

SALES STAR



## The Spiritual Salesman: Christopher Cunningham

[By Mary Waldron]

Veteran salesman Christopher Cunningham has had his ups and downs throughout his sales career. A year after he garnered acclaim as the number-two salesman at the Johnson & Johnson company Cordis Endovascular, Cunningham's moment in the spotlight started to fade. He was able to revitalize his career, though, by stepping back to research and formulate a new approach to sales. Through his book, *The Salesman's Little Blue Book of Daily Inspiration*, and motivational seminars, Cunningham has been able to share his fresh and inspiring message with salespeople all over the country.

Cunningham jumpstarted his sales career after he graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in communications with an emphasis in broadcasting. His first experiences in selling were in the broadcasting arena. Shortly thereafter, he began to gain momentum when he started to work on the account-service side of sales at a large public-relations and advertising firm.

His first position was "assistant account executive," and he eventually climbed to vice president and group director status by the time he was in his early 30s. As a vice president and group director, Cunningham was in charge of managing a multimillion-dollar budget and some of the biggest brands around.

When one of his sporting-goods clients, Mitre, contacted him about becoming a vice president of marketing, Cunningham snatched up the opportunity. He also became the vice president of marketing for another sports company called Reusch in the following years.

After gaining some great international sales and marketing experience with these sports companies, Cunningham eventually began working for one of Johnson & Johnson's companies, Cordis Endovascular. Cunningham performed extremely well at this company, becoming number two among the company's salespeople, increasing his sales growth by more than 164%, and doing more than \$1.5 million in business all in one

year. But unfortunately, true to the "summit and plummet" flow of sales, Cunningham had a reality check the following year when he experienced the worst sales year of his life.

Upon his drop in sales, Cunningham sought inspirational and motivational advice that was infused with grounding spiritual principles. Since he never found a book that fit the bill, he decided to formulate his own book of helpful principles.

"When you don't find what you're looking for, sometimes necessity is the mother of all inventions," he said. "I needed a daily reminder about what I thought was true about

meeting customers and battling competition, and I needed one that had a strong faith beneath it as well."



Referencing some of the oldest sales books that rang true for him, such as William H. Danforth's *I Dare You!* and *Life's Little Instruction Book* by H. Jackson Brown, Jr., and combining their advice with messages from the Book of Psalms, Cunningham was able to develop his own book of inspirational sales principles called *The Salesman's Little Blue Book of Daily Inspiration*.

The following year, Cunningham reached "quota-buster status" at his company. "Once you ground yourself and realize that there's something in this world that's more important than you, you begin to get your perspective in place," he said.

Cunningham's unique message to his training audiences and readers requires them to ask themselves if they are doing their work in sales for a higher power or their understanding of "God."

"I find that 99% of the time, people who sell for a living very often have some sort of faith," he said.

**Q. What do you do for fun?**

A. I am wildly committed to my family. I have four children, so I love spending time with my wife and children. I am also always writing lyrics, books, and poetry. Sometimes I will sneak off to the golf course as well.

**Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?**

A. *Awesome God* by Rich Mullins.

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

A. *Fortune*.

**Q. What is your favorite TV show?**

A. *American Idol*.

**Q. Who is your role model?**

A. My father. He's my hero.



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“When you’re out there on the front lines every day and you have people firing questions at you and saying ‘no, no, no,’ then you very quickly find that you have to practice some kind of faith.”

*The Salesman’s Little Blue Book of Daily Inspiration* provides a 21-day regimen for salespeople that includes daily scripture passages and meditations for personal development and growth. It also features a series of challenging questions and problems from salespeople and spiritually driven and inspirational answers for each of them.

Throughout his career in sales, Cunningham has picked up a few valuable lessons along the way, including, “Don’t be afraid to ask for courage, and don’t be afraid when courage comes.”

Besides benefiting from his spiritual backbone of advice, Cunningham also advises that salespeople stay humble and aware of the realities around them. Through his years of experience, he found that he was not as savvy as he thought he was as a young salesman.

“When I was first in business, I firmly believed that I could conquer the world and spend it on a dime and get back nine cents’ change. As I became older, I found out how much I really did not know, and in that void, I found that I had to humble myself and be thankful for the opportunity to go out and to be victorious with the skills that I’d been given. I also had to understand that it ain’t all about me.”

## ON THE NET

Mitre  
[www.mitre.com](http://www.mitre.com)

Cordis  
[www.cordis.com](http://www.cordis.com)

*The Salesman’s Little Blue Book of Daily Inspiration*  
[www.amazon.ca/Salesmans-Little-Blue-Daily-Inspiration/dp/1591455359](http://www.amazon.ca/Salesmans-Little-Blue-Daily-Inspiration/dp/1591455359)