

# STEWARDSHIP CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for Financial Connections

## Business as Mission

Gary Miller

If I asked non-Christians in your community what you believe, what would they say? Are they forming their impression by examining your church's doctrinal statement?

People build such impressions primarily through business interactions. Our actions and responses impact people more than the carefully prepared statements of our churches. It should be a challenge that the way you conduct your business will, to a large extent, determine how people perceive Jesus Christ. We tend to separate missions and business. When I visited Indonesia—a country that is almost entirely Muslim—a missionary said, "Back in the 1800s the Dutch sent Christian missionaries here to evangelize. Then Muslims came too, but they didn't come as missionaries, they came as traders and shopkeepers. As they went about their business, they told people about Mohammad."

He continued, "I think if Christians had conducted good business in this community, they could have impacted this country for Christ instead."

How different the country of Indonesia could be today. Are we underestimating the power of business in spreading the Gospel? Can we be more intentional in demonstrating Jesus through our business activities? Why are you in business? What is your overriding vision for being in business?

### Proverbs versus Jesus

Let's look at some different perspectives in the Bible regarding business and wealth, specifically contrasting teachings in Proverbs with Jesus' teachings.

In the Old Testament, God tells Israel to slaughter the Amalekites. Flip over some pages and Jesus tells us to love our enemies. We can reconcile apparent contradictions like these because we understand the difference between the Old and New Testaments. But what about the apparent contradictions in the Bible regarding business and wealth?

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### Teachings of Proverbs

Let's begin with what the Book of Proverbs says about wealth. Proverbs abounds in common sense. It instructs us how to get along with people. It stresses diligence and a strong work ethic. It tells us to learn from the ant to plan ahead, work diligently, and save for future needs.

Proverbs encourages the preservation of wealth: "Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he

## In this Issue

**Business as Mission** ..... 1  
*Gary Miller*

**Seminar Information** .... 3

**When Smaller is Bigger** 4  
*Roy Herr*

**New Personnel at Anabaptist Financial**..... 5

**Business Advising**..... 10

take thy bed from under thee?”<sup>1</sup> This passage refers to cosigning on a loan, but notice the secondary message. Why would you endanger your own wellbeing and risk having someone take your bed away? In other words, protect your assets.

Proverbs teaches that material wealth is a blessing. While it does warn against trying to get rich quick, in general wealth is presented as a good thing. “Wealth maketh many friends, but the poor is separated from his neighbor.”<sup>2</sup>

Proverbs emphasizes the advantage of wealth gotten by diligence. Proverbs 3:9 says, “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and the first fruits of all thy increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

In Proverbs, wealth is a blessing. Poverty is a sign of slothfulness, just the opposite of wealth. “Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come.”<sup>3</sup> This is common sense. If you don’t work hard and manage well, you will be poor. Poverty is shown as the curse of slothfulness.

I’ve found that older, wealthy Anabaptist businessmen love Proverbs. They enjoy and appreciate its teachings because it shows them to be wise men.

The widow who gave away her two mites did just the opposite of what we learn from the ant in Proverbs.

### Teachings of Jesus

In contrast to Proverbs, Jesus’ teachings are not known for what we call common sense. What about “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”<sup>4</sup> There is not much common sense in that statement! You won’t usually find this principle in a book on running a successful business.

While Proverbs teaches us to watch out for ourselves, Jesus taught self-denial. The widow who gave away her two mites did just the opposite of what we learn from the ant in Proverbs. She just gave away all she had.

If there is a central theme from Jesus’ teachings about wealth, it is that riches are dangerous. Jesus said, “But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your

consolation.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus even said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> Amazing words!

Jesus taught that the poor—not the wealthy—are blessed. “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, ‘Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’”<sup>7</sup>

So what should we do with the differences between the teachings of Proverbs and the teachings of Jesus?

### Reconciling Proverbs and Jesus

After a financial seminar, I can usually guess by their age what people who come to talk are going to say. A young man will say, “These older men who keep telling us to save money—haven’t they read what Jesus said?”

Right behind him an older man will say, “These young bucks who don’t want to work anymore—haven’t they read what Proverbs says about diligence and planning ahead?”

So what do we do with this contradiction?

First, we must understand that Proverbs is a collection of general truths and observations about our world. While Proverbs says, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing,”<sup>8</sup> is this always true? Most of us can think of situations where a man found a wife, and it wasn’t a very good thing. While there are exceptions, this statement is generally true. A godly wife is a tremendous blessing in a man’s life.

Or consider this proverb: “A soft answer turneth away wrath.”<sup>9</sup> Is this always true? It wasn’t true for Jesus. Yet we know that a soft answer does tend to turn away wrath.

In addition to statements of general truth, Proverbs contains the formula for material success. If you are diligent, work hard, save money, are dependable, you will become wealthy. But to be honest about this, Proverbs teaches universal principles that will work for anyone—even a non-Christian.

I like to think of Proverbs as the operating manual for how this world works, written by the Manufacturer Himself. It contains the building blocks for providing materially for our families. When young men are struggling financially, we point them to Proverbs.

In contrast, Jesus teaches the folly of an earthbound vision focused on accumulating wealth. “But God said unto him, ‘Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required

5 Luke 6:24

6 Luke 18:25

7 Luke 6:20

8 Proverbs 18:22

9 Proverbs 15:1

1 Proverbs 22:27

2 Proverbs 19:4

3 Proverbs 23:33,34

4 Matthew 5:42

## Anabaptist Foundation

# SEMINAR FOR DEACONS, FINANCIAL ADVISORS, AND TRUSTEES

*Our church groups believe in offering counsel and support to members who struggle financially. Deacons and many other individuals are asked to serve by helping as financial counselors, advisors, or trustees. Helping a struggling brother or family in this way is an act of service, but often the problems confronted are challenging and complex. Personal, financial, and spiritual issues are often mixed together.*

*Anabaptist Foundation has received requests to provide teaching for church leaders, financial advisors, and trustees. The **Seminar for Deacons, Financial Advisors and Trustees** is planned to address this need and to provide basic training for those who are serving or who have been asked to serve as financial advisors or trustees helping individuals in our church settings.*

**NOTE:** This seminar is for those who work with and help other people who have financial difficulties. It is not designed for those individuals in our church communities who are personally struggling with financial difficulties.

**WHEN: Saturday, June 10, 2017, 8:30AM – 5:00PM**

**WHERE: Ramer Building, 24647 County Road 44, Nappanee, IN 46550**

## Sessions

Session 1. **Principles of Stewardship** - Richie Lauer

Session 2. **Root Causes of Financial Problems** - Gary Miller

False Concept of Ownership... What does it mean to be a steward?... Mistake of dividing finances from spiritual life... need for prevention... teaching stewardship as a brotherhood.

Session 3. **How do We Begin to Help Someone?** - Joel Martin

Preparing personally... asking questions... gathering information... defining the problem.

Session 4. **Building a Vision for What Should and Can Occur** - Gary Miller

Salvaging the person (emotional/spiritual needs)... importance of measurable and meaningful steps to restore hope... building vision and commitment... accountability.

Session 5. **Damage Control: How to Stabilize a Deteriorating Situation** - Joel Martin

Developing a plan... communicating with creditors.

Session 6. **Requiring Accountability – Staying on Course** - Joel Martin

Building a communication plan... dealing with setbacks... determining appropriate brotherhood assistance.

Session 7. **Moving our Communities Toward a Kingdom-driven Vision for Finances** - Gary Miller

Building a vision of finances as a part of the kingdom... building transparency, openness, and brotherhood... sharing a vibrant vision with your church.

Cost: There is no charge for the seminar. Ordained brethren (bishops, ministers, deacons) and those who have served or are serving as financial trustees are welcome to attend free of charge in appreciation of their service to the church. A free-will offering may be lifted for those who wish to support this type of effort. Lunch will be provided.

**Seating is limited, so advance registration is requested.** To register, contact: *Anabaptist Foundation (800) 653-9817 ext. 214*

### LOCAL COMMITTEE:

LaMar O. Hochstetler – *Amish Mutual Mortgage Fund (574-658-4618; Milford, IN)*

Leroy Martin – *Mennonite Mutual Land Trust (574-596-2753; Wakarusa, IN)*

Daniel A. Bontrager – *Tri-County Land Trust (260-593-0167; Topeka, IN)*

# When Smaller is Bigger

Roy Herr

Preston wasn't sure he had what it took to be a business owner, but when an opportunity arose to get into the printing business, he took it. Preston settled on a slogan that perfectly expressed his vision for Preston's Printing: "Exceptional quality, speed, and price—no project too large, too small, or too uncommon."

Preston's Printing got off to a great start. Preston was elated—maybe this whole thing of running a small business wasn't so hard after all. Small forms, stationery, and card projects flowed in. Then came the sell sheets and brochures. Labels? Sure! Preston invested in more equipment. Catalogs? Yes, we can do that! One thousand catalogs stretched the staff, but they cranked it out. Every week, Preston urged his employees to work faster and longer.

But after several months, things started to fall apart. Preston first noticed it when Elaine, his customer service representative, mentioned one Friday that she had taken several calls from unhappy customers asking about the status of their orders. Preston thought some customers just seemed to have unreasonable expectations about turnaround times.

Preston found himself handling calls about quality problems.

The phone kept ringing. Preston found himself handling calls about quality problems. One time his people folded a brochure the wrong way, so it was inside out. Another time some pages were missing from an annual report they had printed for a customer. Whenever this happened, Preston responded with integrity and made it right. He even offered the customer a discount on their next order. He liked to treat his customers well, and didn't want them to leave for a competitor.

Then came the big order—20,000 catalogs treated with a special coating process. Preston gathered all the help he could get, including his cousin's boys who came after school. The little press did well at first, but then the paper began to jam. The same afternoon, the special coating began to gum up the rollers on the press.

Tension was high—they were getting behind schedule. Preston sent the crew home at 10:00 that night with only 20 percent of the project complete. The next day started well, until they needed to throw away a whole stack of printed sheets because of operator error. A quick calculation told Preston he would not have

enough paper. He ordered some more.

On the fifth day, they were on the home stretch when one of the helpers stacked printed sheets too quickly and 500 copies were smudged. The receptionist came to the back and said there was a customer out front whose postcards were supposed to be finished three days before. Preston sighed. He went to the front and offered more apologies, more promises, more discounts.

Finally, the big project was done. But so was Preston. That night he felt fear. His accountant had been warning him that his margins were too thin. The numbers weren't looking good. He was in debt trying to keep up with an increasing variety of demands. His employees were stressed and overworked. He knew Preston's Printing was getting a reputation for mistakes and slow turnaround time. Worse yet, his family complained that they never saw him and that when he was home, he was distracted and irritable. Preston knew he was at a crossroads. Preston put his head on his hands. Why had he ever gotten into this business? His worst fears seemed to be coming true. Preston felt failure looming around the bend.

The next day, Preston's uncle stopped by the print shop. Preston took him back to his office and poured out his problems. His uncle listened quietly while rereading the slogan in the business card, "Exceptional quality, speed, and price—no project too large, too small, or too uncommon." Finally, his uncle spoke up, pointing to the slogan on Preston's business card, said, "You cannot run a business and be all things to all people". Preston knew his uncle was right. He started to do some serious rethinking. Fortunately, they had been tracking the costs and profitability for each project. As he pored over the numbers from the past three months, patterns emerged. Preston studied the types of customers for each product and quantity range. He envisioned what he wanted his business to look like in five years.

Based on his new vision for his company, Preston began to make changes. The first thing to go was the old slogan. Then he identified three profit centers he wanted to nurture. Two of the profit centers fit nicely with a mid-scale printing company image. Preston decided to have his company brand redesigned to communicate this image.

The third profit center was a high-end specialty with high profit margins that served a unique set of clients. Preston created branding that spoke specifically to this specific group of people. He trained two of his staff to handle calls and walk-ins for this service. This left the rest of his employees free to serve the medium-to-large

projects that accounted for 70 percent of profits.

Preston arranged meetings with three smaller printers in the area. One of the shops specialized in die cutting, foil stamping, and other specialty projects, so he set them up to be his dedicated vendor for these services. Delighted for more volume, they gave him a price that allowed a nice markup. The other two shops became referral options for customers with jobs too small for the “new” Preston’s Printing he was creating.

Preston educated himself about the needs of his customers in each niche. He set clear boundaries for the quantities and job types that fit them best, and focused his marketing efforts to communicate to his prospective customer base. More importantly, Preston gathered his employees together and owned his lack of leadership and apologized for the unreasonable hours. He set reasonable work hours and created a training regimen to improve employee competence and instill enthusiasm for the new direction the company was going. With time, employee morale took a giant leap, customers’ smiles returned and profits rose.

## What can we learn from Preston?

Sometimes smaller is actually bigger. For many businesses, focusing on the untapped small niche has big benefits. A niche is a subset of a larger market, often defined by demographics such as age, income, gender, or location, or by personal interest and beliefs such as goals, values, and worldview.

For example, instead of targeting all consumers in the surrounding area, a grocery store might cater only to those looking for organic foods. A construction company might build new homes for high-income customers while another focuses on affordable remodels for homeowners with average incomes. Or in Preston’s case, narrowing the overall focus to serve customers with mid-sized print projects and then taking additional steps to serve a specialized niche. For Preston, smaller was bigger and much better, especially for his employees and family. 🖱️

*Roy Herr is from Rosewood Marketing, located in Myerstown, Pennsylvania.*

## New Personnel at Anabaptist Financial



### **Tim Lauver**

*Loan Reviewer*

Tim began his work as Loan Reviewer in January 2017. He analyzes and reviews loan applications, interacting with potential borrowers throughout the loan review process. He makes loan determinations, and informs applicants of loan acceptance or denial. Tim is married to Mary Alyce and they have four children. They attend Crossroads Mennonite Church (Keystone) in Richfield, PA where Tim serves as minister.



### **Brian Stauffer**

*Loan Facilitator*

Brian joined the Anabaptist Financial office team in November 2016. He provides potential borrowers with upfront information about how to apply for a loan and assists them with completing loan applications. He helps loan applicants compile the financial information needed for a loan request to be reviewed and summarizes the information for loan reviewers. Brian and his wife Marie have three children, and attend Susquehanna Mennonite Church (Keystone) in Port Trevorton, PA where Brian serves as deacon.



### **Friedrich Stoltzfus**

*Loan Closing Assistant*

Friedrich has worked part time since September 2016. He assists the loan closing team, primarily in lien filings. Friedrich attends East District Mennonite Church (Keystone) in Watsontown, PA. He plans to begin working full time for Anabaptist Financial in June.

of thee, then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*<sup>10</sup> (italics added).

Jesus doesn't tell *how* to make money in business. Rather, He provides the *why* to be in business. If your main goal is to build a prosperous business, be warned that you can live out the teachings of Proverbs and still be a fool.

The teachings of Jesus provide a kingdom context for industry, showing the purpose of business and producing income. "Give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."<sup>11</sup>

God does intend that we generate an increase, but He is very interested in where we store it. By following the teachings of Jesus in your business life, you will accumulate wealth in the kingdom of heaven.

In summary, Proverbs tells how to run a business and create wealth. The teachings of Jesus supersede Proverbs, revealing *why* we should be in business. If we make a distinction between the Old and New Testaments in warfare and nonresistance, we must also distinguish between good business practices and accumulating wealth. Our tendency is to separate the material from the spiritual in our lives, focusing part of the time on Proverbs and providing for our families, and other times on Jesus and our inner spiritual lives. But God intends that we integrate the aspects of our spiritual and business lives.

## Secular Business with Spiritual Skin

What happens when we separate the material from the spiritual? Let's consider an imaginary person we'll call Bishop Robert.

Bishop Robert is a respected church leader. He is known for coming along beside people who are struggling. He works with them, shares with them, and even gives money to them. When it comes to church life, Bishop Robert is kind and considerate.

But when Bishop Robert goes to work on Monday morning, things change. He sees customers, vendors, and employees as people he can make money off of. He is known for driving hard bargains with his vendors. He knows how to write contracts so customers receive no more than they are entitled to, making his business highly profitable.

Bishop Robert seamlessly blends being one person in his spiritual life and another person in his business. He justifies this dichotomy by saying, "Business is business."

Because he gives heavily to the church and charity, subconsciously the end justifies the means for him. As long as business profits are going to missions, it doesn't matter how he runs the business. Not that he would actually say this, of course!

Do you think God is pleased if you are known as a tightwad and for driving hard bargains so you can send more money to overseas missions?

I once worked with a believer who moved to an area with a high concentration of plain people. He told me, "I assumed these people would be very easy to get along with. Working with them would be a pleasure. But I found just the opposite. I would rather do business with the unbelievers in my community than with the plain people."

What a shame! Leaving this kind of impression is radically different from what Jesus taught.

Even though they may not admit it, many businessmen think they would go broke if they implemented Jesus' teachings. Are you afraid of what might happen if you started doing *unto others as you would want them to do unto you*? Do you fear forgoing money, or failing to follow Jesus most? Would you be willing to give up your business and look foolish if this is what Jesus requires to follow Him?

Many businessmen think they would go broke if they implemented Jesus' teachings.

## Kingdom-Focused Business

The business world constantly pressures us to conform to its values. We must have a clear vision of what we're doing and why we're doing it.

When writing the book, *It's Not Your Business*, I interviewed a second-generation Amish business owner who operated a sawmill with his sons.

Years earlier, the family had operated a cabinet shop. One day his father said, "In light of all the needs in the world, we could be doing more. Our cabinet shop is working well, but why don't we start a sawmill and use the income to bless the kingdom of God? There are people overseas who need financial help. People in our community have hospital bills they can't pay, and we need more places for our young men to work." So, they started the sawmill, which grew into a large business.

I asked the sawmill owner, "How do you stay on track with that vision?" He swiveled his chair and pulled their vision and mission statement out of a drawer behind him, and read:

<sup>10</sup> Luke 12:21

<sup>11</sup> Luke 12:33

1. To finance the work of God's kingdom and seek to aid in the alleviation of the suffering of the poor.
2. Seek a unified, well-structured, family-oriented business environment. Business should serve all involved well and enhance Christian living.
3. Prevent overworked and overstressed working conditions.
4. Pay good wages to enhance the employees' financial wellbeing.
5. Hire enough employees to prevent being overworked ourselves.
6. Provide enough office or management staff to stay ahead of costly computation errors and endeavor to be legal in everything for conscience sake.
7. Keep profits under control to prevent tax overburdens and luxurious lifestyle.
8. Work hours that don't hamper family life and/or community service etc.
9. Provide flexibility if someone needs to take time off.
10. Be a debt-free company.

A vision statement explains what an organization hopes to achieve, and a mission statement tells how they are going to accomplish their vision, so this includes elements of both. This was intended only for family use, and they occasionally read it together to keep themselves on track.

At the bottom of their vision statement were the words, "The price of being a disciple of Christ in today's business environment is eternal vigilance." In light of this statement and their kingdom vision, I asked if they bless their community in any ways that provide no financial advantage to the business.

"We produce about a semi-load of sawdust every week," he said. "The easiest thing would be to hire a company to haul it out. Instead, we allow the community to come get sawdust. It is really just a hassle for us, but it is a great blessing to our local people. They're not our customers so there's no financial advantage to us."

Do you provide any services in your business that are not profit oriented? Are you using your business to bless others in some way?

### The Need for Profitability

Kingdom-focused does not mean anti-profit. Sustainability demands profitability, but when a choice must be made between profit and the kingdom, the kingdom always wins. That is when you find out whether profit or the kingdom is on the throne of your business. If you cannot operate a kingdom-focused business in your current occupation, get involved in different field. Businessmen

must follow Jesus, even if it means selling out.

### The Golden Rule in Business

Jesus said, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."<sup>12</sup> This teaching will permeate a kingdom-focused business. When you are a buyer, you will ensure that the seller makes a profit on the transaction. If you are a seller, you will ensure that the buyer receives good value and service. Even though your name may be on the corporate documents, you are a servant of Jesus Christ, and He must be honored in every transaction.

I asked an owner of a woodworking business how he uses his business to reach out in his community. He said, "I want to operate in such a way that everyone who walks out the door of my business leaves curious about Christ." Whether you are the employer or an employee, does your business operate in a way that creates curiosity about who Jesus is.

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but I believe it's a path God calls some  
of his children to walk.

### The Danger of Business

Clearly there is extreme danger in business involvement. Jesus said, "And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."<sup>13</sup>

Business cares can choke our spiritual vitality. In addition to primary cares, Jesus warned there is danger in the lusts of "other things." The American marketplace is full of "other things." Business can be an extremely difficult path, but I believe it's a path God calls some of his children to walk.

God intends that we find our fulfillment in Him. But many Christian businessmen find themselves drawing their life and satisfaction from their businesses rather than from God. God wants to be our life source and identity, and business can become an idol to subtly fill that place.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 6:31

<sup>13</sup> Mark 4:19

## Business as Mission

God intended for churches—not just individuals—to go out and spread the gospel. Business is important for churches starting in a new area. It is a tremendous opportunity to interact with people.

Count Zinzendorf, a major influencer in the Moravian mission movement, was highly educated. Yet when the Moravians created a mission model, they got involved in trades, not just education. They focused on life skills that could be used in the areas they planned to reach. In 1745, just four years after their mission in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was founded, thirty-five trades were being taught, including pottery, carpentry, butchery, farming, medical classes, and tailoring. John Adams said of the Moravians, “They have carried the mechanical arts to a greater perfection here than in any place which I have seen.”<sup>14</sup>

Each Moravian missionary went out equipped with a skill so he could support himself. They went to poor places around the globe and taught others the skills they had learned at Bethlehem. This enabled them to assist others both spiritually and economically.

Anabaptist communities are also known for business, but are we known for using business as a mission? Commerce is a language spoken by everyone everywhere, which is why commerce is so valuable in spreading the Gospel. As people do business with us, they see how we respond to difficult situations, what we value, and what our real priorities are as followers of Jesus.

What if it were well-known that anyone doing business with our people would always get good service *and* a good deal?

## Demonstrating Jesus

Imagine you were a Moravian leaving to start a small business in a foreign country to spread the Gospel. How do you think you would do business when you arrived? How would you interact with people? Would you drive hard bargains? Would you provide service just good enough to get by? How would your business practices differ from how you do business right now?

Imagine that every businessman in your congregation was known for providing more than people expect. How would that impact your community?

When I was a boy, my father used to talk about a farmer in another state. Though this farmer was famous, he wasn't wealthy. I remember my father saying that this man was known for trying to give people too much. He did sharecropping, and he had been caught putting his own grain in the other man's bin while the combine was at the other end of the field. He was always concerned that others weren't getting enough. That's what he was famous for.

What if it were well-known that anyone doing business with our people would always get good service *and* a good deal?

I heard about a man who wanted to buy a certain tool that cost about five hundred dollars. Since he didn't use the tool often, he decided he would pay as much as three hundred dollars for a used one.

Stopping at a yard sale one day, he saw the very tool he wanted with a price tag of only thirty-five dollars. This garage sale was a widow selling her late husband's things, and he knew she had no idea what that tool was worth. So he told her, “This tool is exactly what I've been wanting, but you priced it too low. I am willing to pay three hundred dollars for it,” which he did.

Would it have been better for him to pay thirty-five dollars, buy gospel tracts with the extra money to hand them out to neighbors? This kind of story speaks more than a thousand gospel tracts! What if we were known for demonstrating Jesus in difficult situations? I know a brother who has a tree trimming business. A customer asked him to take a look at removing a nice big ash tree along with an aspen tree in her front lawn. He priced the work, and called her back and left a price on her answering machine to remove one of the trees.

The lady called him back that evening and said she wanted him to remove the ash tree. The young man told her, “No, you don't want the nice ash tree removed. It's the aspen tree you want taken down.”

“No, I want the ash tree cut down.”

He tried to persuade her otherwise, but she insisted that she wanted the ash tree removed. So he removed the ash tree while she was at work, ground it up in the chipper, and headed home. He had just arrived when the phone rang and a very angry woman was on the line.

“You cut down the wrong tree!”

“Well, you said you wanted the ash tree removed, and that's what I did.”

“No, you cut down the aspen!”

She had improperly identified the species and told him to remove the wrong tree. But regardless of who was at fault, this young man had a major issue on his hands.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17770207jasecond> Accessed 2/3/17

Every dilemma is redeemable, but sometimes it isn't easy. How do you redeem the ash tree that already went through the chipper?

Even though she had made the mistake, he offered to plant a new ash tree, free of charge. But this did little to pacify the woman. She said, "That's not the same. It will take years and years to get that tree back again!"

This young man could have said, "It's not my fault, you told me which tree to take down," and he would have been right. But being right wasn't his primary goal. He wanted to demonstrate Jesus Christ through his business.

He planted a new ash tree. He trimmed her shrubs, cleaned up around the place, and worked for that woman until she began to soften. Eventually she brought iced tea out for him, thanked him, and even told her neighbors what a wonderful business this was.

If your goal is to demonstrate Jesus Christ through your businesses, it will only take one bad business deal to destroy your purpose and witness.

### **Business Accountability**

If our goal is to demonstrate Jesus Christ, shouldn't the brotherhood be interested in how businesses are being operated? Are you able to discuss how you operate your business and financial challenges with your brothers, or is that off limits?

What if our churches were known for a lack of interest in accumulating wealth for oneself? Imagine a community of believers so focused on the kingdom of God that they are unmoved by riches. What about your church? Is it obvious to your community that your focus is not on the dollar? Maybe you are known for diligence and a good work ethic, but are you also famous for generosity and compassion for the poor? Are you known for joyfully allowing others to take your possessions?

Anabaptist churches hold their people accountable in many ways. Can we talk about holding businessmen accounting for their lifestyles, the way they conduct business, and the type of service they provide?

Could our churches also bless men who have God-given ability to administrate business, yet hold them accountable for their lifestyles, the way they conduct business, and the type of service they provide? What

if our churches were known for encouraging kingdom business models? Can we come alongside young men, help identify their gifts, assist them in getting started in business, and do it in a way that demonstrates Jesus Christ to the public?

Strangely, while we agree that all money is God's, we are extremely interested whose pocket God's money is in.

### **Conclusion**

While this may stretch your imagination and seem impossible to implement in your congregation, I challenge you to compare what I have described to the testimony of the early church. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."<sup>15</sup>

They didn't even call their possessions their own! Strangely, while we agree that all money is God's, we are extremely interested whose pocket God's money is in. When two businessmen are doing a deal and the principle of fairness is honored and one comes out a little better, does it really matter if it's God's money anyway?

Notice the result of this kind of eternal perspective in the early church. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:"

Imagine the impact our businessmen could have with this vision alive in their hearts! While secular business has a bad reputation, it's a beautiful backdrop for demonstrating radically different Christian values.

Our businessmen hold a prominent place in our communities. How they conduct business will, to a large extent, determine how people perceive Jesus Christ through us. The goal of both our churches and businesses should be to demonstrate what the world could look like if the entire world followed Jesus Christ. 

<sup>15</sup> Acts 4:32

## BUSINESS ADVISING

# Business Optimizer

## A MONTHLY BOOST TO YOUR BUSINESS

Rise to the next level of business management through the Business Optimizer program as you tap into the expertise of an Anabaptist businessman who provides fresh perspective, management experience, and business expertise.

Your advisor will walk beside you, with seasoned counsel that produces a bountiful harvest of Kingdom-focused business success. Our vision is for your business to become stronger with rewarding relationships, better products, and greater profitability.

### HOW WILL YOUR ADVISOR HELP?

- *Problem solving and working through challenges in monthly counsel sessions.*
- *Facilitating annual strategic planning for increased clarity and direction.*
- *Quarterly financial review and analysis to improve management based on numbers.*
- *Teaching leadership principles, identifying strengths of key people, and producing alignment within teams.*

### For more details call:

*David Sauder*

*Advising Facilitator*

*(800) 653-9817, ext. 206*

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