

Anointed for Business

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The marketplace - the combination of business, education, and government - is to a metropolis what the heart is to the human body. Through these three arteries flows the life of a city. Without the marketplace a city cannot exist in the same fashion that a body cannot live without a heart. Today millions of men and women have been called to ministry in the marketplace. They are stockbrokers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, farmers, receptionists and much more. Unfortunately, many of them feel like second-class citizens when compared to those who serve in a church or missionary context. They often fail to rise to their God appointed position because they are derided as "untrained and uneducated". This is not a new thing. Peter and John would say, "Welcome to the club." This is what businessmen-turned-ministers were called by the religious clique in the book of Acts. It is about time that those called to serve in the marketplace be validated as full fledged ministers because the last revival, the one prophesied by Joel and quoted by Peter (Acts 2:17-21), will happen all over the city and not just inside a building.

CHAPTER 1

CONFESSIONS OF A REPRESSED BUSINESSMAN

In my early 20s I found myself wearing three business hats: hospital administrator, member of the board of a bank and CEO of a lending company. I felt good about my job...except in church when the call to ministry was discussed! Why? Because some well-meaning but misguided leaders looked down on my occupation. Time and again they would demand: "When are you going to go into the ministry?" This left me confused because deep down I knew my job was my ministry and God's presence and power were as evident there as they were inside the church building. It was not until 1999 that I discovered that I had been anointed for ministry with the same anointing I was so familiar with behind the pulpit.

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What was Jesus' relationship with the marketplace? Traditionally we picture Him as remote and removed, more as a monk than as a manager. However, because of the roles He embodied - ruler, teacher, and businessman - Jesus belongs in the marketplace rather than in a monastery. In fact, he was a businessman much longer than He was a preacher.

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The vast majority of the Old Testament heroes were business people deeply involved in everyday issues. One of the greatest victories recorded in the Bible pitted a small businessman, David, against a professional soldier. Because he was a businessman it caught his attention that a reward (profit) had been offered. David's interest in the reward touches on a very sensitive issue: profit motive. Profit motive is to a businessperson what the drive to win is to an athlete. Profit motive, when used according to the will of God, provides the incentive to tackle monumental challenges in the marketplace, then once overcome, bring benefits to millions. Perceiving profit motive as evil is what prevents many Christians from succeeding in the marketplace.

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Like Gideon, we must realize that our destiny is to save the nation rather than merely try to survive in a hostile environment. We must stop trying to protect whatever meager resources we have and answer the call to transform the marketplace. If we are focused on preserving what we have we will fail to see how much more we can be entrusted with. We need to set our eyes beyond ourselves. God will give us a hundred times back what we give up for the sake of seeing His kingdom come to our cities and nation.

EPILOGUE

Step by step guide to turn your job into your ministry

INTRODUCTION

The marketplace - the combination of business, education, and government - is to a metropolis what the heart is to the human body. Through these three arteries flows the life of a city. Without the marketplace a city cannot exist in the same fashion that a body cannot live without a heart.

Some of my earliest memories are of the marketplace.

I grew up in a two-story house overlooking the main plaza in San Nicolas (pop 130,000), Argentina. Like in every Spanish town, the plaza was the center of life in the city. On our block was the Plaza Hotel, flanked by the Catholic Cathedral and the Police Station. On the east side of the plaza were the courthouse, the National College, and the Social Club where the city fathers met socially. On the north side was Customs, the homes of the leading lawyers and politicians along with the Italian Club. On the west side were the National Bank, more homes, and a popular restaurant that in between meals set tables on the sidewalk to double as "the" town Cafe. City Hall was three blocks away but it made its presence felt by the sonorous carillon that faithfully announced the time 24 hours a day at fifteen minute intervals.

The main plaza was wedged between the Port and the city's two main streets where most businesses operated. It was such a vital part of the city that everything of substance happened in or around it. It was there that the military parades and political rallies took place. On Saturday evenings beautiful girls, walking by handsome boys, choreographed the ritual of courtship under the attentive eyes of watchful mothers while fathers seated nearby discussed sports and politics. This area of town was called "El Centro" - the center, because everything revolved around it. In essence, it was the marketplace in a micro-cosmos. Through the ages, cultures around the world have fashioned their own versions of the marketplace but they always included these three basic components—business, education, and government.

The Marketplace and the Early Church

Early Christians made the marketplace the focal point of their ministry because their occupations took them there regularly. As they conducted business it was natural for them to present the Gospel to those they had dealings with. Business people played a vital role in the emergence, establishment, and expansion of the early Church and most of them remained in full-time business while simultaneously conducting full-time ministry. This was possible because they saw the marketplace as their parish and

their business as a pulpit. To them witnessing was not an occasional activity but a life-style.

Christians in the book of Acts did more than tell people about Jesus in the marketplace. They also witnessed a steady stream of signs and wonders. So much so that only one out of the 22 extraordinary manifestations of God's power recorded in the book of Acts happened in a religious venue, the healing of the lame man at the Temple gate called the Beautiful (see Acts 3:1-11). Most of these spiritual wonders were facilitated by people like Paul, Priscila and Aquila who were ministry as well as business partners (see Acts 18:1-3; 19:1-20).

Generals, Not Privates

Today millions of men and women are similarly called to full-time ministry in business, education, and government—the marketplace. These men and women work as stockbrokers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, farmers, chief operating officers, news reporters, teachers, police officers, plumbers, factory foremen, receptionists, cooks and much more. Some of them have great influence on mainstream society, others are unsung heroes with low profiles, but all of them have been divinely called to bring the kingdom of God to the marketplace. Unfortunately many of these marketplace Christians feel like second-class citizens when compared to people who serve full-time in a church or missionary context. This should not be the case at all. No matter the occupation, Christians who work at secular jobs need to know that they are not perpetual privates in God's army just because they have not "gone to seminary". They need to discover that they have the potential to become full-fledged generals whose ministry is in the heart of the city instead of inside a religious building.

It is imperative that they realize that not only is it *okay* to do ministry in the marketplace, but that God has explicitly *called* them and *anointed* them for it. By anointed I mean that they have been chosen and empowered by the Holy Spirit for a divinely sanctioned assignment. By ministry I mean more than just witnessing, but bringing transformation first to their jobs and then to their city as was the case in the first century.

Most marketplace Christians already know that their ministry and their business are connected but they don't comprehend exactly how. Even though they sense they have a call to ministry they hesitate about exchanging their secular setting for a religious one. Quite often they are told that this vacillation is due to lack of faith, or worse yet, attachment to worldly things. This indictment leaves them confused because deep down they feel that their spiritual destiny is in the marketplace.

Welcome to the Club!

Unfortunately many of these marketplace ministers (marketplace Christians) fail to rise to their God-appointed position because they are often derided as “untrained and uneducated”. This is not a new thing. Peter and John would say, “Welcome to the Club!” This is what businessmen-turned-ministers were called by the religious clique in the book of Acts. The requirement to be a minister is not religious education but the spiritual conditioning that comes from “having been with Jesus” (see Acts 4:13).

Jerusalem Transformed

It was such conditioning that allowed the Apostles to fill Jerusalem with the good news in just a few weeks by leading thousands to the Lord (see Acts 5:28). As a result Jerusalem experienced transformation at the deepest level: the needs of the poor and the widows, two very vulnerable groups, were met (see Acts 6:1-7). The hungry were fed and the sick were healed (see Acts 2:45; 3:8). The gospel even had a positive influence on the Sanhedrin, the most powerful forum the Jews had (see Acts 5:33-39). Solomon’s Portico became the place for a steady stream of signs and wonders, giving the emerging church favor with the people (see Acts 5:12-15). The movement was so dynamic that eventually the streets and sidewalks of Jerusalem were turned into evangelistic venues. Sick people lined up hoping for the healing shadow of Peter to fall on them (see Acts 5:15-16). Soon afterwards multitudes from nearby cities literally flooded Jerusalem (see Acts 5:17). What a change! This was the city that earlier on had grieved Jesus to the point of tears but now was giving Him tremendous joy (see Lk. 19:41-42).

It all began on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples left the confines of the Upper Room and went to the open space of the marketplace. On that day Peter, the fisherman, became the first fisher of men, setting a pattern soon to be replicated throughout the Roman Empire. This movement was led not by individuals notorious for their religious acumen but by people known for their place in the marketplace: fishermen, tax collectors, farmers and more.

Three Business Partners

It did not take too long for these amateur preachers to transform a myriad of towns and cities, culminating with Ephesus, site of the most dramatic power encounter recorded in the book of Acts (see Acts 19:1-13). This city, with a demon-driven economy and a marketplace that was the citadel of evil, experienced radical transformation. It is no coincidence that at the center of God’s move were Paul, Aquila, and Priscila, who, in addition to preaching the word of God, were business partners. Their dual ministry /

business status connected them to the religious community through their teaching and to the marketplace by their tent-making enterprise.

Jesus' Recruiting Grounds

Jesus, a recognized craftsman, found the marketplace to be friendly territory (see Mark 6:3). He recruited His disciples there, not in the Temple. None of the Twelve was a member of the professional clergy or a leader in the synagogue. Paul, who joined later and was a Rabbi (see Acts 6:7; 9:1-16) was no stranger to the marketplace. He also ran a profitable business that in Ephesus was large enough to provide for him, for his team and for the needy (see Acts 20:33-35).

The elders of emerging churches often were marketplace leaders who had experienced dramatic conversions—for example Dorcas, Lydia and Cornelius. They in turn produced salvation movements due to their prominence in the city (see Acts 9:36-43; 10:1-48; 16:14-21).

More Than a Layman

Today, religious leaders have little interaction with unbelievers, even less with prominent ones. The Church does not command the attention or the respect of the marketplace. In fact, quite often it is considered irrelevant and seen as some sort of a social parasite. To compound this misconception, church members who do have relevance in the city on account of their position in the marketplace tend to disqualify themselves from leadership in spiritual matters. The most common self-inflicted putdown is "I am not a pastor. I am just a layperson." This is all part of a clever satanic scheme to neutralize the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, along with an entire army of disciples, *already* positioned *in* the marketplace.

God calls some people to serve inside the Church, and this is a precious call. Pastors and full-time ministers are the modern equivalent of the Old Testament priests who ministered in the Temple. They clearly play a vital role in spiritual leadership and we would not be the Church without them.

With that in mind, we need to see that others are anointed to serve in the marketplace, like the kings and other officials and functionaries of the same period. Both, the call to serve in the marketplace and the call to serve in the Church, are valid and *interdependent* since both involve ministers who partake of the *same* divine calling. Unfortunately the former has been exalted to the detriment of the latter. It is about time that people who are called to serve in the marketplace be validated as full-fledged ministers

because the last revival, the one predicted by Joel and quoted by Peter (Acts 2:17-21), will happen all over the city, not inside a building. It will be an outpouring of the Spirit of God that will touch *all* flesh.

Spiritual Warfare in the Boardroom

As ministers of God, marketplace Christians need to know that spiritual warfare is a central component of their daily routine, whether they are aware of it or not. Satan and his evil forces constantly try to destroy lives and enterprises in the church *but even more so in the marketplace*. The extraordinary opposition Christians experience when putting deals together in a godly way is no different than what pastors face when counseling people who are contemplating suicide or divorce. Since the source for both challenges is Satan, the solution is also one and the same: servants willing to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit to those oppressed by the devil to set them free in order to turn the spiritual tide. The location is ancillary.

When marketplace Christians are reduced to second-class status, the church is automatically deprived of its most strategically placed soldiers because they are the ones closest to Satan's command and control centers. If properly equipped they can do lethal damage to the systems by which the devil holds people captive in our cities (II Cor. 4:4; Eph 6:12). This is why he allocates a great deal of his resources to make marketplace Christians feel unqualified and inferior in spiritual matters.

Four Lethal Misbeliefs

It is the combination of four major misbeliefs that neutralizes God's calling on those anointed for marketplace ministry:

- That there is a God ordained division between clergy and laity.
- That the church is called to operate primarily inside a building often referred to as the temple.
- That people involved in business cannot be as spiritual as those serving in church ministry.
- That the primary role of marketplace Christians is to make money to support the vision of those "in the ministry".

I have written this book to debunk these unbiblical misbeliefs and to show from the Scriptures and from history the central role of Christians in the marketplace. While it is true that in Old Testament days there was a division between the clergy and the laity and that most religious activities took place in the Temple, Jesus' New Covenant abolished the old order. Church should now happen all over the city, every day and even several

times a day as Christians replicate the model first presented in Acts 2:42, “and they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Today there are multitudes of believers in the marketplace holding strategic positions in business, education, and politics who need to know that they are called to play a vital part in the establishment of God’s Kingdom on Earth. Without their active participation *and leadership*, our cities will not be transformed and the Great Commission will not be fulfilled in our generation.

Get Out of the Bleachers

Too often ministry in the church resembles a final match in the soccer World Cup that has gone into overtime: a handful of players, all in desperate need of rest, struggle on the field while hundreds of thousands of spectators, who can use some exercise, watch from comfortable seats. The players are the “ministers” who exert most of the energy and the spectators are the lay people whose participation is limited to a secondary role, mainly making the whole enterprise financially feasible.

This unbiblical classification of believers has resulted in first and second class statuses within the church. Such distinction should not exist because Jesus himself was not an elitist. Even though He recruited 12 apostles and appointed them to positions of leadership, He was always inclusive. When He spoke, except when He addressed specific situations pertaining to the Twelve, He invariably spoke *to* and *for* everybody. If we are to fulfill the Great Commission, we must eliminate this class division.

No one is better placed in the city than Christians who operate in the marketplace. God has already given them jurisdiction in businesses, schools, and government circles on account of their occupation. The promise that “*Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you*” (Jos. 1:3) applies to them also—and they tread all over the city on a daily basis!

Furthermore, the Lord is in their hearts, the Holy Spirit is imbuing their spirits, and the Word is embedded in their minds. All they need now is to realize that they are anointed to minister in the fullness of the Spirit to push back the spiritual darkness enveloping our cities. When marketplace Christians begin to move in this anointing the whole world will be able to hear the voice of God. This is what this book is about!

CHAPTER 1

CONFESSIONS OF A REPRESSED BUSINESSMAN

“One day you will be the President of Argentina!” said my grandpa for the umpteenth time, while my uncles and aunts endorsed his prediction with enthusiastic applause and cheers.

I am the first male child in an Italian-Spanish family. I have only one sister and no brothers and my cousins on the Italian side are my junior by ten years or more. As the male heir to the family name I was the focus of exuberant affirmation by grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts. To my elders I was “*il bambino di oro*”, or “the golden boy”. Everyone had grandiose dreams for me to fulfill.

Some, led by my grandpa, repeatedly told me that I was destined to be the leader of Argentina. They reminded me that at the moment of my birth the attending physician had declared, “Behold the future president of Argentina.” My father was in politics, so it seemed natural that I would emulate him. I was accustomed to watching him address crowds and rouse them with his booming voice as he spoke passionately about social issues. He led workers’ marches to demand free elections; elections that once held put Juan Peron in power. Subsequently he worked with Evita Peron to help the poor and to advance civil rights. Raised in such an environment, a political career was not a foreign idea to me. In fact, it was expected.

On the other hand, the religious sector of the family proclaimed that I was destined for the papacy. They told me that even though I would have to start as a priest like everybody else, I should get on the fast track so that I could become the youngest and first Argentine-born pope in history. At the time, I was an altar boy and active in the Catholic Action Movement; thus, this option also fell within the realm of the possible.

Then there were those kinfolk who insisted that I go into business while adding with a chuckle, “and when you become *very* rich, take care of

all of us." I had a natural knack for numbers. I did well in school and I was very good at trading *figuritas*, the Argentine equivalent of baseball cards. This resulted in me having a large collection, which in the world of children was synonymous with wealth and success. Watching me wheel and deal, my elders predicted that I would surely advance to the major leagues of business and make it big.

Even though at the time I did not know which one, I knew that eventually it would be one of those three careers. Barely in my teens I became a Christian in a Protestant church and the field was instantly narrowed to one option. Accepting Jesus as my Savior was the best decision of my life; but it automatically eliminated the possibility of running for president because the Argentine Constitution, at the time, prohibited non-Catholics from rising to the highest political office in the land. Since a protestant cannot become Pope, that option was also gone, leaving me with just one: business.

This is how, in my early 20s, I became the youngest hospital administrator in the region, in charge of a new facility served by 51 doctors. Given my lack of seasoned experience due to my young age, I was painfully aware that I needed *supernatural* help. Therefore, prayer became the backbone of my business routine. The more I prayed the more God's hand showed up at work. The more He intervened the better each project turned out. After watching me successfully fend off a hostile takeover, many of the doctors entrusted me with the management of their personal finances. We invested in a community bank and I was given a seat on the board. When more money found its way into our portfolio, we set up a lending company. Before long, I was wearing three business hats: hospital administrator, member of the board of a bank, and CEO of a lending company.

It was challenging, to say the least. Doing business always brings up the possibility of corruption, even more so in Argentina. Tax evasion, double sets of books and violation of labor laws were considered *normal* practices. However, I was unwavering about sticking to the right side of the road. At first my bosses were reluctant because they feared that they would lose the competitive advantage that came from avoiding taxes and taking questionable shortcuts. But as they saw how well we did when deals were done the ethical way they began to trust me more. Eventually they gave me full freedom to act as I saw fit. As long as we made money they did not mind my unusual standards.

The Jesus Chair

I thoroughly enjoyed dealing, buying, selling, and hiring. The pressure was always on but each time it approached the boiling point I reached for what

I called “*Jesus’ chair*”. This was a chair I had purposely placed in my office. When things became unmanageable I would close the door, kneel by the chair, and ask for divine guidance. Repeatedly God provided it. Sometimes He did it in a quiet way. Other times He gave me specific directions. More than once He performed business miracles in answer to those prayers. It was so reassuring to know that Jesus was there and that He had anointed me for the job I had!

In spite of the constant pressure, when at work, I felt good about my job. However, when at church, that was not always the case—especially in meetings where the call to the ministry was discussed.

Why? Because some well-meaning but misguided leaders looked down on my occupation. Time and again they would demand: “When are you going to go into the ministry? You don’t live by faith but by sight. At work you hang around sinners, people that drink and smoke. You have a calling on your life. Do not be rebellious. Leave everything and go into the ministry.”

This criticism from my spiritual leaders was confusing and frustrating.

It was *confusing* because deep down I knew that God was with me at work as much as He was with me in church. I experienced God’s presence in both places. At work, my spiritual assignment was to make Christ known. At church I was to learn, worship and lead others into a deeper relationship with God. The primary difference was that on the job I depended *exclusively* on works (such as business miracles). In order to fulfill the mission God had given me there His guidance and intervention was *essential*. Besides, I could not afford to separate my job from spiritual things. I would not have lasted one day, much less one year, if it had not been for the constant power and presence of God at work.

Another reason I felt compelled to stay on the job was that I was an informal pastor to my business associates. Quite often I found myself in smoke-filled rooms praying with them or at a party ministering to their families—*some received the Lord!* None of this was short of a miracle considering that most of them were staunch Catholics who were part of a social class way above that of most people in my church. How could all this be so bad, I wondered.

It was *frustrating* because I respected my elders; not to follow their leading was tantamount to rebellion. I was also perplexed because when help was needed in matters involving the government, finances, or em-

ployment, those same leaders did not hesitate to ask for my assistance. *If I was so contaminated why was my money and my services solicited so often?*

I Was in Ministry After All

I have a wonderful wife. We have been married for 33 years. We have four children and six grandchildren. When Ruth and I first got married, we both acknowledged that our lives and careers were the Lord's and that our highest aspiration was to serve Him fully. Eventually God led us to exchange our business career for church ministry. I vividly remember the day I tendered my resignation at the hospital. My bosses did not want me to leave and kept pressuring me to name the price that would cause me to reconsider. After successfully turning down a string of very tempting salary increase offers, Ruth and I left town to take a pastorate where the remuneration was thirty times less. The lower income did not bother us even though our first child, Karina, had just been born and this meant increased expenses.

We have never regretted taking that step, but in 1999 I unexpectedly came in touch with a very tender spot in my soul. Later in this book I will provide the details of how this came about but its essence was the discovery of something that had been hidden in the inner recesses of my soul. Deep down, covered by a wall of human-made shame, lay buried the fact that God had anointed me for business with the same anointing I was so familiar with in church ministry. This discovery led me to understand that the day I tendered my resignation I did not leave something bad to go into the ministry—I had been a minister all along!

Once my eyes were opened, I was able to get *guiltlessly* in touch again with the joy I used to have when I was running three businesses. For the first time in more than three decades it was good not to feel ashamed, or worldly, about it. I felt like the prodigal son being embraced by the father and given new robes.

Anointed for Business?

Since then, the Holy Spirit has illuminated Scriptures that clearly show that there is a divine anointing for business. As a result many portions of the Word have come to light to show that those called to make the marketplace their parish already have the *fullness* of the Holy Spirit and *all* His gifts to take the kingdom of God to the heart of the city. In order to do this they are entitled *and expected* to use those gifts in the same fashion that professional ministers do when they stand behind the pulpit. Practically, this means doing business in the power of the Holy Spirit and having “church” all over the city just as the Early Christians did (see Acts 2:42).

Even though in my youth I was not able to express it so clearly for lack of adequate vocabulary, this was exactly what I used to do in my job because I had been anointed for business!

To be anointed for business is to be set aside by God for service in the marketplace to use our job as a ministry vehicle to transform the marketplace so that the gospel will be preached to, and heard by, every creature in our sphere of influence. The same principle applies in all areas of the marketplace, business, education, and government.

Anointing in the Bible

Anointing is an important subject in the Scriptures that is often associated with oil, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Pouring, rubbing, or smearing something or someone with oil was the biblical way to indicate that a person, item, or place had been set aside for divine use (Gen. 28:38). When a person was anointed in the Bible a large amount of oil was poured on the head to symbolize that the totality of the person was set aside. Such an anointing was done for full-time consecration. Kings, priests, prophets and places were set-aside *in toto* for divine service. Part-time anointing, or anointing for part-time ministry *is not found in the Bible*.

In Psalms we are shown the picture of oil running down the head, the beard and eventually the robes of Aaron (see Psalm 133:3). The passage compares the anointing to the dew of Hermon, which comes down upon the mountains of Zion. Abundant, overflowing, enveloping, transforming anointing is what we see in this Psalm.

This plentiful flow of oil is precisely what God has in mind for people in the marketplace. He wants to anoint them with so much of His Holy Spirit that they will “open (their) eyes so that (sinners) will turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). This anointing is meant to transform people *and their environment* “in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in God” (see Acts 26:18b).

Gifts in the Marketplace

Jesus’ promise that believers will be filled with the Holy Spirit, cast out demons, neutralize lurking threats (serpents), survive evil schemes (surreptitious poisonous drinks) and make sick things well (see Mk. 16:17-18) applies *primarily* to ministry in the marketplace.

There are two reasons for this. First, the context for Jesus’ words is the command to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”

(Mk. 16:15, emphasis added). The process described by Jesus is *definitely* centrifugal and as such expansive. The entire world, the totality of creation, must be the focus of the mission entrusted to us, and not just a church building, or a gathering of believers.

Second, only demons with suicidal tendencies would dare hang around Spirit-led, Bible-centered church meetings. Most demons spend the bulk of their time in the command centers that still control unredeemed business, educational and government circles in most cities. It is precisely there where God's power is desperately needed. And who is already strategically positioned in those places? Believers who are called to minister in the marketplace!

Strategies That Reach Cities

Since I first wrote [That None Should Perish](#), and later on [Prayer Evangelism](#)¹, the ministry team at Harvest Evangelism (the organization that I lead) has been deeply involved in city reaching thrusts all over the world. We come alongside pastors to help them motivate, train, and mobilize their congregations so that every person in the city will be prayed for on a daily basis. In the last 10 years we have seen significant progress, a number of prototypes have emerged and there have been significant breakthroughs in many cities.

Yet the new insights concerning the marketplace have energized city reaching thrusts like nothing else has. In places where the movement had stalled, bringing businesspeople, educators, and government leaders on board has been like adding booster rockets to a sputtering airplane. But the most extraordinary benefit has been the renewal in the lives of Christians in the marketplace. These men and women have always had the desire to do something extraordinary for God but they have been stopped by the limitations imposed on them by the old paradigm.

Consequently, they have seen themselves as spiritual prisoners of war, desperately trying to survive with dignity in an evil environment. Because they were taught that the marketplace is off limits to the fullness of the kingdom of God they never felt empowered to embrace the possibility of seeing it transformed. The best they had dared hope for was to be good witnesses, and maybe lead someone to Christ. Thus, the notion that the kingdom of God could materialize in their midst to displace the evil kingdom, has laid beyond the outer limits of their expectations. This in turn has forced them to settle for merely living an honorable life in a dishonorable environment.

A New Paradigm

However, when the pivotal role of the marketplace in God's plans is unveiled, a new paradigm emerges. Marketplace Christians soon discover that in the same fashion that traditional pastors are able to minister God's transforming power to individuals and to *domestic* institutions such as marriages and families, they can do the same for the people and the *secular* institutions that operate in the marketplace. All of a sudden the marketplace ceases to be a stronghold of the devil that needs to be avoided and becomes a place of dynamic ministry to stage its spiritual transformation. To better understand this we need to see how Jesus viewed the marketplace and His role in it.

¹ Both books were published by Regal Books, Ventura, Ca. Excerpts can be accessed at www.harvestevan.org.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS AND THE MARKETPLACE

What was Jesus' relationship with the marketplace?

We tend to see Him as antagonistic to it because of His condemnation of the Temple merchants, or by His strong suggestion to the wealthy young ruler to give away his possessions. Was He really hostile towards business and wealth? What was His attitude really like?

Traditionally we picture Jesus as remote, more as a monk than as a manager. However, because of the roles He embodied - ruler, teacher, and businessman - He belongs in the marketplace as much, or even more, than in a monastery.

Jesus was Born in the Marketplace

Jesus was in touch with the marketplace from the very beginning of His life on Earth for He was born in a place of business, an inn (see Lk. 2:7), and the angelic worship service to celebrate His birth took place in a nearby feeding lot (Lk. 2:13-14).

Rather than religious leaders, Jesus' first visitors consisted of employees and small business owners—shepherds (see Lk. 2:15-20) which His parents received in the inn's parking lot. I point this out because the manger was the equivalent of today's service station since it was used to dispense food (fuel) to the mules and donkeys (vehicles) resting (parked) there for the night.

These events could have happened in the Temple, or in its courts. Instead God sovereignly chose secular venues. I believe this was intended to show God's heart for the marketplace, where sinners, the object of His love, spend much of their time. It also could be that Jesus wanted to get in touch with the heart of the city, the marketplace, from the beginning of His earthly life. Later on He identified even more when he became a craftsman.

Jesus in Business

We easily see Him as a teacher by virtue of how well He taught and because in the gospels He is referred to as a rabbi. We also recognize Him as the ultimate ruler because He is the King of kings. However, picturing Him as a businessman is what we have the most difficulty with today. Yet, in the gospels the opposite was true. At first Jesus was more easily recognized as a businessman than as a rabbi or a ruler.

Shortly after He began to preach, His neighbors in Nazareth asked, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses, and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us? And they took offense at Him" (Mk. 6:3). Please notice how Jesus' neighbors described Him by his occupation - the carpenter - but had trouble seeing Him as a credible teacher, much less as a ruler. Such possibilities caused them to take offense at Him perhaps because they could not accept a local businessman as credible in spiritual matters.

It wasn't difficult for those neighbors to see Jesus as a businessman since many may have engaged His professional services. A carpenter, in biblical times, was a builder who primarily used wood. I suspect that many of those people ate at tables made by Jesus and secured their homes with doors built in His shop. Their houses could have had beams cut and fit by the Savior. Even some of their oxen may have worn *Jesus-made* harnesses. He did not do carpentry work occasionally, or in His spare time; rather, just like every boy in Israel He was taught a trade in His teens, perhaps even earlier. This means that by the time of His baptism He had been working for at least 20 years. He was not a mere apprentice, but a well-established artisan.

Jesus the Profitable Entrepreneur

Jesus did not merely do carpentry as a hobby. He had learned a trade in order to make a living, and this required that He run His shop at a profit. His daily business routine most likely included the calculation of the cost of goods and labor, the interplay between supply and demand, the establishment of competitive pricing, assessing the potential return on his investment, the cost of maintenance and replacement of equipment. Even though it may be unusual, even uncomfortable, for us to picture Jesus working to make a living, this is precisely what He did for most of His adult life.

In fact, Jesus was not a small-time carpenter who worked only when He was short on money. Earlier on - most likely when Joseph, his father, was still alive - He was described as "*the carpenter's son*" (see Mt. 13:55). When His neighbors called Him "*the*" carpenter and listed Him as the head

of the family, it most likely indicated that Joseph had passed away. If this is correct, then Jesus was running a family-owned business. As the first born He was the senior partner; His brothers were junior associates and His mother and sisters played supportive roles. This was not a small shop but one large enough to provide a living for a family of eight or more, of which Jesus was the leader (see Mk. 6:3).

Labor was a central part of Jesus' earthly life. According to Jewish tradition, as a rabbi He had to master a trade and exercise it honestly to support himself to be able to teach for free. His instruction to others that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive,*" which was quoted by Paul (see Acts 20:35), indicated that He had the means to acquire goods to be given away since Jesus definitely practiced what He preached.

Jesus the Well-Informed Leader

The picture of an ascetic, hermit-like Jesus does not emerge from the Scriptures but from distorted human traditions. It is true that He spent long hours alone in prayer, but He usually did this at night (see Lk. 6:12). During the day He interacted with all sorts of people and His conversation incorporated a very diverse combination of business topics. He was definitely a very well informed person and one who acquired information through direct exposure to people and situations.

Jesus the Marketplace Connoisseur

Jesus' parables show that He was thoroughly familiar with the marketplace and its operation. His examples dealt with construction (Mt. 7:24-27); wine making (Lk. 5:37,38); farming (Mk. 4:2-20); treasure hunting (Mt. 13:44); ranching (Mt. 18:12-14); management and labor (Mt. 20:1-16); family owned businesses (Mt. 21:28-31); hostile take overs (Lk. 20:9-19); return on investments (Mt. 25:14-30); futures markets (Lk. 12:16-21); crop yield (Mk. 26-32); management criteria (Lk. 12:35-48); the need for research (Lk. 14:24-35); bankruptcy (Lk. 15:11-16); the advantage of leverage (Lk. 16:1-13); and venture capital in high-risk situations (Lk. 19:11-27).

Jesus the Performer of Business Miracles

Many of Jesus' miracles took the form of business wonders. He produced a tremendous return on a young boy's investment by turning a few fishes and loaves into a complete meal for thousands of people (Mt. 14:13; 15:23). The transformation of water into wine belongs in the same category (see John 2:1-10) and illustrates Jesus' sympathy for those in charge of catering. His instructions leading to two miraculous catches of fish are the modern equivalent of an insightful stockbroker's advice (see Lk. 5:1-14; John 21:1-6). Peter and his crew - all professional fishermen - must have sold that

catch for a significant profit since it was the only fish in town that day. Furthermore, when tax time came Jesus gave a hot tip to Peter that enabled him to catch a fish in whose mouth he found a coin worth enough to cover the tax bill for *both* of them (Mt. 17:24).

A Friend of Poor and Rich Alike

Even though Jesus interacted liberally with poor people He was no stranger to the upper end of society. While he was still a toddler, the Magi visited Him. These men, wealthy professionals specializing in astronomy, medicine, and natural science, presented Him with expensive gifts.

Jesus was often the guest of honor at parties offered by wealthy people (Lk. 11:37, 14:7, 19:5). One rich man, Joseph of Arimathea provided a deluxe burial place for Jesus, a tomb hewn out of a rock, instead of the ordinary ones dug in the ground (Mt. 27:57-60). Joseph, along with Gamaliel and Nicodemus, was a member of the Sanhedrin. This influential institution was the modern equivalent of the Chamber of Commerce, the Elks Club, and the President's Roundtable all rolled into one. This illustrates a point often missed, that Jesus befriended the wealthy as well as the poor. I will cover this more in chapter 5.

Well Provided For

The notion that Jesus was perpetually broke is not scriptural. A group of wealthy women is reported as funding Jesus' ministry. This is mentioned right after He and the Twelve became itinerant preachers (Lk. 8:1,3). This may have become necessary because itinerant preaching must have taken them away from their regular jobs. These women contributed to the support of Jesus *and* the Twelve out of their private means. Evidently these were businesswomen who had significant wealth.

Jesus' tunic was seamless (see John 19:23-24), which made it the first century equivalent of an Armani suit. It is true that His parents gave the poor man's offering when they presented Him in the Temple (see Lk. 2:22-24) and that His statement about not having a place to lay down His head could mean that He did not own a house (see Lk. 9:58). But He always had adequate resources for His ministry and for the support of those traveling with Him. The fact that Judas, the team treasurer, was able to steal money undetected suggests that there were plenty of funds on hand to provide cover for his pilfering (see John 13:29).

Jesus was not a hermit but one who operated with great comfort in the marketplace and who was known to have done honest work for a living. This is also true of His disciples. The notion that Jesus and His follow-

ers extracted themselves from society cannot be sustained from the Scriptures. Jesus, a craftsman for more than 20 years, recruited people from the marketplace to bring the kingdom of God to sinners in cities all over. They led intense and normal lives and not once did they dichotomize labor and spiritual matters.

The Interplay between Labor and Worship

The relationship between labor and worship is important because work, in the Bible, is never presented as non-spiritual. In fact, God introduced labor *before* worship (see Gen. 1:28). He did not do it because labor was superior to worship; rather, He did it because in the Garden labor *was worship*. Being stewards over God's creation was the way Adam and Eve commuted with God, especially when He came down in the cool of the day to check on their affairs (Gen. 3:8).

Furthermore, after sin contaminated the soil, God pointed to labor as the tool to deal with the curse (see Gen. 3:17) that caused the ground to no longer yield its fruit spontaneously. At that moment, physical labor—toiling and the sweat of the brow - became the divinely sanctioned means to extract the now-reluctant fruit. It would take Jesus' death and resurrection to reverse the damage done by Satan in the Garden of Eden but in the meantime labor was given as a redemptive tool.

Jesus left no doubt about His mission when He announced that He came to destroy the devil's empire and its destructive manifestations in people's lives in order to set them free (see Lk. 4:18-21). The devil's empire was not an abstract idea, but a domain firmly entrenched in society to the point that, directly or indirectly, it controlled everyday life. To destroy this wicked system, Jesus had to dismantle and replace its worldwide societal structure. This is why His objective was not merely revival in the Temple, or in the myriad of Synagogues dotting the Roman Empire and beyond—centers where God fearing people congregated regularly. It was also to bring salvation to those most enslaved by sin in pagan societies all over the world.

Jesus' strategy was twofold: first, to redeem humankind – which He did through His atoning death, and then to announce to the captives that they had been set free. The latter required the launching of something new: the Church (see Mt. 16:18-19). To recruit leadership for this new entity Jesus reached into the marketplace instead of the rarified religious circles in Jerusalem. His disciples, the human backbone for this divine vehicle designed to change the world were definitely marketplace people as we will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE DISCIPLES AND THE MARKETPLACE

It is in the marketplace where Jesus first met His disciples. Peter and Andrew, professional fishermen, were busy casting a net into the sea when Jesus told them to follow Him. Next He spotted James and John, partners with their father in a food enterprise, mending their nets during a lull in the fishing (see Matt. 4:18-22). Matthew received his calling “while in his tax office” (Matt, 9:9). Nathaniel, whom Jesus saw sitting under a tree, was probably a farmer (John 1:48). None of the Twelve was a leader in the Temple or in the synagogue. They were definitely marketplace people. Bypassing the religious circles in His recruitment drive was intentional on Jesus’ part, as we will soon see.

Financing Jesus’ Work

Perhaps one of the most fascinating revelations in the gospel is that wealthy women supported Jesus out of their *private* means (see Luke 8:2-3). This was doubly extraordinary because they were women *and* they had private, personal wealth. Given the way women were treated in Jesus’ time, this combination was very unusual. Why would Jesus allow businesswomen to play such a pivotal role? It was part of His pattern to reach out to people in the marketplace for support.

Authors of the Word

The writing of the gospels, Christianity’s most foundational documents, was entrusted not to religious scholars but to marketplace leaders: a medical doctor (Luke), a retired tax officer (Matthew), a partner in a food enterprise (John), and an unemployed millionaire (Mark).

I point this out because there is evidence to suggest that Mark came from a wealthy family. His mother, Mary, was the one in whose house many met to pray for Peter’s release from prison (see Acts 12:12-17). She must have had a large home to accommodate such a gathering. When Peter knocked at the gate, Rhoda, a maidservant, answered. Poor people do not have servants and their homes do not have gates but rather doors abutting the street. Rhoda, startled, ran inside without opening the gate. Peter kept

on knocking but the house must have had an entranceway long enough for Rhoda to be able to run and for him not to be heard in spite of his persistent knocking.

Maybe it was Mark's comfortable upbringing that caused him to "desert Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia and not go with them to the work" (see Acts 13:13; 15:38). Nevertheless, this wealthy scion was entrusted with the extraordinary privilege of writing one of the Gospels.

The First Christians

The church was not conceived - in the physiological sense of the word - inside a religious building such as the Temple or a synagogue but in a private home. The Upper Room—the place where they gathered during the "gestation period", was the spiritual equivalent of the human womb.

What was the Upper Room like?

We usually picture it as no larger than a shack. In musicals and Christmas programs it is depicted as a tiny place, no bigger than a small hut. But it must have been a very large place if 120 men and women were *staying* in it (see Acts 1:13, 15). Staying means that they took their meals and slept in it, and this was just one room! It is safe to assume that the Upper Room was possibly the largest chamber in a villa-type residence owned by one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem. The choice of such a *secular* venue for the gestation of the church must not be overlooked.

Comfortable in non-religious settings

Once the first 3,000 converts joined the church, the disciples did not limit themselves to a religious building, but held church all over the city. And they did it every day, several times a day (Acts 2:42). Even though they continued to go to the Temple for prayer (Acts 2:46, 3:1) the bulk of their activity took place in homes where they shared their possessions with those in need and took their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart while praising the Lord (see Acts 2:44-47).

Complementing their participation in Temple centered rituals with spontaneous religious activities in homes, on the streets and in the marketplace (see Acts 5:12-15) shows how comfortable the Early Church was with non-traditional religious settings.

Notable as the Backbone of the Early Church

In addition to the apostles, the human backbone of the Early Church consisted of marketplace leaders such as Lydia, a wealthy wholesaler of ex-

pensive fabric who had homes both in Philippi and in Thyatira. She was the first European convert. Another prominent believer was Dorcas, a designer and manufacturer of inner garments. She apparently made a good living because “she was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did” (see Acts 9:36-43). The words *abounding* and *continually* suggest a high level of giving for which corresponding wealth is required. Dorcas was prominent enough for her death to be brought to the attention of Peter, and her subsequent resurrection to be noticed by an entire town, and for many of its citizens to believe in the Lord (see Acts 36,42).

Aquila and Priscila, Paul’s associates, were businesspeople also. They had the same profession as the apostle: tentmakers. To us, the word tent evokes images of Boy Scout size tents, but in the first century most tents were far more elaborate than that. A tent-maker was the equivalent of a modern day developer of motels, since tents were used for temporary lodging away from home. Tent-makers also did all kinds of work using leather. One of their largest clients may have been the Roman Army since it had garrisons nearby.

Important government officials also became believers. For example, the Ethiopian Eunuch was in charge of all the treasure of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia (see Acts 8:27). It is most unfortunate that we refer to him by his horrible man-inflicted handicap instead of as the Finance Minister of a prominent kingdom. This shows our discomfort with Christianity in the marketplace in general and with prominent believers in particular. I am sure that upon arriving in Ethiopia it was his distinguished government position that enabled him to present the gospel to others, mostly people of influence, instead of the physical mutilation by which we have chosen to identify him. Erastus, the city treasurer, was another important government official who joined the Early Church (see Rom. 16:23). Theophilus, to whom Luke addresses the book of Acts, was most likely a nobleman, or a high ranking government official (see Acts 1:1).

Capable of Ministry and Business

Nowadays we say that a layperson, such as the Eunuch, who does Church work while supporting himself through a secular job, is in part-time ministry. On the other hand, pastors, evangelists, and missionaries who do not have secular employment are considered to be in full-time ministry. As a result of this arbitrary classification, leaving the marketplace has become a rite of passage for transitioning into full-time ministry. This was not the norm in the Early Church. First-century Christians did not see working in the marketplace and serving in the Church as necessarily mutually exclusive activities. Paul, a full-time apostle, wrote to the Thessalonians that

neither he nor his team members “ate anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with hardship and labor (they) kept *working* day and night so that (they) might not be a burden to (anyone)” (1 Thes 3:8). This is a clear reference to the fact that Paul and his ministry team did *secular* work while ministering the Word. And this was not an isolated incident since Paul did the same while at Ephesus (see Acts 20:35).

Today we favor the notion that once the Apostles left their secular jobs they never returned to them. However, Peter went back to fishing at least twice after being called by Jesus: the first time to get money for taxes (see Matt. 17:24), and the second time right after the resurrection (see John 21:1-6). If a return to the marketplace was tantamount to backsliding and a betrayal of his call to the ministry, as it is often taught, why would Jesus encourage such behavior by enabling Peter and his partners to get a huge catch of fish? Luke was another prominent marketplace person. He is described by Paul as “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14), an indication that he continued to practice medicine after joining Paul’s team.

Able to Produce Excellent Leaders

Community and marketplace people led the newly established churches and their effectiveness as elders was extraordinary when one considers that they were appointed after a brief time of training and usually in a context of severe persecution. One cannot help but wonder how Paul managed to be so effective in his selection of elders for the emerging congregations. The answer lies in the fact that these folks were *already* leaders in the city who, after coming to Christ - usually through a power encounter (see I Cor. 2:4,5) - took positions of leadership in the Church. By power encounter I mean that they experienced the power of God when they were set free from spiritual bondage, usually in a dramatic way such as the Philippian jailer (see Acts 16:25-34). This, in turn, resulted in church leaders who knew God experientially rather than just intellectually and who were very passionate about their newfound faith (see I Cor. 2:1-5). Consequently they did more than simply sit on a church board— they ministered to the flock and to the lost on a *daily* basis (see Acts 20:28-32).

Possible to Understand Theological Truths

God did not hesitate to entrust marketplace leaders with complex theological issues either. The most controversial theological truth of the first century - that Gentiles can be saved without having to become Jews first - was initially presented to three marketplace leaders. Peter (food industry) was a guest at the home of Simon the Tanner (leather goods) where Cornelius, a senior military officer sent for him. This was a new and radical teaching for which the emerging Church had no paradigm. Neverthe-

less God did not hesitate to entrust it to “laymen”. The fact that they had not been trained in theology at formal rabbinical schools like the Pharisees was an advantage given the unprecedented nature of the new revelation.

The Growth of the Church

When the time came to establish a missionary center from which to stage the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, God moved the spiritual vortex of the Church to Antioch, a merchant city located on the convergence of important trading roads.

Choosing Apostolic Coworkers

A common misconception among Christians is to view the seven men chosen in Acts chapter 6 as the equivalent of modern day deacons. In many Bible translations the subtitle for this chapter is “Election of Deacons”. However, the word deacon is not used in this passage as a noun to describe their role. Instead it is used as a verb to depict their function. The Seven were never called deacons in the modern sense of the word. The task entrusted to them was far more elaborate than what we typically expect of deacons today. They were tapped to fix a deficiency in the system that fed thousands of people each day.

The Early Church was having a food distribution problem (see Acts 6:1) that resulted in the neglect of some widows. Because these widows were part of an ethnic group that had previously been despised, tensions rose to the point of menacing the unity of the brethren. Worse yet, this happened “while the disciples were increasing in number” (see Acts 6:1) undoubtedly threatening such growth. This was a problem that required immediate attention.

Solving Church Problems

The 12 Apostles indicated that it was not desirable for them “to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables” (Acts 6:2). Because of this reference to *servicing tables* many assume that the Seven were chosen to do that. However, the criterion to find these men points to something more elaborate since it called for men of good reputation (character), full of the Spirit (spirituality), and of wisdom (capacity for the job at hand) to *be put in charge* of this task (managers).

Most likely the Seven were selected because of their proven ability in business—they were assigned the task of fixing the food distribution problem. There is no record that any of them served tables. In fact, two of them exited the picture shortly afterwards: Stephen went to heaven and Phillip left on an extensive evangelistic tour that transformed several cities

(see Acts 7:60; 8:5-40;21:8).

The main point is that a problem important enough to be highlighted in the Scriptures was solved with great efficiency because recognized leaders in the congregation were selected to partner with the Apostles. Furthermore, as soon as the Seven were appointed, *“the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem (Acts 6:7)*. It appears that their managerial expertise - once recognized and anointed by the Apostles - solved a problem that was fast becoming a threat to the growth of the church (see Acts 6:6,7).

Accelerating Evangelism through Persecution

The Disciples had been in Jerusalem for over ten years with no significant progress towards reaching the ends of the earth, except for forays into familiar territories such as Judea and Samaria. For the most part, the routine of these early Christians consisted of meeting house to house and in the Temple. Most likely the Temple (a building that defined Jerusalem) is what prevented them from moving outward as Jesus had specified. God eventually used persecution to force the Church to move out of Jerusalem. This in turn refocused their attention on the marketplace because they fled along trading routes that eventually led them to merchant cities such as Antioch (see Acts 11:19-20). Antioch was not an isolated case because the cities mentioned in the book of Revelation were also commercial centers (see Rev. chapters 2-3). In these cities it was the marketplace, not the Temple, that was the center of life. It was right after being forced to leave Jerusalem that the church began to advance significantly towards *the end of the earth*.

Paul’s Focus on the Marketplace Shook Cities

From Paul’s early missionary trips we learn that upon arriving in a city he went first to a local synagogue, if there was one in town (see Acts 13:5). However, the record of synagogues becoming churches in the book of Acts is meager and in most cases Paul and his band of new believers had to exit under duress. This happened so many times that eventually Paul decided to focus on the Gentiles instead (see Acts 18:6). This took place in Corinth right after Paul had entered into a business partnership with Aquila and Priscila (see Acts 18:1-3). He immediately moved his base of operations to a private house and many Corinthians believed and were baptized. In the midst of this spiritual harvest God spoke to Paul in a vision to alert him that He had many people in the city. This led to Paul settling in Corinth for a year and a half (see Acts 18:9-11).

The sequence of events is interesting. First Paul entered the marketplace by becoming a partner with Aquila and Priscila. Next he moved

out of the synagogue to a house nearby. Finally, God alerted him to the fact that He had “many people *in the city*,” not in the synagogue. This sequence was to be repeated in Ephesus where he moved next taking Aquila and Priscila with him (see Acts 19:1-10).

Much of the economy of Ephesus was based upon demonic activities centered on the worship of goddesses, including Artemis (the mother or fertility goddess who is also known as Diana), Selene (the goddess over the earth) and Hekate (the goddess of witchcraft). In fact, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus is often listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. There is no doubt that in Ephesus Satan’s bunker was firmly entrenched in the marketplace.

In this environment, Paul and his partners, Aquila and Priscila, entered the marketplace by setting up a tent making operation (see Acts 20:33-35) and also by teaching about the kingdom of God in a secular venue, a school owned by Tyrannus (see Acts 19:10). Two years later a dramatic power encounter caused everyone in Ephesus *and the surrounding area* to hear the word of God (see Acts 19:10). The spiritual atmosphere was so positive that Paul is described as performing *extraordinary* miracles. This is a clear reference to a level of supernatural occurrences not common until then. Even the demons acknowledged awareness of who Paul was (see Acts 19:15). Multitudes renounced their secret practices, and leading practitioners burnt their books of magic in plain view. So much so “that the word of the Lord was growing and prevailing mightily” (Acts 19:20).

There is no doubt that Ephesus was transformed by a power encounter *in the marketplace*. Had Paul’s ministry remained confined to the synagogue he would have never had such an impact on a region so vast as the one he did by establishing roots in the marketplace. What happened in Ephesus was not exceptional but rather normative. In fact, similar encounters must have happened in other cities as well because later on Paul and his band were accused of having done the same thing “*all over Asia*” (see Acts 19:26).

The Church as the Counterculture

Jesus’ recruitment of marketplace people who were not members of the religious establishment was intentional and deliberate. The same can be said of how the Holy Spirit led the Church in Acts to operate in the marketplace. The Great Commission begins with a city, Jerusalem, and it will be fulfilled when the last city on earth is reached. To accomplish this, the city’s most vital component, the marketplace, has to be transformed as it happened in many cities in the book of Acts, Ephesus being the prime example.

Because the marketplace embodies the societal systems that define and give life to a metropolis, Jesus recruited people from the marketplace to be the backbone of His redemptive movement. His objective was to create a new social vehicle - the Church - a movement that freely expanded and not a monument to be gazed at. This movement was meant to be the counterculture rather than the subculture. Subcultures are satisfied with surviving under the dominant culture, whereas the counterculture has as its *irretrievable* objective to debunk and replace it. According to the dictionary a counterculture is "a culture with values and mores that run counter to those of established society."

This is why New Testament teaching is intentionally focused on curing social ills and repairing broken relationships as a mean to transform society's institutions - marriage, family, work, and government. This is so because Jesus' mission is not just to save individuals but to bring people groups and nations to Himself (see Rev. 21:24-27).

The Kingdom of God Must Go to the People

Jesus always spoke of His disciples taking the kingdom of God *to the people*. He also compared His kingdom to leaven, to light, to salt, to seeds. All of these elements need to come in contact with the world to fulfill their destiny - infiltrate, shine, preserve, sprout. His design was for the Church to be the counterculture, not just another subculture merely satisfied with survival. This is where the marketplace comes into sharper focus. Since business is what makes the marketplace go, we need to understand that the God of ministry is also the God of business, as we will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE GOD OF MINISTRY IS ALSO THE GOD OF BUSINESS

The majority of the Old Testament heroes were not ascetics but people deeply involved in everyday marketplace issues. Abraham, “the father of the faith” (Rom. 4:11), carried that spiritual mantle without giving up his very prosperous earthly occupation. In fact, he was one of the most successful and wealthy businessmen in the ancient Near East (see Gen. 12-25). Job - the head of a family business - was the wealthiest man in the country of Uz (see Job 1:3), where he was very active in societal and government issues (see Job 31).

Most prophets in the Old Testament, with two notable exceptions of Eli and Samuel, were businessmen who supported themselves from sources other than traditional Levitical resources. They saw the hand of God in their business deals as much as around the altar. David is a classic example. He told Saul that God provided security services for his shepherding business by empowering him to kill the lions and bears that came to decimate the inventory. To him, God’s protection was an integral part of his business (see I Sam. 17:34-37).

To better understand this I will now take a novel look at the story of David and Goliath. I want to bring up the *business dimension* of this epic encounter since traditionally we spiritualize it to the point of obscuring its significance as far as the marketplace is concerned.

The Tiny Caterer and the Giant

One of the greatest victories recorded in the Bible pitted this small businessman against a professional soldier. Through sheer intimidation, Goliath had immobilized the people of God for forty days before David, a junior partner in a family-owned husbandry business—showed up (see 2 Sam. 17:15-19). David, who had taken on a cloak as a caterer, went to the battlefield to deliver food to his brothers. He arrived in time to hear Goliath’s challenge and to witness Saul’s soldiers panic.

David, a godly man, was incensed by Goliath's taunt to the armies of the living God and by the reproach it represented. But because he was also a businessman, what caught his attention next was that a reward (profit) had been offered. He asked, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine?" (I Sam 17:26). What David appears to have been thinking was, *This giant is an uncircumcised Philistine and we are the armies of the living God. There is no way Goliath can ever win because God is on our side. Victory is a sure thing. Why let a good reward go to waste?*

The God of Ministry is Also the God of Business

David did not see conflict or incompatibility between a spiritual assignment and a financial reward. Unfortunately, today when we retell his story we emphasize his zeal for the Lord but inadvertently suppress any mention of his interest in the recompense, as if the latter was an evil deed. This represents a great injustice because dichotomizing the spiritual and the material did not enter the mind of David, a man according to God's heart. For him, the parallel he drew between God's protection in his business and in the impending encounter with Goliath was absolutely natural. He expected God to be with him in this undertaking just as he was with him when he fought the lions. He did not believe that fighting Goliath was a spiritual enterprise and minding his business a secular one. God was equally central to both of them.

The Old Myth About Businesspeople Not Being Spiritual

David's oldest brother, Eliab, tried to disqualify him from any role on the battlefield on account of his occupation, "With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?" (I Sam 17:28). He accused David of having impure motives and told him to go back to his business. Eliab did not believe that David belonged with the pros. In other words, what he said was, *You have no right to comment on our lack of results because your training is in business. Go back and take care of it so you can keep on funding us, but don't tell us what to do!*

If you are a businessperson, let me ask you, does it sound familiar?

David turned away from Eliab and kept asking the *same* question. Obviously his inquiry had to do with the reward because, "the people answered the *same* thing as before" (see I Sam. 17:30). David must have displayed confidence that Goliath could and should be defeated while making known his interest in the reward because, "when the words that David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul and he sent for him" (I Sam. 17:31). David knew that the deal was morally right, a sure thing, *and* profitable. Consequently, he was convinced it should be pursued.

Profit Motive is Not Necessarily Evil

David's interest in the reward must not be overlooked because it touches on a very sensitive issue: the profit motive. The profit motive is to a businessperson what the drive to win is to an athlete. No athlete worth his or her salt enters a competition to lose. To the contrary, they always expect to win. It is such determination that allows them to overcome extraordinary obstacles. In the same manner, the profit motive provides the stimulus needed for a businessperson to tackle similar challenges in the marketplace. It is a gift from God that, when used within proper boundaries, can benefit millions of people.

However, when an athlete tries to win at any cost, he or she becomes destructive. The same is true of a business person whose motivation is to profit no matter how he or she does it. The drive to win and the desire to make a profit are given by God to provide the incentive required for conquering exceptional challenges. But both must be exercised according to God's overarching principles. To win or to profit in an unethical manner or outside the will of God is never right. In fact its consequences are devastating. The pitfalls of unbridled capitalism are too many: slavery, child labor, and underpaid workers to name a few. It is not just how profit is made that is important but also the purpose for making a profit that counts, as we will see later on.

However, these cautions should not cause us to perceive profit as intrinsically evil. In fact, it is this misconception that prevents many Christians from making it big in business. Deep down they are not sure that they can be successful and godly at the same time. This ambivalence causes them to get lost in a maze of self-doubts. As a result they struggle with who they are in the marketplace and also have trouble recognizing as valid the tool provided by God for them to succeed. Most of them remain in business but give up on experiencing the joy of the Lord in it or of succeeding significantly as if the former was impossible and the latter undesirable, or worse yet, evil.

This is a terrible way to live. The expectations imposed on Christian businesspeople resemble how women were treated during the Victorian era in regards to sex. Godly women were supposed to do it but not to enjoy it. It was their responsibility to produce results (children) but not to get too excited in the process lest they become sensuous. Likewise believers in the marketplace are expected to make a profit but they are not supposed to feel too good about it for fear of becoming materialistic.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with sex or with profit. God designed both of them for an honorable purpose. The fact that they can be

abused should not prevent us from appreciating and exercising the divine intent behind them. God attaches pleasure to vital functions such as procreating and eating to ensure that they are exercised. In the business world, profit motive serves that purpose as the incentive that keeps business happening.

In the case of Christian business people, thwarting this motivation is what the devil is after. By labeling them as “profit driven” in a demeaning way, he either keeps them away from the marketplace, or handicaps with self-doubts those that choose to enter it. This is why it is refreshing, and even healing to study David’s approach.

Business Experience Applied to Spiritual Challenge

When Saul disqualified David because of his lack of professional training, David brought up a principle he had used successfully in business. He told the king how he went after the lions and bears that attacked his livestock, recovered what was stolen and killed the predators. We tend to spiritualize what he said but David’s example is the equivalent of modern day shoplifting, except that instead of junior high students doing it, it is criminal gangs that carried it out. Facing bears and lions with bare hands and recovering the stolen goods was no small feat but David candidly told Saul that he was able to do it because God was involved. And he wisely drew the conclusion that God was also going to be with him when he faced Goliath.

David exchanged Saul’s armor for the tools of his trade—staff, sling, and stones. Goliath despised and cursed David because of this. David did not let those insults intimidate him. He was comfortable with his equipment because he had seen God empower him every time he used it to protect his business. The situation at hand was no different. He reasoned that the same anointing that operated in shepherding should also work against the champion of the devil. And it did!

God Loves the World and Cares about It

It is necessary to rediscover the principle behind David’s approach. He saw God deeply interested in everything *he did*, whether he was watching his flock, catering food for the soldiers, or fighting the evil giant. His job was his ministry and his ministry was his job and both took place in a context of intense spiritual warfare. Please, notice how both David and Goliath saw their encounter as a spiritual struggle. Goliath cursed David by his gods and David replied with a challenge exalting Jehovah (see I Sam. 17:43-47). Even though they were dealing with swords, javelin, armor, sling and stones, they both knew that this was a spiritual confrontation.

Nowadays we have dichotomized the material and the spiritual worlds. We have wrongly concluded that the intangible realm is more likely to be filled with good things, while the tangible world, the one where we spend the *totality* of our earthly life, is intrinsically evil. This distinction is not found in the Scriptures. We have come to rate plowing a field or entering a business transaction in the general ledger as less valid than meditation, prayer or praise. But the former are expressions of life on earth that when done unto the glory of God are as spiritually valid as the latter. God created the world and every material thing in it and when He was done creating it, He pronounced it “very good”. God loves the world so much that He gave the very best—His only begotten Son—to provide the means of salvation from the evil introduced by Satan that defiled humans as well as material things. God is compassionate about both His creatures and His creation. Nineveh is a good example of this. God sent Jonah to call this city to repentance because He cared not just about the people of Nineveh but *also* about the animals in it (see Jon. 4:11).

The world has been contaminated by sin and continues to deteriorate because of a preponderance of it. But God has provided a way to reverse this course, “If my people humble themselves and pray. And seek my face after turning from their wicked ways, I will hear their prayers, will forgive their sin and I will heal the land!” (II Chron. 7:14).

The land this verse refers to is the land we live on. But it does not mean just the land but also the economy it sustains and everything else that emanates from it, all of which have been defiled by sin. No one appreciates the need for the healing of the land more than people in the marketplace because they are the ones who constantly struggle with what sin has brought about.

The Devil Fears Marketplace People

All through the Bible we see how people in the marketplace who operated under the power of God inflicted serious injury on the devil’s empire. Joseph, Moses, Job, Gideon, David, Daniel, Esther, Elijah, Peter, Paul, Barnabas and many others upset his evil plans. This is why today the devil is afraid that business people will fulfill their God-given destiny in the marketplace and bring healing to it. To prevent it from happening he constantly disqualifies them by debasing their occupation, telling them that it is less spiritual than church work. To reinforce this scheme he paints them as materialistic and unspiritual. The devil fears the knowledge of the city and the operational efficiency that marketplace Christians are capable of bringing to Kingdom expansion.

This efficiency is vividly illustrated by the no-nonsense approach

used by the Roman centurion when he asked Jesus to heal his servant. Because the centurion understood authority systems he knew how to delegate power, “Just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me and I say to this one ‘Go’, and he goes, and to another ‘Come’ and he comes.” He was very appreciative of Jesus’ time and did not want to waste any of it. Jesus was so impressed by the centurion’s approach that He bestowed on him an *extraordinary* compliment, “I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel” (see Matt. 8:1-10). This Gentile marketplace leader had a level of faith not seen anywhere in Israel. This example illustrates why business, government, and education leaders similarly gifted need to be incorporated into the leadership of the church.

Efficiency is the Norm in the Marketplace

Time and again I have seen that when business people are brought on board as ministry peers, problems that have frustrated pastors for years, are solved in a matter of days. Efficiency is an absolute must in the marketplace. The competitive environment in which marketplace people operate does not tolerate error, or even vacillation because if too many deals go wrong they get fired. They do not have the luxury of telling their board, or the shareholders, “It was the will of God that we lose money,” or “The devil interfered with our plans.” They are required to consistently operate at the highest level of efficiency possible.

When their natural ability to identify the bottom line and to troubleshoot are framed by a personal *good reputation, faith, and wisdom* as in the case of the Seven in Acts chapter 6, “the word of the Lord spreads and the numbers of disciples increase.” The growth is so great that even people that had previously been unresponsive suddenly get saved. For example, in Acts 6:7 it is recorded that “a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith”. This is due in part to the influence marketplace leaders had in the city.

Your Divine Destiny is in the Marketplace

Marketplace Christians take heart! You have the same spiritual capacity that the Seven and the Roman Centurion had—actually even a greater one because you live on this side of Calvary and the Resurrection. With so much power at your disposal you are expected, in fact you are *commanded*, to do greater works than Jesus did (see John 14:12-15). Do not be confined to a spectator’s seat from which you only watch ministry happen. If you do, Satan will continue to run rampant in your city. However, the day you discover that you have a divine call along with the anointing and the jurisdiction to exercise it in the marketplace, God’s kingdom will begin to replace Satan’s in the heart of the city.

Be a Businessperson for the Glory of God

It is important not to let the evil one disqualify you on account of your occupation. He will repeatedly tell you that you are a businessperson who has no right to be in ministry. He will try to convince you that you should be in business solely to make money and that the marketplace has no transcendent purpose. But being in business for the glory of God adds the most sublime purpose to your occupation. *Do not let your occupation block your destiny but instead let your destiny shape your occupation by turning it into your ministry.*

If you are going to accomplish this, a compelling understanding and embracing of God's purpose is crucial, especially if you find yourself in difficult straits. Do not let negative circumstances immobilize you. Don't be an echo of disappointing factors when, with God's help, you can be a prophetic voice that calls into being what is still unseen. God's purpose for you is immutable and you have the full power of heaven at your disposal to fulfill it (see John 14:14, Phil 4:13). Fix your eyes on the goal and in faith, take that first step today. The key is to get moving toward your destiny regardless of where you find yourself today. That first step is the most difficult but also the most crucial because it will get you going in the direction of your destiny. And He who began the good work in you will complete it. He always does.

Jesus began as a carpenter, David as the shepherd of a small flock, Peter as a fisherman. Those were small beginnings and yet each one of them fulfilled their divine destiny and affected countless lives. Jesus hung on a tree and carved the lives of millions into replicas of Himself. David became the shepherd of Israel. Peter turned into the premier fisherman of men. If you are a Christian in the marketplace, unsure of your role, listen to the Holy Spirit *now*. He is the One assigned to lead you to all truth. Let Him touch the innermost part of your soul and bring to light those areas darkened by shame and confusion. Never let negative circumstances determine your destiny. Instead change those circumstances by wholeheartedly embracing your divine purpose.

Let God show you that your parish, your congregation, your flock is in fact the marketplace. There is a purpose and a destiny for you there. You are part of a movement designed by God to bring His kingdom to the heart of the city because the God of ministry is also the God of business!

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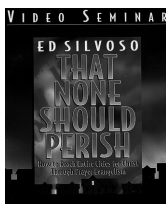
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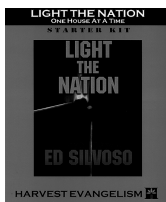
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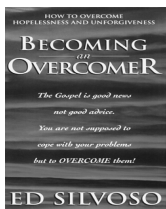
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