

WORK IS A FIRST CLASS CALLING

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TRANSFORMED
WORKING LIFE

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Other titles in the Transformed Working Life series:

Work is a first class calling

No one can serve two masters

Hope –the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

Renewing the mind

Working from rest

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

Fruitfulness

CONTENTS

Introduction

- 1) Man's first ministry calling
- 2) The norm for mankind
- 3) Your calling is especially planned
- 4) Full time service?
- 5) Your vision for work
- 6) Working it out - Salt and Light - ICCO motifs
- 7) Do business until He comes.

INTRODUCTION

We all think we know the Great Commission - that last instruction of Jesus to His disciples:

Matthew 28:19-20

19 *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*

However, read it again – has Jesus told us in what circumstances to fulfil this command, has He given us instructions to give up work? NO!

The Great Commission is repeated by Mark:

15 *‘And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.
16 “He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.
17 “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;
18 “they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

Here Mark assures us that there will be signs following those who believe – are we experiencing any such signs in our workplace?

In ICCC we often liken our work calling and business to a donkey. The reason behind this is Jesus call to the disciples when He was going to enter triumphantly into Jerusalem.

‘Go into the village opposite you and you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to

you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them." Matthew 21 : 2-3
fulfilling -

Zechariah had prophesied, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

Chapter 9 : 9

Prophetic scripture required Him to enter riding on a donkey. In a prophetic sense we say 'bring your donkey (work) to Jesus He wants to ride with you.'

Please note

Quite a lot of this booklet is expressed as if to business owners. The truths and principles put forth apply to all works of life – perhaps with a little modification here and there. We use the male voice and intend that it is applied equally to women.

CHAPTER 1

MAN'S FIRST MINISTRY CALLING

From the very beginning the Lord designed man to work. Exactly what that work involved, at that time, we don't know – except to say it did not involve sweat and toil – they came as a judgement from God after the fall of man into sin – Genesis 3:19.

Eden was perfect – the scripture says that the Lord saw that it was good, and He created man to live and dwell and to look after His garden. Perhaps we had better call it God's estate rather than garden – for we know from scripture that every animal was there!

So man was instructed by God to have dominion over His vast estate – including the animals and specifically, man was given Eden to cultivate. The Lord God so enjoyed His creation, and man He had created, that in the cool of the day He would walk in the garden.

Sin crept in. Satan deceived Eve with promises that she would become like God. The fallen Eve invited Adam to taste the same fruit. In full knowledge of what he was doing, which is why the text says Adam sinned, Adam did so. Mankind had now bowed the knee to satan!

After sin had crept in Adam and Eve hid from God – for now they knew their nakedness. Before they discovered the tree of (eternal) life God had to evict them from the garden of Eden, which was later washed away by the flood of Noah.

(Extracted from Genesis chapters 1,2 and 3)

So work became a burden rather than a blessing

The Lord had designed work to be beneficial to man. The fall of man resulted in the cursing of the ground and work became toil and sweat (Genesis 3:17) – and so it is to this day!

So today we find that our work can be fraught with all sorts of problems. However, we have been called to live by faith – that means that there is another dimension which can be brought to bear on our lives.

Work is man's first calling

For the moment we have established that work is man's first calling. It was for Adam and it is for us:

2 Thessalonians 3:10

'For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.'

It is obvious that we must eat – the Lord has designed our bodies in a way that needs food to survive. The inspired scripture declares that if we don't work – then we should not eat – logic demands therefore that God's desire is that we work.

We are designed to eat – so we are designed to work!

CHAPTER 2

THE NORM FOR MANKIND

If we press our line of thinking further, we will conclude that the Lord is against unemployment. Indeed, we know that unemployment brings with it all sorts of problems, both personal and for society.

Look at it like this: Man needs to eat to live and he receives his food in one of three ways:

- 1) Provision – that is someone else provides it for him. When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness the Lord provided their food miraculously – this is provision!
- 2) Production – man uses his God given abilities to produce – either he produces food directly through farming or he produces goods or services which he can exchange for food.
- 3) Plunder – he steals his food from someone else.

Now the scripture explicitly tells us not to steal – that means an expectation of working to produce or special provision.

The Lord may well see us go through ‘wilderness’ times and He is faithful and does provide. But! The purpose of the time in the wilderness was so that Israel would enter their promised land. The land was bountiful – but they still had to farm the land and fight many battles to obtain and conquer it.

The production of food involves ‘pain’ in the sense that we do it by the sweat of our brow. For this reason other methods of obtaining our ration can seem more attractive. There are many people in the westernised societies who are living off welfare. Welfare is good for temporary relief but many are adopting a welfare mentality. So long as welfare pays enough why work? – This is actually plunder! Mr and Mrs taxpayer pick up the bill.

Christians should therefore be setting an example to the world. The Lord does not want you unemployed or, as a rule, on welfare (granted that there may be exceptional times). (He may use a period of unemployment in the process of changing you from one degree of glory to another, but that would be a temporary matter.)

Work is therefore spiritual in nature

Because God has designed us to work and wants us to work, we can define work as being basically spiritual in nature and origin. This is a long way from most people's thinking. This is because our thinking has become conditioned by the difficulty of work, and because nothing in the this world teaches us that work is God's number one plan for man.

Because work has suffered from the effects of the fall of man and the resultant curse, it has become, to a large degree, a burden for mankind. The Lord did not design work to be a burden, but to be fulfilling.

Indeed Jesus invites us:

Matthew 11:29-30

29 *“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

30 *“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

My yoke is easy and My burden is light – are we experiencing Jesus words in our work?

When we see work as being spiritual in nature and origin – then we will be more able to bring spiritual principles into play. When we see that Jesus expects our work to be easy and light – then we can develop the hope of entering into that experience.

In the next chapter we are going to see that not only is work God's norm for mankind – but He has gone much further, and planned work for us.

CHAPTER 3

YOUR CALLING TO WORK IS ESPECIALLY PLANNED

It is easy to lose sight of just how great God is – in the living of life and dealing with the minutia of everyday affairs, somehow the greatness, the awesomeness of God is easily lost.

But look at what the Lord had to say to Israel:

Jeremiah 29:11

‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’
(NIV)

Plans .. plans .. plans. The Lord God has plans!

Indeed, if we look at the Hebrew we will find a deeper understanding of this word ‘plans.’ It comes from the verb ‘to weave.’ The Lord God is weaving a plan, making a contrivance, He is planning and plotting.

In our text, the Lord is planning for Israel – but it does tell us of His character for His chosen ones and the New Testament confirms:

Ephesians 2:10

‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’

So we see that the Lord is still planning – He has prepared good works for you and I to walk in today.

How to know your calling

For the most part, this is a simple matter. The scripture will help us:

1 Corinthians 7:20

'Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.'

1 Corinthians 7:24

'Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.'

So let each one remain in the same calling. Remain doing the same sort of thing you were doing when you were saved. This is the basic principle. I was saved whilst an articled clerk studying for my accountancy qualifications – so for me, staying in accountancy is God's basic calling.

For some people it is not quite as simple. Consider the 'professional' burglar. Should he remain in that 'calling.' Clearly not!

Ephesians 4:28

'Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.'

Again the scripture is nice and clear. The thief must give up thieving and find 'proper' work.

Change of direction

Our thief clearly has to change direction, and indeed there are other categories of people who cannot remain in the same position as when they were saved. A young person still at school for example.

Sometimes it will be God's desire for someone to change their calling. In the scripture (Ephesians 4) it talks about God making a gift to the body of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastor/Teachers. Clearly these people are going into new callings.

We need to understand a basic principle – we do not change calling by our own choice and volition. The basic command is stay in the same calling. It is not a matter of our choice. The scripture is clear that we are bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7: 23) Therefore ownership of our whole being and life has been transferred to the purchaser – the Lord Jesus Christ.

We change roles as we are led by the Holy Spirit to recognise that the Lord is calling us. (Refer to 'Hearing God Speak' in this series.). A wise bible teacher once told me, 'If you think the Lord might be telling you to do something, make it hard for Him.'

What he meant by this statement is that it is very easy for us to project our thinking and our desires and then to credit them to God. So to be sure God is speaking – seek supernatural confirmation from two or three witnesses and the witness of your own spirit [not mind].

Good and faithful servants

After all, if we accept that the Lord has works for us to walk in, it would be a tragedy to miss His plan. It would be awful to arrive in heaven, face to face with Jesus, to be told that we had missed His plan for our life.

No, we are those who want to hear Him say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’

Wrong calling?

Maybe on reading this chapter you are thinking, ‘Oh dear, I have missed my calling, I have branched out into something different without direction from the Lord.’

If this is the case, or if you are not sure, please don’t make any quick or rash moves.

Speak to the Lord about it, repent as necessary. Ask the Lord to speak to you. He may want you to change back into your original calling – if so that is where His blessing for you will be. He might confirm you in the new role even though you moved into it yourself.

Don’t make any changes without new direction from the Lord – He will be generous to speak to you if you really are submitted to His will and diligently seek Him.

CHAPTER 4

FULL TIME SERVICE?

Let us ask a question: ‘What is full time service?’

We will define it by listing some of its characteristics:

- 1) An attitude which says, ‘everything I do, I do as unto Jesus.’
- 2) An application of time which prioritises the Kingdom of God
- 3) A relationship with Jesus as Lord, which says, You are the boss.
- 4) A knowledge that we are in the right calling.
- 5) Evidence of fruitfulness.
- 6) Working out the job by the guidelines of the truth.
- 7) Working out the job in the power of the Spirit.

From our short list you will see that ‘full time’ service is not determined by the nature of the role. Many would consider that full time service meant – pastoring, bible teaching, evangelism and so on. Certainly those roles frequently become full time, often salaried, positions. But it is a lie to say that they are the only types of full time service or that they are better than other roles. The best role for you is the one specially designed by the Lord for **you** to walk in.

We have already seen that work is spiritual in nature and origin. Being a pastor is no more spiritual and no more full time than being an accountant.

In fact it is obvious to any logical thinking that the Lord does not want everyone to be a full time minister paid by the church.

A stronghold of wrong thinking has developed in the church over this issue and it needs to be torn down. The best calling for you is the special plan the Lord has designed for you. If the Lord has designed accountancy – then that will be the place of His anointing and your fulfilment. Not only that, it will also be the place where you can bear fruit and see the miraculous hand of God in your work – by faith.

This stronghold has caused a severe weakening of the witness of the church in the world. Business people are often told or treated as if they are second class citizens in Christianity. This results in a lack of expectation of fruitfulness in their work. The salt and light effect is diminished. And we have seen many leave their God designed work and take up church leadership through wrong thinking – resulting in lack of fruitfulness and sometimes mental or physical breakdown.

Equipped

In Ephesians 4 we read that the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Pastor/Teacher are there to equip the saints – so that they may do the work of the ministry. The saints are the ones doing the work of the ministry.

Full time service is doing the work of the ministry, right where you are called. Who is salt and light in your office or place of work? You are, or should be!

Who has God chosen to represent Him in your work place? YOU!

It is time to appreciate that God does not want a 100 strong church with 100 pastors – he wants the vast majority of His children out there in the world as salt and light – doing the work of the ministry.

The only valid calling is the particular calling that the Lord has placed on your own life. If that is to pastor – then that is the only valid call for you. If it is to be an accountant – then that is the valid calling of God for you. Neither is better than the other – they are different. Your works will be judged for reward – so it is important for each one to see him or herself as being in full time service for the Lord.

Our works will all be judged by fire - If we are faithfully doing the works we are called to do – then we will receive eternal reward.

CHAPTER 5

YOUR VISION FOR YOUR WORK

Mr Businessman or Mrs Businesswoman today throw off the lie that your calling is in any way second rate. You are a chosen child of God. You are called to work in the marketplace. You are called to set up a witness in the darkest part of the world scene. You are called to make a difference.

Work is God's idea for man. Over the years we have seen its value trivialised in our Christian thinking. We need a rethink. God designed work for man – for his benefit. That first job was gardening or estate management, if you prefer. It was important to God – it still is important today.

Whatever your calling – that calling is special – it is special to the Lord and it should be special to you. In your calling is the place of God's anointing for you. In your calling is the place of God's power for you. Stand up anointed businessman, anointed businesswoman. The Lord wants you in business.

The grass is greener on the other side

We have a saying in English that the grass is always greener on the other side – it means that the field over there is better than the one you are in!

Our enemies will tell us that this saying is true. It is easy to fall into the trap of agreeing with this lie. There are various forces which will try their hardest to get us out of the Lord's will for our lives:

- 1) Us – we will try to get out of the plan of God for our lives - that is the flesh part of us. When the going is tough – and it often gets tough in the marketplace – our flesh will whisper at us: 'It would be better if you were,', fill in your own answer. A pastor, an evangelist, a Doctor, an accountant – you name it, anything except your real calling.
- 2) World or peer pressure. One of our daughters is a nurse and the other is a teacher. Both jobs required a lot of training and a lot of hard work.

The nurse is actually more highly qualified than the teacher – but the world values their skill and time differently, such that the nurse only earns about 75% of the pay of the teacher. The nursing job involves much longer hours including night shifts. The pressure on the nurse – that is the pressure to feel underpaid – the pressure to think, ‘ it would be better if’ is strong just because of the world system.

- 3) The enemy of our souls does not want us to function in our calling. Satan is much happier if you are pastoring instead of accounting – if your calling is to be an accountant. First, you are not going to be fully fruitful because you are in the wrong role. Second, because you are filling that role the person with God’s anointing for it is excluded.

CHAPTER 6

WORKING IT OUT - SALT AND LIGHT

There are many unreached people and the vast majority of them are not found in the church – they are out there in the marketplace!

There are a number of principles included in the TWL (Transformed Working Life) teaching program which are outlined here and come from Gunnar Olson, Jan Sturesson, Dag Wilund and others.

Heart management.

The two trees.

Building on the rock.

The two dimensions.

The valley experience.

Heart Management

Relationship and fellowship depend on what is in my heart, God's heart and other people's hearts.

Business is a matter of relationships. A relationship is a mutual interaction between two or more individuals. A business can be viewed as a collective individual. Therefore a business can have relationships with both individuals and other businesses. We can learn a great deal about relationships between businesses by studying how relationships between individuals are built up as well as how they are broken down. Actually business is not carried by 'businesses' but by individuals within companies and organisations.

Lasting businesses are built with the help of good relationships. In a business deal, both partners must earn something from their interactions. Both must believe that the returns are greater than the sacrifices. Healthy relationships

are the key to our general well-being, both as individuals and as businesses. We sometimes hear the expression that the most essential elements of existence are ‘matters of the heart.’ Our actions in business are ‘matters of the heart.’ So in order to create lasting businesses we need to actively deal with what lies in the heart.

The three hearts:

1) What is the heart of man?

What is most crucial for man today? – For my customer, my employees, my neighbour? What do they think? How are their world views developed? How is that view different from the one we encounter in the bible? How much is society influenced by secularisation? If we understand these things we can relate more effectively to our surroundings.

The Lord tells us to be aware of what is in the heart.

‘Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.’

Proverbs 4:23

‘Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.’ Matthew 12:34

‘And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.’

Genesis 6:5

What is the heart of man is closely related to the degree of love that he or she has for Jesus – the greater that love the more the heart of man come into agreement with the heart of God. Prayer - ‘Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus.’

2) What is in God’s heart?

We can never know the full answer to this question. But, what ‘hidden’ truths can we find in the Bible in regard to business and the market-place, and within those realms what does the Bible say about relationships? The fact that we have food, clothing, tools, beautiful things etc is evidence of, or an expression of God’s love. Therefore God must also have some thoughts about the processes that create these things.

When God created the world everything was perfect. Since then everything

has become scarred and deformed by the consequences of sin. But, God has, in Christ, reconciled the whole world to Himself. If this reconciliation has penetrated to the same depths as sin, then there must be reconciliation available for everything. We often limit the concept of reconciliation to the individual's relationship with God. Let us instead open our minds and try to perceive God's original thoughts concerning these things.

What has God thought and planned in regard to economy, work, leadership? How would these things appear in restored form? What does the path to restoration look like? For me? For society? It is essential that we wake up, ask these questions, and begin to move in God's direction, if we are to truly serve Him in our working life.

3) *What is in My own heart?*

Why do I end up in the same situations time after time and behave contrary to my will and the will of God? What is on my conscience that I cannot be free from? Have I treated others poorly? What wounds do I have as a consequence of ill treatment by others? How can I be freed from them? Am I living in unhealthy relationships (which can become binding)?

A new heart * A new life * A new business.

The two trees.

The fruit depends on the root!

In today's world we can easily be puzzled when we meet others and hear their ideas and views. We use a variety of words, which have varying degrees of importance or significance, in our conversations. The strength and meaning of these words depend directly upon our view of God and our view of the world – not everyone shares our view of God. It is easy to think that we always mean the same thing, but if we are seeking true understanding, and are willing to make the effort to look deeper into the context, we will often see that some people mean just the opposite of what it seemed.

Some example of words that can be misunderstood in this context are: Godliness, dialogue, comprehensive view, love, God, Christ, healing, inner light, soul, spirituality – the list can go on and on.

The situation can be likened to two trees which stand either side of a narrow deep ravine and have their branches intertwined. At first sight it can be difficult to see which branch belongs to which tree. When one examines the fruit from the different branches it can also be difficult. It is easier to evaluate the fruit over a long period than it is to judge by its appearance at a certain moment. By its nature, sin is such that it can give an immediate sensation of pleasure, and the consequences don't come until later. As a rule Godly fruit can be seen through observation over a long period of time.

One tree has its roots firmly in God's Kingdom and the other on the other side of the abyss is rooted in Satan's Kingdom. The two trees have totally different root systems but the branches can be deceptively similar. We need to be true to our roots in the Kingdom of God, keeping our hearts pure and our actions righteous. At the same time being aware that those we deal with might be rooted in the wrong Kingdom or may be believers who, though rooted in the right Kingdom, nevertheless are not following the Lord in all their actions.



Building on the rock.

‘Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain that build it.’

Psalm 127:1

The following series of pictures and explanations demonstrate the fundamentals of building on the rock.

If we are going to see God’s ways manifest in the marketplace that it should be obvious that whatever is built must be on the one foundation – Jesus Christ our rock.

We need to dig down to that foundation by clearing out of the way all the dirt and stones and other things which clutter our thinking and our lives.

BUILDING A HOUSE.

First excavate.....

Dirt, stones, clay, sand - down to the solid rock

BUILDING A TOWER

FIRST EXCAVATE...

DIRT, STONES, CLAY, SAND,
DOWN TO THE SOLID ROCK!



1 COR. 3:11

“FOR NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER
THAN THE ONE ALREADY LAID, WHICH IS

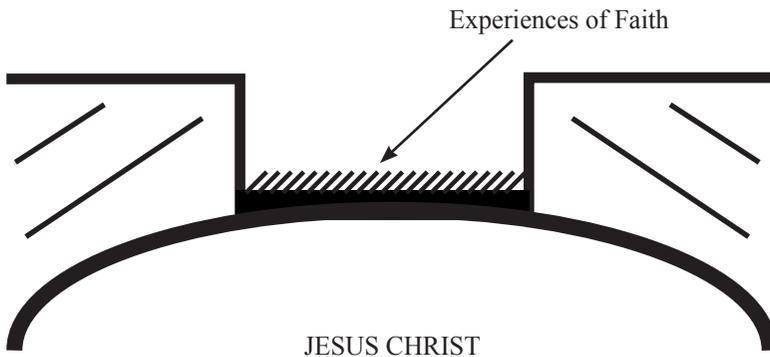
JESUS CHRIST”

To start the building process we should have experiences of faith. That means the business should be God's idea rather than just our good idea. There should be specific leadings from the Holy Spirit – that is experiences of faith.

In addition to the specific leadings over the business we should have lives filled with experiences of faith – this is part of the heritage of the children of God.

Definition: an experience of faith is when God tells you something, you believe it, and it happens, and when God clearly brings something to pass in response to prayer.

THEN:
Fill the hole with a carrier
layer of the same material as
the Rock.



Next we come to the foundation. The motive of the owner is the next foundation of the business.

For a Christian there is only one motive that will stand the full scrutiny of the light ..

That motive is obedience.

In Matthew 6:33 we are told to seek first the kingdom of God – that is to seek His kingship over our lives.

'You are not your own, you were bought with a price.' 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

We do not have the right to do our own thing – we are stewards of that which the Lord gives us to do.

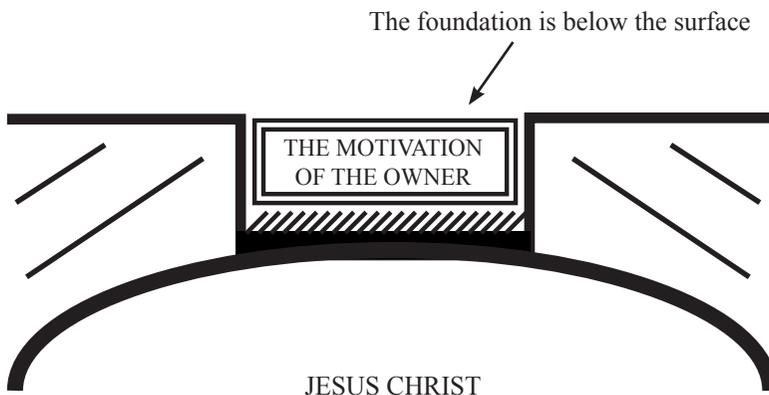
AFTER THAT....

Pour the cement for the foundation.

Must be well measured and formed.

Must be reinforced with iron.

Must harden well.

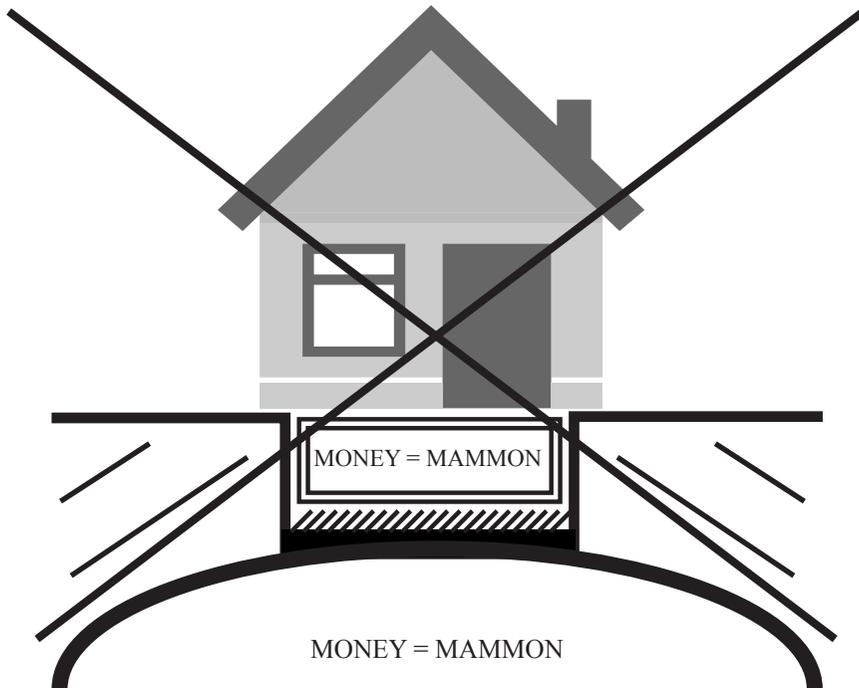


The way of the world –

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

1 MATH. 7:27

“THE RAIN CAME DOWN, THE STREAMS ROSE,
AND THE WIND BLEW AND BEAT AGAINST THE
HOUSE, AND IT FELL WITH A GREAT CRASH.”



This picture shows the way of the world – so often the motive for business is making money. Worldly business is built on a faulty foundation. The scripture says you cannot serve two masters – you cannot serve God and Mammon.

Here we want to underline the issue – the only appropriate motive is obedience to God. ‘Making money’ for the kingdom is not a good motive, (although at first glance it can appear to be) unless God Himself has expressly given that instruction (most unlikely.)

We see many Christian in business fail because of this faulty motive.

God already owns the whole world – He has no need of money. We cannot bless God by making money for Him – rather he wants to bless us abundantly and to watch us use His blessings in the way He directs.

Now the foundations are in place we can start to see the visible part of the building process. Here we need to keep in close touch with the Lord to understand what the business is to look like and what it is to fulfil.

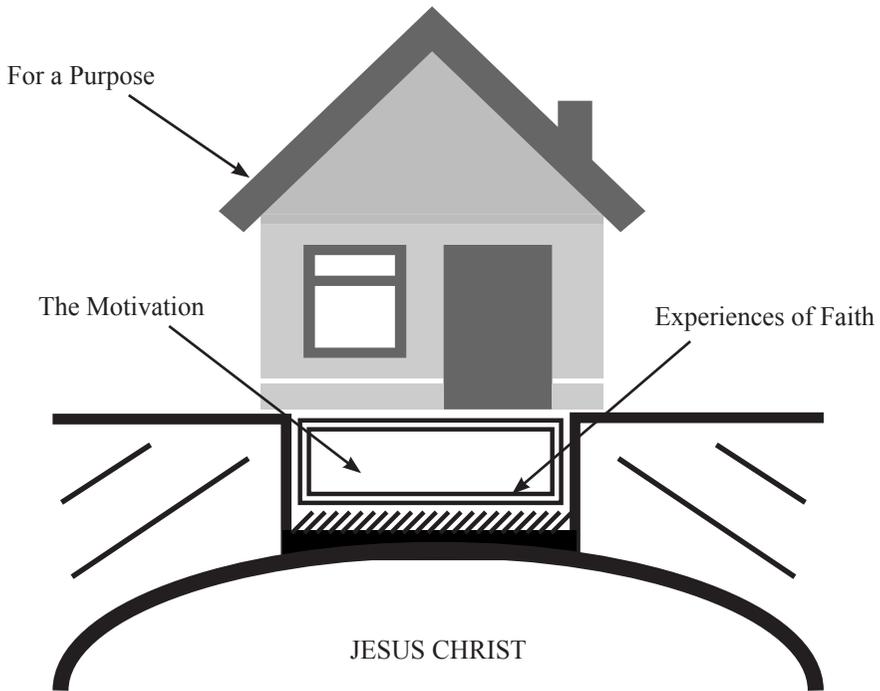
NOW BEGINS THE VISIBLE PROCESS...

APPEARANCE

- ETHICS AND MORALS
- LOVE AND TRUTH
- RIGHTEOUSNESS

SIZE

- VISION
- KNOWLEDGE
- POWER & PERSERVERENCE
- GOOD STEWARDSHIP



As a witness to the goodness of God.

The two dimensions.

A business, like many others spheres of life, is multidimensional. On the one hand we understand that any successful business needs to define a proper business concept. It could be described as the idea behind the business activities. Another important requirement is the product or service which is sold through the enterprise and finally, both the idea and the product/service must fill a need and find its market in order to become profitable and productive.

This is true for any business venture and could be seen as the natural prerequisite for any business. When well defined and successfully implemented it will lead to some measure of success and freedom as well as reputation and position for the businessman.

From a spiritual perspective the first prerequisite however, is the understanding of God's calling and the vision and purpose of the Lord in what He calls me to do. Then in obedience to the Lord and His calling begin the walk of faith which should manifest in the business realm. We follow the Spirit as He leads us day by day. This is what Jesus meant when He said to His disciples, 'Follow Me.'

The businessman Abraham did this – the bible describes it in Hebrews 11:8 – *'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterwards receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going.'*

This walk of faith brings forth the fruit of the Spirit which is the character of Christ. It is a true expression of stewardship within the realm of our calling and thus becomes a true manifestation of the Kingdom of God. There is no other way by which the presence of God will become known to the world except through a walk in obedience to the calling of the Lord. The key to effectiveness in this walk is relationship with the Lord in reality; hearing Him and obeying Him from a heart which really loves Him. This is faith working through love.

For a Christian in business, both dimensions must be perceived and implemented successfully. Faith is not a substitute for skill and excellent business understanding but it is that added element that the world knows

nothing of and which demonstrates the difference between those who believe and those who do not. Business success without God’s calling and His enabling is merely ‘good works’ which will not survive the His scrutiny and will not bring forth Godly fruit.

BUSINESS’S TWO DIMENSIONS

Natural:

Business concept
Product/service
Market



Success
Freedom
Reputation and position

Spiritual:

Calling and vision
Obedience
Faith



Fruit
Stewardship
Manifestation of the Kingdom

The valley experience.

Count the cost before you say ‘Yes let’s start.’ Luke 14:28-33

Businessmen from a number of nations have observed that when they handed control of their companies, businesses and working lives to the Lord, they began to experience considerable difficulties in their business. Before they seemed to experience a period of blessing. ‘Why is this happening?’ they wonder.

It seems as if there is something in our lives and hearts that the Lord wants to change, so that He can have real intimacy with us. If our lives and businesses are to be to the glory of God, we need to die away from all our ambitions. This is often a tough process, and many can’t stand the pressure. But what is happening is normal and good.

What are these worth in God’s eyes? –

- My company
- My talent
- My experiences
- My money
- My strength and ability.

NOTHING – unless you have the right motive and attitudes. This means that you need to submit everything to the Lord, under His hand, as a true steward. He is looking for devoted hearts! Everything has to die before it can be resurrected as His business.

When handing control of the company to the Lord, there could come a period when satan won't bless it and God cannot because of some obstacle. We need to make a solid foundation for our business. Put it on the Rock!

Many have had some kind of valley (or desert) experience in different times in their lives. We usually don't welcome them, but they prove to be significant and precious times for us, once we get God's perspective on ourselves and the situation. God uses this situation for our sanctification and to cement the calling He has given us in our hearts.

We can learn much from the experiences of men in the bible: Joseph, Moses, Abraham, David, Daniel etc, gaining insight from their 'difficulties' and desert experiences. Prosperity is in the will of the Father. These men were. We can learn that the hard times were periods for learning and training for us, used by the Creator Himself, for our good. It leads to death to self ambitions, self reliance, self 'control.' It gives birth to trust, hope, and faith in the Lord; also happiness over seeing His will come forth in our lives.

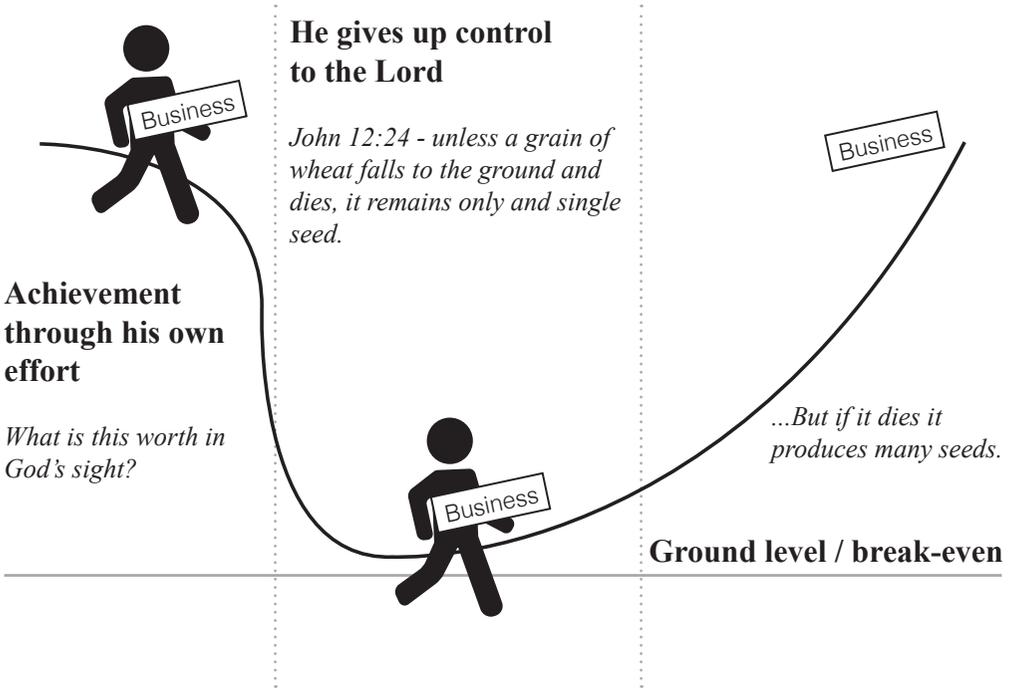
It would be appropriate to look especially at Joseph and Daniel. One of the most interesting marks in their lives was that they could stay calm regardless of the circumstances they encountered. Joseph had peace in the well where his brothers had placed him. He lived in victory even there because he was in the will of the Lord. The same with Daniel – particularly in the lion's den. He obeyed and the Lord saved and blessed him and gave him what He had planned for his life. An effective ministry can only be achieved through an obedient life, which is possible only through listening to the Spirit in your heart. Peace and freedom will come.

Before He uses us for the tasks and missions that we may have dreamt of, he works on us on the inside, changing us and making us fit for His use. We are a piece of clay in the Master's hand. He takes good care of the 'clay' - you and me.

So our lives can go through this valley experience – down to the floor of the

valley where we give up relying on our own ability and strength – works of the flesh cease. Now He can raise us up as we listen, obey and follow the plane He has for us and the good works He has planned for us to walk in. (Ephesians 2:10.)

THE VALLEY EXPERIENCE



NOW THE GLORY GOES TO THE LORD

CHAPTER 7

DO BUSINESS UNTIL HE COMES

As we see everything drawing towards the return of Christ it could be tempting to give up on work. We may even think other things are more important. However, we are to follow the leading of the Spirit and the basic truth of the scripture.

So what does the scripture say:

Here we can look at the parable of the workers in the vineyard found in Matthew 20.

‘The kingdom of heaven is like’ And the passage likens the kingdom to a vineyard where the owner goes out early to hire workers for the day. At various points throughout the day he finds more and more labourers without work and sends them into the vineyard with the promise to pay them what is right.

Then right at the last hour of the day he finds still more labourers and sends them into the vineyard as well.

Its pay time - he starts with the last ones in and pays them 1 denarius – this was the amount agreed with the very first workers for a whole day. Those who have worked all day then expect more and grumble when they receive only the same.

The owner says to them I have not wronged you - I paid you what was agreed. If I choose to pay the others the same it is within my rights to do so.

What do we learn –

- a) The owner of the vineyard expects work right up to the very last.
- b) He values everybody the same.

You may have become a Christian very late in the day or you may have surrendered your life to Christ very late in the day. Conversely you may have been an exemplary Christian for many many years. The Lord’s message - keep working to the last and My reward is for you.

The reward, of course, is eternity with the Lord and everyone who believes in Jesus' sacrifice for our personal freedom from guilt and sin will reap the same reward.

What does the Spirit say:

This is personal. What does the Spirit say to you? He can lead you to a different occupation or to no occupation, but the message will be the same - work until the end.

What is the message:

Press on. Keep on doing what the Lord has led you to. Don't give up – even when the going gets tough. God is with you. His anointing is upon you for the good works He has prepared for you to do. (Ephesians 2:10) Above all, 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and follow the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit.'

'So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them 10 minas, and said to them,

“DO BUSINESS TILL I COME.”