

✦ 1. Serving through business

The Bible says – Luke. 19:13 (NKJV)

"...do business till I come"

Due to our thorny relationship with money, the issue of doing business has been a difficult and morally confusing question for many Christians.

We know that we need money to survive in this world, but at the same time we think that money can be something dangerous that can corrupt us if we get too much of it.

- This has created a poverty-mentality; poverty has become the standard among us.

✦ Because of this, money actually becomes a bigger issue in the everyday life of Christians and churches than it should - **we always need it, but never have enough of it.**

The exhortations in the Bible against materialism (*living for material things*) and greed have been used **in a one-sided way** so that we have become fearful of earning more money than just what we need to manage in life.

The other side of what the Bible speaks about-

- **God's care for our needs** and,
- **the many promises of financial abundance and blessings**, has been down sized.

✦ The very word 'prosperity' that is mentioned in several places in the Bible makes some church people nervous and upset.

If somebody gets rich they suspect that there is probably something wrong with that person's heart.

This negative approach to financial prosperity has automatically led to a suspicious attitude toward doing business in general and towards business men/women in particular.

There has been a lot of guilt and condemnation associated with the issue of money and business, not only for theological reasons, but also because there have been some bad apples among the Christians who have practiced business.

And those who have opposed Christian business life have been quick to point this out.

- But, of course, there is a better way to approach the issue of business than a fearful and life-denying way

God does not use fear or condemnation to guide his people but instead uses his precious Spirit who leads us through peace. And there is a tremendous freedom to serve God in so many ways in the NT.

✦ In Luke 19:13 Jesus exhorts us to do business until his second coming- "*do business till I come*".

- If business was something bad, Jesus would never have encouraged us to it.

The opposite, doing business with a right heart, will benefit the kingdom of God and bless the nations.

✦ • Business is **part of the calling** we have as a body of Christ.

✦ *Reaching the marketplace with the gospel*

We come together in the church to edify ourselves spiritually. After we leave the church we go to our jobs and businesses. There we have an opportunity to affect the marketplace with the gospel, by word and walk.

44. To be a businessman and a man of God

So many relationships come naturally in everyday business situations and give plenty of opportunities to share the gospel.

- The marketplace is probably **the biggest mission** field in society

✦ *An opportunity to bless our people*

A well-run business:

- will have a **good impact on the region** and
- will **add to the wellbeing** of society.

It benefits many outside the business owner because

- it **creates jobs and incomes** and
- it creates an environment with **new opportunities for other businesses** who supply or add more value to our products

✦ *Creating resources for the kingdom of God*

Besides creating opportunities to share the gospel and prosper our people, we can also create wealth for the kingdom of God.

- We can create job opportunities for our church members or other churches' members so they can give more.
- We can generate higher incomes for ourselves so we can give more in tithes, offerings and alms to the poor and needy.
- One of the main callings we have for doing business is to make money in the world and finance the work of God.

When we set God first in our lives, running a business can really become a tremendous blessing and a true service to the Lord.

✦ 2. A prophet and a businessman

- Is it possible to be very spiritual and a good businessman at the same time?

This question might puzzle business people, pastors and ordinary believers.

But the Bible is full of examples of great men of God who at the same time were successful and rich businessmen.

Let's look at a few examples:

✦ Job

The Bible says – Job. 1:1-3 (NKJV)

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest man of all the people of the East”

This man was the most successful businessman of the East in his time and at the same time the most God fearing person on earth (verse 8).

- He combined the fear of the Lord with successful business endeavors without any problem.

A great lesson from the book of Job is that when he lost all of his wealth and his close family,

- he **did not sway in his integrity and commitment to God** and
- **God gave him even greater riches after his tribulations.**

Job is great example of a businessman who had his deepest identity and life in his relationship with God rather than an identity based on his business.

- His values were deeper than his pockets!

✦ Four generations of prophets and businessmen

In the book of Genesis we can see four successive generations of businessmen who at the same time were great men of God; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

These were the great patriarchs who were the beginning of the Jewish people and the covenant that God made with man, both the old and the new covenant/testament.

- They were not only a holy family, but also an entrepreneurial family

Let's see how they had both a strong spiritual life and a business mind at the same time.

✦ Abraham

Abraham is mentioned as a prophet in Gen 20:7 and is the father of faith to all believers (Rom 4:11). He made a covenant with God the Almighty and God himself called himself after Abraham – “I am the God of Abraham”

So Abraham was definitely a **mighty man of God**, but he was also a **wealthy man**. He was very rich in gold, silver and had vast herds of livestock (Gen 13:2). His business employed hundreds of people and just grew wealthier over the years.

- He was truly blessed in his finances.

He emigrated from his home country Ur and started to create his business fortune while he lived in Haran, the crossroad of commerce in the Middle East.

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✦ Isaac

Isaac, his son, was the next generation who also had a strong relationship with God, and God confirmed his covenant to Isaac several times.

Isaac **heard from God how to invest** in times of financial down turn and made himself a good fortune (Gen 26:12-14).

Isaac's fortune was not inherited from Abraham but was self-made by turning a financial crisis into an opportunity. Isaac was both a god-fearing man and a savvy man.

✦ Jacob

Was definitely a man who heard from God. There are many examples of him receiving dreams and words from the Lord. He struggled with the angel and saw God face to face.

He went over the brook empty handed when he fled for his life from his brother but he returned to Canaan with vast possessions.

- He practiced good business by the wisdom of God.

The turning point for his financial situation came when he stopped working as an employee for Laban **and started his own business** (Gen 30:30).

This is so true:

- it is in owning the business and not working for it, where the big money is

✦ Joseph

The forth examples of the combination of great men of God and business in this family was Joseph.

No doubt he was a man of great integrity and prophetic anointing. He walked close to God his whole life and his life is a prophetic sign of the coming of the Messiah.

God blessed Joseph with a **business mind** that was just amazing. By his management he saved the nation of Egypt from starvation.

- Joseph was a great man of God and a great businessman at the same time.

By his management he made a fortune for himself, even if he didn't run his own business technically speaking.

None of the above individuals had to compromise with their faith or integrity because they were businessmen.

We can rather see that their walk with God was the prime reason they were so successful in their business, as **Proverbs 10:22** says. *"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and he adds no sorrow with it"*.

There are many other examples in the Bible telling of the combination of being a devoted man of God and doing business at the same time. **Paul is another example**, but time will not allow us.

- ✦ • So we can draw the conclusion that business and spirituality don't have to contradict each other

The important thing when we do business is that we preserve a high level of integrity and a right heart.

You don't have to become a pastor to be used by God and serve him.

You will probably be more used by God if you stay true to your gift and calling to be a businessman, working with a kingdom perspective, than trying to become a pastor if God hasn't specifically asked you to.

✦ Discussion

Discussion

1. What is the biggest challenge for a businessman to have strong spiritual life?

✦ 3. Financial and spiritual leadership

The Bible says – Gen. 37:5-11 (NKJV)

“Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, ‘please hear this dream which I have dreamed: there we were, binding your sheaves in the field. Then behold my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf’ And his brothers said to him, ‘shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?’ So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, ‘Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.’ So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?’ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.”

✦ Joseph had two dreams after one another. They both had one thing in common and one thing that separated them from each other.

- The thing **in common** was that they both spoke about Joseph becoming a leader

The stars and the sheaves bowed before him and admitted his position of authority.

- What **separated them** was that one of them spoke about stars and heavenly bodies bowing to him and the other about sheaves bowing to him.
- The stars represent the **spiritual**
- The sheaves represent the **financial**.

✦ Joseph was to become both a **spiritual leader** and a **financial leader**.

- **Stars** = spiritual leadership
- **Sheaves** = financial leadership

We can see how this prophetic dream about **his spiritual leadership** becomes a reality when he speaks the Word of the Lord to the Pharaoh’s servants in prison and interprets the dream to Pharaoh. He also became a **leader for his father** Jacob when he took the nation of Israel on a new course and brought them to Egypt.

His financial skills and leadership are very evident throughout the whole story in Genesis. Joseph becomes exalted to a position of leadership in every place he comes to and he ends up being the Minister of Finance in the super power of that day, Egypt.

By his financial leadership he saved hundreds of thousands lives and made Pharaoh exceedingly rich.

This story highlights the combination of spiritual leadership and financial leadership working together, and the result of it is just beautiful.

- Joseph was truly a prophet and a businessman at the same time.

If you have a calling to be a businessman you are called to be like Joseph!

✦ **A spiritual leader:**

You are called to speak the word of the Lord into the market place. Jesus called us to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15).

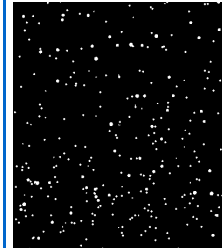
The world today is not homogenous, but is divided into many subgroups made up of race, language, class, profession, etc.

The barriers between these groups can sometimes be very high and it is difficult to enter into one subgroup without belonging to it.

- one of these subgroups is businessmen/woman

Many of them only spend time with other businessmen. If you want to reach businessmen you must belong to their world by being a businessman yourself.

- As a businessman you are called to **share the gospel** with other businessmen and bring them to Christ.



Stars



Wheat sheave

44. To be a businessman and a man of God

- We are **to be both disciples** of Jesus Christ and **disciple-makers** for Jesus Christ **in the market place**.

✦ **You are called to be the salt of the earth and a light in the world.**

Salt had the function of stopping the decaying process, and you are to have a moral and ethical impact on your fellow businessmen by being a good example.

You are also to be a **light** in the world, shedding the love and hope of Christ on other businessmen who have broken and lonely hearts.

- **This is our privilege and obligation as Christian businessmen.**

✦ **As a financial leader:**

As a businessman you are creating wealth not only for yourself but also for the community and are to contribute to its development.

When you are successful in your business you are creating job opportunities and opportunities for other businesses to grow because of your growth.

An important effect of a strong business life in a region is that

- **it offers a future for young people**

When we create jobs they don't have to leave the region to find jobs elsewhere or start living a destructive lifestyle of drugs and idleness.

As financial leaders we improve the lives of many by creating better living conditions for them.

When our business grows we will also start to get a platform of influence in society.

In Luke 19 and Matt 25 we can read that the more successful the servants had been in their business, the more cities they would rule.

- **When the business grows we will start to get a voice in society**

Because Joseph was skilled with finances he had a voice before the mightiest man of his time, the Pharaoh, just as Daniel had a voice before the emperors of Babylon and Media and Persia.

On the other hand, Ecclesiastes 9:14-16 says; *"...the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard"*

As our business prospers, the community will respect us more and ask for our involvement and we will have an opportunity to bring healing to the nations (Rev 22:2).

✦ 4. The personal life with God

The Bible says – 2 Cor. 8:4-5 (NKJV)

“Imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering of the saints. And not only as we hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God”

Giving big sums of money to God is not the first thing that God wants from you as a businessman. What he wants is your heart!

We are not to give to God’s work to ease our conscience or win favor with the Lord: **we already have his favor by the blood of Jesus.**

- We give because we love the Lord and his work.

We can’t tip God with our money: true wealth in God’s eyes is a life devoted to Christ.

The Bible says that obedience is better than sacrifice and what the Lord seeks is a true worship service where we give ourselves to him honestly, wholly and devotedly.

That devotion can only be possible when we have daily fellowship with our heavenly Father and a regular church life.

But as we all know, a businessman is also a busy man, so good routines are essential to create spiritual habits.

Daniel was a very busy man with great responsibility. But he wouldn’t compromise his relationship with the Lord for any position or worldly success. In that busy job he created routines, by praying three times a day, so that he could maintain his relationship with the Lord and not dry up spiritually (**Dan 6:10**).

If we are determined to keep our personal life with the Lord alive, we can be both spiritually strong and hard working successful business men; a wonderful combination.

This can be done when we understand that our identity as Christians is not our profession as businessmen/woman but our position as children of God.

We don’t live for our business, but for the Lord: he is our true meaning in life.

That’s why every Christian businessman should not only ask for God’s blessing on his business, but commit his business to Jesus and tell him that he can do whatever he wants with it.

- ***This is the heart of a man who is both a man of God and a businessman.***

✦✦ Homework

Prayer:

Thank you Father for the gifts you have put in my life. I want to use them for your glory and for the benefit of your cause. As a business man/woman I want to serve you with that gift. I don’t see my business life as one part of my life and life with you as another, but it all comes together as ministry for you Lord. Grant me the wisdom to run my business in a way that pleases you and serves my fellow man. Let me glorify Jesus every day in my job as a business man.

In Jesus name!

Amen!