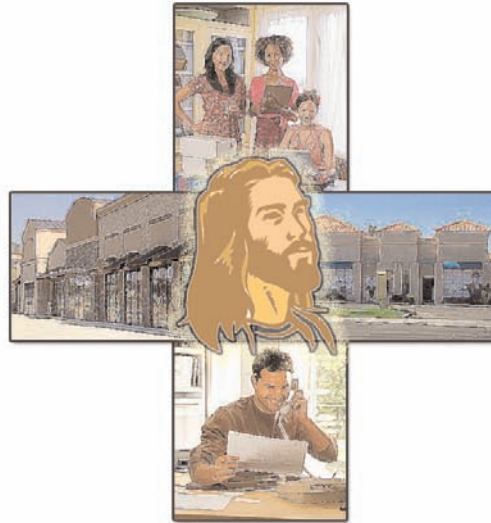


# Operating A Small Business-Ministry To Extend God's Kingdom

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

## Lesson 2

### 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

*Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz*

email: [mikedowgie@gmail.com](mailto:mikedowgie@gmail.com)

Web: [www.Restorationministries.org](http://www.Restorationministries.org)

## The Guiding Principles of a Christ-centered Business-Ministry

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### Lesson 2

## The Influence of Hellenism: Businessmen Become Pariahs

*“The ‘church’ building is the ‘holy house of God’ led by a ‘man of God.’ Business owners and the workplace are the ‘profane realm’ of the ‘laity.’”*

We hope the above statement repels your soul! This bears repeating: our Father is restoring the *Hebraic foundations* that guided the first followers of Jesus. This means that the call of God for *all* who belong to Jesus is the *trust-based obedience* of the Hebrew, Abraham.

Contrary to prevailing Hellenist thought which separates the secular and spiritual arenas and permeates westernized Christendom, the Hebraic view regards the *spiritual* and *physical* worlds in continuity. Neither is higher than the other because *God* has a part and a purpose for humanity in both realms. The Hebraic perspective recognizes and honors God as the Creator Who declared that the world He made is good. Even though sin resides in the nature of mankind, that which God created is still designated “good” by Him. The question is, How can the *workplace* be considered *holy*?

*Holiness* means being set apart by God to do His will and fulfill His purposes.

Being *in His will* is holiness;  
no specific occupation is holier than another.

Christianity was heavily influenced by the teachings of converted Hellenist philosophers in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. These men, dubbed “Church Fathers” because of their influence, perpetuated the anti-Hebraic view of *cosmic dualism*. First touted by the pagan Plato, religious leaders developed unbiblical creeds which compartmentalizes life

into two domains:

- the *spiritual*, which they declared “good”
- the *physical*, which they deemed “evil.”

While this is a simplified definition, the influence of cosmic dualism on Christendom has created a religious caste system which stipulates some occupations to be holier than others. This is an important matter, for modern Christianity is still heavily influenced by Hellenist dualism—much to the negation of the Hebraic understanding which undergirded the teaching and message of Jesus.

- Through dualist influence, a Nicolaitan clergy system was established to lord their position over the less educated. The word *Nicolaitan* means “to conquer the *laity*,” that is, the common people. For centuries the clergy have ruled the laity through a hierarchical religious system. Professional clergy have made sure that their “higher, sacred calling” is preeminent in their religious culture. They have convinced the “laity” of this inequity of position, deceiving themselves and all others that working and conducting business is inferior and profane compared to “religious service”. Our God, however, hates Nicolaitanism with its unbiblical arrogance and suppression of His children. (See Revelation 2:6,15.)
- Inanimate buildings are misnamed “the church” or “the house of God. Yet God does not live in manmade structures. Nor is a mortar and brick structure His “*called-out ones*,” the true definition of *ekklesia*, the church. The collective body of Christ is a living, serving organism—His “temple” in which His Spirit indwells each one. *Wherever* the called-out ones in Christ are doing His will is holy in our Father’s eyes. No occupation is more spiritual than another.

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Dominated by cosmic dualism, Christianity disdained anything to do with business and commerce. Thus the ruling authority from the Middle Ages onward, Roman Catholicism, cursed the Jews whom they blamed for Christ’s crucifixion. (They conveniently discarded the biblical truth that the *sin of all mankind* brought about Jesus’s willing sacrifice.) Because of rampant anti-Semitism within religious hierarchy ranks, the Jews had been forced from agricultural enterprises when the religious establishment confiscated their lands. Only one vocation was left available to them: the despised sector of finance.

As the political power of Roman Catholicism grew, the need for wealth escalated as well. Who better to handle the “sinful” realm of money than the group they so scorned? The moral and spiritual division between the sacred religious sphere and the secular “worldly” realm of business continues, even if subtly. Ecclesiastical powers want the money which business people provide, but too often religious leaders avoid helping business owners establish biblical foundations for their businesses. Not often do you find business people praised for serving on the frontlines of extending God’s Kingdom!

Some Christian ministries *are* trying to help business owners today run their businesses according to God’s Word. However, many of these ministries are led by those who give business owners too high a view of themselves—the same prideful self-elevation of many clergy.

Seminaries inadvertently reinforce the Nicolaitan heresy by training clergy to see themselves as spiritually superior to the people in their congregation. The whole ecclesiastical structure is a pyramid in which power and prestige increase the

further up you go. “Nickels and noses” determine how a clergyperson compares with others. (Mike counseled clergy for ten years after graduating from seminary himself, so these observations are based on factual experience.)

Sadly, the same unChristlike motives of recognition and abundant profit propel business owners headlong into worldly goals and values. Unlike the vineyard owner who viewed himself as representing the concerns of God for people and serving the needs of his workers, business owners today generally see themselves as superior to their employees. But beware! That grievous underlying stench of Nicolaitanism in both clergy and business owners inspires our Father’s hatred.

Our Lord’s pattern for anyone who would lead others is to become their servant (Mark 10:45; Luke 9:48, 22:26). To be in Christ is *to serve*. “Successful” leadership is in reality an upside-down pyramid. Think of leadership as a tree. When we first begin to live for our Lord Jesus, we’re like one of the small limbs near the top of the tree. As we mature in His character and motivation, we move down the tree becoming sturdier, stronger branches. Eventually we find ourselves representing Jesus to others at the trunk of the tree (see John 15:1-10). *Humility* is the key characteristic underlying this process. The more we mature by His grace, the more we find ourselves serving those who serve.

Our Lord Jesus seeks business-ministry owners who humbly and actively represent His concern for people. He is establishing a Kingdom which the gates of hell can’t withstand (Matthew 16:18). Therefore He purposes that His followers mix with the world on a daily basis, and wherever they go through life, make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

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- From our Lord’s perspective, small business-ministries are His means to provide livelihood to owner and employees alike *if* they conduct their business by seeking His guidance and establishing their practices according to His Word. (See Proverbs 16:11; Colossians 3:23.)
- Business-ministries are avenues for business owners (and employees) to reveal His loving and compassionate concern for people (Exodus 34:6).
- Business-ministries are our Lord’s frontlines where unbelievers can encounter the Kingdom-minded who are burdened to see people embrace our Father’s Covenant in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

[For more on the destructive influence of Hellenism on Christendom and businesses, download a free copy of our book *Restoring the Early Church*, Section Two:

**Chapter 5.** The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots: Christianity’s Response to the Jews

**Chapter 6.** Greek Philosophy in the Church: How Did Plato Displace God?

**Chapter 7.** The Roman Conquest of the Church: Is the Reformation Unfinished?

<<http://www.restorationministries.org/html/rtec.html>>].

### Further Hellenist Effect on Christianity

#### Hellenistic Orthodoxy–*Right Behavior*

vs.

#### Hebraic Orthopraxy–*Right Heart*

The philosophical influence of Hellenism on Christianity produced *orthodoxy* as the dominant thought pattern of western Christendom. Primarily concerned with *being right*, orthodoxy has resulted in a myriad of diverse creeds. Yes, a certain degree of biblical orthodoxy is necessary to forestall heresy. But as with the Pharisees, those who rest in their orthodoxy become prideful about their own beliefs (Matthew 23:2-4). Too often they get caught up more with judging others based on imposed standards of ‘correct behavior’, while humility, love, and Christ-like compassion for the welfare of others fall to the wayside (Matthew 23:23,28).

As we note in our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, the converted Hellenist philosophers brought with them a *philosophical* method of determining truth. This method relies on the mind’s rationale and ignores seeking the Holy Spirit for

#### **Nicolaitan Religious System**

- **clergy-led and ruled from the top down;**
- **clergy view themselves as *men of God* representing Him in a “holy” occupation;**
- **non-clergy are *laity* who work in the profane and unholy world system;**
- **emphasis is on what takes place in the “church” building; “laity” rely on clergy and staff for spiritual direction and knowledge;**
- **the personal lives of people and their contacts throughout the week are less important than their presence at services and activities in the “church” building;**
- **clergy fail to role model a way of life others can incorporate into their own;**
- **people are seduced into passivity and complacency, which dull any devotion to make disciples and extend the Kingdom of God.**

#### **Kingdom of God**

- **founded on the cooperation of apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd/teachers equipping people to actively extend the kingdom of God through their interpersonal encounters;**
- **leaders serve from the bottom up;**
- **focus is on equipping people to be light in the darkness—wherever they find themselves during their daily life, whether at work, school, home, neighborhood—helping them represent the interests of Jesus to reconcile the world with our heavenly Father.**
- **business owners are recognized to be a front-line point of contact as they role model God-dependency and establish their business practices on His Word.**

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power and direction to bring about God’s will. Cognitive presentation of the Bible that’s independent of the Spirit has led to the development of creeds which now divide Christianity into over 38,000 competing denominations and sects. (There were 24,000 in 1994 when we returned from Israel.)

By contrast, both the Bible and the Hebraic understanding of truth emphasize *orthopraxy*. Orthopraxy may be defined as the way our love for Jesus as our Lord is expressed in how we live our lives. Orthopraxy causes us to see life and people more and more from God’s perspective of loving kindness and their desperate need for Christ. Hence He moves us to act in accordance with His love, as the vineyard owner did.

Unlike the Hellenistic emphasis on “creed” which focuses on what you *know and agree with*, orthopraxy understands biblical “doctrine” as a way of life based on *applying God’s commands*. This frame of reference is why Paul could encourage Timothy, “**Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers**” (1 Timothy 4:16).

#### A Comparison of Two Jewish Farmers

Suppose you were living in 200 BC and you met a Jewish farmer who viewed his life from orthodoxy. You noticed his ungleamed fields and noted he was upholding Leviticus 23:22, “*When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.*” If you asked him, he would tell you that he obeys the above verse “because God commands it.”

Suppose you went a little further down the road and met an orthopractic farmer who hadn’t completely reaped his fields either. In

answer to your question he would reply, “My God loves the poor and unfortunate and I love them too.” Can you see the difference? Same behavior...entirely different motive.

*Orthopraxy* revolves around heart-motive. Abraham was declared righteous because His heart-motive was demonstrated in his obedient, trust-impelled actions (James 2:21-26). This same heart-motive must be the “new wine” of business-ministry owners today. Their “doctrine” is demonstrated in their personal life and how they conduct their business-ministry.

The multiplicity of creeds divides people, while sound doctrine brings the followers of Christ together as a unified body with each doing their part to extend the Kingdom of God.

#### The Hebraic Stream of Influence on the Newer Testament

When Christians today read the account of the first followers of Jesus in Acts 2:44-47, they erroneously think that meeting in homes developed spontaneously after Peter’s message on Pentecost. We discovered in our research that God had guided the *Hebraic Stream* of Judaism to meet in homes long before the coming of Jesus. In fact, the faith practices we see in the Newer Testament were part of the Hebraic Stream BEFORE the Incarnation. Look closely at the key points about how their mutual faith was being enacted:

“*All the believers were together and **had everything in common**. Selling their possessions and goods, they **gave to anyone as he had need**. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They **broke bread in their homes** and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And **the Lord added to their number daily those who***

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*were being saved”* (Acts 2:44-47).

**A note:** Have you ever questioned *why* there’s no mention in the Newer Testament of followers of Jesus meeting in public buildings with steeples, pews and pulpits? Why is there mention of only meeting in homes? (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2; Colossians 4:15).

As we’ll discuss in a later lesson, the Hebraic Stream of Judaism met in homes long before the coming of Jesus in order to *uphold communal righteousness*. They knew one another well and were willing to help each other remain repentant.

The first followers of Jesus fellowshipped in homes for this same purpose, as authentic “family” in Christ to help each other stay repentant and gratefully abide by their Lord’s words. By collectively remaining repentant, their heavenly Father would hear and answer their prayers (see Proverbs 28:9; Psalms 34:15-17; John 9:31; 1 Peter 3:12).

And, in meeting the needs of one another, they didn’t just offer charity. Business people in a neighborhood home fellowship would view themselves as a means for others to receive God’s provision. Those who were able would give work to their brothers and sisters whenever possible out of loving concern. The home fellowship and the business-ministry were intricately linked both in communal righteousness and in fulfilling their Lord’s command to make disciples.

Another key facet that was part of the Hebraic Stream was ultimately destroyed by Hellenism: reliance on spiritual anointings. Jesus established these to undergird the Kingdom-minded as they cooperated to fulfill His purposes:

*“It was [Jesus] Who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds and*

*teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service,*

*so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

*From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”* (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Lord Jesus never established the clergy system that dominates Christianity today. The Levitical system of priests from the Old Covenant has passed away, replaced by a *priesthood of believers* made up of all Jesus followers (see 1 Peter 2:5,9). The demonic religious system which overlords others was adapted from pagan Hellenism.

By contrast, our Lord’s method of preparing His people to do His Father’s will was through the mutual cooperation of the four spiritual anointings Paul cites above to *prepare God’s people to serve*. Even before the coming of Jesus, within the Hebraic Stream of Judaism were apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers (older men of wisdom). As you go through the lessons of *Operating a Small Business-Ministry To Extend God’s Kingdom*, you’ll realize this:

Because so little regard is given today to the cooperative nature of spiritual anointings, the importance of business-ministry owners in the kingdom of God has been severely undermined. Too often business

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owners see themselves *competing against* each other rather than *cooperating together* as a unified force to extend the Kingdom.

So many clergy have not only discarded the anointings Jesus established to equip and unify His body; they’ve also repudiated the importance of business-ministry owners as God’s point people positioned on the front lines to extend His kingdom. As a result, the Spirit within the business people is squelched. They’re reluctant to *mutually minister together* to extend the kingdom of God. Often divided by the creedal differences Hellenism has introduced, they’re also disinclined to work together because of the myopic concern of their clergy. Pastoral leaders generally focus more on the smooth operation of their congregation activities than on equipping people to establish business-ministries that could reach the lost. Too often clergy are obsessed with what goes on inside their “church” building; preparing others to make disciples would put congregants beyond their control.

My Navy career taught me how important *morale* is among those who serve a common purpose. A corresponding thread of maintaining high morale runs through both the Kingdom of God and the military: each person has instilled in them the mutual cooperation needed for them to operate effectively. As the apostle, prophet, evangelist and shepherd/teacher cooperate together, Paul describes how the followers of Jesus work together to extend His Kingdom:

*“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).

As you saw in Ephesians 4:11-16 cited earlier, the four anointings are the means through which our Lord Jesus equips His followers to cooperate together as His unified body. Everyone who belongs to Him is empowered by His Spirit and is vital in the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 12:4-11,14:26). There’s nobody greater and nobody lesser (Romans 2:11). As someone has written,

- Everyone who belongs to Jesus has some gift, therefore all should be encouraged.
- No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be humble.
- All gifts are for the one Body, therefore all should be harmonious.
- All gifts are from the Lord, therefore all should be content.

[For more on the importance of spiritual gifts within the Kingdom, download a free copy of our book, *God’s Instruments for War—Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare*:

<<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/books/gifr/GIFREntireBook.pdf>>].

As with the equipping anointings Jesus calls for, Navy officers were trained to *serve* those we led (Matthew 23:11). We didn’t just consider our personnel according to the work they did. We concerned ourselves with things that affected them in their private lives, such as their family and financial problems. I’d found this concern in the vineyard owner in Matthew 20 when I worked on my ethics course paper. That owner wasn’t into making money at all costs, nor did he view the men who worked in his vineyard only as his means for financial gain. He concerned himself with them beyond the workplace, ensuring that each could provide for that day’s needs.

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By the time I completed my paper I realized that Jesus had recounted the parable of this particular vineyard owner for a reason. He wanted to commend a business owner who had His Father’s love and compassion for people (Exodus 34:6; Psalms 103:8).

The vineyard owner’s business was ministry and he ministered to others through his business. Through love the owner represented God in His concern for the well-being of people. It wasn’t *what* he did but *why he treated the workers* as he did. His orthopraxy was the summation of God’s commands in the Older Testament on how to treat people.

The vineyard owner’s response flowed out of the biblical character qualities that were developed in him as he applied God’s Word to his personal life and business. In other words, he saw people through the *eyes of God*: they needed to eat, and in order to do this they needed to work. The best the vineyard owner could do under his business circumstances was to pay each a man a day’s wage so he could live another day.

**A Note:** Ancient Jewish rabbis defined seven levels of how love is expressed to others. The lowest level is giving them charity. The highest level is to uphold their dignity by doing what’s necessary so they can support themselves. This is what owners of business-ministries today can do—help brothers and sisters in the faith to provide for themselves by working.

[For more on the anointings in Ephesians 4:11, download a free copy of our book *Pastoring By Elders*:

<<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/books/pbe/PBEEntireBook.pdf>>].

### Questions to Consider and Discuss

- **Are you a collective thinker? Do you think in terms of *we* and *us* more than *I* or *me*?**
- **When you consider people in “religious” occupations, how do you think of them? Are they on a higher spiritual plane than you?**
- **What is the depth of humility in your own heart? Do people close to you see a servant’s heart in you, or do they see you as someone who likes to have it your own way and draw attention to yourself? Ask those close to you in the faith: What do you bring up first and/or most often in your conversations?**
- **If you were the vineyard owner, would you have paid all the workers the same wage at the end of the day? Really?**