

WORK WITH A HIGH PURPOSE

BY MERLE HERR

Are you disillusioned with your work? Do you ache for more purpose in work? Have you ever wondered if your work pleases the Lord? To answer these questions, start by understanding the difference between your work's purpose and its mission.

Purpose is what inspires you to work. It is the reason why you work. Having purpose encourages and motivates you to get going. Lack of purpose depresses you and saps your joy. What in your work is worth giving thirty years of your life to do? A purpose is something which we aspire to and which grips our heart. Purpose motivates us and engages our emotions.

Mission is practical. Mission is what you actually do. It is the specific type of work your hands and mind do on a daily basis. Mission is essentially a description of our products or services. It answers the question of "what." What do you provide or produce? That is your mission.

You can *accomplish* a worthy mission in life, but you also need to *fulfill* a high purpose. The ability to find meaning and joy in your work is directly related to the worthiness of the work and the height of the real purpose. Even a good mission (what you do) will often fail to satisfy if it isn't backed up with a high purpose.

Serving the Work

It is a worthy mission to want to make a contribution to your industry—such as building quality

furniture or producing good food—and by showing a better and more ennobling way of doing the work. Satisfaction should be found in work itself, but serving the work cannot be done at the expense of detriment to people.

The only true way to serve people is to emotionally belong to the community and then to willingly work for the sake of people. While the products or services created "serve" the community, the worker serves people. Work has dignity and in meaning in and of itself as it serves the good of others. Even serving a cup of cold water has dignity.

The Scriptures mandate and bless work. The Genesis creation mandate to "be fruitful" and "have dominion" is the foundation for a Christian work ethic. Christianity finds its natural expression through work.

However, some work is not worthy. The Scriptures warn about works that are wood, hay, and stubble, and which will be consumed in the final purging fire. No eternal reward will accompany such useless work.

We should reject work that destroys human life, that exploits others, and that destroys and damages the earth. Work should truly serve people with value that is good, true, and lovely. If your work does not hold these values, you should seriously consider redirecting your efforts to work with a higher purpose. Give yourself to worthy work that truly serves the good of people.

Work should truly serve people with value that is good, true, and lovely. If your work does not exemplify these values, you should seriously consider redirecting your efforts to work with a higher purpose. On the other hand, if you aim only at serving people, you may forget the dignity of work itself. This can lead to discontentment with menial work, bargaining for reward, seeking for applause, and feeling slighted if you are not appreciated.

Give yourself to worthy work that truly serves the good of people.

We accomplish
a worthy
mission.

We fulfill
a high
purpose.

Continued on page 4 ►

ANABAPTIST FOUNDATION

LOANS FOR CHURCHES AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Anabaptist Financial's mission is to help our conservative churches channel material resources within the Kingdom. Part of that "channeling" of resources includes providing loans for churches and nonprofit organizations with some of the resources entrusted to Anabaptist Foundation, our organization that works specifically with donors and charities. The Foundation's **Investment Management Agreement (IMA)** Program provides a connection between conservative Anabaptist churches and charities who temporarily are holding extra funds which they need to invest and other churches and charities which are in need of funds to fill a gap.

Why would a church or nonprofit organization need a loan?

Our churches and charities, by and large, manage their finances very conservatively and do not casually borrow funds. Generally, projects are not undertaken until a significant percentage of the needed funds are in-hand. We encourage these practices. Sometimes, pledges toward a project have been made, but cannot be fulfilled right away. Sometimes, opportunities for real estate purchases come with fixed deadlines. The availability of a loan can be the bridge that connects goals to opportunities.

David Bohlander is an independent financial consultant who often works in the conservative Anabaptist community and is concerned about our people who are being defrauded. *Stewardship Connections* asked him to share his perspective with its readers.

oversight committees. In my business consulting work, I also work regularly with many Anabaptist businessmen and accounting, finance, and legal professionals. I have become aware of a troubling amount of fraud committed by conservative Anabaptists. While fraud is often being perpetrated by outsiders on our church members, even more shocking is the fraud being committed by our church members themselves. The impact of this fraud reaches far beyond the financial losses reported in the newspapers.

The purpose of this article is simple—to prevent any more harm. Our people must be alerted to the way fraud is financially costly to individuals, harmful to the reputation of conservative Anabaptists, and most importantly, how it tarnishes the broader testimony of Christ and His Church.

Damage to Our Christian Testimony

The fraud I have described is undermining our testimony of honesty and truth, values we would claim distinguish us from the world. Numerous large financial frauds committed by conservative Anabaptists have drawn considerable public and embarrassing attention. Just four of these frauds I am directly aware of caused \$125 million of losses to approximately 5,000 members of plain churches in over twenty-five states. I know of seven different federal investigations resulting from these frauds. All of them were committed while the perpetrators were members of our churches. One federal agency has conservative Anabaptists on their investigative radar to uncover

INVESTMENT FRAUD AMONG US

BY DAVID BOHLANDER

"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." Matt 13:25

We have a very serious problem among conservative Anabaptists. Members of our churches have lost millions of dollars through fraudulent financial activities. These losses have far-reaching effects individually, upon our Christian witness, and upon our capacity to fund the work of God's kingdom.

I have participated in numerous church-appointed trustee/

Real-life Situations...

- A deacon brother manages an alms/medical fund and faces a large financial need related to a medical case. If the hospital can be paid off within a specified time period, very large discounts are available. The local church district accepts responsibility to meet the need, but it will take time for the local brotherhood to make up the necessary contributions. A bridge loan from Anabaptist Foundation enables the local church district to pay the expenses within the discount period and provides a time margin for offerings to be lifted to cover the need. The church meets its own need within the local brotherhood, but it needs help (time) to make that happen.
- A newer out-reach congregation is bursting at the seams in its “make-do” building, and an empty church building in the community suddenly becomes available at absolute auction. Pre-approval for a loan enable the church group to prayerfully set the price they are willing to pay and to attend the auction able to buy.

Currently, Anabaptist Foundation holds 31 loans to conservative Anabaptist churches or church districts, schools, mission organizations, and other nonprofits. Information on loans and applications are available from the AF office: (800) 753-9817 ext. 3.

more ongoing financial fraud, and has told me that if we don't clean up this problem, they will.

What is Fraud?

Fraud is not merely the loss of investors' money – an investment that “didn't pan out.”

Here are some excerpts on the definition of fraud:

Fraud can be defined as a false representation of a fact by false or misleading statements, or by concealment of what should have been disclosed—that deceives and is intended to deceive another so that the individual will act upon it to his injury;¹ It is an act or course of deception, an intentional concealment, omission, or perversion of truth.² To deceive is to induce someone to believe that a thing is true which is false, and which the person practicing the deceit knows or believes to be false. To defraud is to deprive by deceit: it is by deceit to induce someone to act to his injury;³ concealing a fact from the other party which may have saved that party from being cheated.⁴

Key recurring concepts in these definitions are misrepresenting, deceiving, and concealing facts. Fraud is not limited to

making a false statement, but also includes deceiving someone by concealing material facts. I am witnessing this deception much more frequently among conservative Anabaptists than I would have anticipated. I hope these are the exceptions, but nonetheless the exceptions are too plentiful.

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”

1 Corinthians 5:6

Examples of Fraud in the Anabaptist Community

To illustrate the depth of the problem, following are examples of some of the fraud, deception, and misrepresentations I have observed.

Ponzi Schemes

The most notorious frauds among conservative Anabaptists are those large fraudulent investment schemes that have been described in the media. In a Ponzi scheme, “new” money is used to pay the “return” on earlier money deposited with the promoter. Usually the rate of return the promoter promises is unrealistically higher than can be expected from legitimate investments. Profits from the underlying investment are not generating the return paid back to the investors, but rather new deposits are the source of returns. The scheme collapses if anything interferes with raising new money, which is needed to prop up the illusion that the investments made with the earlier deposited money are generating a true economic return.

¹ *The Legal Dictionary*

² *Business Dictionary*

³ *Legal Practitioner*

⁴ *CriminalFraud.com*

Continued from page 3 ▶

An example of a Ponzi scheme was the securities fraud in Holmes County, Ohio, where a conservative Anabaptist church member hid a \$10 million investment loss from 2,500 investors for ten years by taking in new money to pay the return on the earlier deposited money. When the Securities and Exchange Commission investigated, a total of \$16 million (out of \$35 million) of investor funds had been

lost, and he was convicted and is serving 6.5 years in a federal penitentiary.

A common characteristic of Ponzi schemes is that the investors do not know and have not verified how and where their money is actually being used. Nor were they presented with information on the financial condition of the underlying investments enabled by their funds.

Illegal Money Pools

A fairly common practice among conservative Anabaptists is for investors to deposit their money with a "trusted advisor" who aggregates the deposits and invests them. Investors often overlook or are unaware that these "money pools" are subject to state and federal regulations and must be registered to operate legally. Likely

Continued from page 1 ▶

The High Purpose of Serving People

We all give lip service to having God as our high purpose for business and work. But the "snake in the woodpile" bites us because our purpose in business is sometimes swallowed up by urgency of the mission. *What we do* is so large and consuming that we can lose sight of *why* we do it!

When asked to explain what you provide customers, what do you say? You can likely talk for five or ten minutes describing your product or service. Can you also talk freely about your purpose? Why are you in business? This is a harder question. Of course the right answer is "to glorify God" or "to love God," but be more specific. Let's ask the question this way: "What is the second highest purpose in your work?"

A farmer was teaching his son how to cultivate corn when a neighbor stopped by and said, "George, you're raising a fine crop of corn." George replied, "I'm not raising corn, I'm raising boys! Raising the corn is just one of their lessons." Raising corn was his mission—it was what he was doing; raising boys was his high purpose—it was why he was farming!

The story of ServiceMaster, a company based in Memphis, Tennessee, helps illustrate this point. Their worthy mission is janitorial service—cleaning floors and washing windows. Their mission requires low-skilled, low-paid labor to

make a profit. ServiceMaster's biggest problem was employee turnover. They were spending enormous amounts of energy recruiting and training new employees. Few wanted to stay with them because washing windows did not provide opportunities to advance to higher-paying work. How many people want to mop floors for the rest of their lives? And how could a higher purpose of helping employees develop be fulfilled if they only stayed a year or two?

CEO Bill Pollard had a passion to help develop people, so ServiceMaster developed a career path for each employee. The company plans to lose each employee the day the employee is hired. They sit down with the employees and help them make decisions about how to achieve career education. They help with training for the next job. Their high purpose was helping people prepare and train for a career beyond ServiceMaster!

When ServiceMaster meshed their mission of washing windows and floors with their purpose of helping people with career preparation, they no longer had as much difficulty in retaining employees.

While the highest purpose of every business is to honor God, the second highest purpose of every business must be *people*. Jesus said that the first commandment is to love God and that the second is to love people. Mark Nissley from Hutchinson, Kansas, recently said,

"Work not only matters to God, but it should matter to us. We are most miserable if the only purpose of our work is the paycheck, or if we have a job that serves our ego and comfort."

Keeping Our Purpose High

To fulfill a higher purpose, work must truly serve the good of others. Anabaptists are well-known for their strong work ethic. We believe in the dignity of work. We work hard. Historically, Anabaptists valued farming because of how it nurtured family life. Farming performs the worthy work of feeding the world with milk, meats, and grains, but the still higher purpose is raising children in a Christian environment of grace and work.

But with so many moving off the farm, we may have unintentionally accepted lower purposes in our work. We continue to "serve the work" with a strong work ethic off the farm. However, we have weakened our resolve to "serve the family" in non-agricultural industries. Many industries will not tolerate children at work with their father. Do we have the vision and purpose to enable fathers to spend time at home with family? Are Christian employers willing to reduce profits by paying above-market labor rates so fathers avoid excessive overtime? Let's ascribe to high-purposed family values similar to those historically achieved through farming. If you increase profits

requirements include the following:

1. The promoter must be a registered securities advisor;
2. The fund ("money pool") must be registered with the state and possibly the federal securities agencies (which requires compliance with all applicable securities laws for this type of investment entity);
3. The investors themselves must be "qualified" as meeting the qualifying standards required by the government, particularly in being capable of taking on the risk of the particular investment (for example, meeting net worth requirements).

Money pools that are not in compliance with applicable regulations are likely illegal, possibly in multiple ways. Such money pools are in contrast to the

legal investment pools within our conservative Anabaptist communities that are in compliance with securities laws and have excellent third-party oversight and financial reporting. Examples of these would include Anabaptist Financial (registered with the securities divisions in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Kansas, and Ohio); Amish Helping Fund (registered with the Ohio Division of Securities); Old Order Amish Fund (registered with the Pennsylvania Securities Commission) and Weaverland Financial Aid (registered with the Pennsylvania Securities Commission), and others.

In addition to the possibility of administering investments illegally, other dangers of these money pools include the frequent lack of third-party oversight (such as a legitimate board of overseers)

and of audited financial statements for the investors. For example, after a presentation I gave on investment fraud, a man in his eighties asked me privately if he should be concerned—he had deposited almost \$400,000 with a money pool manager and only receives an occasional statement that notes his "accrued" interest. He has no idea where the \$400,000 was invested and how the underlying investment, if any, is doing. Nor after three years has he received any cash payments in return of principal or interest. This investment is his primary source of funds for retirement needs.

The "trusted advisor" to whom the investor deposits his money may often have skills such as tax preparation or accounting, but has little, if any, skill in the type of investments he is doing or

Continued on page 7 >

at the price of diminishing the strength of families, you have made a bad and costly bargain.

The more effectively work moves people towards Christ, the higher the purpose of the work. For example, selling a \$1,000 kitchen stove to a family with six children accomplishes a much higher purpose than selling a \$5,000 stainless-steel kitchen stove to a hedonistic couple wanting no children—particularly if this couple's purpose in buying the high-priced stove is to complement their status-seeking \$100,000 kitchen.

The more effectively work produces value for the Kingdom, the higher the purpose of the work.

If your products and services subtly move people away from Christ, you must take responsibility for this loss. If your products fulfill lust for riches, you become one of the factors that deepens bondage to sin and the deceitfulness

of riches. It makes no sense to pray on Sunday for neighbors who are lost, in part because of their riches, and then sell products on Monday that further alienate them from Christ. Consider our loss of joy and purpose in this type of work—and more significantly—our loss in eternity. There is a lot of money to be made serving the lusts of the rich, but what would Jesus do?

A respected Amish outdoor furniture maker in Ohio found himself caught on the horns of negative-purpose work. He began selling expensive hot-tubs to complement his existing line of outdoor furniture. He told me the story of how the hot-tubs drew in rich customers with very low values. The profits were high but the lack of fulfillment was heart-wrenching! He discontinued selling hot tubs. I challenge you to follow the example of this Amish brother. Carefully consider if your business contributes to the spiritual strengthening or weakening of your customers. Move away from negative-purpose work and your reward

will be great. Put people development ahead of product development, and family values ahead of economic values. Turn away from work that subtly erodes Kingdom values. Make profits a secondary concern after you have met the social and spiritual needs of people.

A friend of mine commented how he found deeper meaning and joy working with displaced Burmese people than he did in building houses in America. Is foreign mission work inherently more worthy than washing floors and windows or building houses? The reality is that both are worthy work in the kingdom, and God calls each us to work in different places for the common good of the Kingdom. The more powerfully your work moves people toward Christ, the higher the purpose. Worthy mission and high purpose are the two joy-springs of your heart and you will be restless until you find your calling in a worthy mission with a high purpose. Ω

Seminar for Deacons, Financial Advisors, and Trustees

As conservative Anabaptists, our concept of brotherhood includes offering counsel and support to members who struggle financially. Deacons often take a leading role in addressing financial struggles, and many others are asked to serve as financial counselors, advisors, or trustees. Helping a struggling brother or family in this way is a true act of service, but often the problems confronted are challenging and complex. Personal, family, financial, and spiritual issues are often mixed together.

Both *Anabaptist Financial*, with its program of business education and seminars, and *Christian Aid Ministries*, with its series of books on financial stewardship, have received many requests to provide teaching for church leaders, financial advisors, and trustees. The upcoming **Seminar for Deacons, Financial Advisors, and Trustees** plans to address this need and to provide basic training for those who are serving or may be asked to serve as advisors or trustees in our church settings. The same seminar topics will be shared each day, with the different days and locations being offered to make it more convenient for you to attend.

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 struggling with personal financial difficulties. In reality, this seminar is planned as an effort to "encourage and teach the teachers." We hope those who attend will be better equipped to lead out in their own church communities and learn how to effectively help others who are struggling financially.

Seminar Fee: There is no charge for the seminar. Ordained brethren (bishops, ministers, deacons) and those who have 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.

8:30 am – 5:00 pm

Wednesday, June 5 @ Martindale Reception Center (Ephrata, PA)

Thursday, June 6 @ White Horse Fire Company (Gap, PA)

Speakers | Sessions

Joel Martin

AF Advisory
Group Member
New Holland, PA

Gary Miller

Christian Aid Ministries
SALT Program,
AF Advisory
Group Member
Caldwell, ID

[1] Principles of Stewardship

[2] Root Causes of Financial Problems

False concept of ownership; What does it mean to be a steward?; What does the Bible say regarding this topic?; Mistake of dividing finances from spiritual life; Need for preventative teaching – addressing stewardship as a brotherhood; Our fears of addressing the issue

[3] How do We Begin to Help Someone?

Preparing personally; Asking questions; Gathering information; Defining the problem

[4] Building a Vision for What Should and Can Occur

Salvaging the person... caring for emotional and spiritual needs; Importance of measurable and meaningful steps that restore hope; Helping to visualize sustainability, the danger of consumer debt, and life without debt; Building commitment... importance of accountability

[5] Damage Control – How to Stabilize a Deteriorating Situation

Developing a Plan; Communicating with Creditors

[6] Requiring Accountability – Staying on Course

Building the Communication Plan; Dealing with Setbacks;
Determining Appropriate Brotherhood Assistance

[7] Moving our Communities Toward a Kingdom – Driven Vision for Finances

Building a Vision of Finances as Part of Kingdom; Building Transparency, Openness, and Brotherhood;
Engaging your Church Community in Dialogue; Sharing a Vibrant Vision with your Church Community

To register, please contact *Anabaptist Financial* @ 1245 Old Route 15, New Columbia, PA 17856 or (800) 653-9817 ext. 0
Seating capacities are limited, so advance registration is requested.

the type of projects he is investing in (e.g. real estate, businesses, loans made to others). The businessman who filed the previously mentioned Ohio bankruptcy was primarily a tax preparer and had very limited investment experience, but had invested \$35 million at his sole discretion. In another instance, a money pool manager with no credible business venture development experience, training, or prior business success, invested and lost over \$65 million from 1,500 conservative Anabaptist investors.

If you are currently investing in a money pool, I recommend at a *minimum* that you insist on the following verification and oversight from the money pool manager:

1. A formal legal opinion (from a lawyer) that the money pool is in full conformity with all applicable securities and tax laws and accounting regulations;
2. Audited financial statements;
3. An independent credible board to which the money pool manager is accountable and which verifies reports to the investors;
4. Current market values (i.e. such as appraisals) on underlying assets in the money pool.

If he cannot supply this information, immediately make a formal request for the return of all your funds. *If these four actions had been taken in the above mentioned Ponzi scheme and money pool fraud, at best the losses may never have occurred, and at worst the harm done would have been considerably less.* Proactive, early intervention will prevent a damaging crisis later.

Compromising legal practices

Increasing numbers of bankruptcies are being filed by conservative Anabaptist members. These cases lead to conflict and compromise, and sometimes to legal actions that tear the fabric of brotherhood among us. For example, consider the bankruptcy filed in Ohio in 2010 by the individual mentioned

above who lost \$16 million. The Amish churches of Ohio spent six months and over \$200,000 in an unsuccessful petition to reverse the bankruptcy and have it removed from the Federal Bankruptcy Court. They felt strongly that the Church should oversee and restore the damage done by one of their members. More recently, another large bankruptcy has been filed by a conservative Anabaptist member in Indiana. I am aware of a lawsuit filed in Ohio by partners who were defrauded and are trying to remain anonymous in their litigation against Fair Finance—a \$200 million bankruptcy that significantly affected many conservative Anabaptist investors. Litigation is increasingly being used for debt collection by conservative Anabaptist businesses. The point is that the damage caused by fraud and deception is not limited to the funds that are lost. Fraud brings compromise by leading our members to take worldly legal actions and weakens trust and brotherhood among us.

Affinity fraud

One of the reasons that fraud is so pervasive among the conservative Anabaptists is the “affinity” factor. Affinity fraud is the type of investment scam in which a con artist targets members of an identifiable group who have something in common such as race, age, or religion. Often he is, or pretends to be, a member of the group. Usually he will promote a Ponzi or pyramid scheme. This type of scam leverages and exploits the inherent trust within the group. Often respected members are used to “spread the word” and they unwittingly aid the spread of the scheme. This helps us understand why conservative Anabaptists so often fall prey to fraud being perpetrated by other members. The inherent trust we afford each other causes us to overlook the lack of proper oversight and accountability.

Difficulties with accountability

It is my strong opinion that much greater accountability must be exercised by all members of the Anabaptist community, and particularly by church leadership, or more harm will be done. Confronting questionable behavior is difficult, but must be done. Our community holds to and expects self-governing of our community and the issues that arise within the community, but is often slow to confront those who refuse to be voluntarily accountable. There were suspicions about most of the large financial frauds we have mentioned years before these investment schemes reached a crisis, but they were not investigated. This lack of effective intervention emboldened the investment schemers and allowed them to continue to harm innocent people. Indecision is a decision. Indecision caused substantially more harm to be done than if these perpetrators had been confronted sooner.

Be part of the solution

We must begin to deal proactively with these problems of fraud within the conservative Anabaptists. I envision a collaborative effort of broad-based conservative Anabaptist leadership working to prevent future fraud as well as bringing current investment practices into legal compliance. We already hold the foundational values of accountability and responsibility to each other that are necessary to bring about reform. Ω

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

Matthew 5:13

Contact David Bohlander

Email: bohlander@analyticsinc.net

Phone: (570)265-7554

Fax: (570)521-5932

Stewardship Connections ♦ Volume 6, Issue 2 ♦ May 2013 ♦ A quarterly publication of Anabaptist Financial

www.afweb.org ♦ phone: 800-653-9817 ♦ fax: 866-230-6253 ♦ email: info@afweb.org

Stewardship Connections Personnel

Editorial Team Kyle Brubaker
Merle Herr
Richie Lauer
Timothy Stoltzfus
Geryll Zehr

Managing Editor Geryll Zehr
Design Editor Kyle Brubaker
Reviewers Merle Burkholder
Amos Kauffman
Amos Hurst
Ben Stoltzfus

Address service requested

1245 Old Route 15
New Columbia, PA 17856

Anabaptist Financial
Stewardship Connections With Integrity

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #44
SUGAR CREEK, OH
44681

An Informational Newsletter For Financial Connections

STEWARDSHIP CONNECTIONS