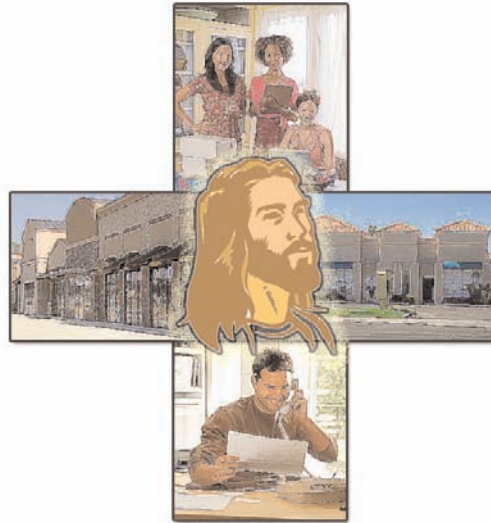


Operating A Small Business-Ministry To Extend God's Kingdom

Followers of Jesus Prayerfully Discovering A Need
and Establishing A Christ-centered Business-Ministry To Meet It

Lesson 1

Your Business As A Ministry



Ministering From Your Business

A business discovers what people need
and seeks to make a profit through meeting that need.

A ministry encounters a need and seeks to alleviate it
through compassion and relief.

A business-ministry serves our Father through discovering needs and establishing
a profit-making enterprise that helps His children provide for themselves.



Restoration Ministries International

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The Guiding Principles of a Christ-centered Business-Ministry

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Introduction

If you've been to our website, Restorationministries.org, then you realize that our Father is fulfilling His promise to *restore the Jewish people* to the land of Israel. At the same time He is *restoring to the Gentiles* around the world the Hebraic foundations upon which the first followers of Jesus established their faith practices as their *way of life* in Christ.

In 1993 our Father recruited us to leave a retreat center ministry in Connecticut to go to Israel. There He revealed to us (as He has to many others) the Hebraic purposes and faith practices which go back to the Hebrew, Abraham, the father of all who trust Jesus (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:29). The loving, obedient trust with which the Patriarch related to God and lived his life was a role model for those who followed Jesus as their Lord in the first century.

Keep in mind that our Hebraic father Abraham was a human being like all of us, complete with frailties. But his righteous and trusting obedient way of life pleased God so much that He established an *everlasting covenant* with him (Genesis 17:4,7; James 2:23). This covenant found its fullness in our Lord Jesus, and all who put their trust in Him are partakers of that covenant.

Our Father wants this same *love-grounded, obedient trust* to be your way of life in Christ too. His Spirit impressed on us that this relational responsiveness to His Lordship defines ***“The Hebraic Restoration.”*** That which our Father is restoring is prophetic in its timing. From all over the earth our Lord is gathering Jewish people back to the land of Israel (see Isaiah 49:22). And, in advance of calamitous times coming upon the earth, He is revealing the Hebraic foundations to those who have hearts to discern them

and apply them to their lives. These foundations are the underpinning of a *Kingdom* way of life. Through their loving, obedient trust in Jesus and their sacrificial love for one another, our Father's children *will* shine in the midst of the encroaching darkness (Philippians 2:15).

***“Have faith in the LORD your God
and you will be upheld;
have faith in His prophets
and you will be successful”***
(2 Chronicles 20:20).

These truths going forth worldwide are being carried in the hearts of *prophets*, not teachers. That's why you won't hear much about them in the religious establishment. There's a prophetic parallel today to ancient times. After God had fulfilled His promise to banish Judah and Israel to Babylon because of their idolatry (see 2 Kings 17 and Isaiah 30:9-11 for the account), the exiles began to meet in the homes of the prophets among them. They were desperate to hear from the God they had rebelled against.

Why did they seek out the prophets? Because the teachers, the priests and the elders they had previously relied on back in the Land had led them into the judgment that God had brought upon them. At the same time, however, the prophets had been warning the people to *repent* and turn back to God (2Chronicles 24:19). Now, with thousands slain and most of the survivors banished, who better to turn to in order to seek the will and the way of the Lord than a prophet.

Fast forward to today. Because of widespread toleration for sin and perversion, God's judgment is upon us. At the same time He is raising up authentic prophets to turn His people back to His ways. You won't see them on TV peddling books or pleading for money.

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Empowered and guided by the Spirit, true prophets quietly go about instructing those who'll hear the way to live righteously in Christ with the same obedient trust as our father Abraham.

An important area of restoration our Father's prophetic voices will bring about is direction in how our Father does business. They're making known the Hebraic foundations for doing *business as ministry*. Through prophetic wisdom, business-ministry owners will emerge from the backwater of Christendom into our Father's purpose for them: to be the point people on the frontlines of extending God's Kingdom.

Operating A Small Business-Ministry To Extend God's Kingdom

Revealing our Father to a lost world by incorporating biblical goals and purposes into everyday business activities

When most people hear the word “business” they immediately think of someone who's focused on making money. In the case of those who are controlled by worldly values and goals this is often true, but their material aspirations put them at odds with God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). For a follower of Jesus, His goals and methods of doing business have nothing in common with the world's objectives. And, ignorance of our Lord's goals and purposes has resulted in unnecessary tragedy for many Christian business owners. Most notably are the devastating loss of their marriage, and their businesses falling into financial difficulties.

Our Father is delighted when His children start small business-ministries so that He can work through the owners to meet the needs of people. He views business as

a *ministry means* to represent His Kingdom goals and His concern for the welfare of people—a *business-ministry*. When a business-ministry is operated with His goals in mind and according to His Word, He will prosper it so that He may display His loving kindness to the lost.

Small business-ministries which are operated on the principles of God's Kingdom can impact a neighborhood or city far more effectively than any “church building” in the same area. Followers of Jesus who own and operate a small business-ministry can act like grains of salt in a lost world to “flavor” it like Christ and stem the sinful decay (Matthew 5:13).

Think about this:

Small business-ministries can reveal our Father to a hurting world if owners make *His* goals and purposes theirs. A business-ministry has far more hours and contact points during the week to be accessible to those who have yet to encounter Jesus than does a “church building” rarely visited by the lost. The building serves chiefly as a gathering place for those who already consider themselves “Christian.” In the lessons to follow we make this clear: *Kingdom-minded small business-ministries can serve a far greater purpose for our heavenly Father than a weekly “church building” service can accomplish.*

For many centuries businesses have been relegated away from the mainstream of Christianity because of a perceived sacred/secular divide. And, viewed from the world's standpoint, a business is just a means to make money. Yet from our Father's perspective, businesses which are operated according to His goals and are built upon His Word are on the front line of *extending His Kingdom*.

In a later lesson you'll discover how the influence of ancient Hellenism on Christianity over the centuries has

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deterred many from believing that our Lord could use them to start a small business-ministry. We hope to show you that starting and operating a small business on *Hebraic foundations* is something the Spirit of the Lord can enable anyone who belongs to Him.

In these lessons in Operating A Small Business-Ministry To Extend God’s Kingdom:

- We’ll introduce you to the ways biblically Hebraic foundations can equip your small business-ministry to serve the Kingdom of God so that He can prosper you as you fulfill His purposes. Our Father’s desire is that a business-ministry owner view him/herself as *a point person on the frontlines* in extending His Kingdom.
- We’ll explain how businesses have been relegated by the Hellenized religious hierarchy to the far edges of Christendom. This demonic influence has singlehandedly kept many Christians from starting business-ministries and making disciples through their contacts.

A Note: You’ll notice an important connection in this series: the biblical mandates for a shepherd/teacher in a Hebraic home fellowship align themselves with the criteria for an owner of a business-ministry. Both shepherd and business owner are called to lead, and our Lord’s criteria for both are the same. Peter sums up the motivation and nature of both spiritual shepherds and those who own a business-ministry:

“Shepherd God’s flock that is under your care, *servicing as overseers*—not because you must, but because *you are willing*, as God wants you to be; *not greedy for money, but eager to serve*; not being a lord over those entrusted to you, but *being examples to the flock*” (1Peter 5:2,3).

This passage illustrates the heart of both a person who’s leading a home fellowship family and an owner of a business-ministry. In the lessons to follow we’ll expand on this inner motive so you can manifest our Father’s heart in your treatment of the people in your care.

Mike’s First Encounter With Business-Ministry in God’s Kingdom

My pilgrimage into business as ministry began in the 1970s while I was in the Navy. A particular military assignment called for me to acquire a graduate degree so I enrolled in night courses at California Lutheran University, which offered extension classes on my base. I pursued a Masters in Business Administration, specializing in organizational psychology and interpersonal relationships.

During my first semester I took an ethics course. A major portion of my grade was based on a term paper. Unlike the other students who picked their own topic, the professor came to me after class one day. “Mike, I’d like you to do your paper on the parable in Matthew, chapter 20. Tell me what you learn about God in why the vineyard owner paid everyone the same amount no matter how long he worked.” I agreed to the assignment.

I’d never even read the Bible before. In fact I remember asking myself, “Why are there *numbers* in front of the sentences?” But the timing was right. I’d recently completed my third deployment in Vietnam and was doing a lot of deep soul-searching. One day someone close to me challenged me to read the *entire* Bible, not just my assigned parable. The first time I read through it, I was trying to find something wrong with it. The second time, though, I sought to know what God wanted of my life.

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I noticed a similar theme throughout the Bible: Whenever someone stood **valiant for God or for His Word**, He stood by them and gave them the victory—quite often miraculously as with David against Goliath, Daniel with the lions, and Shedrach, Meshach and Abednego in the pit of fire. My heart was deeply moved by this recurring theme of the valiant living for Him and applying His commands as a way of life. And underlying this theme is the same heart a shepherd or business-ministry owner for the Lord needs to have.

A Note: After Sue and I both became followers of Jesus in 1977, we discovered that our neighbor, the base chaplain, had asked his entire congregation to pray for months for our salvation. As we looked back we could see how our Father had been orchestrating situations and events to bring us to Himself in response to their prayers. We continue to appreciate how essential to every undertaking is *our Father answering prayer.*

“No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins” (Luke 5:37,38).

In this vivid word picture our Lord Jesus was telling all who would trust in Him that *something completely new* would be required of them. If they were to embrace the “New Covenant” with His Father which He was about to make possible through His shed blood, they’d need a *totally new life* (Hebrews 12:24; 2 Corinthians 3:6). Jesus was making clear to all, but especially to the religious leaders, that they couldn’t patch a trusting faith in Him (John 7:38,39) to their self-justifying religious practices.

The lesson for both them and us: In order to partake of the New Covenant, each

person must become a “new wineskin” in order for His “new wine” to be poured in. You can’t patch a trust in Him or be part of His Kingdom if at the same time you’re relying on the practices and rituals of religion to make you feel righteous.

Your *inner* person needs complete transformation if you’re to receive what Jesus offers you. To receive “new wine” means you need to let go of your “old wineskin”—your worldly, *self*-absorbed way of life—and become a “new wineskin.” Only by doing this can you embrace the fullness of a biblical Father/child relationship that’s offered you in Christ (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). Do you want with all your heart to be our Father’s child as well as part of the Kingdom which Jesus came to establish? Then you need to wholeheartedly commit to a life of *ongoing transformation by His Spirit* (2 Corinthians 3:17,18), and earnestly desire to fulfill His purposes (Ephesians 2:10).

If you’re a business owner who thinks you have it all together, this Father/child dependency may be difficult at first. This is especially true for anyone who has worked for any length of time in businesses controlled by the world’s values and goals. Too often you’ve viewed yourself as a *problem solver* rather than the person responsible to *secure God’s wisdom*. Wisdom is seeing a situation from *His perspective*. An owner who focuses primarily on *solving* a problem will most often miss the purposes and lessons God intended *through* the problem.

- Transformation into a “new wineskin” calls for total reliance on His Spirit within you to both guide and empower you. That way you can live a life pleasing to your Father.
- The Spirit also transforms you through the mutual support of others who are wholehearted in their desire to become more like Jesus and are determined to extend His Kingdom as He works in and through them.

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Back to the vineyard owner in Matthew, chapter 20. The more I got into writing my paper for my ethics professor, the more I came to appreciate how *deeply concerned* our heavenly Father is for the welfare of people, especially those who are helpless or defenseless (Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17; Leviticus 19:10,34; Luke 14:12-14; James 1:27).

I could see that Jesus cited this particular owner because he understood God's reasons for operating a business as a ministry. Like the heavenly Father, the vineyard owner was genuinely concerned for people's well-being. By his very actions in giving everyone a whole day's wage he demonstrated that his primary goal was *not* making money or accumulating wealth. Rather, he provided the means for each man to earn his “daily bread.”

The Older Testament reveals how God was glorified whenever His people trusted Him and conducted their lives according to His Word. Their trust was evidenced by their obedience. Think about the workers in the vineyard. While the men who'd labored all day were jealous that those who'd worked only an hour received a full day's wage, those who'd been shown much grace by the owner left rejoicing, grateful to God.

Jesus Himself affirms the connection between kind actions and recognition of God's hand in those acts: “*In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16). Paul affirms this intertwining concern for others, gratefulness and praise to God in 2 Corinthians 9.

The Hebraic followers of Jesus understood that God didn't give work to man as a curse, since the first couple labored in the Garden *before* the fall. Rather, work gave humanity a sense of purpose and

meaning and was also a source of provision for them.

The Hebrew word *emunah* [eh-moo-NAH] means both work and worship. When people are delighted in their work and in God's provision through it, they are grateful and more willing to acknowledge Him in their thanks. The men whom the vineyard owner hired—the ones wondering how they would eat that day—must have been overwhelmed with gratefulness that he was concerned far more for their well-being than for his profit. Hence every man received a denarius, one day's wage, so he could eat.

A note: Jesus makes it a point to warn business owners against pursuing wealth for *self*-gratification (Luke 12:16-21; see also Luke 16:13-15,19-25; 18:22-25). All too often a wrong focus can lead to idolatry, and our Father is jealous for the love of His people! A Kingdom-oriented business-ministry owner eagerly wants God to be praised through his/her efforts, and for each employee to obtain adequate provision. A greedy owner, on the other hand, is focused on *self*, whether through acclaim, prestige or personal luxury. But notice the result: The Kingdom-minded is blessed by God; the *self*-idolizing struggles as God opposes his sinful pursuit.

As I pored over the Bible in research for my ethics paper, I realized that the way of life which the Bible prescribes for a Jesus follower who has a business-ministry had already been instilled in me and role modeled for me as a Navy officer. I had seen and experienced the righteous motivations of the vineyard owner through a number of the Commanding Officers I'd served under. Some of them followed Jesus and were **valiant in their convictions**. They didn't set their faith aside as military men, but rather upheld it in their leadership. One of these men I

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served with for three years became a “father” to me; he impressed into me his biblical character qualities through role modeling, instruction and a *lot* of correction.

It was as if God had been showing me His Word in action before I ever read it. And in doing so, He’d been demonstrating for me the heart-motive of the vineyard owner. Because of his love for God and love for people, the owner lived out the commands of God as his guide in conducting his business. And through that love-grounded obedience he revealed a loving and compassionate God to his workers. The great measure of his love poured onto his employees, superceding desire for abundant profit (Luke 6:38).

As I worked on my paper I also realized that the Bible was the source behind many of the Navy regulations that guided me as an officer. Let me explain.

Those in command are responsible to the Commander in Chief for the *operational readiness* of their unit; every person and every piece of equipment is prepared to function at their best. But equally important, those in command are responsible for the *morale* of their unit—each person’s mental and emotional readiness to fulfill their responsibility individually and as a team. These two responsibilities are intertwined and passed down through the chain-of-command to the officers and the senior enlisted personnel. *Both* of these mandates cause those in leadership to focus on training *as well as* esprit de corps.

The training the Navy put me through in order to be an officer transformed my own inner motivations. In my youth *I* got myself through school through my own efforts. *I* worked and put myself through college. *I* had little responsibility for others. By the time I

finished training as an officer and arrived at my first squadron, my view of myself and others had been revolutionized. Little did I know then the biblical undercurrent flowing beneath this transformation into a concern for others:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3-5).

I saw that the Bible called for a follower of Jesus to be transformed from thinking of himself first into becoming a servant of others. Indwelt by His Spirit, following Jesus as Lord means *dying to self* and *rising in new life* to serve Him—new wineskins filled with new wine! As “soldiers for Jesus” we’re empowered to be “spiritually operational” according to His standards:

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23,24; see also Matthew 25).

If you belong to Jesus and are serving His purposes for your life, then it’s *not optional* for you to use your business-ministry as God’s means to bless others. Neither is working with excellence as unto Him. Remember, *His* reputation is being represented by those who claim to

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be His, beginning with the business-ministry owner. Think of the owner first as a servant of our Lord and a steward of the resources entrusted to him or her. What does this look like on a daily basis?

- The owner must lead the way in putting Kingdom interests first (Matthew 6:33).
- He or she must search His Word and establish our Lord’s goals and methods for the business-ministry.
- In order for our Lord’s purposes to be accomplished (John 15:16), each employee must be effectively disciplined into a Christ-like motivation to carry out their assignments as though they were working for Him. It may not be evident in the account of the men who worked in the vineyard, but these laborers must have been trained to not damage the grapevines or waste the grapes as they picked them.

During my years of Navy service I recognized that one of the highest contributors to morale was when a group of people *worked together effectively* to accomplish an assignment. Group participation, both in planning and execution, brought out the best in everyone. Again I saw a biblical parallel: the spiritual empowerments our Lord gives His own calls for the same *collective cooperation*:

“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:11,12; see also 12:13-27).

Questions to Consider and Discuss

- **In your spiritual life, do you instigate starting new things? For example, a Bible discussion group, a ministry to the homeless,**

a neighborhood effort to help widows and single parents, even inviting someone into your home for a meal?

- **If you don’t generally initiate new ways to bless others, list below the reasons that hinder you.**
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- **If you’ve been part of initiating new things, did you rely on a program someone else prepared, like a “canned” Bible study or discipleship course? Or, did you seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance and rely on searching God’s Word to put it into practice?**

- **In your innermost being, do you have a sense that you might “fail” God, or have a fear of failure in general?**

- **How miraculous has our Father shown Himself to be over the course of your life? Do you have testimonies of His power demonstrating itself through you on behalf of others?**

- **How truly aware are you of the needs and concerns of others? Can each of the people with whom you’re discussing this material point out the major emotional or physical needs of one another?**

- **As you talk with people close to you in your faith walk:**

Do you discuss Bible passages with the intent to *apply them to your life*, or do you just exchange spiritual facts?

How is His Kingdom being extended as a result of your fellowship together?

In essence, are your spiritual conversations renewing your mind into a “new wine-skin?”

Are your discussions helping to transform each of you into becoming more like Jesus? Are you being filled with “new wine?”