

Executive finds faith has a place in her job

Bonnie Wurzbacher sees meaning in the role of business in supporting institutions.

IRVINE • Jobs can be meaningful and spiritual, even in large companies, if workers understand that they are part of creating wealth that sustains their communities, a senior Coca-Cola Co. executive said Thursday.

Bonnie Wurzbacher, a self-described Christian businesswoman, said she came to believe that she could entwine her successful career with her spirituality over the course of 27 years with the international company.

"There is no such thing as meaningful work," she said. "You must



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learn to bring meaning to it."

Wurzbacher was the keynote speaker at Concordia University's annual Faith and Business Forum on Thursday.

The daughter of a minister and the granddaughter of missionaries, Wurzbacher graduated from Wheaton College in Illinois believing she must be a teacher or work in a nonprofit role in order to do something significant. She believed she would teach for a few years, get married, quit her job and raise a family.

But God had other plans for her, Wurzbacher said, and after five years of teaching, she was called to start a sales career at Coca-Cola. She began in Chicago, was transferred to Houston and ultimately landed one of the company's largest deals, selling Minute Maid products to McDonald's in the U.S. and 12 other countries. Since then, she's held various senior executive roles in sales and marketing, earned an MBA and most recently lead the company's North American global customer management teams.

"Business was indeed my calling," she said.

Careful to say that Coca-Cola is not "a Christian company," Wurzbacher said she "came to find meaning in selling brown sugar



Bonnie Wurzbacher

water" through study of Christian writers, the Bible and during pivotal moments when she saw God at work in her life.

She came to the conclusion that business is the only wealth-creation machine in the world, supporting all institutions, such as government. So the role of business "in God's kingdom" is to advance the economic well-being of communities around the world,

Wurzbacher said.

"Our work is the way we participate with divine intention in this world," she said.

Wurzbacher now leads the company's "Global 5 By 20" initiative, aimed at empowering 5 million women entrepreneurs by 2020. The effort seeks to create more jobs and business enterprises in developing countries by empowering women through Coca-Cola's sales and distribution systems.

"When women are lifted up economically, socially, intellectually and spiritually, so are their communities," she said.

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