

Anointed for Business

Ed Silvano

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From Gospel Light
Ventura, California, U.S.A.

Published by Regal Books
From Gospel Light
Ventura, California, U.S.A.
Printed in the U.S.A.

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Cover and Internal Design by Rob Williams

Edited by Steven Lawson

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Silvano, Ed.

Anointed for business / Ed Silvano.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8307-2861-9

1. Evangelistic work. 2. Business—Religious aspects—Christianity.

I. Title.

BV3793 .S464 2002

248.8 '8—dc21

2002001443

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to an extraordinary architect of biblical dialogue. He is a person who has a unique ability to build forums broad enough for heterogeneous groups to exchange ideas and thoughts about difficult and controversial issues that directly affect the fulfillment of the Great Commission. He is someone who I have never heard utter a word of criticism directed at those who do not understand what he does or who vehemently disagree with his conclusions. I dedicate this book to C. Peter Wagner, with deep admiration for his character and great gratitude for his impact on the lives of millions, including my own.

Contents

Foreword	xx
By Bill McCartney	
Acknowledgments	xx
Introduction	xx
Chapter 1	xx
Confessions of a Christian Businessman	
Chapter 2	xx
Jesus and the Marketplace	
Chapter 3	xx
The Disciples and the Marketplace	
Chapter 4	xxx
The God of Business	
Chapter 5	xx
God Loves Bill Gates, Too	
Chapter 6	xx
Reconciliation in the Marketplace	
Chapter 7	xx
The Kingdom, the Church and the Marketplace	
Chapter 8	xx
God in the Boardroom	

Chapter 9	xx
Four Steps to Finding Your Destiny in the Marketplace	
Chapter 10	xx
Your Destiny: Saving the Nation	
Chapter 11	xx
Why God Wants You to Declare Chapter 11 Bankruptcy	
Chapter 12	xx
Doing Business God's Way	

Foreword

It is frequently acknowledged that the Second Great Awakening, the revival that swept America in the early nineteenth century (and which ultimately led to the abolition of slavery), was at least partly initiated by businessmen praying together in the city of New York. Is it possible that a third great awakening could take place in our times, also led by believers in business?

In *Anointed for Business*, Ed Silvano makes a compelling case for that possibility. And why not? While ministers have always been vital to the Church, according to Ed, throughout history God has almost always chosen to use people of the marketplace to lead revivals, transform societies and enlarge the kingdom of God. As he points out, not only did Jesus begin His life as a businessman (a carpenter), but also virtually all of the men He called to be His disciples were in businesses of one sort or another (fishing, collecting taxes, farming and so on). With the exception of Paul, none were priests, Levites or Pharisees—and even Paul ran a tent-making business in conjunction with his ministry.

But that is part of the point: In God's economy there is really no distinction between ministry and business. They are part and parcel of the same thing. You could say that business is the ministry of heaven, as much as the business of heaven is ministry. Unfortunately, too many people make a distinction between their work and their service to God. Not only has this led to the phenomenon of the "Sunday Christian," where a person attends church on Sunday and basically lives like the devil for the rest of the week, but it has also caused even sincere believers to distinguish what they do on the job (work) from what they do on Sunday (worship).

As Ed Silvano clearly points out in *Anointed for Business*, the Bible teaches that we are all called to be ministers of Christ, whether we work on Wall Street or in a pulpit, and to worship Him every day. And since the majority of pastors and clergy labor most with those who are already believers, it only makes sense that the workplace should be the natural arena for the greatest evangelical impact—and the most powerful ministry!

I fully agree with Ed that whatever our calling, be it clergy, coach or accountant, our "job" as Christians is to help win our world to Christ, to

contribute to revival, to lead the way to moral restoration within our nation and to transform our towns and cities through God-empowered activities in the marketplace. Indeed, as with first-century Christianity, it all begins in the marketplace, where the disciples of Jesus daily rub shoulders with the lost.

Bill McCartney
Founder and President, Promise Keepers

Acknowledgments

Let me express my deepest gratitude to Steven Lawson, my editor when we began to work on this book and my friend by the time we reached the last chapter, and to Cindy Laube-Oliveira, my faithful assistant who improved a fluid manuscript with her God-given touch for perfection.

I also want to recognize the wonderful people at Regal Books who went many extra miles with me to get into print this message that has been burning in my heart. Thank you Bill Greig III, Kyle Duncan, Deena Davis, Kim Bangs, Nola Grunden and Elizabeth Wingate. I could not have completed this work without your vision, prayers and expertise.

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. A city cannot exist without a marketplace 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, Argentina.¹ Like in every Spanish town, the plaza was the center of life. The Plaza Hotel, flanked by the Catholic cathedral and the police station, was on our block. On the east side were the courthouse, the National College and the Social Club, where the city fathers gathered. On the north side were the Customs, the Italian Club and homes of the leading lawyers and politicians. On the west side were the National Bank, more homes and a popular restaurant that between meals set tables on the sidewalk and doubled as the town café. City Hall was three blocks away, but it made its presence felt by the sonorous carillon that faithfully announced the time at 15-minute intervals 24 hours a day.

The plaza was wedged between the port and the city's two main streets where most of the 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 and handsome boys would choreograph the ritual of courtship under the attentive eyes of mothers, who would stand nearby, and fathers, who would sit at the café and pretend to discuss 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 microcosm. Through the ages, cultures around the world have fashioned their own versions of the marketplace, but they always included these three basic components that were found around the plaza in my hometown: business, education and government.

The Marketplace and the Early Church

Early Christians made the marketplace the focal point of their ministry because their occupations regularly took them there. As they conducted business, it was natural for them to present the gospel to the people they encountered.

Marketplace people played a vital role in the emergence, establishment and expansion of the Early Church—in fact, most of Jesus’ followers 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 lifestyle.

The book of Acts unfolds the story of believers who did more than tell people about Jesus in the marketplace. They also witnessed a steady stream of signs and wonders. In fact, only one of the 22 extraordinary manifestations of God’s power recorded in Acts happened in a religious venue: the healing of the lame man at the temple gate called Beautiful (see Acts 3:1-11). Most of these spiritual wonders were facilitated by people such as Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, who as ministry *and* business partners, are classic examples of marketplace Christians (see Acts 18:1-3).

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 each of them has been divinely called to bring the kingdom of God to the heart of the city.

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. 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 *OK* 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 that they can

do more than just witness; they can bring transformation to their jobs and then to their cities—as happened in the first century.

Most marketplace Christians already know that their ministry and their occupation are somehow connected, but they do not comprehend exactly how. Even though they sense that 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, an 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 fail to fulfill their divine destiny because they are often derided as untrained or uneducated. This is not a new accusation. Peter and John would say, “Welcome to the Club!” In the account we find in Acts, this is exactly what businessmen-turned-ministers were called by the religious clique. This should never happen because the requirement to be a minister is not religious education; rather, it is the spiritual conditioning that comes from “having been with Jesus” (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; 6:7). 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 where sick people lined up hoping that the healing shadow of Peter would fall upon them (see Acts 5:15). Soon multitudes from nearby cities flooded Jerusalem (see Acts 5:16).

What a change! This was the city that had previously grieved Jesus to the point of tears but was now giving Him tremendous joy (see Luke 19:41-42)! It began on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples left the enclosed 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 roles in the marketplace: fishermen, tax collectors, farmers and more.

Three Business Partners

It did not take too long for these enthusiastic preachers to transform myriad towns and cities, culminating with Ephesus, site of the most dramatic power encounter recorded in Acts (see Acts 19:1-13). This city, with a demon-driven economy and a marketplace that was the citadel of evil, experienced a radical transformation. It is not a coincidence that at the center of God's move were Paul, Aquila and Priscilla. Their dual ministry/business status connected them to the religious community through their teachings and to the marketplace by their tent-making enterprise.

Jesus' Recruiting Grounds

Jesus, a recognized craftsman, found the marketplace to be familiar 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 the group later and was a rabbi (see Acts 9:1-16), was not a stranger to the marketplace. In fact, on many of his ministry trips, he also ran a profitable business. In Ephesus his for-profit operation was large enough to provide for him, his team and even 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. Due to their prominence in their cities, they, in turn, produced salvation movements (see Acts 9:36-43; 10:1).

More Than a Layman

Today, in general, 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 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 put-down is "I am not a pastor—I am just a

layperson.” This is all part of a clever satanic scheme to neutralize apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers along with the 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, since they are the ones who, through their examples and Bible-centered teachings, equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Their God-given role cannot be overemphasized—it is crucial. We would not be the Church without them.

With this in mind, we need to see that there are others who are anointed to minister in the marketplace, like the kings, officials and other functionaries who were the contemporaries of the Old Testament priests. The call to serve in the marketplace and the call to serve in traditional religious settings are both *valid* and *interdependent*, since they involve ministers who respond to the same divine calling. Whether people are priests in the Temple or kings in society, God has called each one of them. 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 (see Acts 2:17-21), will happen all over the city, not just inside a building. It will be an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon *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 routines, 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 from what pastors face when counseling people who are contemplating suicide or divorce. Since Satan is the source of both challenges, the solution is the same: servants willing to turn the spiritual tide by ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit and setting free people who are oppressed by the devil. 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 (see 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12). This is why he allocates so many of his resources to make marketplace Christians feel unqualified and inferior in spiritual matters.

Four Lethal Misbeliefs

The combination of four major misbeliefs usually neutralizes God's calling on those anointed for marketplace ministry:

1. There is a God ordained division between clergy and laity.
2. The Church is called to operate primarily inside a building often referred to as the temple.
3. People involved in business cannot be as spiritual as those serving in traditional Church ministry.
4. 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 expose 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 at the temple, Jesus' New Covenant abolished the old order. In fact, the temple in Acts does not equate with the Church as we know it. The reference to early Christians praying in the temple simply means that they prayed where it was customary. The New Testament replaced the Levitical priestly order with the priesthood of all believers—in other words, every Christian is a minister. That is why today, Church should happen all over the city, every day, all day long as Christians replicate the model presented in Acts 2:42, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Nowadays there are multitudes of believers in the marketplace who hold strategic positions in business, education and politics. They 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.

Getting out of the Bleachers

Too often ministry in the Church resembles a final match in soccer's World Cup that has gone into overtime: A handful of players, all in desperate need of rest, run all over the field while hundreds of thousands of spectators, who could use some exercise, watch from comfortable seats. The players are the ministers who exert most of the energy, and the spectators represent the laypeople whose participation is limited to a secondary role, mainly making the whole enterprise financially feasible.

This unbiblical classification of believers results in first- and second-class statuses within the Church. Such distinctions 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 follow Jesus' lead and eliminate 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. The promise that "every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you" (Josh. 1:3) applies to them also—and they tread all over the city on a daily basis! The Lord is in their hearts. The Holy Spirit is imbuing their spirits. The Word is planted in their minds. All they need now is to realize that they are anointed to minister in the fullness of the Spirit. When this happens, they will be able to push back the spiritual darkness that envelops our cities. As marketplace Christians begin to move in their anointing, the whole world will hear the voice of God. This is what this book is about!

Note

1. San Nicolas, Argentina, has a population of 130,000.

Chapter 1

Confessions of a Christian Businessman

“One day you will be the president of Argentina!” my grandpa announced for the umpteenth time. My uncles and aunts endorsed his prediction with enthusiastic applause and cheers.

Born and raised in Argentina, I am the first male child in an Italian-Spanish family. I have only one sibling—a sister—and my cousins on the Italian side are my juniors by 10 or more years. As the male heir to the family name I was the focus of exuberant affirmation by my grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts. To my elders I was *il bambino di oro*, “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!” 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 that demanded 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 my 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 some kinfolk who insisted that I go into business. Someone would add, with a chuckle, “And when you become *very* rich, you can

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 my having a large collection, which in the world of children was synonymous with wealth and success. Watching me wheel and deal, some of my elders predicted that I would surely advance to the major leagues of business and make it big.

At the time I did not know what I would become when I grew up, but I did know that eventually I would take up one of these 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 business 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 its 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. Evading taxes, keeping a double set of books and violating 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 the 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. At 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 who 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 deeper relationships with God. The primary difference was that on the job I depended *exclusively* on works (such as business miracles). By this I mean that in order to fulfill the mission God had given me there, His guidance and supernatural intervention were *essential*. Besides, I could not afford to separate my job from spiritual things. I would not have lasted one day 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 members of their families—*some of them 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 far above that of most people in my church. *How could all of this ministry on the job be so bad?* I wondered.

It was *frustrating* because I respected my elders; in my eyes 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 employment, those same leaders did not hesitate to ask for my assistance. *If I was so contaminated, why were my money and my services solicited so often?*

In Ministry After All

I have a wonderful wife. Ruth and I have been married for 33 years. We have four children and six grandchildren. When we got married, we acknowledged that our lives and careers were the Lord's and that our highest aspiration was to serve Him fully. Eventually God led me to exchange our business career for church ministry. I vividly remember the day I submitted my resignation. 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 30 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 that 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 again able to get *guiltlessly* in touch with the joy I had when I was running three businesses. For the first time in more than three decades, it was good to feel no shame or worldiness about it. I felt like the prodigal son being embraced by the father and given new robes.

Anointed for Business?

The Holy Spirit has since illuminated Scriptures that clearly teach 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* of 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 these gifts in the same fashion that professional ministers use them when they stand behind a 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 I was not able to express it so clearly in my youth, 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. Once anointed, we are 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 (see Gen. 28:18). When a person was anointed, 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 133:1-3). 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 level of anointing 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* “that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an

inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [God]" (Acts 26:18).

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 Mark 16:17-18) *primarily* applies to ministry in the marketplace.

There are two reasons for this. First, the context for Jesus' words is the command, "Go into *all* the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15, emphasis added). The process described by Jesus is *definitely* centrifugal and expansive. The entire world, the totality of creation, must be the focus of the mission entrusted to us, 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, education 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 wrote *That None Should Perish* and *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 members of their congregations so that every person in their cities will have someone praying for them each day. 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 these 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 upon them by the old paradigm.

Consequently, when it comes to assessing their roles in the marketplace, 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 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 lain 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

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 minister God's transforming power to individuals and to domestic institutions such as marriage and family in the context of the church, they also can minister to the people and 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 it 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. We will look at this in the next chapter.

Note

1. *That None Should Perish* and *Prayer Evangelism* are both published by Regal Books, Ventura, California. Excerpts from these books can be accessed at www.harvestevan.org.

Chapter 2

Jesus and the Marketplace

Matthew quotes a reference to Jesus as the “carpenter’s son,” using the Greek word “tekton.” Tekton, means “artificer, craftsman.” Mark quotes a similar reference, which specifically refers to Jesus as a “carpenter,” a tekton. Neither Joseph nor Jesus were simple woodworkers; they were craftsmen, carefully making implements of wood.

Troy Haltom, Bearing One Another’s Burdens

What was Jesus’ view of the marketplace? We tend to see Him as antagonistic toward it because He condemned the Temple merchants and because of His radical suggestion that the wealthy young ruler should give away all of his possessions. Was He really hostile toward business and wealth? Exactly what was his attitude?

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

Born in the Marketplace

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

Rather than religious leaders, Jesus’ first visitors were employees and small-business owners. They were shepherds (see Luke 2:15-20) whom His parents received in the inn’s parking lot. I point this out because the stable was the equivalent of the modern service station—it was used to dispense food (fuel) to the mules and donkeys (vehicles) that rested (parked) there for the night.

Each of 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. As He grew older, He identified even further by becoming a craftsman.

Jesus in Business

We easily see Jesus 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 doing today. Yet in the Gospels the opposite was true. At first Jesus was more recognizable 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" (Mark 6:3). Please notice how Jesus' neighbors described Him by his occupation—the carpenter—but had difficulty 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 was not difficult for those neighbors to see Jesus as a businessman since many may have engaged His professional services and purchased products made by His hands. A carpenter, in biblical times, was a builder who primarily used wood. Jesus 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 at His profession for at least 20 years. He was not a mere apprentice but a well-established artisan.

I suspect that many of His neighbors 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* yokes.

It is interesting to note that Jesus even drew upon His experience as a craftsman when He taught and ministered to the multitudes. He was not simply

using a catchy metaphor. When He said, "Take my *yoke* upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my *yoke* is easy, and my load is light" (Matt. 11:29-30, emphasis added), He knew exactly what He was talking about.

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 likely included the calculation of the cost of goods and labor, the interplay between supply and demand, the establishment of competitive pricing, the measurement of the potential return on His investment, the estimation of maintenance costs and the 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. Early in His ministry His neighbors described Him as "the carpenter's son" (Matt. 13:55) and "the carpenter" (Mark 6:3). If His father, Joseph, had already passed away, then Jesus, as the firstborn male, would have been running the family-owned business. His brothers would have been junior associates, and His mother and sisters would have played supportive roles. This was not a small shop but one large enough to provide a living for this family of eight or more.

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. Jesus' 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 He definitely practiced what He preached.

Jesus the Well-Informed Leader

The picture of an ascetic, hermitlike Jesus does not emerge from the Scriptures; rather, it comes from distorted human traditions. It is true that He spent long hours alone in prayer, but He usually did this at night (see Matt. 14:23; Luke 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 (see Matt. 7:24-27),
- wine making (see Luke 5:37-38),
- farming (see Mark 4:2-20),
- treasure hunting (see Matt. 13:44),
- ranching (see Matt. 18:12-14),
- management and labor (see Matt. 20:1-16),
- family-owned businesses (see Matt. 21:28-31),
- hostile takeovers (see Luke 20:9-19),
- return on investments (see Matt. 25:14-30),
- futures markets (see Luke 12:16-21),
- crop yield (see Mark 13:27-32),
- management criteria (see Luke 12:35-48),
- the need for observation and research (see Luke 14:24-35),
- misuse of money and bankruptcy (see Luke 15:11-16),
- the advantage of leverage (see Luke 16:1-13) and
- venture capital in high-risk situations (see Luke 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 (see Matt. 14:13). 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 Luke 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 along, Jesus gave Peter a hot tip that enabled him to catch a fish that had a

coin in its mouth that was worth enough to cover the tax bill for *both* Jesus and Peter (see Matt. 17:24-27).

A Friend of Poor and Rich Alike

Jesus interacted liberally with poor people, yet 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 expensive gifts.

Jesus was often the guest of honor at parties offered by wealthy people (see Luke 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 (Matt. 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: Jesus befriended the wealthy as well as the poor (I will cover this more in chapter 5).

Financing Jesus' Work

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 (see Luke 8:1,3). This may have become necessary because itinerant preaching must have taken them away from their regular jobs. Drawing from their private funds, these women contributed to the support of Jesus *and* the Twelve (see Luke 8:2-3). Evidently these were women who had significant wealth. This was extraordinary: They were women, *and* they had private, personal wealth. Given the way women were perceived and treated in Jesus' time, this combination was very unusual. Why would Jesus allow the women to help? It was part of His pattern to reach out to people in the marketplace for support, instead of relying upon the religious system of the day.

Jesus' tunic was seamless, 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 Luke 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 Luke 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 Judas's 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 followers extracted themselves from society cannot be sustained from the Scriptures. Jesus, a businessman for more than 20 years, recruited people from the marketplace in order to bring the kingdom of God to sinners everywhere. 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 nonspiritual. In fact, God introduced labor (subduing and ruling over the earth) 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 communed with God, especially when He came down in the cool of the day to check on their affairs (see Gen. 3:8).

Furthermore, after sin had contaminated the soil, God pointed to labor as the tool to use when dealing with the curse (see Gen. 3:17) that had caused the ground to no longer spontaneously yield fruit. At that moment, physical labor—toiling and the sweat of the brow—became the divinely sanctioned means to extract the now-reluctant fruit.

Jesus left no doubt about His mission when He announced that in order to set people free He had come to destroy the devil's empire and its ruinous manifestations in their lives (see Luke 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 (see Eph. 2:1-3; 6:11-12). To destroy this wicked system, Jesus had to dismantle and replace its worldwide societal structure. This is why His objective was not only revival in the Temple or in the myriad synagogues dotting the Roman Empire and beyond—centers where God-fearing people congregated regularly. It was also to bring salvation to the people 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 let the captives know that they had been set free. The latter required the launching of something new: the Church (see Matt. 16:18-19). To recruit leadership for this new entity Jesus reached into the marketplace, instead of the rarified religious circles in Jerusalem. This is why His disciples, the 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

Jesus intentionally recruited marketplace people who were not members of the religious establishment because His objective was to create a new social vehicle—the Church, a movement that was meant to be the counterculture, rather than a subculture.

The first picture we have of the disciples is in the marketplace where Jesus met them. Peter and Andrew, professional fishermen, were busy casting a net into the sea when Jesus told them to follow Him. Jesus next spotted James and John, partners with their father in a food enterprise—they were mending their nets during a lull in the fishing (see Matt. 4:21-22). Matthew received his calling “while in his tax office” (Matt. 9:9). Nathaniel, whom Jesus saw sitting under a tree, was probably a farmer (see John 1:48). All of the disciples were certainly marketplace people. None of the Twelve was a leader in the Temple or in the synagogue. Bypassing the religious circles was intentional on Jesus’ part, as we will soon see.

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 about Mark (also called John) because there is evidence to suggest that he 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 did not have servants, and their homes did not have gates. Startled, Rhoda ran inside without opening the gate. Peter kept on knocking but was not heard by the other

people inside Mary's house. This indicates that the house must have had a long entranceway.

Maybe it was Mark's comfortable upbringing that caused him to desert Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia and not go with them to do 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; rather, it started in the upper room of a private home. The Upper Room—the place where the disciples gathered during the gestation period of the Church—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 Easter programs it is depicted as a tiny place, about the size of a small hut. But when we stop to think about it, we can see that it must have been a very large place because 120 men and women were *staying* there (see Acts 1:13,15). *Staying* means that they took their meals and slept in it, and it was just one room! It is safe to assume that the Upper Room was possibly the largest chamber in a villa owned by one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem. The choice of a secular venue for the gestation of the Church must not be overlooked.

Comfortable in Nonreligious Settings

Later, when 3,000 converts joined the Church, the apostles did not busy themselves with erecting a religious building—instead they held church all over the city. They did it every day, several times a day (see Acts 2:42). Although they continued to go to the Temple for prayer (see Acts 2:46; 3:1), the bulk of their activities 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).

The fact that Christians in the Early Church complemented their participation in Temple-centered rituals with spontaneous religious activities in

homes and on the streets (see Acts 5:12-15) shows how comfortable they were in nontraditional 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 expensive fabric who had homes in Philippi and in Thyatira. She was Christ's first European convert. Another of the first believers 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" (Acts 9:36). The words "abounding" and "continually" imply a high level of giving for which corresponding wealth was 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 which led many of its citizens to believe in the Lord (see Acts 9:36-42).

Aquila and Priscilla were also businesspeople. They had the same profession as Paul: tent makers (see Acts 18:3). Today the word "tent" evokes images of Boy Scout pup tents, but in the first century most tents were far more elaborate. It is not entirely farfetched to equate a tent maker with a modern-day developer of motels, since tents were used for temporary lodging when a person was away from home. Tent makers also did all kinds of leather work. One of Aquila and Priscilla's largest clients may have been the Roman Army, which had garrisons nearby.

Business people were not the only ones to join the early Church. Many prominent 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 by his position of influence—he was the finance minister of a prominent kingdom. This shows our discomfort with the marketplace in general and with prominent people in particular. It is likely that when he arrived in Ethiopia it was not his degrading physical scars but his government position that enabled him to present the gospel to others, mostly people of influence.

There were other prominent people in the Early Church, too. Erastus, the city treasurer (see Rom. 16:23) was a member and Luke addresses Acts to

Theophilus, who was most likely a high-ranking government official (see Acts 1:1).¹

Capable of Ministry and Business

Nowadays, we say that people such as the eunuch, Aquila and Priscilla, who do church work while supporting themselves through secular jobs, are in part-time ministry. On the other hand, we consider pastors, evangelists and missionaries who do not have secular employment to be in full-time ministry. As a result of this arbitrary classification, leaving the marketplace has become a rite of passage for the transition 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 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 labor and hardship [they] kept working night and day so that [they] might not be a burden to [anyone]” (2 Thess. 3:8). This is a clear reference to the fact that Paul and his ministry team did *secular* work while they ministered the Word. This was not an isolated incident, since Paul did the same thing while in Corinth as well as in Ephesus (see Acts 18:1-3).

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 he had been called by Jesus: the first time to get money for taxes (see Matt. 17:24-27), and the second time right after the Resurrection (see John 21:3). If a return to the marketplace was tantamount to backsliding and betraying his call to the ministry, as it is often taught, why would Jesus encourage such behavior by enabling Peter and his partners to catch so many 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 he joined Paul’s team.

Able to Produce Excellent Leaders

Community and marketplace people led the newly established churches and they were extraordinarily effective as elders, considering that most of them were appointed after a brief time of training and usually in a context of severe persecution. It is a wonder that Paul managed to be so effective in his selection of elders for the emerging congregations. The answer lies in the fact that after these folks, who were *already* leaders in the city, came to Christ—usually through a

“power encounter”—they 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, as in the case of the Philippi jailer (see Acts 16:25-34). This, in turn, resulted in Church leaders who knew God experientially rather than just intellectually and who were passionate about their newfound faith (see 1 Cor. 2:1-5). Consequently, they did more than simply sit on the board—they ministered to the flock and to the lost *on a daily basis* (see Acts 20:31).

Possible to Understand Theological Truths

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. Nevertheless, God did not hesitate to entrust it to laymen. The fact that they had not been trained in theology at formal rabbinical schools, as the Pharisees had been trained, 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 the gospel would be spread to the ends of the earth, God moved the spiritual vortex of the Church from Jerusalem 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 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” (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 *servoing tables* many people assume that the seven men of good reputation noted in Acts 6:3 were chosen to do that. However, the criterion used to select what are sometimes called the Seven points to something more elaborate, since it called for men of good reputation (character) and 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 to fix the existing food-distribution problem because of their proven ability in business. There is no record that any of them served tables. In fact, two of them exited the picture shortly afterward: Stephen went to heaven and Philip left on an extensive evangelistic tour that transformed several cities (see Acts 7:60; 8:5-40).

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, after 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

By this time the disciples had been in Jerusalem for more than 10 years and there had been no significant progress toward 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 had to use 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 centers such as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (see Acts 11:19-20). These were not isolated cases because the cities noted in Revelation were also commercial centers (see Rev. 2-3). It was not until the disciples were forced to leave Jerusalem that the Church began to make significant progress in its journey toward the ends of the earth.

Shaking Cities Through Paul's Marketplace Focus

From Paul's early missionary trips we learn that upon arriving in a city he first went to the local synagogue, if there was one (see Acts 13:5). However, the record of synagogues becoming churches is meager. In many cases Paul and his band of new believers were forced to exit the synagogue, and in many cases the city, under duress. This happened so many times that eventually Paul was led to focus on the Gentiles instead (see Acts 18:6). This happened in Corinth right after Paul had entered into a business partnership with Aquila and Priscilla (see Acts 18:1-3). He immediately moved his base of operation to a private house where he was able to teach daily, rather than just on the Sabbath, and many people believed and were baptized. In the midst of this spiritual harvest God spoke to Paul in a vision, alerting him that there were many believers *in the city*. It is interesting to note that God used this vision to point Paul to the city right after he had exited the synagogue. As a result, Paul settled in Corinth for a year and a half (see Acts 18:11).

This sequence of events is worth noticing since it shows Paul having shifted from the synagogue to the marketplace. First Paul entered the marketplace. Next he moved out of the synagogue to a nearby house. Then God alerted him to the fact that there were many believers *in the city*, rather than in the synagogue. This sequence was repeated in Ephesus, where he moved next, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him (see Acts 18:18). The transition to the marketplace was accompanied in both cases by extraordinary results, specifically many conversions in the midst of dramatic power encounters.

Much of the economy of Ephesus was based upon demonic activities centered on the worship of goddesses, specifically Artemis, the fertility goddess

who is also referred to as Diana.² This allowed Satan's bunker to be firmly entrenched in the marketplace.

In this environment, Paul and his partners, Aquila and Priscilla, entered the marketplace. They did it by setting up a tent-making operation (see Acts 20:33-35) and by using a secular venue, a school owned by Tyrannus (see Acts 19:9-10), where they taught daily about the kingdom of God. 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 God was performing extraordinary miracles through Paul. This level of supernatural occurrences had not been common until then, hence the extraordinary qualifier. Even the demons acknowledged that they knew who Paul was (see Acts 19:15). Multitudes of people renounced their secret practices, and leading practitioners of sorcery burned their magic books. As a result, the Word of the Lord grew and prevailed in a city that had once been a major stronghold of Satan (see Acts 19:20).

There is no doubt that Ephesus was transformed by a power encounter that occurred *in the marketplace*. Had Paul's ministry remained confined to the synagogue, he never would have had such an impact on a region as vast as the one he eventually did by establishing roots in the marketplace. What happened in Ephesus was not exceptional; rather, it was 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" (Acts 19:26).

The Church as the Counterculture

Jesus' recruitment of marketplace people who were not members of the religious establishment was intentional. The same can be said about how the Holy Spirit led the Early Church 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 just as it happened in Ephesus and the other cities mentioned in Acts.

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, rather than a monument to be gazed at. This movement was meant to be the counterculture, rather than a subculture. People in a subculture are satisfied with surviving under the dominant culture, whereas those in a counterculture have as their *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.”³

This is why New Testament teaching is intentionally focused on curing social ills and repairing broken relationships as a means to transform society’s institutions: marriage, family, work and government. This is true because Jesus’ mission was not only to save individuals but also to bring people groups and nations to Himself (see Rev. 21:24-27). If He had come only to save people, believers would be transferred to heaven right after their conversions. Instead, they are left in the world and entrusted with the commission to disciple the nations.

Taking the Kingdom of God to the People

Jesus always spoke of His disciples taking the kingdom of God to the people. He also compared His kingdom to leaven, light, salt and seeds. Each of these elements must come in contact with the physical world to fulfill its destiny: to infiltrate, shine, preserve or sprout. Jesus’ design was for the Church to be the counterculture, not another subculture merely satisfied with survival.

This is where the marketplace comes into a 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. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. The title “Most Excellent Theophilus” would seem to support the position that Theophilus was a high-ranking government leader. The *New English Bible* translates this expression “Your Excellency, Theophilus.”

2. For more information on how the worship of Artemis and other goddesses affected Ephesus, read Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).
3. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., s. v. "counterculture."

Chapter 4

The God of Business

The expectations imposed upon Christian businesspeople resemble how women were treated during the Victorian era in regard to sex. They were told, “Do it, but do not enjoy it. Produce results [children], but do not get too excited in the process lest you 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.

The majority of the Old Testament heroes were not ascetics; rather, they were people deeply involved in everyday marketplace issues. Abraham, “the father of the faith” (Rom. 4:1), 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 governmental issues (see Job 31).

Most prophets in the Old Testament, with the notable exceptions of Eli and Samuel, were businessmen who did not support themselves with traditional Levitical resources. They saw the hand of God in their business deals as much as they did 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 his inventory. To David, God’s protection was an integral part of his business (see 1 Sam. 17:34-37).

To better understand this factor I will take a novel look at the story of David and Goliath. I want to examine the *business dimension* of this epic encounter, which we traditionally spiritualize to the point of obscuring its significance as it relates to the marketplace.

The Tiny Caterer and the Giant

One of the greatest victories recorded in the Bible pitted a small businessman against a professional soldier. Through sheer intimidation, Goliath had immobilized the people of God for 40 days before David, a junior partner in a

family-owned husbandry business, showed up (see 1 Sam. 17:15-19). David, who had taken on the cloak of 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?" (1 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 that Goliath can ever win because God is on our side. Victory is a sure thing. Why let a good reward go to waste?*

God in the Marketplace

David did not see a conflict, or an 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 were an evil deed. This represents a great injustice, because dichotomizing the spiritual and the material did not enter the mind of David—someone who was described by Samuel as "a man after God's heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). For David, 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 off the lions. He did not believe that fighting Goliath was a spiritual enterprise and running his business a secular one. God was central in both of them.

An Old Myth About Businesspeople

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?'" (1 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 meant 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 that you can keep on funding us, but don't tell us what to do!*

Does this sound familiar? If you work in the marketplace, you have probably heard something like this somewhere along the way in your Christian life: "Let the professionals do the ministry and you take care of business."

A Familiar Ring

David turned away from Eliab and kept asking others the *same* question. Obviously his inquiry had to do with the reward because "the people answered the *same* thing as before" (1 Sam. 17:30, emphasis added). David must have displayed confidence that Goliath could and should be defeated and made known his interest in the reward because "when the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him" (1 Sam. 17:31). David knew that the deal was morally right, a sure thing *and* profitable. Consequently, he was convinced that it should be pursued.

Profit Motive 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.¹ 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 him or her 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 businessperson 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 many, including slavery, child labor and underpaid workers. It is not just how profit is made that is important but also the purpose for making a profit (which I will cover later in this book).

While we need to be mindful of these cautions, they 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. They struggle with who they are in the marketplace—businesspeople—and have trouble recognizing the validity of the tool provided God for them to succeed—profit motive. As a result, many marketplace Christians remain in business but give up on experiencing the joy of the Lord in their work or of significant success, as if the former was impossible and the latter undesirable or, worse yet, evil.

This is a terrible way to live. The expectations imposed upon Christian businesspeople resemble how women were treated during the Victorian era in regard 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 either 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 by functioning as the incentive that keeps business happening.

In the case of Christian businesspeople, the devil seeks to thwart this motivation. By labeling believers as “profit-driven” in a demeaning way, he either keeps them away from the marketplace or handicaps them with self-doubt if they choose to enter it. This is why it is refreshing, and even healing, to study David’s approach.

Business Experience Applied to Spiritual Challenges

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 is describing how he dealt with the equivalent of modern-day shoplifting, except that instead of junior high students doing it, it was wild animals that carried it out. Facing bears and lions with bare hands and recovering stolen goods was no small feat but David candidly told Saul that he was able to do it

because God was involved. From his past success, he wisely concluded that God would also be with him when he faced Goliath.

David did not use Saul's armor, opting for the tools of his trade instead—a staff, a 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's Love and Care for the World

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—both happened in a context of intense spiritual warfare. Please, notice that 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 1 Sam 17:43-47). Even though they were dealing with swords, javelin, armor, slings and stones, they both knew that this was a spiritual confrontation.

Nowadays we have dichotomized the material and 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 with His creation, He pronounced it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). 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 defilement of all things, human and material, that was introduced by Satan. 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 who lived there but also about the animals (see Jonah 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 and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land! (2 Chron. 7:14).

The land this verse refers to is the land we live on. But it does not just mean the land; but it also means 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.

Why 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 damage to 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 Christians will fulfill their divine destiny in the marketplace and bring the kingdom of God to it. To prevent this from happening he constantly disqualifies them by debasing their occupation—telling them that it is less spiritual than Church work—and He paints them as materialistic and unspiritual. The devil fears the knowledge of what makes a city tick and 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 operational 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" (Matt. 8:8-9). 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" (Matt. 8:10). This Gentile

marketplace leader had a level of faith not seen anywhere else. This incident illustrates why business, education and government leaders need to be incorporated into the leadership of the church.

Efficiency as a Norm

I have often seen situations where problems that have frustrated pastors for years are solved in a few days when businesspeople are brought on board as ministry *peers*. This happens because efficiency is an absolute must in the marketplace. The competitive nature of the environment in which businesspeople operate daily does not tolerate error or even vacillation, because if too many deals go wrong they get fired. These people do not have the option of telling the 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 personal *good reputation, faith and wisdom*, as was the case of the Seven in Acts, the word of the Lord spreads and the number of disciples increases (see Acts 6:7). The growth is so great that even people in groups 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

Marketplace Christians, take heart! You have the same spiritual capacity that the Roman Centurion had—actually even a greater one because you live on this side of Calvary and the Resurrection. With so much divine power at your disposal you are expected, in fact commanded, to do greater works than even Jesus did (see John 14:12-15). Do not confine yourself 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 your city.

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 because your focus is on the marketplace, you have no right to be in ministry. He will try to convince you that you should be in business solely to make a living 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; instead, allow your destiny to shape your business 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. Do not 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 upon the goal and, in faith, take that first step today. The key is to get moving regardless of where you find yourself at this moment. That first step is the most difficult but also the most crucial because it will propel you in the direction of your destiny. Remember, He who began the good work in you will complete it. He always does.

Your current occupation or your station in your field does not matter. Jesus began as a carpenter, David as the shepherd of a small flock and Peter as a fisherman. Those were small beginnings, yet each of them fulfilled their divine destiny and affected millions of 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 fisher of men. If you are a Christian in the marketplace, unsure of your role, listen to the Holy Spirit *now*. He is the One who is assigned to lead you to all truth. Let Him touch the innermost part of your soul and bring to light those areas darkened by man-made 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 God has designed to bring His kingdom to the heart of the city. You can take your first step toward your destiny right now, because the God of ministry is also the God of business!

Note

1. Profit motive also applies to the other components of the marketplace (government and education), although not as centrally as it does to business. The main thrusts in education are ideas and knowledge. In government, it is the provision of vital services. However, schools need to have enough income to stay open and governments need to generate enough revenue to fund their programs.