

The Ultimate Business Model

As God's co-workers - - II Cor. 6:1a

The Parables of the Talents, [Matthew 25:14-30](#), [Luke 19:12-28](#)

There are various reasons that Christians get into business. For some it's an opportunity to (at least hopefully) make a lot of money and live the good life. Yep – sports cars, fancy boats, fast airplanes, a second or third home or other marks of “success.” The desire to “be somebody” and to be looked up to by others may be less obvious but just as real.

There are also those who find deep satisfaction in giving employment to others. To help them and add to their life. And the power of enterprise in both stature and financial resources offers opportunity to serve ones' community. These are potentially honorable but there's something more.

The highest level of motivation is that we partner with God in making His eternal life known to the ends of the earth. (That includes ones' neighbor.) There is something spectacular about that. An aspect of eternity in what we do in our few years on earth.

We get to do stuff that has purpose and meaning that will outlast us. The fruit of our labors will continue forever – even a million-million years after our factories and warehouses are gone. It is instructive that, as Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, few remember us for very long after we die.

“Just Do What Comes Natural”

Sometimes we say, “Just do what comes natural.” What we mean is that the thing to do will be obvious. It's what the situation calls for.

In 1982, when I proposed to sons Ken Jr., Brian and Mark that we start an aircraft parts business, I laid down a precondition that was foundational to me. Up to this time I had been a businessman, a pastor and a commercial pilot (sometimes concurrently), and something had come together in my mind. Nothing that I had ever done was more “spiritual” than anything else I had done, because all were in response to God's leading as I worked in His vineyard.

I said that if we started a business, I wanted us to agree that if God prospered us, we would view it as being for His purposes and not our own. We would be stewards and not owners. Those resources would be applied to the extension of God's kingdom and were not for a personal, luxurious lifestyle.

I said that the businessman was no less accountable to God than the preacher was for the use of the gifts and resources entrusted to him. (Okay, some preachers today make that line irrelevant but nonetheless - -.) There would be ways of serving God that were specific and natural to our enterprise. Sure, we would “send money to missions” and would support our local churches and our community, but there would be more.

That vision was put to the test in 1985. The business was growing; I was again serving part time as a pastor; and it was time to either lead or get out of the way. My sons were quite young, but we had walked together through the recovery from a fire soon after we started the business (see [“Tried by Fire”](#)) and they had learned a lot.

Admittedly it felt risky but I knew I had to hand [Preferred Airparts](#) off. It felt risky - business-wise because they were young, but also because I was entrusting to them my passion for serving God through enterprise. Was this my vision or had it become theirs? The answer was soon obvious.

Preferred has grown under their leadership more than it would have under mine, because I'm a founder more than a builder. And the "natural" ways that they have found to use the substantial resources entrusted to them, for God's purposes, boggles my mind. Being about our Father's business through the enterprise He entrusts to us as stewards has endless possibilities for the committed and creative.

What Is In Your Hand?

If you are in auto sales you can provide vehicles to ministries, your church, missions or (hopefully responsible) needy people in a way that blesses them. If you have a body shop; an auto supply business; a book store or food mart, you can - -. How about your computer services, web design or other graphics enterprise? If you collect a lot of frequent flyer miles, you can - -.

If your business has an open house or some event where you'll have a lot of people around, why not invite a mission or ministry to have a display and representative there, and promote them along with advertising your business? How about putting a verse with your advertising – a warm one that draws people to Christ, not the "repent or go to hell" type.

A precondition to this is that you conduct your business in a way that represents God well, and refuse the temptation to seek an advantage for yourself or your business through your generosity.

I challenge you to do it in a low key way – it's not about us, it's about Him. Dare to do it sometimes without an invoice and tax deductible receipt. God knows and His additions are better than Uncle Sam's deductions. And you don't have to keep track of how much you're doing. God knows and it might be best for you, *not* to!

Yep, you will be disappointed sometimes in the people and ministries you serve. You might sell something at cost and have to wait (and wait) for payment. Or you special order it and they return it for a not-so-good reason. They might make decisions that seem unwise to you. There will be times when you have to remind yourself that you did it "unto the Lord," and you determine to entrust them to Him and keep on serving as God opens doors.

Real Questions

If God has prospered you, maybe you want to start a whole new enterprise for the sole purpose of generating funds for His work. Don't you already have enough? I've seen people do that. Humble, blessed, business-savvy people who were more interested in extending God's kingdom than in accumulating personal wealth. Few people know what they've done and that's the way they want it.

Actively partnering with God is the ultimate entrepreneurship model and it wonders me that more don't choose it. Where is it taught in our Christian universities? Is it something that business people discuss over lunch, challenging each other to go further?

Which is most deeply satisfying, \$\$\$ gain that will go "poof" before long, or laying up treasure in forever-heaven? Wealth used for personal satisfaction is boring. Why else do so many wealthy folks need more and more of this and increasingly exotic that? On the other hand, the sense of God's gentle hand on our shoulder, and His "well done" whispered in our ear, is satisfying beyond words.

Finally, what are you going to say when Jesus asks what you did with the talents (whether abilities or money) that He entrusted to you? That's a real question and it deserves a real answer!