



Moving Away from God

With the pressures of the work environment, seeking to walk with Christ and let the Holy Spirit guide all one's work decisions can often be challenging. How can one seek to be a Business Executive Leading with Integrity, Entrusted Values, and Expectancy (BELIEVES) in the work environment?

How do we continuously invite God into _____ and find real joy – even if it's messy?"

The 2024 BELIEVES season maintained its focus on this overarching question on Tuesday, March 12th, with a discussion focused on "Moving Away from God," sparked by thoughts shared by Thomas Clements, Jr., President of Zenith Ministries.



"I lead a healing ministry in the Cumming area – it has to do with my past," Clements opened by saying after some free-flowing dialogue had taken place related to the topic among all present to open the discussion.

Clements, who grew up Catholic – attending St. Jude's – said that between the ages of 15-21 he fell away and got into drugs and alcohol.

"It was a long six years," Clements said.

Then he found himself coming back.

"In the middle of my addictions, I started to pray" he stated. "It was a crazy battle – in the midst of my demons."

He went on to say that God showing up in the Eucharist was a way better thing – way better than any drugs. During this phase where there was a fight going on, he said he had many falls, having to go to confession consistently for two weeks.

"Then I'd come out of confession and say I'm done," Clements told everyone. "Then I would receive the Eucharist. Then I'd fall – not trying to fall to these bad things – I'd fall out of weakness."

That was until April 23, 2007, arrived.

"I was drunk the whole day," he recalled. "A friend took me to the store to get more beer. Then I heard the music that has been playing all along."

The music is referring to an earlier part of the conversation when Clements talked about a scene from *The Sound of Music* – it is the music of God's grace that is always playing.

"I threw the 12-pack of beer out the window and quit drinking right then and there. Furthermore, I have never smoked pot since."

He added, "The music got louder. Everything I was looking for in the drugs and alcohol – God brought it to me. With God it was better."

This brought to mind for him the words in John 1 focused on the light and the dark.

"We want to see the light, but we love the dark," stated Clements. "I was fine with the dark. I was comfortable with it."

Clements went on to explain that the light is the grace we carry around in the world with us.

"What can I do to increase the light, and not snuff it out?" he asked aloud. "A lot of it starts with the mind. How are we handling the thinking process?"

Some earlier conversation before the session began had focused on a few reflections related to *The Sound of Music*. Clements' thoughts went back to a particular character in the movie.

"I think of Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. What caused him to spiral? What was his thought process?"

Clements then turned the focus to share thoughts on what some "Big D" (big decisions) and "little d" (little decisions) were that he had worked through related to the professional setting.

"When we start our day with God, it helps to be in God's reality and make the decisions easier," he remarked. "A friend of mine lives in the business world. He lives for God. He once told me how he was in a meeting where people pulled out drugs and it got a bit crazy. He was battling – 'Should I stay? What should I do?'"

Clements said his friend made a decision.

"He wound up saying, 'I'm married, and I need to go.'"

It turns out because of his friend saying that the driver of the vehicle opened up about how he was discerning to go to seminary.

"So, this whole beautiful thing opened up from that," Clements shared.

He added, "For me and things I am wrestling through – I struggle with work-life balance. I am a firm believer that my kids have a right to my attention. I am trying to be a dad, husband, and friend. I believe God speaks to me and listens to me. I speak to Him on everything and then bring it to others as well."

Having shared this, the audience was asked to share any thoughts they had.

One attendee asked about how we handle the disappointments.

She then said, "Sometimes interruptions are nudges to take a break. As adults, we do not always see things from a child's perspective. I do not like the term work-life balance. We do not talk about the discipline of God. The thing I focus on is, 'God, what do I need to say no to?' I have to allow the Lord to re-orient my thinking. To re-orient, we have to turn a whole 180 degrees, and we do not think about that. We have to ask God to 'change my life.'"