patty,

“This is not going to work. I’ve got to give up real estate before the stress kills me.”

While I maintain a license in case I ever want to resume the business, right now I’m not selling a thing.

This experience was one of several life-changing events in recent years. At one time I had envisioned myself on the “fast track” into upper management. Now, I had to recognize it wasn’t going to happen.

Before he retired, Dad was an engineer at Kodak, which we affectionately called the “Big Yellow Box.” We lived in a neighborhood in Rochester, New York that was a mix of blue- and white-collar workers. Almost everyone worked for Kodak or had a close relative who did.

With that background, I always envisioned following in Dad’s footsteps. I had a burning desire to ascend the corporate ladder and earn the big bucks that came with it.

After a five-year course of study and

work at the Rochester Institute of Technology, I felt the world was my oyster.

In school I had spent some time as a co-op student at a General Motors division in Lockport, New York, but after graduation chose to stay in Rochester.

Failing to get hired at either of the area GM organizations, I found work as a hydraulics engineer. Two years later, I landed an engineering job at Kodak.

A young idealist with a strong work ethic, I tried to position myself to be “someone” among the 62,000 people then working for the company in Rochester. I dressed right, conducted myself properly, associated with the right people, and attended all the right activities.

Despite these efforts, which included earning my master’s degree five years after joining Kodak, I didn’t seem to be joining the upwardly mobile professionals.

I watched as others were promoted within my division. Doing well by most standards, I felt I was destined for more but not being afforded the opportunity.

In an effort to climb the ladder, during the 1990s I moved around within Kodak, including a stint in engineering and construction. However, my advancement remained modest.

Years passed before I came to grips with reality, but several events combined to help me face it.

One was my mother’s death in 2000. She had been suffering with respiratory problems and an infection. Although she seemed to be improving, after a relapse she took a turn for the worse.

Although I had worked my way through grief by the time she died, it was her death that caused me to realize that some things just aren’t worth going after.

Mom’s death led me down a path of further self-examination. I recognized that upper management positions brought incredible pressure and stress with them.

I thought of those times I shared a cup of coffee with an older cousin, an

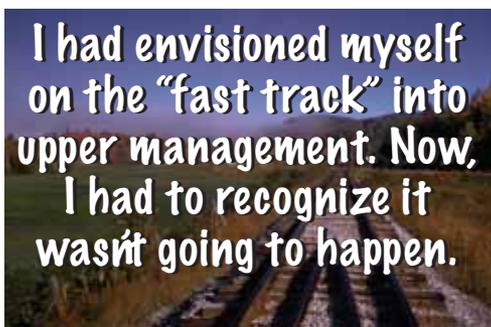
executive vice president. Despite having much more energy than me, he was always loaded with responsibilities.

Memories of occasional business trips popped up, too. I never really enjoyed leaving home and family for even a few days. One time I thought, “I’m glad I’m not in a job that has a high demand for travel. I would probably be a basket case after a year.”

The other factor that helped me reconcile not advancing that high on the corporate scale was my faith in God.

Although I grew up going to church, starting out in my career I had never prayed or asked God to help determine my course.

That changed in the mid-1980s after some co-workers and neighbors talked to me about having a personal relationship with



Jesus Christ.

I had never thought much about that, but they seemed to be so happy and at peace I was willing to consider it.

When one of those friends invited me to a meeting of Christian businessmen, I went. I was impressed to see businessmen, wearing coats and ties, willing to talk openly about their belief in Jesus and the way the Holy Spirit directed their life.

At the end of the meeting, I responded to an invitation to follow Christ and commit my life to Him.

I said a simple prayer: "Lord, forgive me of my sins. I want to accept You into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior."

As you can tell, that decision didn't make life a bed of roses. Yet as I gradually developed a closer relationship with Christ, it has meant everything.

At home, it has given me a much better marriage. My wife and I have prayed together throughout 18 years of marriage, whether the decision is big or small. This has put us on the same plane spiritually and helped us work through the problems that affect every marriage.

God also helped me deal with the disappointment of not reaching the levels I dreamed of as a young man.

One day, as I pondered failing to advance, I sensed the Holy Spirit saying softly, "Rick, I didn't mean this for you. You might have thought you were destined to do all these great worldly things, but that's not what I had in mind."

Ironically, recently Kodak sold our division to another company, forming the backbone of a new space systems division. We design and manufacture various space-borne and ground-based imaging systems.

It's not as though I don't have any

management responsibilities, since I supervise a group of 29 engineers. As much as I like the technical side of engineering, God seems to be leading me into more supervisory slots.

This position also gives me a chance to share my faith. Naturally, there are some constraints, but opportunities arise in casual conversation. And, every year on the National Day of Prayer when I am able, I join others at the company for prayer.

I also tell those I supervise I'm there to help them and I am the one who works for them. That's part of what is called servant leadership.

My desire is that others will see what Christ has done in me and desire to know Him too. Based on what I have experienced through the years, I recognize that every minute of every day, I need Christ in my life--no matter where I go in my career.



Rick Stoffel is a supervising engineer in the Space Systems Division of ITT Industries and a member of BMF's Greater Rochester Chapter. He and his wife, Patty, have three sons, ages 11 to 16.

Free, Whole, and New

THE DAVID GURNO STORY • Minneapolis, Minnesota USA

“Clang!” slammed the door

of my new home: a room in the state hospital. A guard shuffled down the hall with the key in his pocket.

Still drunk despite the three-hour trip from Minneapolis, I looked around. A small bed and a toilet were the only furnishings.

When I glanced up at the ceiling, several large birds appeared to come flying down out of it. They took bites out of my face.

Throwing up my arms as a shield, I looked down at the floor. Snakes and other creeping, vile-looking vermin seemed to be crawling up out of the drain.

Right then I knew there were only two choices – I would either lose my mind or die. If there was a hell, I must have stepped into it.

As an 11-year-old boy, I never imagined the grief that would follow my first sip of alcohol. I just wanted to fit in

with the other Chippewas on the Red Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota.

All the adults I saw liked to drink. So did my peers and 10 of my 12 brothers and sisters. That day I drank until I passed out, just like I did nearly every day of the next 38 years.

Dropping out of school after eighth grade, I started hanging out in a town near the reservation. My escapades led to 30 to 40 nights in jail and five times as many trips to a detox center.

At 17 I migrated south to the Twin Cities, as Minneapolis and adjoining St. Paul are known.

When I wasn't drinking, I panhandled or worked odd jobs as part of a daily labor pool. If I managed to work two days straight, I took off the next three to get drunk.

One winter I earned my high school equivalency diploma while staying in a

treatment center. It wasn't worth much, considering my main ambition was to use my alcoholism to qualify for Social Security disability payments.

I was nearing bottom two years before going to the state hospital. Running low on cash and ways to get it, several drinking buddies and I resorted to using Lysol to get high.

Puncturing a couple holes in the top of the can to let out the aerosol, we would drain the fluid into an empty milk jug. Filling the jug with water, we passed it around.

Well-known in the inner city neighborhood where I hung out, the police usually left me alone. But several months before going to the state hospital, they started picking me up regularly.

Finally, a county social worker came to see me in detox.

"David, you're costing us too much money," she said of my treatment-and-hospital merry-go-round. "The next time this happens you're going to the state hospital. They have a lock-up treatment facility and that's where you're going."

"That'll never happen to me," I replied.

Not only had it happened, as I stood in this tiny room I wondered how I could escape these insane hallucinations.

Suddenly my mind went clear. I remembered the man who had appeared at my bedside for four months, every time I

woke up from a stupor in detox or the hospital.

"Dave, I know someone who can help you," said this stranger, who I am now convinced was an angel. "His name is Jesus."

"No, I don't want to hear that," I would moan. "I'm an Indian."

Now, I remembered that man and what he said – that Jesus could set me free, make me whole again and give me a new life.

If anyone needed a new life it was me! Kneeling, I said, "Jesus, if You can

really do what this man told me You can, and You're really real, I need You to help me. I need You to take this desire of alcohol away from me, because it's driving me crazy."

Nothing happened, but I crawled up onto that bed and slept soundly for the first time in more than two years.

When I woke up, I felt different. I didn't have the shakes.

For the first time in longer than I could remember, I didn't feel sick. I felt strong again.

Immediately I realized what had happened. Jesus had answered my prayer. He had come into my life. I knew He was the Son of God. And now, He was my Lord.

Soon after this, another inmate gave me a Bible. I wanted to read it, but I needed help. So I prayed again: "Jesus, if You want me to learn about this Book, You're going to have to teach me."

Not only did God show me how to

Running low on cash and ways to get it, several drinking buddies and I resorted to using Lysol to get high.

read the Bible, He helped me understand it. For the 93 days I was in the state hospital, I read it whenever not in a group meeting or other required activity.

Afterwards, I returned to Minneapolis and moved into a halfway house. I started going to church and found steady employment.

I also looked up my old drinking buddies. They were amazed to see me sober, working and happy.

“Dave, where did you learn about the Bible?” many asked.

After I explained, eight hard-core drinkers made the same decision to follow Christ. Five of them have since gone to heaven. I see the other three occasionally. All of them are still in great shape.

I was so grateful to God for what He had done, but He wasn't finished blessing me. The year after my trip to the state hospital, I was walking past the American Indian Center one morning on the way to work.

A staff member was outside picking up litter. Just then, God told her, “Go and share your testimony with that man.”

DeBora walked up to me and repeated those instructions. Then she told me about a life that sounded just like mine.

A mix of the Sioux, Arikora and Hidasta tribes, she was born in North Dakota. After abusing drugs and alcohol for years, in 1983 she killed the man who raped her sister. Although sent to prison for life, after deciding to follow Christ she had been paroled early.

As I listened to her story, tears filled my eyes. Afterwards, I asked if I could give her a hug. When I did, I think I fell instantly in love.

Getting her phone number, I called and we began attending church and Bible studies together. Soon we entered pre-marital counseling. Four months after we met, we were married.

Together we travel nearly every weekend, telling others the true story of how God changed our lives.

We are especially concerned with persuading Native Americans that Jesus is Lord of all. He isn't some “white man's religion,” He is the answer to the curses that have plagued our people for far too long.

I know because He rescued my life when it was going nowhere. He filled me with His Holy Spirit and gave me a wife to stand beside me. He is the way to happiness on earth and to heaven after this life ends.



A member of the Minneapolis Chapter of BMF, David Gurno has worked steadily in recent years as a security guard. He and his wife, DeBora, celebrated their seventh anniversary in August of 2005. They attend the Potter's House church in Minneapolis.

Reflections

*Before I shaped you in the womb,
I knew all about you.
Before you saw the light of day,
I had holy plans for you.*

Jeremiah 1:5

- THE MESSAGE BIBLE

Christ is the ANSWER...He makes life worth living.

As you have been reading the stories of the lives of different people in this issue of *Answer Magazine*, you may have been thinking, "Is it possible for me to really know God and have peace in my heart?"

The answer to this question is "YES!" It is experienced by believing in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and being born-again by His Spirit.

God loves you and He showed that love in sending His Son, Jesus, to die on the Cross to pay the penalty for your sins. He wants to bless your life and make it full and complete.

He not only offers you abundant life here and now, but a life which is eternal. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Do you want to be born-again and receive the free gift of eternal life? If you do, then follow these steps:

1. ADMIT to God that you are a sinner and are separated from Him, and that only the Lord Jesus can save you. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)
2. REPENT by turning away from sin and submitting to God. "I tell you... except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:5)
3. BELIEVE that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross and shed His blood to pay the price for your sins, that He was buried

and rose again. "If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

4. ASK God to save you. "For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

If you would like to accept Jesus into your life, and receive the free gift of eternal life, then pray this simple prayer out loud:—

"Dear God, I come to You in the Name of Jesus. I now realize that I have a choice to make about my life. I believe that Jesus died for me, shed His blood to wash away my sins, and that He rose from the dead, making a way for me to have fellowship with You. I turn my back on the life I have lived without You, and I choose to follow Jesus from this moment on. I ask Jesus to be Lord of my life and to live in my heart. I thank You, Almighty God, that You love me, have forgiven me, and have accepted me as Your child, and that right now I am a new creation, born of God. Thank You Heavenly Father."

When you have made this very important decision, please complete the form below and return it to the nearest National Service Center (listed on the back cover).

We will then send you further helpful information.

I wish to inform you of my decision to follow Jesus Christ

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Wendell Nordby

Ronny Svenhard

C.F. (Buz) Swyers

Publications Editor

Ken Walker, contributing writer

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info@bmfusa.com
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Business Men's Fellowship, U.S.A.

3824 Buell Street, Suite A
Oakland, California 94619
Tel. 800-BMF-8981
Fax 800-BMF-9136
email: info@bmfusa.com
www.bmfusa.com

Business Men's Fellowship, Canada

P.O. Box 76038, Southgate
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5Y7
Tel. 780-435-7502
Fax 780-436-2693
email: bmf_can@telusplanet.net
www.bmfcanada.com

Business Men's Fellowship, UK

454 Crow Road, Glasgow
Scotland, UK, G11 7DR
Tel. 0141-357-0606
Fax 0141-339-2554
email: nsc@bmf-uk.com
www.bmf-uk.com



Business Men's Fellowship International