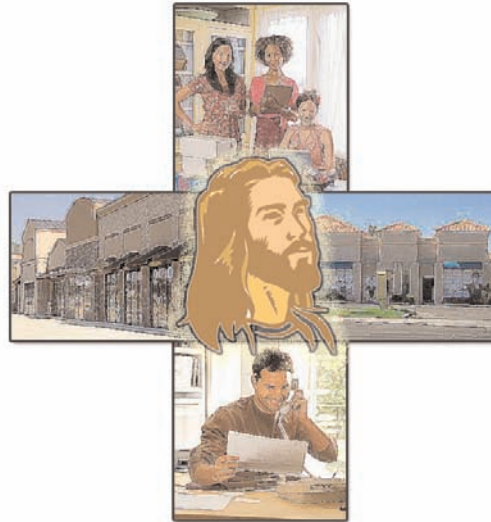


Operating A Small Business-Ministry To Extend God's Kingdom

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

Lesson 5

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.



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The Guiding Principles of a Christ-centered Business-Ministry

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“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12)

Lesson 5

A Business-Ministry Owner Whose Lord Is Jesus

Applying God’s Word and Seeking His Guidance

God calls for the kind of intense and determined love for Him and for the people around you that encompasses *every part of your being*. Jesus made this clear as He reiterated to all who would follow Him the relational command that had been given to the Israelites:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27; see also Deuteronomy 6:5, 11:1).

This love is most fully expressed and evidenced among those who love Jesus as their Lord when they keep His commands: “This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

The commands throughout the Older and Newer Testaments reveal the specifics in *loving God and your neighbor*—in other words, what *love* looks like *in action*. Jesus made full the meaning of the commands to the Hebrew people as He revealed love-based motives behind obeying His Father’s commands in His own life purpose and practice. Doing our Father’s will willingly and gratefully out of *love for Him* is crucial for business-ministry owners today. *Your love* is *why* you want to reveal your Father and your relationship with Him through the way you live for Him in obedience and trust.

Years ago we encountered a vivid example of a business-ministry owner’s intertwined love and obedience that brought glory to our Lord:

In 2000 we moved from the east coast to Flagstaff, Arizona to work with Native Americans. We arrived in town knowing no one and had no idea where we would live. As we prayed and looked through real estate booklets, one agency stood out named “*Fly With Christ Realty.*” We called the owner, Ginny Britt, and over the course of time we discovered a woman dedicated to glorifying God through her biblically-based business practices. She’d earnestly pray for guidance for every business decision, and made His Word a way of life in her business. She was even willing to turn away prospective clients if she didn’t sense her involvement was God’s will, or if they were doing things contrary to His commands.

Applying God’s Word

A business-ministry owner who wants to please God and receive His blessing must establish his or her goals and activities on God’s Word. This is done by prayerfully identifying *specific biblical applications* for the various aspects of the business, then putting them into practice. These biblical applications will answer the question *why* you’ve formed this business and *why* you conduct your business the way you do.

The Spirit of Christ within you will guide your life as you develop your biblical applications, the *halakhahs* we mentioned earlier. These biblical principles of which you take ownership and put into action reflect the character of Jesus at work in and through you. The specific ways in which you apply God’s Word will be the basis for both your business practices and how you treat your employees and customers.

Since the time of the Hellenist “Church Fathers” when ecclesiastical authority overrode personal response to the Spirit and the Word, business owners

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have been robbed of a particular authority Jesus gave to all His followers. Do you know what authority Jesus has given you in the passages below?

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:18-20).

Jesus gave His followers the authority to *bind* or *loose* in their lives the commands in God’s Word. The scriptural truths that you *bind* are those applications of God’s Word that constrain you from violating His righteous boundaries. For example, in regard to our Lord’s command in Matthew 7:12, *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets,”* you would identify and avoid those business practices that you wouldn’t want someone else to do to you. In other words, you wouldn’t want others to charge you exorbitant prices, use dishonest scales, or speak evil of your business. In this light, you would establish applications which bind you from doing these things to other people.

When you *loose* the Christlike motives and actions found in the Bible, you enact them as your way of life. In this manner you’re a living reflection of Christ to others as you put a face on the Spirit of Jesus Who is within you. Take a passage such as this: *“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” (Philippians 2:3,4). Then prayerfully ask the Spirit of Christ how this passage might be made real in your personal life and your business-ministry.

When you put God’s Word into practice, you’re like the man building his house on rock (see Luke 6:46-49). It’s in the process of *applying* the Bible to your life that you bind or loose God’s commands as He directs. This is authority our Lord gave you. A biblical command is just words in the Bible unless people can see that you *practice it* as your way of life.

You may have missed an important connection between *seeking* His kingdom and our Lord *giving you the keys* to the kingdom. Why did Jesus speak of binding and loosing in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18? The first followers of Jesus would have understood that He was *removing* from the religious leaders the role of dictating what others had to believe and practice, especially the multitude of “traditions” that only added to the burden of Jewish daily life (Matthew 15:4-9; 23:13,15). He was then *bestowing* on all His followers the responsibility and privilege to apply God’s commands individually and collectively to their lives. That is, out of love for Him as their Lord, they bound and loosed His commands into their own way of life.

Centuries later the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authorities usurped this responsibility by insisting that only *they* could interpret the way to apply God’s Word. Many Protestant denominations have followed suit.

Our Father is restoring to His people again the authority to bind and loose His commands through the work of His Spirit in them. And this is something business-ministry owners must do if they aspire

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for Him to bless their efforts. Recognize that Jesus promises to be in the midst of people who come to agreement as they put His way and His will into practice (Matthew 18:20; also 1 John 5:14,15). Your confidence in the process and in the presence of our Lord is critical. If you belong to Him, then trust in His Spirit within you!

To Recap:

Business-ministry owners must *apply* the Bible as their life handbook so they'll live in a way that pleases our Father. When you “loose” something in your business, you discover the areas of freedom to love and serve others for His glory. And when you “bind” something, you refrain from intentionally sinning and bringing down His holy name.

It's important that you write down your *halakhah* business practices to help you remember them; you may also discover you need to revise them as time goes on and circumstances change.

God made sure that Moses wrote down specific instructions in anticipation that centuries later Israel would ask for a king to rule them (see 1 Samuel 8). These future kings were to inscribe for themselves in their own hand a copy of God's law. This they were to keep close by and read daily, putting God's commands into practice as an example to all of Israel:

“When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the

law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

Our Lord reveals His principles for your character development as you establish and write down *halakhahs* for yourself. And the principles that guide your business-ministry now can be added to and refined as you become sanctified by the Spirit into more of the character of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word (rhema) that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

Our Lord also reveals His will through *rhema*. Rhema is His explicit guidance that directs your specific actions. Our Father can reveal His will to you through many means: He may use a Bible passage or spiritual gifts of prophecy, exhortation, wisdom or knowledge. He may direct you through dreams or visions. You may hear a quiet voice within you, or a thought may come to you that you sense is Him directing an action you're to take.

When our Lord Jesus reveals His will, He also releases His *spiritual power* to accomplish it. Let's look at a Newer Testament example of how *rhema* works. The angel Gabriel told Mary that she'd give birth to a child who'd be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:31). Startled, she asked how she, a virgin, could conceive. The angel replied, *“Nothing is impossible with God”* (v. 37).

In other words, every word, that is, every *rhema* that comes from God brings the power to fulfill His purpose. Mary's humble and willing obedience to *trust* was faith enough for God to act. The Holy Spirit came upon her and the Son of God was conceived. In the Older Testament we see how King David's reliance

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on God’s *rhema* (2 Samuel 5:17-25) produced victory. The same is true today whenever *rhema* is received and acted on.

You’ll probably find that the *rhema* you receive from His Spirit is opposite your first inclination. That’s because when decisions need to be made, we usually turn to our mind for solutions. The human mind is bent on solving problems. We rationalize with pro and con reasoning to come up with the best solution. There’s nothing wrong with this in itself. But remember, your mind, will and emotions, often referred to as the “soul” in God’s Word, is where your sin nature resides (Philippians 3:3) and demonic strongholds exert influence. Make sure your *spirit* is first attuned to the indwelling Spirit so your mind’s conclusions align with His.

When you sense you’re in a situation about which our Lord wants you to seek His guidance, don’t immediately trust the rationale of your brain. Our Lord wants you to *seek Him* for wisdom and guidance (James 1:5). When you have *His perspective* (which is wisdom) and *His guidance*, you’ll also have His power to accomplish His will. The prophet Isaiah recounts a keen description of *rhema* which never fails to bring about what our Lord intends to accomplish:

“‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it’” (Isaiah 55:8-11).

As you’re seeking the Lord’s will for your business-ministry, remember that when you receive from Him a *rhema* and *act on it*, His spiritual power goes forth to accomplish His will for you. This is a far better process than what your mind can come up with!

When you take action after receiving a *rhema*, someone may ask you why you’re doing what you’re doing. Because of God’s *rhema* for you, you’re able to not only answer how our Lord *guided your spirit*, but also reveal your *love-based motive* for why you obeyed. When you bear witness to *how* Jesus guided you and why you obeyed, your testimony can convict others of their own need to seek Him, be found in Him, and obey Him as their LORD.

Let’s review. *Rhema* guides you into specific acts of obedience; *halakhahs* are character principles which demonstrate a Christ-like way of life. Biblical applications are our Lord’s way of helping you *distinguish good from evil*. Recognizing good and avoiding evil is a theme found throughout both the Older and Newer Testaments.

The many ways in which you *apply the Bible* to your life are the building blocks of developing Christ’s character as you cooperate with His Spirit. Out of love for Jesus as your LORD, you’ll *want* to avoid sin and will intentionally turn away from its influence and live a holy life that pleases Him. That’s His grace at work!

We want to make clear to you that *seeking God’s rhema* and *establishing biblical applications* are two powerful ways that evidence the LORDSHIP of Jesus in your personal life and your business-ministry. Before Israel entered the Promised Land, God briefed them about a significant difference they would experience:

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The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden.

But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven.

It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul— then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil (Deuteronomy 11:10-14).

For generations the Israelites had relied on the Nile and its canals to water their crops in Egypt’s dry climate. Water was not an issue for them. Now God was leading them to a hilly land that depended on the spring and fall rains rather than irrigation to water the crops. Think about this dramatic shift for them. When a farmer relies on irrigation, his crops are watered through his own efforts. On the other hand, the farmer who trusts in the rains God sends to water his crops has a different heart. He plants and prays and waits until God sends His rain.

Our Father wanted the Israelites to depend on Him totally and wholeheartedly—to love Him and to serve Him alone. God’s requirement for His blessing of rain was that they keep His commands and live righteously in the land He gave them. (Remember His promise of blessing and curse in Deuteronomy 28?) When they entered the Promised Land, there would be a shift from relying on their own efforts of irrigation to living right-

eously and waiting on the seasonal rains from His sovereign hand.

If you’ve been working at or owning a business according to the world’s values, you may want reckon that time as being “in Egypt”. Now, as you seek to conduct your business-ministry according to our Lord’s Kingdom standards, you’ll need to establish your goals and practices on His righteous ways.

Please, learn a lesson from the Israelites. There ARE dire consequences when you decide to not seek guidance and confirmation from God, or to tolerate sin in your personal life or business practices. Do you recall the Gibeonite ruse in Joshua 9? God had commanded the Israelites to annihilate the wicked people in the land He’d promised them. But as they got closer to it, they missed an important step: “The men of Israel...**did not inquire of the LORD**” (Joshua 9:14). They sinned through giving way to deception and independent thinking, and made a treaty with the heathen Gibeonites.

[For more on developing a biblical basis for your business, download a free copy of our book:

Christian Halakhahs—Loving Jesus Through the Way You Apply His Word

<<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/books/ch/ChristianHalakhahs.pdf>>]

A Business-Ministry Owner Must Confirm Decisions

Looking for others in Christ to confirm business decisions is often a stumbling block for business owners. They often see themselves like clergy: one of a kind and more important than everyone else. But in a *business-ministry* the owner needs others to help confirm major decisions. The process of confirming decisions is God’s way to protect an individ-

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ual from giving way to the deceit in their own heart and manipulating an outcome (Jeremiah 17:9).

The Bible emphasizes the critical components of **mutual discussion** and **confirmation of two or three** so that you'll *bring Jesus*, the Head of His body, into your decision process. It's important that we revisit the command Lord Jesus gave to ALL His followers:

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst (Matthew 18:18-20).

“Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (2 Corinthians 13:1).

For almost 11 years we administrated and taught at a retreat center in Connecticut. As soon as a group arrived we'd closely observe them to discern the depth of their relational strength with each other; in other words, who readily helped others get their belongings into the lodge, who were the closest friends, and who came to the retreat but really didn't feel like they belonged to anyone.

After observing a group for awhile, Mike would often say to various adults, “You own your own business, don't you?” He was close to 100% in recognizing business owners. They'd generally reply with surprise: “Yes, how did you know?” It wasn't hard. The combination of the demonic strongholds of idolatry and worldliness, fear and insecurity, and control created a friendly yet isolated individual. Over the years on retreats we'd often meet the spouses and/or teenage chil-

dren of a business owner. They'd usually say something like this: “Even when he's home, he's not with us. His mind is on his business.”

What a sad state of affairs! Far too many business owners suffer from feelings of isolation because they're ignorant of God's standard for *mutual discussion* and *collective decision making*. Many perceive their business as a *singular* endeavor, bearing alone a responsibility that God never gave him or her. Even the vineyard owner was part of a social community where others knew his business. He had access to elders who usually sat at the city gates to offer sage counsel and help him apply God's Word to his business (see Ruth 4:1-13, Proverbs 31:23).

A certain Hellenistic influence underlies the notion of the solitary, self-dependent business owner. As we discussed previously, our Lord established a *collegiality of spiritual anointings* to equip His followers for service and to help them experience unity in Him. The Nicolaitan clergy system eliminated our Lord's anointed and empowered way of extending His Kingdom and brought about the unbiblical system of one individual being esteemed above all others (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). This same singular mindset is presently being confronted as droves of clergy fall into sin. Grievously, Protestant clergy have been a leading occupation for divorce in this nation for years. It's difficult to stay married to someone whose occupation feeds a perception of self-importance.

Mike counseled clergy in New England for nearly a decade. He discovered that the same strongholds which beset many business owners are the same ones that plague many clergy as well. The primary reason for the downfall of clergy as well as many business owners is this

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detached sense of being more important than others. Both clergy and business owners often fail to develop close, load-bearing relationships that are evidenced by Christlike loyalty—a wholehearted commitment to another person’s character development.

Many clergy and non-Kingdom minded business owners put ungodly emphasis on their desire for accomplishment. They want to be noticed and acclaimed for their success. This obsession hinders them from regarding others as important as themselves and prevents them from fully considering the dignity and morale of those around them.

They miss the standard of Christlike leadership which was so marvelously modeled by Jesus:

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

When you read this profound statement, you probably think it refers to someone dying in order to save another. Images come to mind of a courageous soldier jumping on a hand grenade or a loving mother leaping in front of a truck to push her child out of danger. You certainly have to be *dead to yourself* to respond so heroically and spontaneously!

But Jesus is also pointing to how we treat others on a daily basis. *Laying our lives down for others* reflects our view of ourselves compared to our view of them. On occasion at the retreat center we’d test the heart motives of people who came by tossing a simulated hand grenade into the middle of the group. We wanted to see who’d jump on the grenade so that others might live. The scenario was this:

“You have three seconds before the grenade blows up. One...two... three...”

- 0% of the clergy ever jumped on the grenade. Not one!!!
- 10% of non-clergy men jumped on the grenade.
- 50% of the women and teenagers jumped on the hand grenade.

Look at this distressing trend especially among males in Christendom: A teenage boy has a 50% chance of jumping on the grenade to save others. When he becomes a man the likelihood of him sacrificing his own life by jumping on it drops to 10%. Could it be that years of influence by self-preserving clergymen who are 0% likely to lay down their lives to save others causes other men to follow in their steps?

When people don't have time to analyze the pro's and con's of a situation, their true heart is often revealed. Nobody is born prepared to die for others. This is an acquired character trait that calls for deep humility and love. Yet dying to ourselves and becoming more like Jesus through His Spirit is the essential purpose of our sanctification—our Father’s goal for us each and every day we live. A willingness to look to others first is a motive that’s sorely needed by business-ministry owners. That will help them see themselves as *collective participants* in extending our Lord’s Kingdom—servants of the people they encounter each day.

Often when owners who are having problems in their business are asked, “Who have you discussed this with?” they respond with silence or an embarrassed, “No one.” That lack of feedback and input benefits no one. Just remember that even when a prophetic utterance is given, God demands that it be tested by others: “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said” (1 Corinthians 14:29). Don’t think

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that being a business-ministry owner puts you above anyone else. Everything must be discussed and confirmed by other people!

At one point while we were consulting with the ministry to business owners we mentioned in a previous lesson, we were given an office to use by the “Christian” owner of an ad agency. His business was thousands of dollars in debt. Mike offered to help him under one condition: that every decision be confirmed by two or three of his key employees. Because his business was in such desperate straits, the very singularly thinking owner agreed. Not long after this his computer system went down; the techs he called in went days without getting the system working. They were stymied.

After praying about it and receiving a prophetic *rhema* from the Lord, Mike called the owner and key employees together. “There’s unrighteousness in your computers,” he told them. The owner denied what he perceived as an accusation. But one employee spoke up: “Most of our software is pirated. We don’t have the copyrights for them.” After discussion everyone agreed that copyrighted software needed to be purchased and installed.

Replaced with over \$5,000 of copyrighted software the computers they still didn’t work. The owner gloated that the *rhema* was in error. Mike gathered the employees together again. “There’s *still* unrighteousness in the computers.” Another employee admitted, “One of our accounts is American Express, which uses profits to support abortion.” This was a large account for the company. After discussion all agreed to terminate the account. The moment the account was terminated the computer system began to operate!

Questions to Consider and Discuss

- **In your Christian walk have you been establishing biblical applications for yourself, your family and/or your business? Is the thought of doing this new to you?**
- **Do you make major decisions without seeking our Lord’s *rhema*? If you do seek His guidance, in what ways do you expect to receive His *rhema* for your life? In other words, have you cut off or discounted any of the various means He uses to reveal His will?**
- **How do you confirm God’s will? Are others involved in the confirmation process? Do you treat their input on equal terms with yours?**