



Young Christian professionals: Disciplined away from Christ?

An analysis of the lives of
young Christian professionals
in the workplace

IFES Graduate Impact, 5 Blue Boar Street,
Oxford OX1 4EE UK
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www.cross-current.org
admin@graduateimpact.org
Director: Tim Vickers / Report: Samuel Johns

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Introduction & Executive Summary

IFES Graduate Impact is a ministry within the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students that focuses on helping young Christian professionals to integrate their faith and working life. We believe that doing so leads to greater individual flourishing as Christians learn to see the Lordship of Jesus over every part of their lives; it brings a positive influence into the workplace, as they learn to live for Jesus and speak for Jesus at work; and it lays the foundations for a life of seeking God's glory in society through their professional work.

Starting in 2011 we began developing *Cross-Current*, a network of learning communities that provide medium term mentoring (2-3 years) for young Christian professionals. Some of these groups are formed around specific profession groups led by an experienced older believer from that profession; other groups are formed in a specific location with a group of mixed profession graduates and are led by either our staff or by local leaders. To facilitate these groups we have created a purpose-made curriculum designed to be taught in a variety of ways.

At present there are 42 groups running with participants from 30 different countries in Europe and Eurasia, as well as groups in Mexico, Canada, and Burundi (starting in May). We also have interest from Latin America, Francophone Africa, and several East Asian countries.

Since 2017 we have undertaken research, sponsored by the Templeton Religion Trust, addressing the question: **How can a Christlike character (service, love, integrity, generosity, humility, and beneficial purpose) be promoted and supported amongst young Christian professionals in the workplace?**

We have sought answers to the following three questions:

1. What hinders young Christian adults from practising these virtues in their professional life?
2. How would this Christlike character, lived out in the public sphere through different professions, change the way participants behave in their workplaces?
3. What steps can we take to help a generation of young Christian adults overcome these hindrances, promoting a greater consistency between their private faith and public life, as a foundation for their personal witness and public influence as adult believers?

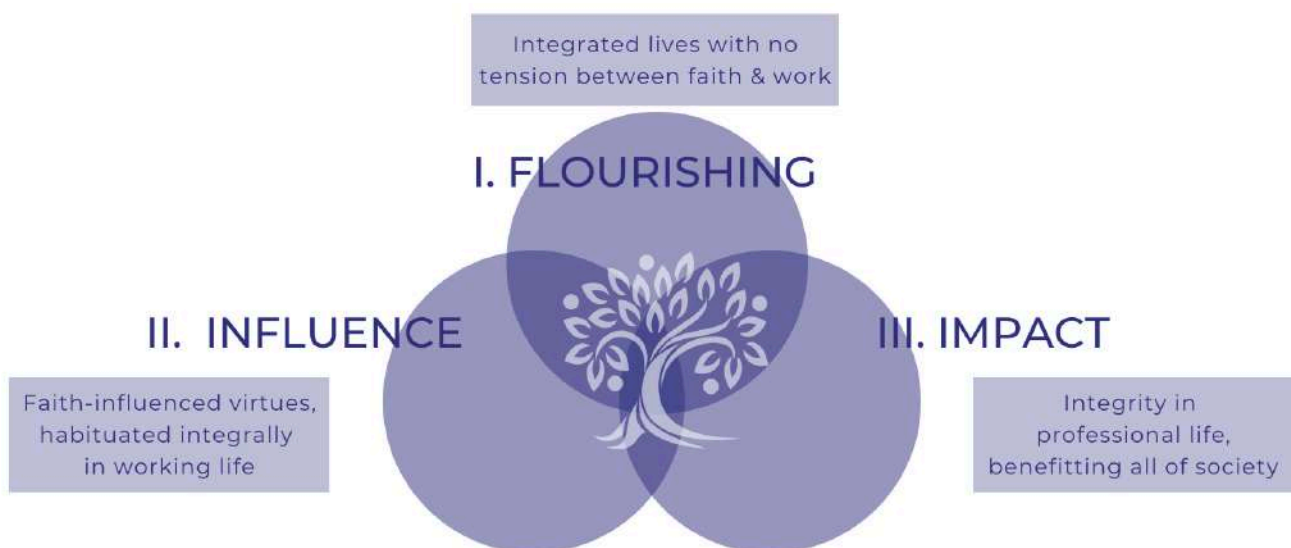
Our research has found that:

- **Young Christian professionals who have participated in Cross-Current have high potential to be a significant positive influence in their workplaces and societies.**
- **A lack of mentoring, support, relational accountability, and deep teaching and training hinders young Christian adults from living out their full potential as Jesus' people in their professional careers.**
- **A network of like-minded, committed young Christian professionals can help overcome these hindrances, ensuring consistency, contextuality, authenticity, and deep roots.**
- **The impact of even a limited number of young Christian professionals, supporting each other in learning communities, can positively shape trust, resilience, and initiative in different professional spheres, whilst also mitigating the negative impacts of corruption and inequality.**

Of all the virtues, integrity has stood out as both highly valued and longed for amongst young Christians in varied professions. It is also the hardest virtue to habituate in working life. Integrity speaks of a unified life, with consistent character and behaviour in each and every context. Specifically for the young Christian professionals we work with, integrity speaks of learning to be truly Christian in every context and conversation whilst at the same time learning to see God glorified by the standard and value of their professional work.

Our work has ascertained that young Christian professionals often suffer a disconnect between the virtues they align with personally and those they accommodate in their workplace or professional context. Where this integration fails it can have a deleterious effect on ethics and attitudes in working life, which in turn may compromise personal and professional standards. Failure to integrate these two risks loss for the whole of society, as the reasonable, moderate and compassionate Christian voice would be crowded out, leaving the space for populist and potentially intransigent approaches, both from the religious and the anti-religious camp.

We are convinced of the essential high value of Christian professionals able to integrate faith and work, to practise integral mission in their workplace and to conduct themselves with integrity in their professions and wider societies. Without these people we lose the prophetic biblically-informed voice our societies need.



“You can’t blame the meat for going rotten, that’s just what meat does. But you can blame the salt for not being there.”

John R W Stott

Furthermore, when Christians fail to integrate faith and work, they are left living two lives - a work life and a personal life. If the latter is the only place in which they can experience and express their identity in Christ, then the former - work life - becomes, potentially, irrelevant. Alternatively if they follow the call of their work, then church can quickly seem irrelevant. In the first instance, they miss out on their missional opportunity to live and speak at work in a way which brings Christian influence and hope into their workplace and their profession. In the second instance, they often stop attending church and within a few years struggle to identify themselves as Christians anymore.

1. Cross-Current Project

1.1 The socio-spiritual landscape

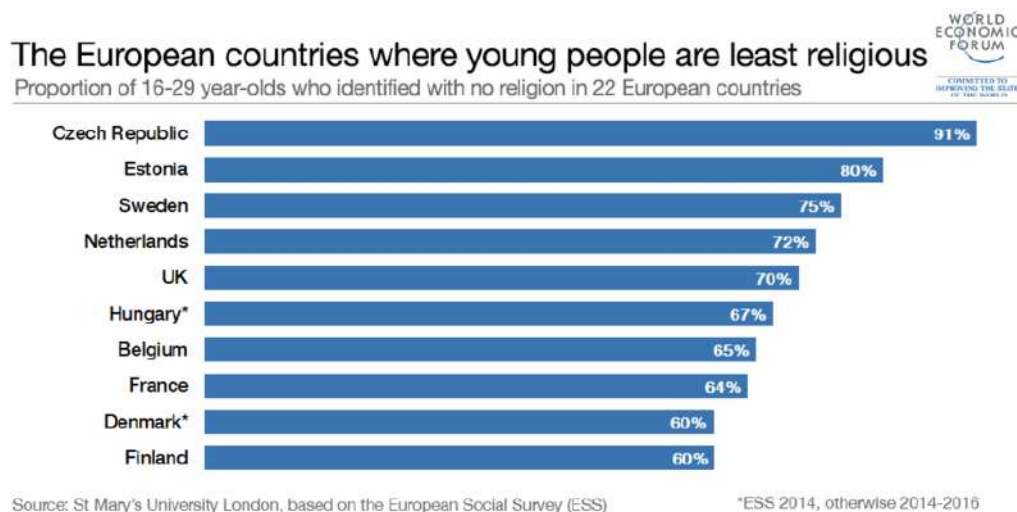
Between the ages of 18-26 significant numbers of young adults coming from Christian communities turn away from the church and stop identifying as Christians.

Insights from the Pew Research Center¹ (2018) show that in several Western European countries, recent declines in Christian identity and allegiance have been marked. These include, but are not limited to:

- Belgium (11% decrease from 45% in 2002 to 34% in 2014)
- Finland (28% decrease from 75% in 2002 to 47% in 2014)
- Ireland (9% decrease from 80% in 2002 to 71% in 2014)
- Netherlands (8% decrease from 39% in 2002 to 31% in 2014)
- Portugal (12% decrease from 84% in 2002 to 72% in 2014)
- Spain (13% decrease from 76% in 2002 to 63% in 2014)
- France (2% decrease from 43% in 2002 to 41% in 2014)
- Germany (2% decrease from 59% in 2002 to 57% in 2014)
- UK (3% decrease from 43% in 2002 to 40% in 2014)

Interestingly, during a similar time period, the change in the unaffiliated population (the group of people who state themselves as belonging to 'no religious or belief group') is significant. Indeed, in 2010 this group accounted for around 1.1 billion people (16% of the global population).

Amongst young adults (aged 16 to 29 years old) a significant majority now identify as 'non-religious'. The World Economic Forum (2014), in partnership with St Mary's University in London, shows the nations where young people are least religious. The top ten nations are:



Across Europe and Eurasia, these significant demographic changes (over a short period of time) and their impact on integrity and character virtue need to be understood. At this stage in our analysis, we can simply note that a number of countries have both (i) a strong history or legacy of historical Christian

¹ Pew Research Center, 2018, "Being Christian in Western Europe". Available online: <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>

roots and (ii) significant declines in practicing Christians, particularly amongst young adults and especially in Northern and Western Europe.

This next generation of Christian believers in these countries are a vibrant and vital minority group who need to learn how to bring the influence of the Gospel of grace into all areas of society – for their own sake, for the sake of those they work with, and for the sake of their societies.

1.2 Cross-Current concept

Cross-Current is based around the formation of small learning communities which aim to help young Christian adults (typically aged 23-33) to integrate their faith-life and working life, by understanding the theological significance of their work to Jesus and of Jesus to their work, and by developing a deep sense of what Christlike character in their personal working life would look like.

Starting with biblical worldview, we look at how the virtues of service, love, honesty, generosity, humility, and beneficial purpose reflect the character of God in the lives of believers, as an integral dimension of individual and integral witness to Christ in the workplace. We see this integrity of thought and deed, of personal faith and professional life, as a fundamental support to any words we may offer that point people towards our hope in Jesus (1 Peter 2:12 “live such good lives” and 1 Peter 3:15 “always be ready to give a reason for the hope you have”).

Within the groups we encourage participants to examine their own work context, together with their personal attitudes, in order to see the conflict or compromise in their own working lives between these Christlike values. Together, through peer mentoring, prayer and accountability we encourage participants to set an agenda for change, to change who they are at work and to better learn how to embody the Gospel of grace wherever they are, whoever they are with.

V & S are two lawyers from a former Soviet country where the payment of bribes is accepted as a necessary part of business life. Together we looked at the biblical call to honesty. They were challenged, at first by the futility of trying to change the accepted order, but in time they saw their challenge was to subvert the system and refuse to pay or receive bribes. This gives an outstanding example to their colleagues, a reason to explain their hope in Jesus and two honest lawyers pursuing justice amidst corruption.

Our hope is that by helping participants (within the first decade of their careers) develop a clear understanding of the connection between conviction and virtue in working life, we will set foundations in place that will endure for the entirety of their working careers.

We run two different types of Cross-Current groups:

Professional Groups draw together people who are working in the same professional sphere. These groups are led by an ‘Inspirer’ from that profession who has gained significant experience in understanding the connection between their faith and their profession. Together participants develop an understanding of how their Christian worldview speaks to practical and ethical issues faced in their workplaces and professions. Altogether we have run 16 different Professional Groups:

- Two groups for politicians/political workers;
- Two groups for scientific researchers;
- Two groups for business managers;
- Three groups for lawyers; and
- One group each for economists, teachers, medical thought leaders, media professionals & journalists, IT thought leaders, cultural influencers, and environmental scientists.

City Groups draw together graduates from mixed professions who live in a single location (a city or geographic region). The City Groups are led by IFES Graduate Impact staff and facilitated by local volunteers who are usually connected to the local IFES Movement. Here the primary focus is to understand the dominant cultural values of each participant's workplace and to help each other learn how to strengthen the six character virtues in their personal attitudes and interactions at work. These groups have a broader interest than the profession-specific groups because of the vast diversity of different professions represented in the group. There have been twelve active City Groups since 2017.

Typically City Groups have met from Friday evening until Sunday after lunch, whilst Professional Groups have met from Thursday evening until Sunday after lunch.

2017-2021 Professional Groups



2017-2021 City Groups



1.3 Cross-Current curriculum

We have created a curriculum based around six modules, each of which focuses on a different Christian character virtue as a foundation for 'integrated' Christian living in the workplace. Because all participants hold the Bible to be of epistemological significance, we begin each module with deep Bible study to examine the connection of the virtues to Christian worldview. This helps us to understand the primacy of these virtues despite variances in cultural values. Alongside this are a variety of learning concepts including cultural analysis (immediate workplace and wider cultural context), personal reflection, case studies, and peer mentoring. Each module is connected to the others and leads participants towards their own personal agenda for change. We have found that this gives enough substance to be worthwhile but also provides enough flexibility to allow adaptation for use in different circumstances. The modules explore:

1. **Service** – understanding how the Bible envisages service of others as the heart of work, and leading participants to see the opportunities for them to exercise responsibility for others through their professional roles.
2. **Love** – understanding the true nature of personhood and the intrinsic nature of relationality, and examining how love can cause us to alter and realign our interactions with colleagues and work-related contacts.
3. **Integrity** – developing personal ethics in response to biblical concepts of righteousness, justice and honesty, when working in circumstances with varied levels of corruption.
4. **Generosity** – understanding the biblical perspective on money and wealth creation, and learning to budget for generosity as an intentional counter-cultural life commitment.
5. **Humility** – seeing humility as a natural effect of worship, and considering the example of Saint Paul to pursue, with ambition, that which gives glory to God. Then reappraising our personal and professional goals.
6. **Beneficial Purpose** – drawing on all five preceding modules to clarify a vision statement for work, and examining behaviours and practices to both acquire and maintain integrity of virtue in all of life.

We have published Modules 1-3 in a workbook and are currently working on the production of a second workbook for Modules 4-6. The Professional Groups use this material as a foundation, but additionally set their own agenda to allow deeper exploration of issues pertinent to the specific profession.

In addition to the curriculum we are supporting leaders and participants with:

- Leader's guides for each module;
- Some online video resources to help leaders;
- Cross-Current website with key articles (see www.cross-current.org/discover)
- Monthly 'Workwise' emails, relating to the core curriculum
- Video resources and testimonials (see <https://vimeo.com/user20882891>)
- Supplementary books on working life and virtue in the workplace
- Supplementary reading lists, provided and curated by the Inspirers
- Chat channels piloted by group leaders on messaging platforms such as WhatsApp
- A dedicated app for the Cross-Current community, for posts, messaging, and updates
- Social media news and updates (on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Vimeo)

1.4 Cross-Current scope

We started Cross-Current in 2012 with four Professional Groups, and began our first City Group in Baku in 2015. At present we are running 12 City Groups and 9 Professional Groups with a total of 336

committed participants. More significantly, though, there are now more than 20 City and Professional Groups being run by other leaders who we are training and supporting. These 'proxy' groups are in Mexico, Canada, Norway, Italy, and Portugal, serving in excess of 200 people. Additionally we have interest from six further Latin American countries, together with Indonesia, Taiwan, and the Philippines. We also have a group beginning in Burundi, which is being run as a pilot for potential adoption of Cross-Current into the 13 countries of Francophone Africa.

Cross-Current resources are being translated into Spanish, Russian, Norwegian, French, Romanian, Portuguese and Mandarin.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions many of these groups have adapted the material to be delivered online and through weekly/fortnightly meetings.

We have also worked at creating an online presence, with a regular email list of more than 1,500 people, more than 3,600 Social Media followers, and our own dedicated community App.

2. Cross-Current research

2.1 Demographics

The Cross-Current community consists of 336 young Christian professionals, working across Europe and Eurasia in 27 different countries. The major industry sectors they inhabit are broken down into six streams: business and management, researchers, medicine, government, ICT, and law. It should be noted that within these broad professional fields there exist a significant diversity of workplaces.



Word cloud based on professions of 336 members of the Cross-Current community.

2.2 Monitoring and evaluation

Many young Christian adults experience difficulty in trying to habituate the virtues they associate with their Christian faith in their professional working lives. We have aimed to develop a far greater understanding of the complex issues which create this inconsistency in the lives of our participants; and to build bridges repeatedly between privately-held Christian beliefs and the resultant virtues that should display those beliefs in public working life. Alongside this we have sought to understand the difference that these virtues, grounded by a biblically-informed worldview and supported by a community, can and should make in everyday working life. By assessing the value of Cross-Current, we aim to present some clear measures of the steps that can be taken to effectively promote and support the development of these virtues in the lives of young Christian professionals within Europe and Eurasia. An overview of the data collected in association with Cross-Current is tabulated below:

Before	During	During	During	During	After
Entry surveys	Journaling & Mentoring	Meeting evaluations	Focus Groups	Additional surveys	Exit surveys
Responses x318	Responses x300	Responses x266	Responses x25	Responses x148	Responses x84

We collected data using surveys, mentoring meetings, meeting evaluations, group reflections, and Focus Groups. Two entry surveys, a qualitative and a quantitative, were developed as a key way to understand what hinders young Christian adults from practising virtues associated with their faith in their professional and academic life. The qualitative survey (48 questions) was aimed at identifying any inconsistency in a participant's epistemological framework for character virtue development. The quantitative survey (89 questions) was designed to allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of our program by measuring change in participants' attitudes in this survey and an exit survey, at the end of the course.

In order to glean some of the participants' experiences, we employed mentoring meetings, evaluation forms, and group reflection. Our mentoring meetings gave participants time to process the material and its application; they also provided the participants with a safe environment in which to identify priorities for change, their success in achieving them, and any barriers to implementation they have encountered. After every module, we asked the participants to fill out an evaluation form, which then provided insight into their experience with that specific virtue and module. We also had group reflections at the start of each module, to converse on the previous virtue and for participants to share their experiences, changes in attitudes and practices and their successes and challenges as they have tried to live out the previously-discussed virtues in their workplace.

In order to gain more nuanced insights, in February 2021 we conducted a total of four group interviews – comprised of three focus groups with Cross-Current participants (of Professional and City group members) and 1 focus group with young Christian professionals not involved in a Cross-Current group. In total we interviewed 25 people, twenty Cross-Current participants and five non-Cross-Current participants.

Participants were also invited to respond to two additional surveys. The first was an analysis of their workplace culture, which provided specific feedback on the organisation style and workplace culture of each Cross-Current participant, reflecting a diversity in geography and society. The second survey was a specific COVID-19 workplace survey with questions aimed at understanding the impact of the global pandemic on working life.

At the end of the three-year program participants were asked to complete a shortened version of the entry quantitative survey (shortened due to feedback and recommendations on the first version) in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Whilst the length of the survey was reduced, the span across the six virtues remained proportional, with each virtue allotted the same share of the questions (16% per virtue).

By asking participants to repeat the quantitative entry survey, we aimed to understand:

- Whether there had been a narrowing of the virtues gap between private and professional life;
- How much participants' biblical knowledge of the six virtues had expanded and how salient the participants now perceived those virtues in their work lives;
- The degree and types of relationships participants now experience from their networked and recurring interactions with each other in bringing virtues to workplace practices; and
- How the exposure of participants to notables in their field has changed their understanding and perceived practices.

The Exit Survey also included questions relating to the participants' views on the benefits of the course, suggestions for adaptations and improvements in the future, and ideas for continuing to enhance the value of the course in their occupational careers.

The final twelve months of the project were greatly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which made international travel virtually impossible, thus interrupting the Cross-Current meeting cycle of residential sessions. While we did substitute physical weekend meetings with online meetings, some material had to be condensed for an online format. This also impacted our ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole, as meeting schedules changed. In order to address this, we asked some participants to complete the Exit survey after Module 5. We have also supplemented the Exit Survey data with some of the insights gleaned from the various focus groups.

3. Obstacles to virtue

Big Question 1: What hinders young Christian adults from practising the virtues associated with their faith in their professional and academic life?

3.1 The primacy of integrity

Integrity is the overwhelming critical virtue selected by our participants as an essential, even defining, quality to their working life. Integrity is one of the most quoted and at the same time least understood qualities of working life. A robust sense of integrity can uphold professional standards and duties. Cultural drivers, the expectation of seniors, financial pressures, and the like, however, can all militate against integrity. Integrity is the currency of trust; without trust, all structures on which society stands will fail. In our research we asked the 300-strong community of Cross-Current the following question: "If you were to select one critical virtue to guide your behaviour in your work life, what would it be? Name one virtue." (Answers in the word cloud below.)



If we break down the data across our six chief industry sectors we can see that four out of six groups rank integrity within their top two virtues, whilst the other two substitute trustworthiness, which is itself an internal measure of integrity.

	#1 virtue	#2 virtue	#3 virtue	#4 virtue	#5 virtue
Business	Integrity	Dedication	Kindness	Patient	Proactivity
Medical	Integrity	Love	Wisdom	Honesty	Empathy
Government	Integrity	Dedication	Patience	Honesty	Compassion
Research	Trustworthiness	Patience	Humility	Integrity	Diligence
IT & tech	Trustworthiness	Diligence	Honesty	Genuineness	Love
Law	Humility	Integrity	Boldness	Self-control	Faithfulness

This need for integrity or trustworthiness in working life is corroborated by contemporary research. The Edelman Trust Barometer² is released on an annual basis, drawing together survey responses from 33,000 respondents in 28 countries. The 2021 report cites business as the only trusted institution (in a cohort shared with NGOs, Government, and Media), due to the "information bankruptcy" wrought by

² "Edelman Trust Barometer 2021," accessed 7/2/21, <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2021-trust-barometer>.

the global pandemic of COVID-19. Erosion of trust is attributed to poor information hygiene, a raging infodemic of mistrust, and a crisis of leadership, particularly amongst government leaders and business CEOs. However, local relationships (particularly with business) remain strong and instrumental. Whilst trust in CEOs is at an all-time low (e.g., France at 22% and Japan at 18%), trust in the local employer has grown to an all-time high. The Edelman team writes, "Trust is local: my employer [is] a mainstay of trust"³ (rising in 18 of 27 countries, or 67%).

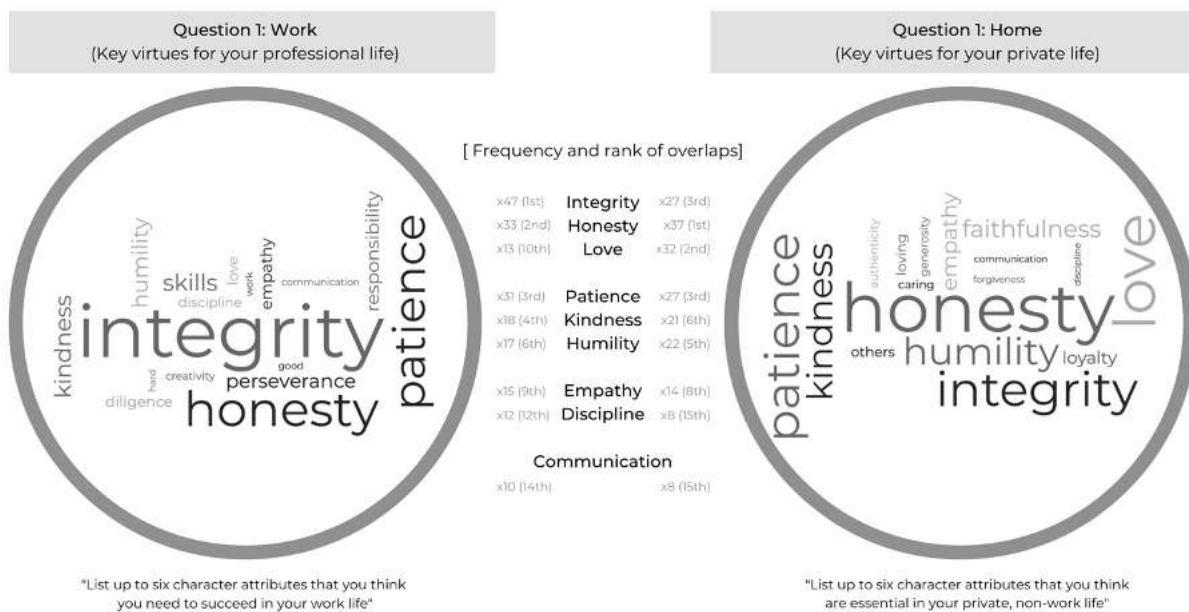
Whilst research abounds on the quality (or lack thereof) – and indeed, the significance – of integrity and trust in our society, much remains to be agreed on in terms of defining these attributes. What is integrity? What is trust? How do we define these foundational concepts? Who delimits their boundaries and who assigns them moral or ethical virtue?

As young Christian professionals, work plays an important and significant role in their understanding of vocation. Broadly, we can say that rather than viewing work in purely 'instrumental' terms (e.g., as a means of survival), this subset of professionals takes an 'intrinsic' view of work (e.g., with clear career goals, with an aspiration to contribute to the good of society).

3.2 Barriers to integrity

Whilst integrity remains a 'slippery' concept from a sociological point of view – with a difficulty of definition and a struggle to exemplify – for the Cross-Current community, it features as a critical virtue.

The first thing to note is the virtue gap with integrity, between aspiration and lived reality. Respondents identified pressure at work as a significant contributing factor to this virtue gap. In the surveys, respondents often articulated a clear mandate for work, with a sense of purpose or vision, yet failed to articulate the concrete action steps that could form the backbone of practical, lived reality. For example, young Christian professionals can often articulate a 'theology for work' (e.g., the mandate for work, the purpose of work, their sense of calling in work) yet remain ambiguous or ambivalent on its application (e.g., in difficult work negotiations, in maintaining integrity at work). As demonstrated below, integrity is a 'cross-over' virtue (ranked top 3), aspired to in both professional and personal life.



³ "2021 Edelman Trust Barometer" (Edelman, 2021), 8.

Secondly, work culture plays a powerful role in shaping the perspectives of participants. In Cross-Current Module 1 we use a tool to evaluate workplace culture; results from this demonstrate the different types of culture in workplaces and explores their various expectations and influences, as well as advantages and disadvantages. In total twenty questions were asked, and some of the questions drawing the strongest responses include: “in my workplace, initiative is always encouraged”; “managers praise work that is done well”; “people understand the ‘big picture’ of what we do”; “my boss is always available when I need them”; “people have a sense of purpose”; “we are always under pressure to meet deadlines”; and “people are always looking for new jobs”.

The result of the survey was the grouping of responses according to three broad categories of workplace culture: a creativity culture (emergent, start-up), a responsibility culture (established, family-owned), and a survival culture (traditional, corporate). The responses from the Cross-Current participants showed a bias for creativity cultures (41%). Interestingly, while fostering innovation, initiative, and entrepreneurship, a key hallmark of ‘creativity culture’ is the necessity to respond to pressure and deliver to tight deadlines. It can also be a hotbed for urgency (constant rush), workaholism, and burnout.

Participants in general noted the ways in which pressure at work can have a militating effect on integrity and character virtue in the workplace. One Cross-Current group (of 14 members) noted the following eleven barriers on living out virtue in the workplace:

- The demand or pressure to conform to workplace standards
- The need to balance work pressures and targets with being present to clients
- An efficiency and results-oriented environment versus a relational one
- A desire to be counter-cultural versus a professional expectation to be neutral
- A private and public divide between what is okay to talk about at work and what is not
- The work culture and lifestyle, including a lack of time and anxiety from work pressures
- The sheer volume of time given over and consumed by work
- An expectation to meet targets and deliver work results
- Differing cultural expectations within the workplace
- The everyday stress of work performance
- The busyness of work and time pressures

Thirdly, the majority of participants suggested that they do not have role models within the cultural and professional bounds of respondents working lives, which can contribute to a virtue gap. For instance, a mentor from a different geographic context or cultural group will have limited understanding of the specific pressures and difficulties a mentee may face at work. Equally, specialisms within working fields often require nuanced and particular responses, which may vary from specialism to specialism, limiting the efficacy of a mentor.

3.3 Discipled away from virtue

Despite work not being the defining shaper of our worldview and life philosophy, the relationships we have at work with our colleagues do play a significant role in shaping our views.

In the quantitative Entry Survey, respondents noted the ‘many hours’ they spent at work, the close ‘relational ties’ they establish with colleagues, as well as a ‘sense of team’ and even ‘enjoyment’ at work⁴. By aggregating responses to questions about collegiate community and teamwork, there was a clear demonstration that the young professionals of the Cross-Current network are engaged, committed,

⁴ See Appendix 10.2 for the full list of questions on this topic, including questions #2, #8, #14, #16, #19, #20, #21.

hard-working, self-giving colleagues with a strong sense of team as well as individual ownership. Notwithstanding this fact, respondents consistently attributed the difference between their life-philosophy and the dominant culture of the workplace as a source of tension and struggle. In other questions of the Entry Survey this came to the fore in a significant way, demonstrating a lived reality of public-private tension for many respondents.

Cross-Current uses the concept of *discipleship* which emphasises the array of emotional, pedagogical, and practical dispositions of a person who allows themselves to be shaped under the influence of various relationships and a corresponding way of life. In short, discipleship has to do with *long-term, character-shaping, formative influence from one or several people*. In a Christian understanding, proper discipleship is predicated on the influence of the person and principles of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christian community.

Such discipleship should lead to cultivating and demonstrating a number of beneficial virtues in all areas of life, but our survey of young Christian professionals demonstrated the reality of a form of discipleship *away* from virtue. When explicitly asked what barriers young Christian professionals face in the workplace, in living out the character virtues of service, love, integrity, generosity, humility, and beneficial purpose, the group responded with the following list:

- A preoccupation with image and reputation
- A lack of personal maturity, or low self-esteem and insecurity
- A lack of community and a lack of mentoring in small groups
- Fear of judgement and professional consequences of stepping out
- A lack of good role models and sense of balance in the workplace
- Shallow discipleship, with no one taking ownership to disciple the next generation
- Mentoring support often based on events rather than relationships

This issue of loneliness was tackled directly with Cross-Current participants and raised some noteworthy findings. Whilst the vast majority of participants (67%) disagreed with the statement 'I have no real friendships at work', suggesting that they do have significant friendships with their colleagues – only a small proportion (26%) agreed to often 'spend[ing] time with colleagues outside of work'. Interestingly, this suggests that friendships can flourish within the workplace, and within the confines of professional practice, even if time for shared leisure activities or private, non-work time is limited.

Both our quantitative and qualitative research findings show that young Christians employed in competitive professions face similar challenges across various geographic contexts.

3.4 Challenges in living virtuously in the workplace

In order to identify and get a more nuanced understanding of the main challenges that young Christian adults face in living out the virtues in their workplace, we conducted a series of semi-structured focus group interviews.

These are the things that came out consistently: *the influence of peer pressure, the desire to fit in, and the fear of rejection* are all significant challenges that most of the young Christian professionals we interviewed have to deal with in their workplaces. We tend to believe these are universal challenges for all young professionals, not only for our specific demographic.

Further to the general challenges, practising religious professionals also have to navigate an additional layer of challenges. These include, but are not limited to: *fear of being labeled according to stereotypes, the*

need to conform, anti-religious environments, not wanting to look uneducated or less worthy of respect, and humility perceived as weakness.

Some participants, particularly those working in highly competitive and results-driven workplaces, noted that there is simply not much time to discuss things outside work, so the only way to live out one's faith is through diligent and competent work.

In workplaces that pride themselves as open and welcoming intellectual spaces, where all opinions are said to be welcome, but some receive a really bad reception, the "desire to fit in", the "fear", and even the "shame" associated with being distinct are perceived as serious challenges. The most stressful workplaces (from this perspective of the high costs of 'not fitting in') were identified as academia, big tech, research, and a selection of other industries, including law, advocacy, and international NGOs. In such places, whenever one expresses a faith-based existential commitment, there's a real risk of losing one's reputation.

4. Re-envisioning work

Big Question 2: How would these Christian virtues (service, love, integrity, generosity, humility and beneficial purpose), lived out in the public sphere through different professions, change the way participants behave in their workplaces?

4.1 A mandate for work

In particular, we want to understand how the integration of private faith with professional work can benefit and contribute to both individual flourishing and corporate wellbeing.

A source of significant data from the Cross-Current program is the ongoing meeting feedback evaluation forms. These have helped us better understand the application of virtue-teaching from Cross-Current to daily, lived experience. Three questions from the evaluation forms are particularly salient in this regard:

- What significant things have you learned through this meeting/module? (Question 5)
- How will this impact your life and work? (Question 6)
- What decisions will you make for your work and life that will help you to improve or make changes? (Question 7)

On the basis of these three questions alone, we collected 19,000 words of feedback from Cross-Current participants. For the presentation of question 5, this is perhaps most easily accessed in visual format, as per the word cloud of popular responses below:

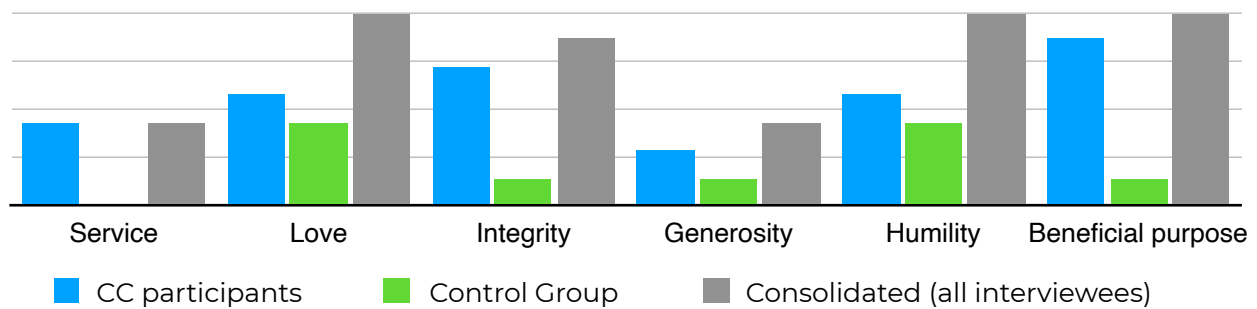


Word cloud based on feedback for Question 5.

Given the intention of Cross-Current to help people learn how to integrate faith and work, it is encouraging to see the prominence of 'God', 'Work', and 'learning' in the feedback. It is also interesting to note two further standout features from the significant learning points of respondents:

- (i) **Relationships/Colleagues:** These remain front and centre in the thought-worlds and the lived-worlds of participants, both in and out of work.
- (ii) **Integrity:** Just as integrity featured as most valuable in the virtue rankings, so integrity features highly in the significant learning points of respondents after every module. Integrating private belief with public life remains high on the agenda for respondents.

Which of the following virtues is the hardest for you to live out at work? (list one or two)



For the presentation of questions 6 and 7, we propose the following two sub-headings to better understand what a 're-envisioning of work' may look like. Part 4.2 embarks on an understanding of 'becoming (more) collegial colleagues', and part 6.3 looks at 'becoming (more) distinctive colleagues'.

4.2 Becoming collegial co-workers

The first insight from the word cloud on the previous page, the significance of relationships/colleagues, is to do with humanness. Matthew 22:39 says, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. So what then do we do when our 'neighbour' is our boss, a colleague, or a team member? Specifically, how do we demonstrate love when our 'neighbour' is our superior or our competitor? Equally important, how do we demonstrate love when our 'neighbour' is a difficult person, hard to work with, or uncooperative?

Participants noted this simple biblical command requires a ground-breaking way of thinking through the particulars and specifics of working life. They reported:

- *"What stuck with me most was that we are called to 'become human' above all... I am challenged to see the 'humanness' in the other people and look past what separates us to what we have in common." (Female participant, working in Business & Management, from Liechtenstein)*
- *"[Cross-Current] provides a framework for considering how I can be praying for my colleagues - remaining focused on them as people and remembering to ask for God to be gracious to them... [and also to] increase the hospitality that I show towards colleagues, remain[ing] considerate of them in stressful situations, invit[ing] colleagues for lunch to get to know them better." (Male participant, working in Business & Management, from Ireland)*
- *"To be more expectant when I go into work to see God move but also have more grace towards co-workers... meditat[ing] on how you feel towards work and co-workers but also think[ing] about how co-workers see you, tak[ing] interest in their personal life, be[ing] aware of God's love for them and [that] they're made in his image." (Female participant, working in Research, from Ireland)*

The second insight from the word cloud, the significance of integrity, is to do with distinctive living. The high value placed on the virtue of integrity demonstrates both its integral significance in the workplace as well as its peril and fragility. This reminds us of the words of Warren Buffett: "Trust is like the air we breathe – when it's present, nobody really notices; when it's absent, everybody notices."

We discussed the relative importance and complexity of the six virtues within focus group interviews, and we discovered:

- Respondents regularly remarked: *"None of the virtues are easy."*
- Many participants agreed that 'love' is difficult to practice at work for two main reasons: when you are rejected for your faith, and when people are not likeable or easy to love. However, surprisingly,

some said 'love' is easier in practice, because you'll never be vehemently rejected for trying to love and show compassion to your neighbours.

- Humility was a frequent issue for participants in high performance environments and cultures. It is difficult to navigate, as humility is essential for teams and societies when collaboration and working together on team projects is a prerequisite of work, yet it is often perceived as a weakness.
- Overall, the Focus Group participants registered that Integrity and Beneficial Purpose were both the most complex and the hardest of the six virtues for them to habituate in work.

The interesting thing about the virtues we covered in our curricula is that we discussed them in a complex, holistic manner. The more straightforward ones, such as service, love, generosity and humility are simple to understand but hard to live by, whereas integrity and beneficial purpose are multi-faceted, complex, over-arching concepts which, in various ways, include all the other virtues, and there's a need for balance, assessing the relative importance, and keeping all the other virtues and principles together in a way which ensures continuity (character) and progress (lifelong learning).

There is a marked difference between the priority of integrity in the Entry Surveys and the difficulty with habituating integrity in the Focus Groups. This shows that Cross-Current participants possess an enormous desire to live and work in a way which is morally distinct, but that they also struggle to do so in their workplaces because of the previously mentioned cultural pressures.

We should make explicit the fact that almost all virtues noted by Cross-Current respondents are inter-personal, relational virtues (e.g., kindness, patience, compassion, humility) and even the personalised virtues (such as self-control) are always enacted and practiced in a relational context. This demonstrates the need for ongoing mentoring, training, and teaching on inter-personal relationships in the workplace.

4.3 Becoming distinctive colleagues

The second response of participants to the second 'Big Question' focusses on living out a counter-cultural calling, and what it means to be distinctive in the workplace whilst also working to professional, reputable standards.

On this front, we can consider two distinct elements.

Firstly, Cross-Current participants suggest living with a high degree of criticality. In practice, this means embodying an alternative way of life. Rather than viewing work as a job (with a means-end goal of paying bills, etc.), work is seen as both a career and calling (with an inherent sense of meaning).

Numerous participants provided feedback in the meeting evaluation forms, suggesting that Cross-Current had been instrumental in encouraging participants to live and work in a way which embodied an alternative way of life. The gospel-way espoused by participants embraces relational values as of primordial importance, creativity ahead of consumption, work as service ahead of career-ism, and a sense of collective community and living in neighbourliness ahead of individualism. Respondents articulated these perspectives:

- *"I learned ways in which I can be more intentional in building relationships with my colleagues at work and had the opportunity to think about how I might respond as a Christian in some difficult situations/conflicts that may arise at work, with the purpose of improving my testimony, witness, [and] impact at work."* (Female participant, working in Research, from Bucharest)

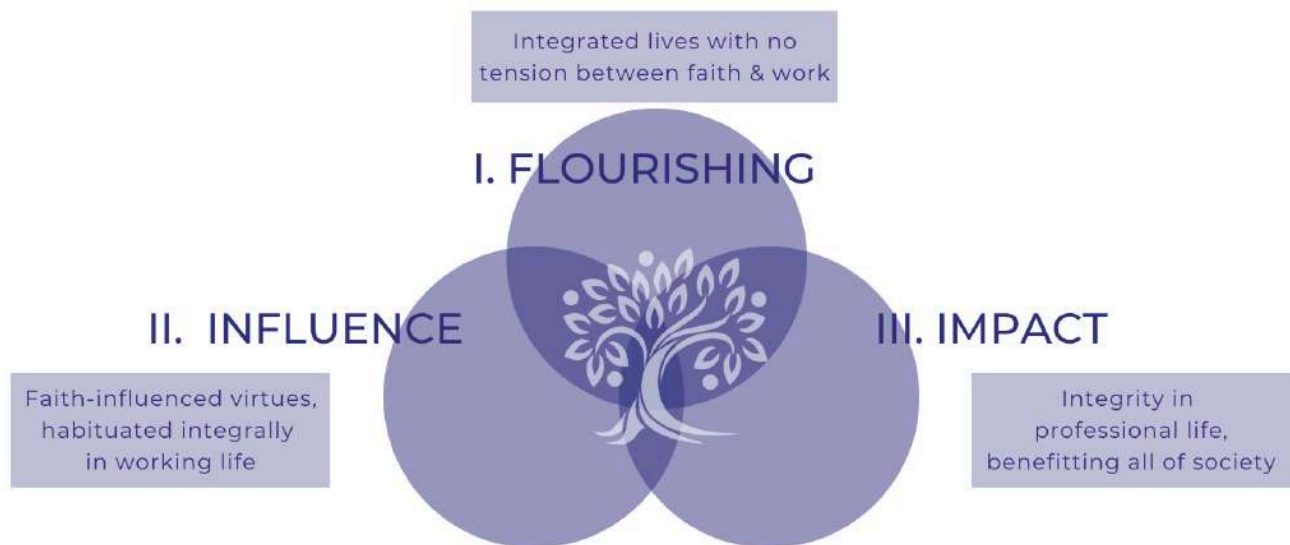
- *“I will know how to not only accommodate but also collaborate with my colleagues and my superiors; how to behave in a biblical way with my colleagues - with compassion.” (Male participant, working in Business & Management, from Chisinau)*

Secondly, Cross-Current participants honestly note the potential for negative side-effects, such as marginalisation, bullying, or unemployment, associated with such a counter-cultural calling. Just as they noted one of the obstacles to integrity is fear of a bad reputation, respondents noted some of the negative side-effects that can materialise within professional contexts. They were quick to note the types of ‘culture’ where malpractice is endemic and any attempt to resist the tide or stand up to superiors may be met with a strong reaction. Examples noted and identified include:

- **Efficiency culture** – professionalism excludes all or any personal conversations, colleagues are reduced to workers, business routine trumps all personal interactions.
- **Fierce culture** – common in corporate organisations, particularly in sales and marketing, where dominant, alpha character traits are necessary and ‘being humble’ is perceived as weakness.
- **Gossiping culture** – common in white-collar office cultures where nepotism may rule and gossip is a dividing line between those who ‘do take part’ and those who ‘don’t take part’.
- **Materialistic culture** – striving to be among the ‘cool crowd’ in an office culture can drive a toxic culture of competition, bonuses, materialism, one-upmanship, etc.

4.4 Concluding remarks

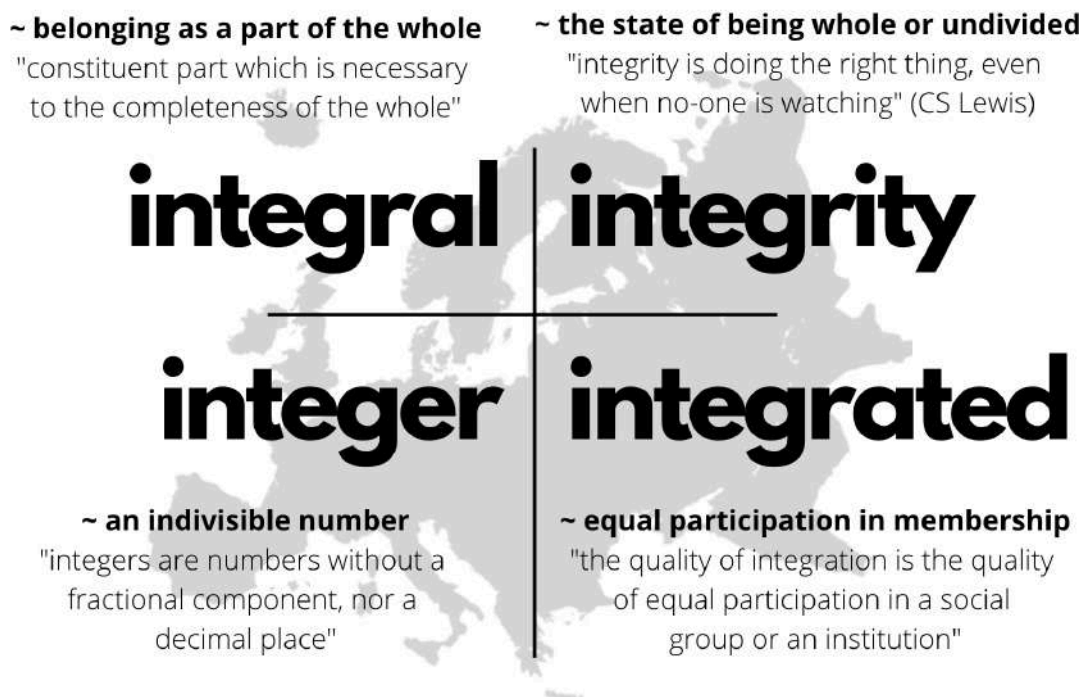
In summation, we can visualise the effect of integrity in three ways – or rather, three overlapping spheres – under the banners of ‘flourishing’, ‘influence’, and ‘impact’. These incorporate both a scaled and a relational model for understanding. ‘Flourishing’ represents the individual benefit of living with integrity, whereby there is greater consistency between private faith and public life (including work). ‘Influence’ is the benefit of working in domains and fields where our skills, expertise, and knowledge are productively applied. Finally, ‘impact’ denotes the benefit of working with integrity to the whole of society, regardless of our professional field.



We can also collate this research to suggest four areas of consistency – or lived-out, practical integrity – that can help young Christian professionals change their behaviour in the workplace:

- **Integrity:** “the state of being whole or undivided”, or according to the well-known aphorism, “Doing the right thing, even when no-one is watching.”
- **Integral:** “belonging as a part of the whole” or being a constituent part, which is necessary to the completeness of the whole (i.e., benefiting society in productive ways)
- **Integer:** “an indivisible number” or a number without a fractional component (i.e., living a life of unity and integration, without compartments)
- **Integrated:** “equal participation in membership” or the quality of equal participation in a social group or an institution (i.e., seeing work as service to the benefit of wider society)

We see these four elements as closely interrelated, and interdependent, leading us to visualise them in the following way:



5. Cultivating Consistency

What steps can we take to help a generation of young Christian adults spread across Europe and Eurasia to overcome these hindrances, promoting a greater consistency between their private faith and public life, as they start their professional lives?

Specifically, we want to understand how consistency can aid and profit young Christian professionals, in what is often termed a 'developmental crisis'⁵, transitioning between education and professional work.

5.1 Discipleship in a distracted age

Given the complexities they face in their professional lives, which seem remote from the biblical teaching they're usually exposed to at church, young professionals need *contextualized teaching* and *profession-targeted training, committed to industry-specific issues*. Respondents noted the value of such teaching. The Professional Groups of Cross-Current further tailor the teaching to niche marketplaces, including Media & Journalism, Cultural Influencers, Scientific Researchers, and Environmental Scientists. The employment of case studies is a staple of the Cross-Current curriculum. In response to these exercises, many participants found them to be of material benefit, imagining decision-making in a fast-moving or tight-cornered environment. One male participant from Italy wrote, *"I liked how we explored the original vision of work and ways to apply it in our everyday life. I really identified in some of the case studies we analysed and realised what I was doing wrong or not completely right"*. Different case studies invoke different cultural challenges depending on context. One respondent appreciated this, noting how *"the challenge to live and work with integrity may have different sticking points in honour/shame versus innocence/guilt cultures"* (male participant, working in the UK).

Besides the contextualised, relevant biblical teaching, participants also need *consistency* in learning how to apply the principles of the Bible and in continually integrating their growing understanding of the implications their Christian identity has on all of life. This leads to more concrete and practical action steps, building greater consistency between private faith and public life in the workplace. Each Cross-Current meeting ends with an 'Agenda for change', a commitment made by participants to focus on certain aspects in their lives that need particular attention and improvement. They do keep themselves accountable to one another by praying for each other, encouraging each other and monitoring progress.

The Cross-Current program is predicated on consistent communication within the formed learning community. A carefully detailed communication strategy flowed from this, allowing regular and consistent updates, encouragement, teaching and reminders for events throughout the 300-strong Cross-Current community.

5.2 Mentoring and forming a community

Cross-Current fosters a community of like-minded people and allows for mentoring within that framework, a critical feature of helping young Christian professionals build consistency between their private faith and public life when starting out in their careers.

⁵ E. Erikson (1964), *The Stages of Psychosocial Development*

In particular, for Cross-Current participants, mentoring fell into two camps:

- Peer to peer mentoring: guided by active listening and a framework for open questions; These help keep young professionals accountable to one another, whilst also providing a source of ongoing encouragement, both during the program and beyond it.
- Role model mentoring: led by an older, more experienced professional in the same field who follows the biblical discipling process of asking questions and telling stories than by giving straight answers

The primary goal of these mentoring relationships within the Cross-Current program was to help young professionals move forwards on their 'agenda for change'. Five markers for 'success' within a quality mentoring framework were noted:

- Commitment and intentionality to one another
- Genuine & respectful relationships - being aware of differences & avoiding judgmental attitudes
- Trust and vulnerability - a safe place to explore deep issues
- Service & submission - the required posture for the relationship to succeed (1 Thessalonians 2:8)
- Supplication & action - a commitment to prayer and to faith in action

One female participant in the Medical Thought Leaders group noted the value of being mentored by a role model: *"Professor Wyatt gave examples from his clinical experience and it was very helpful to discuss really practical problems"* (working in Romania). Another appreciated the mentoring model of peer-mentoring and active listening, employed throughout the Cross-Current curriculum: *"The mentoring method helps me to be accountable for improving and developing my spiritual and working life, and therefore to remain focussed on that"* (male participant, from Italy). *"[I need more] skills to get through a period of confusion and cognitive dissonance, [or other] stages of transformation. I liked the mentoring session and the skills you are practising through those sessions, asking questions [and then] analysing."* (Female participant, working in Business & Management, from Austria)

In general, participants also deeply appreciated the continuity of relationships and sense of collaborative community formed by such a learning group. Numerous participants left Cross-Current teaching weekends with a renewed vigour and sense of clarity and direction for their professional lives. One male participant (working in Tbilisi) wrote, *"After this meeting I am motivated, peaceful, inspired, refreshed, recharged. I got rest :) I have new ideas and plans."*

The result is the following: there's a shift away from taking character development as a personal development quest, towards a more compassionate and less self-centred understanding of character (the Cross-Current effect). People start to think in terms of journeying, becoming and discovering, and less in terms of improving (as though going to the gym). Participants start to discover the importance of commitment and accountability in shaping a virtuous character. Moreover, developing a virtuous character doesn't become a project in and of itself, but this pursuit is part of something bigger, usually involving serving a cause, striving for justice, community development or participating in advancing the greater good.

This shift from an individualistic take to a more relational, communal and richly-textured understanding of virtue and character is one of the greatest achievements that result from forming honest learning communities and allowing the space and time for thoughtful and honest exploration.

5.3 Pandemic possibilities and COVID-19

For the final third of the Cross-Current program duration, the global pandemic of COVID-19 put a stop to all physical meetings. With the pandemic's massive impact on professional lives and work patterns around the globe, the Cross-Current program could not ignore these realities. The autumn of 2020 was therefore a unique opportunity to interact with the Cross-Current community, and beyond, on the impact of the pandemic on the working life and work patterns of young Christian professionals.

In a survey of 148 Cross-Current participants across 22 countries, the impact of the pandemic on work-life was revealed to be stark. A majority of respondents (55%) were working from home or remotely, and 5% of respondents (7 individuals) were unemployed as a direct result of the pandemic. Respondents answered that despite communicating with colleagues on a regular basis (73% answered either every day or 2-3 times per week), the sense of cohesion at work and team unity was eroding (57% felt less connected to work colleagues).

These impactful findings directed the Cross-Current program to create an online model of teaching and interaction, whilst keeping in mind the importance and necessity of shared, embodied spaces. In particular, the need for Cross-Current to be flexible became very apparent, which

Given the high likelihood of remote working continuing beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, and participants' views corroborating this sentiment, **Cross-Current material and teaching designs were recalibrated to reflect this 'new normal'**. Participants responded well to the new online models of teaching and interaction.

Cross-Current also recognised the keen need for flexibility and resilience in the face of the global challenges of COVID-19. Given that 81 of the 148 respondents were now engaged with remote working, the need for managing new work-life boundaries, addressing productivity, and working around constraints has become ever more pressing.

5.4 Long-term virtue

Developing consistency between private faith and public life, at the beginning of the professional lives of these young Christian adults, depends largely on developing a fabric for faithfulness. Cross-Current has helped to identify three key threads to this fabric:

1. **Mentors** – both peer mentoring and role model mentoring, to allow for honest conversation
2. **Friendship** – a community of like-minded and active participants to share with
3. **Worldview** – an ongoing model for training and teaching on the virtues

Firstly, **training and teaching on the value of the virtues espoused by the Cross-Current curriculum ensures a long-term impact.**

Secondly, from the meeting feedback evaluations of participants, **both peer and senior mentoring rose to the fore as significant practices for long-term virtue.**

Thirdly, **a community of like-minded and active participants, to share with and learn from, is integral to long-term virtue encouraged by the Cross-Current program.**

6. Conclusions

The concluding statements to this report are founded on the structure of the three 'Big Questions' we asked at the outset of our proposal.

How can the Christian virtues of service, love, integrity, generosity, humility, and beneficial purpose be promoted and supported amongst young Christian professionals in the workplace?

1. What hinders young Christian adults from practising the virtues, associated with their faith, in their professional and academic life?
2. How would these Christian virtues, lived out in the public sphere through different professions, change the way participants behave in their workplaces?
3. What steps can we take to help a generation of young Christian adults spread across the continent of Eurasia to overcome these hindrances, promoting a greater consistency between their private faith and public life, as they start their professional lives?

For each of these questions, the careful responses of Cross-Current participants – collated over a number of different surveys – as well as the testimonials and interviews provided by individuals, help us articulate the difficulties of integrating private faith and public work, at the beginning of a professional career. Our conclusions fall in line with each of the questions.

6.1 Answering the 'Big Questions'

Firstly, on the 'obstacles to integrity' that we noted, it is clear that integrity is an aspirational virtue.

Respondents, time and again, in both entry, evaluation, and exit surveys, demonstrate their aspiration to live and work with integrity. Integrity is a 'cross-over' virtue that travels between both professional work and personal life. Indeed, integrity speaks of a wholeness of life that travels with participants, regardless of context or culture. Nonetheless, it is often aspirational, and not lived. In simple terms, this means that it remains an objective or targeted virtue, yet in the muck of life can easily be worn down and eroded. Cross-Current seeks to address this virtue gap between 'aspiration' and 'habituation', or in other words the distance between desired virtue and practiced behaviour.

Cross-Current participants also demonstrated the 'indexing' role of relationships, above and beyond the content or culture of their industry-specific workplace. In the quantitative analysis, this was evidenced by the fact that only a small majority of the respondents (36%) agreed that work is where they find meaning to life. Interestingly, however, a very large proportion of respondents (76%) agree, or strongly agree, that they 'love to be liked by people [they] work with'. We suggested from this that even if in the first-place (i) work is not the most significant influencer or shaper of worldview and life-philosophy for participants, that (ii) the relationships formed at work with colleagues and team members play a significant role in indexing and shaping our attitudes, including our worldview and life-philosophy. As such, relationships emerged as front and centre in shaping the views of participants. Once again, this underscores the need for ongoing mentoring, training, and teaching on inter-personal relationships in the workplace.

Secondly, on the need to ‘re-envision work’ and reframe our understanding of collegial participation in the workplace, two important conclusions emerged.

The first attitude of mind and heart noted by participants was regarding collegiality. Understanding humanness in the workplace is not limited to or limited by religious affiliation, pronouncement, or belief. Rather, participants sought to reframe colleagues as neighbours, to use the biblical language, with work an activity of service and love, in view of their neighbours. This restores what Walter Brueggemann (2017) calls ‘neighbourliness’ to the local context: a sense of embeddedness, communal interaction, integration in a team, and inter-personal affiliation that goes beyond the mere instrumentality of work. Participants sought to live in a liminal space, between under-represented Christian minority (often reduced to the private sphere) and high-intensity young professional (with all its demands, challenges, and pressures).

By the nature of their faith and professions, these people are inevitably living in a liminal space: a space of intersection and great potential, and also a space presenting them with serious challenges and risks. Being at the intersection of faith communities and scientific or professional communities, they need special support and they’re also uniquely placed to bridge the gap and bring an insightful and competent contribution to society.

Further to this, Cross-Current participants understood their distinctiveness in the workplace within a clear role. This was a character-attribute favouring integration and reconciliation with others, rather than alienation or obstruction. All too often, Christian minorities are reduced to a ‘radical’ voice that can be easily barred or precluded from serious discussion. Cross-Current participants, however, appreciated their vocational calling as a space to integrate differing viewpoints and beliefs with colleagues, rather than separate and divide. For many participants, this emerged through hours of peer-to-peer mentoring, as well as with inter-generational mentors.

Thirdly, and on the final of our ‘Big Questions’, ‘consistency’ was noted as a critical habit in character formation and the habituation of virtue.

Many steps and recommendations were made for cultivating consistency between the private faith and public lives of participants, as they start their professional careers. Four features, in particular, rise to the fore. Firstly, inter-generational role models and mentors became a bedrock for advice and support in the difficult transitions faced by young Christian professionals. Particularly in regard of ambition, the most driven and highly ambitious participants actively sought out mentors and role-models to help steer and guide them through their sense of direction in work. The role of active listening, within peer mentoring relationships, was regularly referred to, as a valuable practice and easily forgotten source of wisdom. Secondly, consistency in Cross-Current meetings and interactions helped build a fabric of faithfulness for the participants, weaving together mentors, friendships, and worldview. The need for ongoing accountability and honest conversations emerged over the course of the six module Cross-Current curriculum, highlighting the time it often takes to reach a point of personal and inter-personal honesty.

Furthermore, consistency had certain deep geographic biases and culturally contextual elements that must not be forgotten. Mentoring and honest conversations in a Cross-Current group in Novosibirsk, Russia, may look very different to a group in Brussels, Belgium. As such, it is important to interact closely with local facilitators and leaders, in uncovering the geographic context and cultural sensitivity needed to work with success.

6.2 The Cross-Current effect

Helping a generation of young adults—emerging leaders to live a more integrated, virtuous life for their individual flourishing and for contributing to the greater good, benefiting their communities and the society.

We work with some of the most brilliant minds at the intersection of science, professional excellence and thoughtful Christian faith. These participants, both as individuals and as a learning community, are a unique population group, both for their professional and faith communities and for society in general.

By the nature of their faith and professions, these people are inevitably living in a liminal space: a space of intersection and great potential but also a space presenting serious challenges and risks. They are on the frontline of both worlds and have to deal with the fear of being misjudged, the social pressure, the prejudice against faith in their professional community, and the prejudice against science in their faith community. The challenges they have to navigate put them in a difficult yet relevant spot. They face both in-group pressures—from their more fundamentalist fellow believers, and outside pressure—from their professional peers who might see them as less valuable thinkers because they have an existential commitment to the Christian faith

We discovered throughout this program that our default take on character development and virtue is consumerist or instrumentalist, at best. We all start with mixed motivations and a superficial understanding of what virtue and character is. Even many practising Christians (i.e. church-goers) don't practise the Christian virtues in the real sense. They might incidentally practise them, but not *as* Christian values. So they can pick and choose which ones to employ when convenient, practising them selectively but also lowering the standard and settling for an impoverished version of the virtues, i.e. a minimal view of the virtues. In a subtle way, this amounts to a utilitarian view of virtues: we praise them *because* they work, as long as they work for our own benefit. We serve others because we think they might reciprocate. We love the people we like (or we love because we want to be loved back) and we're indifferent to people we don't care about. We try to 'show' integrity when people see us, forgetting that integrity is always doing the right thing, even (and especially) when no one's watching. We're trying to show generosity not for generosity's sake, but because people appreciate generous people. We're striving to look humble mainly because people don't like arrogant people. We're all about beneficial purpose not because we want to benefit others or the greater good, but to find meaning in our work.

After going through the program, the Cross-Current participants have a richer and more complex understanding of virtues. They generally invest each term with more weight and substance and are less likely to claim that they are virtuous. This brings in much-needed humility and realism. We call this 'the Cross-Current effect'.

6.3 Nurturing and sustaining relevance

In order to sustain long-term virtue, the need for a consistent support community was widespread in all the feedback we gathered. The need for a relevant community, for dialogue and encouragement, for competent and insightful peers from various fields, for more interdisciplinary and intercultural interaction - these were some of the most salient needs the participants expressed. We think programs like Cross-Current, which are focused on learning communities which provide both a place for intellectual debate, soul care and encouragement, are a needed bridge between faith and science, between church and the professional environment people spend much of their lives in. There was a pervasive feeling that oftentimes these people feel they're left in-between, in no man's land, neither here nor there. One participant said, *"...you start to feel disconnected"*.

Nurturing and encouraging the emerging generation of young Christian professionals is strategically important, because these people are occupying a liminal space: a space at the intersection of faith and science. They are living at the intersection between faith-based communities and professional expertise, and are uniquely placed to bridge the gap by bringing together the best of both worlds.

There shouldn't be a stark divide between the two, but there are not many people who belong to both worlds. On one hand, these are the best equipped individuals for bringing a Christian contribution to the wider benefit of society; on the other hand, given the challenges they face, the lack of community and high pressure environments they work in, they are at risk of either suppressing their own faith, or at risk of withdrawing from their professions, if they feel they have to choose between the two. Either of these options would be a loss for the whole society, as the reasonable, articulated, moderate and compassionate Christian voices would be crowded out, leaving the space to populist and potentially intransigent, fundamentalist approaches, both from the religious side and from the militant anti-religious camp.

7. Moving forwards

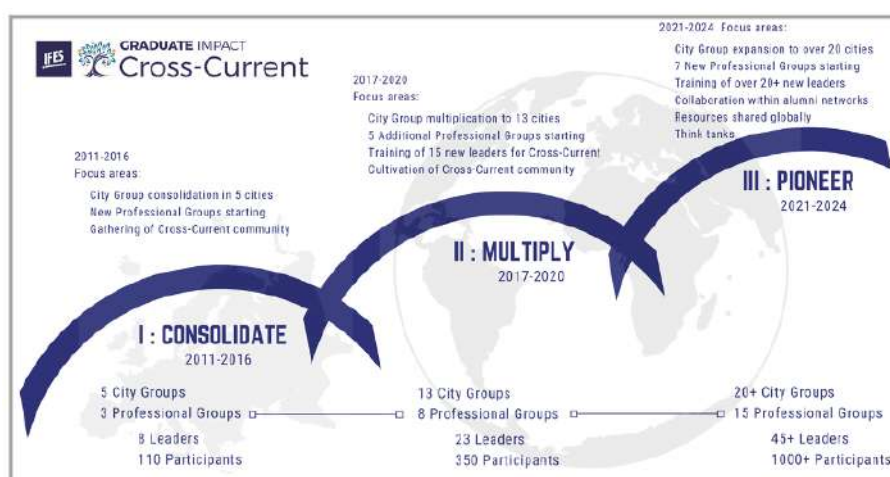
Over the last three years we have seen an amazing response to Cross-Current among the young graduates from IFES movements. At present there are more that 40 groups running on four different continents. There is also serious interest from multiple countries in Latin America and Francophone Africa.

Our core teaching material, written in English, is being translated into seven other languages, and we have a growing network of people we serve online.

Over the next five years we hope to develop the following six streams:

1. Support the **organic (led by demand) growth of Cross-Current City Groups** by focussing on training leaders either through national or regional initiative. For this we need the commitment of interested local IFES movements and the identification and recruitment of suitable leaders. This has worked well in Mexico, where we train 40 leaders twice a year and they run eight groups for a further 150 people in between training meetings.
2. Facilitate the **provision of Professional Groups on a national or regional level**, by investing in the development of new Professional Group leaders. Initially this would be a training program conducted online, with at least one physical meeting of all participants midway through.
3. Create **new resources** including:
 - Curriculum resources for emerging Professional Groups;
 - Books for IFES Graduates on a lay approach to Christian thinking in different professional fields;
 - eLearning resources produced by Professional Group leaders for undergraduates to access anywhere in the world.
4. Develop **support of our alumni ministry**, to involve more of our former participants in helping initiate new groups, or supporting Cross-Current in a different part of the world.
5. **Secure our funding base.**
6. Form a **team with regional representatives** for Latin America, Europe (extant), Eurasia (extant), Francophone Africa, and East Asia.

We believe that with the current level of organic demand for Cross-Current, if we have adequate funding in place and Covid restrictions end, we would expect to see up to 5,000 Cross-Current participants in 40 countries by 2026, together with countless other students and graduates being inspired by online and printed resources to build a stronger connection between their faith and their work.



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Further Cross-Current resources available upon request

- Cross-Current *Authentic*
- Cross-Current COVID-19 survey data
- Cross-Current Entry Survey data (Qualitative survey) Cross-Current Entry Survey data (Quantitative survey) Cross-Current Focus Group transcripts
- Cross-Current Meeting Audio recordings Cross-Current Meeting Evaluation survey data Cross-Current *Transition*
- Cross-Current *Workbook Modules 1-3*
- Cross-Current Workplace Culture survey data