



The Flourishing Culture Podcast Series
“Our Best Stories of Healthy Workplace Culture”
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Cary Humphries and Giselle Jenkins

Intro: Welcome to our season-finale podcast, reflecting on the eight drivers that create engaged employees and a flourishing culture. For the past several months, we have listened to dozens of leaders describe how they have helped create healthy workplaces. Listen in on a discussion of our highlights, with two of my esteemed colleagues, Cary Humphries and Giselle Jenkins.

Female: This is the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*. Here’s your host, president of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, Al Lopus.

Al Lopus: Welcome to another episode of the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*, where our goal is to equip and inspire you to build a flourishing workplace. We are here to help you eliminate workplace distrust, improve your employees’ experience, and grow your organization’s impact. And before we meet our special guest today, I urge you to subscribe to this podcast. As a result, you’ll receive our action guide. It’s our gift to help you lead your organization’s culture to the next level. To subscribe, simply go to bcwinstitute.org/podcast. Hit the Subscribe button, and receive our free action guide.

Also, if you could share this podcast with others, and rate it, it would really mean a lot to me. Thank you.

You’ve heard the phrase “we’ve saved the best for last.” Well, that’s never been more true than right now because during the next few minutes, we’re going to hear some of the very best stories and strategies to equip and inspire you to build a better, healthier workplace culture where your employees love coming to work, where they feel more engaged, and are even more productive. There’s so much good stuff here, and I’ve asked two trusted, expert colleagues to join me. And I think you’re going to really love the insights and put their practical wisdom to work as we talk about the last year’s podcast, while we focused on the FLOURISH model in our podcast. With me is Giselle Jenkins, the BCWI culture consulting director, and Cary Humphries, our regional director. Welcome, both of you, to the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*.

Giselle Jenkins: Thanks, Al.

Cary Humphries: Yeah, good to be with you.

Al: Yeah, great. Well, Cary, we're going to start off with you. You've got an inside story to share about one of our most-respected ministries around the world, and it's a story that you've heard about and you've done something with them and something that's really spoken to you and, actually, to all of us. Tell us the story.

Cary: Alpha USA, Craig Springer, their president, was on a podcast with you, talking about the progress that they've made, but it really jumps out to me as an inspirational leadership story. When Craig was announced to be the upcoming president of Alpha, he reached out from previous experience with BCWI. He knew he wanted that data, and he reached out to survey, actually, even before he arrived. And they're a ministry with global reach, but they'd had some transitions in the U.S., and it was time for new leadership and time for an opportunity to get a feel for where they were going. And so they surveyed, and their results revealed that the culture was not at all healthy—I'd say bottom 20 percent of those parachurch ministries we survey. Mission alignment was really high, and staff's confidence in their product, the Alpha course, was solid, but so many things were weak: job security, overall management trust, and a sense of supervisory excellence, just in a rough spot. And they surveyed. But then Craig and Sean Hogan reached out, asking us to come in and do some additional listening. We call this focus groups, and we usually do those in person but sometimes by video. And we did focus groups with them by video. And with the benefit of that learning, leadership went about addressing issues. And amazingly, Al and Giselle, within a year, their results were up an incredible 26 points, to near healthy. Inspirational leadership improved substantially. Momentum, that question over the past year we've changed for the better, was up 47 points. So it was just a sea change with more to come. And just another year later, Alpha took another big jump up. They actually skipped the whole healthy quadrant and jumped into flourishing. It just points to me that there are many organizations with that pent-up desire to get healthy. And when a leader steps in and gets some data and exercises courage, exciting things happen.

Al: I really love the Alpha story, the way you've described it. Craig, even before starting, wanted to get a real picture of the health of his culture. And it really speaks to me also because I've had two now-close friends that have come to faith through the Alpha program, and I know personally how impactful it is. When you really step back, what about their story spoke to you personally? Is there anything that comes to mind?

Cary: Well, I think it was—we've said before that our biggest competitor, if you will, is a lack of courage. It just takes courage to get data on your organization, for a leader to say, "I'm willing to see what's going on. I'm willing to even be a little bit of the problem and to embrace it and act on it." And Craig did that. For your listeners to go back and listen to Craig's most-recent podcast with you is just really inspirational. So to see him just get his arms around this. It wasn't trying to hide anything. It was just, let's get to the bottom of this. Let's not make this about blame. Let's make this about progress. This coming spring, we'll be serving Alpha for the fifth year, and they're just committed to acting on their data.

Al: Yeah. And I remember it was those focus groups. Craig admitted that he had made a wrong turn, even coming in fresh. He had kind of made a wrong turn in terms of strategy, relative to fundraising,

and had to go back, and the data helped him go back and realize that, yeah, he had made a mistake. He apologized, and through input, really moved forward. That was a really encouraging thing. As he says, "Facts are our friends," right, Cary?

Cary: Yeah. And Al, they're a distributed team. So some of our listeners would relate to that. They've got people on the West Coast, in the Midwest, in Colorado, and spread other places, and yet they've been able to create a really healthy culture across the miles, using a lot of video and getting people together when appropriate. And as you pointed out, they're making a big difference for the kingdom.

Al: Yeah. Well, based on our research, there are eight drivers that really drive employee engagement in Christian-led organizations. And which of the eight drivers has really shined at Alpha USA? Cary, you mentioned one. Is it inspirational leadership?

Cary: For sure, for sure. It's inspiration leadership. And I think as you point out, they pay attention to strategy and were willing to take a step back. But they've really worked hard at building stronger communication across, with the use of technology. But this is an example of inspirational leadership in spades.

Giselle: I'd say if a leader's willing to apologize and go in a different direction, that's certainly modeling humility, which is one of our leadership questions.

Al: Yeah. That's right. Yeah, and, Giselle, as you've pointed out in an earlier debriefing today, we see inspirational leadership and healthy communication really working closely together. And I think that's an example you mentioned both of those, Cary, how they work together to help change the culture there at Alpha USA.

And when you step back, Cary, is there a lesson or a cultural truth that really stands out with Alpha USA's culture turnaround?

Cary: I think, Al, just persistence. They've seen dramatic improvement, but it was the decision to communicate to staff. We're going to use this tool as a way to listen, and we're going to act on it, and we're going to listen again. And they committed upfront to getting in the routine of giving staff a voice, and it's produced great results.

Al: Well, Giselle, let's move on. You've got a story. And thanks, Cary. That's a great story, with Alpha. But Giselle, you've got a story, and you've got a favorite place that you love to go in Lansing, Michigan. Tell us about it.

Giselle: Yeah. For our listeners' edification, I got to go to Lansing, Michigan, when there was a lot of snow on the ground. And that's a little inside joke here. So, earlier this year, our listeners got to hear from Pastor Marvin Williams. So he's at Trinity Church in Lansing, Michigan, which is the capital of Michigan. And Pastor Marvin shared about their journey to a healthy level of engagement. And his emphasis in the podcast was that he had a special culture builder, who actually happened to be his unflappable executive assistant, who came from the outside corporate world and came in and made just an amazing, positive difference. And I love the podcast because it can really show how one person

who isn't in a leadership role can really help turn the culture around, and she certainly did. So, for anyone who'd like to listen to that, that's season four, episode 17, and it's a very inspirational story.

And if you go back to—let's just back up a little bit—how we took a deep dive with Trinity Church. And so we did, back in March of 2016, basically, the church had taken the survey, and they'd gotten the results, and the results were not what they wanted. And we came and started working with them. And as I reflect now, three years down the line, Trinity is healthy and improving all the time. And I thought about, really, four factors that I saw reflected by the leaders at Trinity, and I'd like to talk about them.

The four factors are humility, trust, listening, and action. Those are the ones that I'm talking about. So first, humility. So in the work at BCWI, we generally see humility as an essential condition. It's sort of number one. So if you think about it, leaders are normally someone who has been highly respected over the years. They're looked for for answers. Sometimes, especially within churches, they're revered as people. They're impact is considered very meaningful. And when we have a humble leader, we can see that they really can put all that aside. They just put it aside. They look at the critical realities around them, and they ask others for help. And so humility, and this is a little bit ironic, is really a towering strength. And the first thing that the leaders did at Trinity was they asked for help, reached out to us.

And then the second is trust. Pastor Marvin and Pastor Jack, who is executive pastor there, they trusted what they knew about BCWI. They'd heard about us. We'd been referred to them. They took our survey. They trusted us with their confidential results. They actually trusted the results. They were disappointing results, and then they trusted us further. We said, "You should do focus groups." They said, "Come and do focus groups." They invited me up there on a chilly March day, and I literally interviewed all of their employees. They trusted us to do that. We gave them a report and recommendations. They trusted the report and recommendations. They didn't push back on the negative feedback. They didn't rationalize it. They actually went further, and based on the results, they submitted themselves to 360 assessments, both Pastor Jack and Pastor Marvin. And then, they acted on the 360s, and they made changes to their leadership style. And, you know, we have that joke: Can you handle the truth? Truth can handle the truth. And they did. And they were willing to submit to that truth.

And then third, they listened. And as Cary mentioned, with Alpha, we find that healthy communication and listening is both a top way to learn, but also to build trust. And so they listened to their staff. They listened to their survey feedback, their focus-group feedback, their 360 feedback. They listened BCWI. We gave them recommendations. People there felt heard and known. I talked to people later, and they said, "We feel heard. We feel understood." So leaders went off this stage. They could've been on a stage because of their positions. They gave others a voice. And so we find leaders who truly listen, they really make remarkable and healthy inroads.

So finally, though, they acted. So you can have all the other characteristics, but if you don't act, right? You know, there's a line from the musical *My Fair Lady*, which is one of my favorite musicals, and Professor Higgins sings, "They listen very nicely. Then they go out and do precisely what they want." I won't sing it for you. But anyway, we do find that sometimes. Lots of feedback, get survey results, but they listen, but then no action happens.

So that wasn't the story at Trinity. We don't find that's the story when we find humble leaders who trust and they listen. What they'll do is they'll prioritize healthy culture, which is what Trinity did. And that's time, energy, and finances to act on the suggestions and feedback.

And then they don't stop. They build ongoing activities, they involve people in decisions that affect them, and they create rhythms, and that's what Trinity's done. They have monthly meetings. They have quarterly meetings. They invite feedback. They have lunches together, and fellowship.

And I would just say that the smile that was on the faces of Pastor Marvin and Pastor Jack when they became certified was a beautiful thing. It's a smile I like to see on everyone's face. So they went from this low, toxic culture to this healthy culture. And I have no doubt if they continue, they'll be a flourishing culture.

Al: You know, Giselle, it's interesting that you say humility, trust, listening, action. And I really kind of focus in on listening because to really listen, you have to almost bring humility, and trust what you hear. And if you really are listening, then that really compels you to action. To me, that listening is a key part. And I also love how Jim Collins in *Good to Great* talks about level-five leadership, and humility is right at the core of that, which even as a non-Christian, he understands the importance of humility. That's a great story.

Giselle: Well, Al. It's your turn now. So, there's a parachurch organization that caught your attention in 2019. Why don't you tell us a little bit about that.

Al: Well, this is an organization, Giselle, that we've been working with for the last 15 years, and that's Joni and Friends. And Joni Eareckson dived in a pond and broke her neck in the '70s, and she's been a paraplegic ever since. And she really has a passion to bring disabled individuals into a knowing relationship with Jesus Christ. And she also brought in, as her organization was growing 20 years ago, a guy named Doug Mazza to lead as the COO and president of the organization and to help build it. And one of Doug's mantras, as he talked about in the podcast that we've had, is fantastic teams and how teams and the entire organization needs to be collaborative and to have a unified vision.

And he talks about four pillars on a regular basis. They talked about the four pillars that Joni and Friends focuses on and how he consistently would keep these at the forefront of the culture of the organization. One was that he really believed in leading like Jesus, and every employee had gone through a Lead Like Jesus training and was kind of the operating system for their culture. Another thing he really believed in was collaboration. And he built cross-functional teams to work together to achieve their unified vision in a very creative and productive way. He also believed in helping individuals focus on their competence and their area of competence and had made sure that they invested in people and their training and development so that people were able to contribute at the highest level. And lastly, the last pillar was to be a best Christian workplace. And he took that and the entire organization took that very seriously. In fact, in the podcast, he talked about the importance of visible leadership and how leaders need to lead from the front, that employees need to know their leader, and that helps to build integrity, and that starts with, even, onboarding. And there's great stories of the onboarding program at Joni and Friends, how that focus on a leader is to help equip the

team to dream big and then even bigger, and to encourage people and then encourage people more. And those were parts of Doug's mantra.

But I think back in our journey, Doug had the courage—it was actually in 2007, 2008, 2009—where they went from a flourishing culture, and they actually went down. They were certified every year, but they were getting very close to a critical moment. And he stopped, and he listened, and one of the big issues was that the field staff, those people that were distributed out in the field across the United States, did not feel like they were really part of the team. And he brought them all together, and they created, then, an annual all-staff training and conference, if you will. And as a result of that, they were able to collaborate, get to know each other individually, they had great worship times together, and that brought their culture back to a flourishing level. So that's a little bit of the story of Joni and Friends and how Doug and his leadership really started off flourishing. As the organization grew, they had challenges. He listened. The survey was a key tool for him to understand where things were. And then he was able to bring them back to a flourishing level in their culture.

Giselle: Gosh, Al. I heard you talking about the importance of knowing your leader, and then I heard Doug reflect on how he needed the staff to know each other and to the staff, so certainly that's a theme. Can you think of any other quality about Doug that—you know, he's recently retired from there, and we hope to see him, though, still because he's just such a great guy. Can you think of a quality or characteristic about him that really stands out to you?

Al: Yeah. I would say, kind of back to Cary's comment with Alpha and Craig Springer, courage is one of the things that I think about with Doug. And again, as he saw the culture decline there in the late 2000s, he stepped into it. He went to where the trouble was. He didn't shy away from it. Oftentimes, leaders, they sense trouble, and they'll back away from getting involved. And he had the courage to step into it again, listen, and then, he had to make some unpopular decisions to help get things back on the right track. So I'm going to go back with Cary's term earlier of courage. Well, thanks, Giselle.

You know, I love the fact that the essence of a healthy, even a flourishing, workplace culture, as we've been talking about, it helps employees live and breathe and grow and even transform either a church, which we do a lot of work with churches. We work a lot with Christian nonprofit parachurch organizations, and we're doing a fair amount of work with Christian-led companies. And Cary, there's a thriving company in North Carolina and few people in the world or in the country know about it. But wow, what a story they have to tell. Why don't you tell us about it.

Cary: I will, Al. And I'll back up just a minute to say that we met ACR Supply Co. through the C12 Group, and C12's been a wonderful partner and has actually also surveyed themselves. And a number of businesses have come to BCWI through their recommendation and example because C12 has moved into a flourishing culture themselves, through their headquarters and even out into their boards. Very exciting to see.

But ACR Supply Co., interestingly, you know, people come to us at all different levels of health—sometimes not healthy at all, sometimes quite healthy. And ACR Supply Co. had been committed to culture for years, and Troy Meachum, their CEO, would say and said in your recent podcast with him that he believes there's an absolute connection between culture and results. And their organization has

grown eight times during Troy's—eight-fold growth through his tenure. But for me, the most-interesting thing about Troy and ACR Supply was that they surveyed with us, their results were already flourishing—first time they surveyed, in the upper quartile of organizations we survey. But even so, one of his teams, the support staff, were healthy but significantly lower than the rest of the organization. And he invited us in, actually in person to facilitate focus groups with that group, and just spend some time listening to them, thinking about what *better* looked like.

What a great example of leadership. You have a healthy organization that's thriving and growing, sort of knocking the cover off the ball. And yet a leader is willing to say, "We're not equally healthy, and we want to give this team an opportunity to express what *better* would look like." And that's just, to me, a great example of leadership and communication, which Troy mentioned on your recent podcast with him was an area of strength for them.

Al: Yeah. And I like, as he described, that he invests 50 percent of his time in training his staff and how he does specific training that he feels not only helps them on the job but also helps them in their personal life, being able to have crucial conversations and so on. But, yeah, that's a great example, Cary, and really that podcast, as he described it, was very interesting to me.

Cary: Yeah. And you know, Al, just one other story about a C12 company at the other end, a company that came in not very healthy. But even with that first year's data, this is a little metal fabricator in the southwest United States, 70 employees. They had great participation, nearly 100 percent of their staff participated. And yet while the journey for them is long and is going to take some time, the data—and this goes back to C12's values—one of C12's values is that results matter; God measures results, and so should we. And it's true for Troy, it's true for this little metal fabricator—not so little, 70 employees—and they've gotten results and have gone about step by step getting out, meeting with staff, doing the discerning needed to grow the health of their culture. So it's just fun to see businesses do that and exciting to see C12 sending them in the direction of measurement.

Al: I trust you're enjoying our podcast. We'll be right back after this brief word about a valuable tool that can pinpoint the true, measurable health of your culture.

Male: What if you could get an upper hand on unwanted turnover, relationship conflicts, struggling morale, and unproductive staff, and, at the same time, increase the effectiveness and impact of your organization? You can with the Best Christian Workplaces Employee Engagement Survey. This popular, proven resource pinpoints the true health of your workplace culture and ways to improve it.

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Al: All right. Now, let's hear more from today's guest.

You know, I like the example you gave that Troy was unhappy when one of his departments, one area was a little less healthy than the rest, and he cared enough about that area to bring it up to standard, if you will, or what was the standard for the rest of the organization. We love when we see that.

Cary: Yeah. And one of the strengths of the tool is that an organization can get data on each of its teams and can use that data to help teams have what they need to create action plans and move toward engaging every single member of the team.

Giselle: I like the heart of God that's visible in this picture that we're hearing because you think of heart of God is, it says God's not a respecter of persons; He wants everyone. And just the heart of God that came out and said, "We're not going to have one group that doesn't enjoy the flourishing environment that we have. We're going to make sure everything does." And I just think that's wonderful.

Al: Kind of like the shepherd that left the 99 to go after the one. Yep.

Cary: Giselle, you've got a remarkable story about a remarkable organization. Share with us a little more about that.

Giselle: Yeah. Well, this organization is called 4KIDS, and I noticed that they were very remarkable the first time that I debriefed their survey, and that's because they had basically the strongest, most-effective strategy that I've seen in the last five years of being with BCWI. And I know that there's lots of people listening to this that say, "Yeah, I want a strong, most-effective strategy. Speak those words over me."

So I want to tell you a little bit about 4KIDS. They serve South Florida, in what's known as the Treasure Coast, which is the east side of Florida. And their work is inspired to be a Christian-based foster care. And I've taken this from the website—this is what they do: 4KIDS brings hope to babies, kids, teens, and young adults by providing safe and secure environments for healing, equipped parents and caregivers who are trained to love kids from hard places. We give essential resources to meet their physical needs, nurturing counsel to help them thrive, and a renewed sense of value in their hearts. So they are working with some of the most-struggling people that we know. They talk about how these children have been taken out of abusive, terrible relationships. They've been abandoned. They've been abused themselves. Really, really, I mean the mission, I think, really close to the heart of God.

So I met their third new CEO at the time. He's been there three years now. His name is Kevin Enders. And two years ago, when I met Kevin, I knew that their board had made an excellent choice. It was clear from day one. He's really a great example of the three factors of leadership that when someone does our BCWI 360 that we offer, we measure these three areas of character, competence, and chemistry. And I really see that Kevin is a great demonstration of all three. He's got a winning combination, and I think it's really the fuel behind why their strategy is so effective.

So first of all, character. Kevin has a passion for Christ and His kingdom. And if you listen to his story, he became a Christian as an adult and as a mature adult, not as a young adult. And he went to a vibrant church and literally started fostering children almost immediately after becoming a Christian.

He heard the call. He felt the Holy Spirit was grabbed onto him, and he and his wife had already had children. And yet they jumped into the foster care, Christian foster care, which was from 4KIDS. He heard the presentation. And, of course, you'll know where this story is going because, first, they fostered one child, and then they adopted that child. And then guess what? The child got a sibling, and they fostered that child and adopted that child. So it was a real servant's heart and showed his character, his devotion to God.

And then Kevin has competence. He has a long, successful career in the profit world. He's also been an entrepreneur with his own company. And he had some just wonderful best practices to be successful for that many years. He developed some very great insight, and he brought that into 4KIDS, great methods of management, great methods of leadership.

And finally, chemistry. Sorry to keep on talking about the same subject, but I have to say Kevin is a great listener. You know that as soon as you meet him. He asks you questions; he listens to the answers. And he's a team player, and he's a learner. And when he got to 4KIDS—this is so fantastic—he actually said to them, “You know what? I don't know how to run a nonprofit. I have passion. I have heart and energy. I want to succeed, but I'm a for-profit leader. So I'm actually going to ask you, each and every one of you, to help me know how to lead and manage a non-profit organization.” And with that level of transparency, with his listening skills, his team spirit, he built trust in those around him.

So he got this role, and he, then, encountered a strategy that wasn't very effective. And with all that passion, you can imagine how that stirred in his heart and in others. And they had this bold vision, which is a home for every kid. And believe it or not, for several years, they actually met their vision. We've heard of people meeting their goals, right? But have you ever heard of someone meeting their vision? A home for every child.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about that winning approach. What happened? What changed in their strategy to be this effective? First, I think it was collaboration. So Kevin included all voices in the 4KIDS movement. He checked with everyone to see what they thought that strategy should be. He says is that they need a vision that is the everyone vision, and the strategy that's the everyone strategy. So it's not Kevin's strategy or 4KIDS strategy. It's everyone's strategy. So I call that collaboration.

What was the fuel? Prayer. Believe it or not, they prayed 60 minutes a day at 4KIDS. We've heard of organizations pray 60 minutes a month, maybe 60 minutes a week; 60 minutes a day at 4KIDS. And they deeply believe that prayer is their fuel.

They're also fanatical about their culture. So when they say culture, they, one, it's a spiritual culture, and they want the developmental culture. They want the people culture. So I call this sort of an all-faceted culture. The don't rest on loads of success, just like what we heard from Troy Meachum's story. They think, “How can we improve? What else can we do?” And, by the way, that's where they utilize our survey, and they're able to drill in. And they're the kind of leaders, when you debrief the survey, they just want to get right to where they're lowest. You have to bring them back, “Let's celebrate. Come on. Let's celebrate, people. Let's just go right to where we need to improve.” So always looking how to improve.

And then, planning. I really highly encourage you to listen to the podcast—it's season four, episode 30—because he describes the planning process that they go through. So they're praying, they're collaborating, they're building a great culture, and then they plan. And there's five areas, subsets, actions. They make sure that this strategy isn't a wish; it's actually an approach.

And finally, communications. So I'd like to say we helped them a little bit. So I can remember two years ago, I pointed out to them, you've got this strategy that's really effective, but you've actually got lower scores on your planning strategy. What do you think that's about? And they realized they kind of kept their wins secret. They don't—no one was talking about their wins much. So the next year, they went about and designed a quarterly meeting with employees. They talked about their goals. They were getting to their goals. They asked for incremental feedback from the staff, and they said that they'll sometimes get some feedback where they'll make changes, but often they realize they're right on target.

But what happened was when they began communicating more effectively about the strategy, their score skyrocketed, with no change, actually, and no results from the standpoint of their goals, the perception of the employees, because of that communication that improved. So I saw this sort of winning combination as collaboration, prayer, culture, planning, and communication.

Al: Great, Giselle. That's very interesting. And again, Kevin was thrilled. You talk about planning—they'd actually made one of their strategic plans to have a flourishing culture, and they went from just a critical moment to a flourishing culture. And they beat their plan by a couple of years, is what I recall him talking about. So, yeah, thanks for helping him along the way.

Cary: You know, Al, one of the things that just pops out in Giselle's story is her heart for their mission. And that's one of the joys that each of us as consultants at BCWI get to enjoy is just walking with people, hearing what they're passionate about. And sometimes I tell people, "We're not here to tell you what to do; we're here to help you do what God has called you to do, to your fullest."

Al: Yeah, exactly.

Giselle: It's a joy, certainly. Goes to my heart.

So, Al, when I say the name Gateway Church—and I'm sure to many listeners something comes up, and we might think that it's a huge, thriving megachurch in Southlake, Texas—but what comes to your mind when I say Gateway Church?

Al: Well, I think about a really healthy culture and how a church that focuses on people and wants to create a workplace culture that's healthy, maybe even flourishing, that they have success. And it's been remarkable to watch the growth of Gateway over the years. And in fact, Allan Kelsey, who's an associate senior pastor of strategy—I think that's his title now—did a podcast with us recently, and they talked about how they have created a strategy for growth. And in fact, they're expanding the number of campuses in the next 12 months or so from six to twelve, and the work that that takes is really remarkable. And it's not all focused on growth. They're really focused on the way they love one another as a staff, and it starts with a social covenant. They have a covenant, a social covenant, that actually outlines what the behaviors are that they've agreed on and the way they're going to treat each

other and the way they're going to love each other as they do the work of the kingdom at Gateway. And not only do they have this social covenant—and we've written about that in past blogs—they've decided they really want to communicate and train their staff to be capable, competent, and have the chemistry necessary to move the church ahead.

And they, in fact, for several years had a full day, the first Tuesday of every month, where the morning sessions were worship and communication; the afternoon sessions were team building and training sessions. And they've pared that back most recently to just morning sessions. But that has had a huge impact on their communication, the way their staff are engaged. And Allan talked about the way they have really adopted a strategic planning process where every six months they will get in smaller teams, about a third to a half of their staff together, to really talk about where we've been in the last six months, what's worked, how God has worked with their teams, and then what the plans are for the next six months. So that's been really interesting.

And as Cary has worked with them in the past, they had to layoff a couple of years ago. And because their focus on culture, we typically would see just huge hits in a culture because of layoffs and the way that breaks trust and relationships. But they were able to do that because they focused on their culture in a very healthy way and have really been successful in the way they did that. So that's one church example.

I do have to, though, also mention another one of our favorites is Jeff Lockyer at Southridge Community Church is another church example. And I love it when he says why focus on a healthy culture? And he says it's so we can experience the kingdom of God in our work and through each other. And, you know, he puts a great spiritual dimension on culture. He says leaders must first experience the kingdom of God themselves before they can share it with others, and I think that's really insightful as well. So as leaders, are we experiencing the kingdom of God in the way that we've created the culture in our workplaces? And again, he says that by focusing on culture as a strategy, he finds that being a flourishing workplace is a way that he can experience, and therefore, we can experience, the kingdom of God ourselves. So I just love that as a reason.

As Cary pointed out earlier, we talk a lot about, well, when you have a healthy culture, you're going to see growth. And Jeff is saying, well, there's a spiritual dimension, too. When we have a healthy culture, we experience the kingdom of God for ourselves; only then can we share it with others. So there's a couple of church examples that I thought was worthwhile for our listeners.

Giselle: Al, I really see a theme here between what Cary shared, and what we've shared, about Joni and Friends, now about Gateway, is this steadfast, big-picture look of sticking with something, realizing that these rhythms and these routines and this just deliberate focus on health and improvement and culture. And it's not a one-time thing; it's something to just continue and stick with. We've heard stories about declines, and we're not going to accept the declines. We're going to self-examine, we're going to believe the data, we're going to take new actions and new strategies.

I like this long term. In the society we live in now, it's instant, right? And this isn't instant, and it's something that you need to do every day. So, that's great.

Al: Oh, thanks, Giselle. Yeah. I appreciate what you just said about it being steadfast. You know, there are rhythms, there are seasons in life, and there are seasons in organizations' health. And it's why we get physicals every once in a while, hopefully every year, so that we can get a gauge on exactly how healthy we are and how we can react to the information to make sure that we're living a healthy life. That's true with culture as well, isn't it.

Cary: Yeah. That's a great point. I have had people—I know we've chuckled occasionally when someone has asked the question, is there a silver bullet? Is there one thing? And I've repeated to people that I think the two key things in moving forward with culture. One, of course, is to measure. But once you decide to measure, then to believe your staff. Key point number one, just believe the staff. And the results are not going to be perfect. No person's feedback is perfect. But if you believe the staff as a point of first step, it's critical.

And then the second for leaders is to not allow taking this data personally to become an obstacle. It's so easy for leaders to say, "I work so hard. I give this so much of my effort. How could they say this to me?" But if we if we just embrace it, I can remember some really strong leaders who have said in our communications over the years that when I was able to just go on this journey with the Lord and respond to the data and own it and commit to the journey that things began to change. And I think that shows up in all the comments you've had. Believe the staff, don't allow this to become unhelpfully personal, but move forward and embrace the needed growth.

Al: Yeah, Cary, that's great.

So the final word I'd leave with our listeners is to be encouraged. And I really enjoy and have enjoyed this conversation about these organizations that have experienced transformed culture, and there are just so many more out there that we've even talked to just in the last few months. And I think about Mike Sharrow, for example, at C12; and Roland Warren at Care Net; and Brian Mosley at RightNow Media; and Jason Rachels at Calvary Christian Academy; and Dan Busby at ECFA; and Peter Greer at HOPE International; and Paul MacDonald at Crossings Christian School in Oklahoma City, just to name a few that have been on our podcast in the last couple of months. So be encouraged because it is possible to change the health of your culture and to experience a flourishing culture.

Cary, Giselle, any last words?

Cary: I would just echo, Al, what you've said. It's been so encouraging to watch people go on this journey. I can remember some leaders who have said, "I am having a lot more fun leading than I used to." That's what we're about. And when you're a senior pastor or a company CEO or an executive pastor or a college president or a principal, and those responsibilities are heavy burdens, but with a healthier culture, it just becomes there's more joy, and it's been a delight to see that happen.

Giselle: I'll have to say amen, Cary.

Al: Well, one last thought, just to round it off, and that is we've been to an off site, and we really felt as a team, as our entire Best Christian Workplace team, that we believe in our God-size goal for the next 10 years, that by 2030 we want to see 1,000 flourishing Christian-led workplaces. And right now, there's

about 70 that we're working with at this point, and that's a pretty significant growth. And we believe that Christian workplaces should set the standard as the best, most-effective places to work in the world. So I invite all of our listeners, please, let's be on the journey to make a difference in the health of our workplaces so that we can be one of the flourishing Christian-led workplaces in 2030 and to really make a difference for the kingdom.

So this has been great. Giselle Jenkins, the BCWI culture consulting director, and Cary Humphries, our regional director, it has been great to be with you. There's a lot to celebrate, and we're grateful for it, and a lot of work to do between now and 2030. So I pray that the Lord go with each of you and with each Christian organization that's making an impact for God's work in the world.

Cary: Thanks, Al. Great to be with you.

Giselle: Take care, Al.

Al: Thanks, everybody.

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