

*“Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet. Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.” Acts 4:36-5:2*

## Encouraging Warriors or Smiling Pretenders?

Today’s verse contrasts Barnabas – a landowner who God used powerfully in helping Paul, John Mark, and many others move forward in faith – with Ananias and Sapphira, a similarly ‘landed’ couple who also desired to be a part of the Christian community but were unable to ‘let go’ and be personally honest with themselves and others. Barnabas was a hands-on servant leader whose actions proved his clear Kingdom purpose and perspective, as demonstrated by many New Testament passages, including this one:

*“When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.” Acts 11:23-24*

What can we learn from Barnabas’ example? Some C12 Groups go deep, debating alternative approaches to real issues and opportunities, and applying Biblical principles and compatible business ‘best practices’ to address their challenges and potential in Christ in a way that other groups scarcely approach. Meanwhile, other groups seem to just go along, skimming along the surface, with members mysteriously disappearing when things get tough in their life or business and they can no longer easily attend ‘in stride’ while relying on their own strength. What’s the essential difference between these two types of C12 groups? One is confrontational in a healthy way, with an authentic desire for lifelong learning and iron sharpening iron progress, *whatever* the circumstances. The other seems full of ‘arms length’ relationships, like community peers attending the same class but not truly relying on, or investing in, each other to transform the local marketplace for Christ. By seeking to just get along, they withhold God’s best from themselves and each other. This can also be true of the dynamics of many companies, families, and churches.

None of us are perfect. We all withhold in some areas, here, at work, and at home. Let’s pause to honestly self-assess how we’re doing, around **this** C12 peer board table, in speaking the truth in love and putting Scriptural wisdom into practice. Are we merely ‘philosophizing’ or are we truly wading into the real issues in our businesses, ministries, and lives as Christ’s disciples in order to transform our marketplace? Are we each focused on serving ourselves, or are we ‘all in’ and willing to risk discomfort in order to serve God by serving each other? Are we **encouraging warriors** or **smiling pretenders**, desiring to be a part of C12 without deeply submitting to the Lord’s work in, among, and through us? What would you say?

# MONTHLY TAKE-AWAYS

	Devotion	Working On My Business	Working On My Ministry	Core Presentation	General Discussion
What interesting new <b><u>THINKING</u></b> surfaced from our topic and discussion?					
Based on this answer, what are the most <b><u>CRITICAL ISSUES</u></b> facing me, my team, the organization?					
What is my biggest <b><u>CHALLENGE</u></b> in dealing with these issues?					
What are the <b><u>OPPORTUNITIES?</u></b>					
What <b><u>ACTION STEPS</u></b> can I take now, short and long term?					

## *Motivation: What Works?*

**H**ow can I get my people to do what I want them to do? This is a common refrain among chief executives hoping to establish a system of management that works even when we're not watching. If we simply add, "...and keep on doing it," to the tail end of our question, we've really captured the aspirations of most CEOs in a nutshell! We inherently know that a motivated team that feels appreciated is much more likely to be loyal, operate at peak performance, grow our company profitably, and recommend us to others.

Many CEOs run around trying to find the magic key that will unlock a new level of employee motivation. This often includes grasping at motivational fads trumpeted by consultants and marketers as "revolutionary breakthroughs." The fact is that though there *are* many specific ways to equip, encourage, and motivate people... none of them work in a vacuum or broken culture. They must be an integral part of an overall working environment that's intrinsically motivating. We want to develop the kind of motivation and alignment that prompts our team members to want to do what we want to do: build strong and successful businesses that make an eternal difference!

We can't really *make* people do anything, at least not for long. They basically do what they want to do with the majority of their time that's not tightly tied to daily work flow. The trick is to bring what we want and what they want into alignment. When that happens, their motivation isn't externally imposed, but internal, and not dependent on constant intervention, coaxing, or force. Internal motivation can be enhanced by circumstances and environment, but isn't solely dependent on them.

Our goal in this segment is to establish a few fundamentals that can set the stage for grabbing the right motivational levers to propel our companies forward. Once we've done this, we can then creatively consider tactics (e.g., programs, systems, and events) that can *really* help (see today's **Appendix**). In doing so, we're mindful of the following poem: "*Methods are many, principles are few. Methods always change, principles never do.*" Let's get started!

### ***Speaking the Language***

Why should our employees care whether our companies grow at an annual rate of 3%, 15%, or at all? Will it really make a short or long-term difference to them? It does if your company has integrated performance management or incentive compensation and provides opportunities for employees to grow with the firm. A high growth rate should represent successful performance and incremental career opportunities for most employees. Unfortunately, many team members, especially in entry level positions, won't necessarily understand this unless we've invested in them by teaching "business literacy."

Business literacy involves understanding the *key drivers* of your business (e.g., markets, technology, processes, financials, cost, quality, service, competition) and the impact of team and individual performance against short and long-term goals. If our

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team members know the basics of the business and their role in helping the company succeed, they're far more likely to take appropriate action and act like owners.<sup>1</sup> This 'invisible hand' extends management thinking throughout the company and builds our *internal capacity* to grow profitably.

Developing company-wide business literacy is a *process* that requires sustained top management commitment. We all must start where we are. For some, this means starting by establishing rudimentary language and quantitative skills. Basic English and math aptitude can no longer be presumed on the part of high school or college graduates. Most companies can integrate basic aptitude testing into the job application and selection process. It's also never too late to invest in existing employees, many of whom simply need support and encouragement to 'step up' in these win/win areas. Overall, we need to offer a workplace where our people engage in lifelong learning and develop a growing appreciation for business realities. As stewards of the material and human resources God has entrusted to us, we want our team members to know that they'll benefit from their long-term association with us in terms of applied knowledge in their chosen field. They need to appreciate their true God-given potential as we see it. The alternative is for them, and us, to be constrained by the 'ankle weights' of ignorance and low expectations as we move into the future together.

## ***A Strong Three-Legged Platform***

Let's get back to the three prerequisites that will enable our team to operate with maximum sustained motivation. It's been well said that "*great vision without great people is irrelevant!*"<sup>2</sup> Ideally, our goal is to combine ***a great vision for our business;*** with ***great people properly deployed, equipped and committed to that vision;*** and a ***supportive workplace culture that fuels great team performance.*** Let's briefly look at each element and consider where we are today in applying each one. Then we'll pause to discuss our initial reflections before moving on.

- 1) Right Bus** In the vernacular of *Good to Great*,<sup>2</sup> "getting on the right bus" means that our team wants to go where our "bus" is going. This presumes upfront clarity and commitment to our company's core principles and direction. The bus analogy implies that the company is *actually going somewhere*, according to a particular route, timetable, and style. Without such upfront clarity, how can new team members intentionally commit to the journey? And unless company leadership follows through to keep the bus moving toward the promised destination, how can we retain a topnotch, motivated team? Along the way, input from talented team members, based on 'local knowledge,' helps us to make the most of the trip by enhancing and enriching the journey even beyond our original vision. How well do new employees understand your company's destination, route, and bus design *in advance* of getting on board? ***What percentage of your current workforce would say that they "signed up" for what they now know this journey to be?***
- 2) Right Seat** Continuing the bus analogy, let's now picture our team of 30 or 300 safely on-board and hurtling down the road toward our vision and purpose. Along the way, what seats do each of them occupy and why? How ideal is your current team's mix of skills, inherent abilities, and motivation when you compare it to recruiting the *perfect* team from scratch? As leader, you *really do* have the opportunity to shape a winning team. But it must begin with people who display the attitude and aptitude necessary to fuel your progress. Objectively look at each

contributor to be sure that they possess both the competence and the desire to perform well. Are they truly on the right bus and in the right seat? ***When did you last conduct a companywide, person-by-person assessment of your team?*** If you aren't doing this annually, you're compromising your company's organizational development *and* the long-term welfare of miscast employees. We need to be frank, speaking the truth in love, about this prerequisite to healthy long-term performance. Even exiting employees will thank you one day.

The matrix below may help in this process. It contrasts the types of situations we can face with various team members. Our goal should be to have as many people as possible moving into the upper right-hand quadrant. By mapping our employees against this grid, we can think specifically about recruiting, developing, and managing our people.

<b>APTITUDE/CAPABILITIES</b>	<b>Strong</b>	Skilled Iconoclast or Naysayer	Player-Coach
	<b>Weak</b>	On the Wrong Bus!	Sloppy Supporter (In the Wrong Seat?)
		<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>
<b>ATTITUDE/CHARACTER</b>			

**3) Right Environment** As leaders, we must concern ourselves with having the right processes and supports in place to 'organically' breed on-going alignment, motivation, depth, and performance. With the wrong people *off* the bus, we can focus on recruiting, fully engaging, and retaining the *right* people. Although this has more to do with character and inherent potential than with specific prior skills and experiences, both are important. Supportive processes that help to sustain a healthy, motivated team and develop future leaders include:

- Recruiting, screening, hiring, and 'launching' the *right* employees based on clear non-negotiable core principles, position qualifications, and core competencies
- Incentive pay based on actual performance against operating goals, key metrics, and objective performance feedback (e.g., internal/external 'voice of the customer')
- Opportunities for continual learning based on a clearly defined business model and key processes, with cross-training for greater depth, flexibility, and team productivity
- Knowing you desire their best by developing and promoting from within wherever possible, providing life/family skills and self-management opportunities (e.g., owning all issues related to their work, such as cost, quality, timeliness, and customer service), and investing in our people with succession in mind.

***What's it like to work in our companies? Are employees better off having spent time under our leadership?***

Let's pause to discuss our initial observations about where we are, and need to go, related to these three prerequisites for maximum sustained motivation.

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## ***Making it Personal through Coaching***

Let's think more deeply about motivation and performance from our team members' perspective. Self-motivation typically relies on the *right* employees accurately answering three basic questions:

- ***"What's my job?"*** Not always as simple and clear as we think.
- ***"How am I doing?"*** Again, a simple request and basic management responsibility.
- ***"Why is my work important to our success and how will I benefit by doing it well?"*** Well?

Your first reaction to these legitimate questions might be, *"You've got to be kidding; everyone already knows these things."* Actually, very few companies handle these three simple questions in a winning way. Let's consider the case of a professional football team to demonstrate.

Do you suppose that any pro football player doesn't have a basic knowledge of the game and their position? The linemen *know* they're supposed to block, tackle, or rush the passer. The running backs know that they're supposed to carry and catch the ball and find the end zone. Punters know they're to kick. Quarterbacks must be able to pass, and so on. As professionals, they *know* the game.

Yet not everyone wins consistently. During 2000-2010, the NFL teams with the worst winning percentage were the Lions (26%) and Browns (36%). Meanwhile, other teams always seemed to be Super Bowl candidates, led by the Colts (72%) and Patriots (70%). What's going on? They're *all* professionals in a league where everything is set-up to drive parity. The worst teams receive the first draft picks and everyone is subject to team salary caps. The system is rigged to ensure that every team will have their 'day in the sun.' The main difference between winners and losers *isn't* player talent. There are too many examples of underperforming talent-laden teams and overachieving teams with less talent. It's *coaching* talent that produces winners. Somehow, certain coaches routinely succeed against comparably talented teams. The best-coached teams are those who do the basic things best: blocking, tackling, kicking, and passing. They rarely rely on trickery or innovative techniques to outperform their foes. During adverse conditions, like a snowy day in Pittsburgh, or a pressure-packed late-season game against a play-off rival, fads and trickery aren't enough. Winning teams rely on performing the basics correctly.

The classic example of this was the legendary coach, Vince Lombardi,<sup>3</sup> who began his first practice with the Green Bay Packers by holding out an oblong leather object and saying, *"Gentlemen, this is a football."* Even though the Packers had been doormats for years, many of the veteran players snickered at his approach. They were professionals, albeit professional losers. Lombardi quickly got the scoffers "off the bus" and trained those that stayed in the basics. They drilled over and over again until the fundamentals became second nature. They used far fewer plays than other teams, but executed them with unrivaled excellence. Each player learned exactly what was required of them and how to perform it correctly *every* time. Lombardi taught them how to play the game to win.

The results are history. The Packers were far and away the most successful team of their time producing 75+% wins, five NFL championships, and 11 NFL Hall-of-Fame inductees as a result of Lombardi's eight years at the helm, ending in 1967. Following Lombardi's departure, the Packers missed the playoffs in 1968.

## ***Applying Coaching in the Workplace***

How does this football story relate to us? The primary function of a coach isn't to play all the positions he coaches but to ensure that all team members are taught the game and playbook well enough to understand what must be done to succeed. He transmits that knowledge to others who desire to do it and are willing to learn how. A coach must be able to clearly and precisely provide job descriptions for each player. Can you imagine the outcome if a coach merely told his guards, "*just block hard,*" or his receivers, "*just go out for a pass!*" Winning requires much more than that!

Successful coaches not only tell their players *what* to do, but also *how* to do it best within their overall system (i.e., business model), by either showing them or hiring specialized assistants who can. Even when a head coach delegates the coaching, he remains ultimately responsible for overall performance. Head coaches must also help their staff and players know how they're doing. Performance is always measured. Even when the team is winning, each player's performance is graded. Players whose grading is consistently substandard are given special attention. Those who don't ultimately measure up after an adequate opportunity are traded or replaced. To keep them too long would hurt the team. Coaches don't generally enjoy this part of their role, but it must be done for the good of the team.

Successful coaches impart an inherently high expectation vision of 'what *can* be' to their teams. The vision is constantly reinforced and referenced via signs, symbols, and day-to-day discussions. The players begin to sense the benefits of achieving the vision... professional accomplishment and a sense of pride related to being a champion. They begin to understand how their roles fit into the overall effort and why they're important. Irrespective of their position, they see that the team suffers without top performance from them. Good coaches clearly explain the vital importance of each player's performance and help them see the value *to them* in working to accomplish team objectives. Players who are privileged to play for great coaches are more likely to work out in the off-season, obey training rules, and strive to improve their stamina and skills. They develop new ways to help the team and more often become coaches themselves.

In his 1985 best-seller, *A Passion for Excellence*,<sup>4</sup> Tom Peters devoted an entire chapter to coaching. In the decades since, business and life coaching have exploded, with varying degrees of impact. A recent Google search on 'coaching certification' turned up 51 million results; more than for 'bread', 'water' and 'oxygen' combined! Beyond the hyperbole, the underlying case for on-going coaching in the workplace is solid. Coaching is aimed at developing key performers to maximize the use of their God-given gifts toward greater competence, sharper performance, teamwork, and accountability in-line with company principles and objectives. Research<sup>5</sup> has shown that top corporations outperform their peers, in part, because they wisely use on-going coaching and mentoring to supplement simple training. In fact, companies report that coaching more than triples the impact of training by increasing the likelihood of attaining key goals and preparing staff for greater responsibility. One study estimated that companies see a six-fold return on their coaching investment. Recent Home Depot CEO, Bob Nardelli, said, "*I absolutely believe that people, unless coached, never reach their full potential.*" Before retiring, former GE CEO, Jack Welch, said, "*In the future, people who are not coaches will not be promoted.*" Obviously, coaching isn't just for remedial issues or problem leaders anymore. Organizations

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now see coaching as a way to develop all key performers to achieve critical business goals faster and more reliably in a competitive marketplace!

How about you? Think about the training and attention to detail that a coach must give players to build a great team and then compare this to the effort you're giving to develop your team. Most of us don't do enough, or care enough, to provide what's really needed to be great. We are generally getting the results that we deserve from our people. If you're not satisfied with the way *your* team is playing right now, ask yourself if you've adequately addressed the three basic questions: "*What's my job?; How am I doing?; and Why is what I do important, in terms of how it impacts team success and my future?*" Try thinking like a coach. Who on your team is weak or negatively impacting team effort and processes? What's the problem? Is it a skill issue or an accountability and follow-up problem? Where are they today regarding attitude and aptitude?

In many ways, business *is* a game, and winning this game requires an aligned effort on the part of all the players. So *Coach*, what kind of a season are you having? Is your team focused on making it to the championship? Can you win with the players you have? Can you win if they keep playing as they are now? Are you preparing the next generation of leaders for your firm? What is winning for you? If you're not satisfied with any of these answers, who must lead the change?!

<sup>1</sup>Books worth reading as you consider how to equip and motivate your employees are *The Great Game of Business*, Jack Stack (Currency/Doubleday, 1992), *Managing without Supervising*, William Abernathy (SysPerf Press, 2000), *Spark: How Old-Fashioned Values Drive a Twenty-First Century Corporation*, Frank Koller (PublicAffairs, 2010), and *Plain Talk: Lessons from a Business Maverick*, Ken Iverson (Wiley, 1997)

<sup>2</sup>*Good to Great*, Jim Collins (HarperCollins, 2001)

<sup>3</sup>We could also easily focus on such well-known Christian sports hall-of-fame caliber coaches such as Tom Landry, John Wooden, Tom Osborne, Don Shula, Bill McCartney, and Tony Dungy

<sup>4</sup>*A Passion for Excellence: The Leadership Difference*, Tom Peters & Nancy Austin (Warner Books, 1985)

<sup>5</sup>Hewitt Associates research on 500 global leadership companies (2002-2009) shows that the top 25 companies for developing leaders more often employ practices such as assigning coaches to high potential employees. Also, studies by IBM, Xerox, GE and other major companies has shown that executives and managers who "coach" their subordinates toward improved performance produce better business results. A 2004 survey by Right Management consultants showed that 86 percent of companies said they used coaching to sharpen skills of individuals who have been identified as future organizational leaders

## Appendix

### Thoughts on Recognizing & Rewarding Employees

While much can be said regarding the dos and don'ts of encouraging our team members through recognition and rewards, the following thoughts are intended to provide a broad context for the many creative ways leaders can establish specific approaches. The fact is that some leaders get more out of their people with a smile or pat on the back than others do with intricate bonus programs. The difference is how such rewards are administered in the eyes of employees. Any recognition and reward system will have a greater impact if you adhere to the following fundamentals:

- **Clearly cast your vision, values, purpose, annual operating plan and supporting goals** with employee involvement along the way... give your folks a *voice*, not necessarily a *vote*.
- **Be clear on reward criteria.** They should be specific, measurable, 'locally' trackable, and regularly discussed and celebrated when possible (i.e., SMART goals, the simpler and clearer the better). Fairness and broad-based involvement is vital. Favoritism and murky goals kill team motivation! When conducting competitive contests, be sure to keep the momentum rolling and attempt to be broadly inclusive, while still recognizing the winner.
- **Be sure that goals align with overall company objectives and core principles.** Be sure to "walk your talk" or your programs and goals will create cynicism.
- **Recognize worthy behaviors, not just outcomes.** Since godly core principles are rooted in *how* we do things, not just *what* we do, take time to recognize events and individuals that demonstrate and personify pursuit of company core principles. Role models, heroes, and frontline stories can all be used to reinforce worthy behavior. Consider impromptu recognition or periodic special awards for those being found trustworthy or selfless under extreme conditions.
- **Occasionally tailor rewards to fit individual employee needs.** Although team members will share in many common programs and objectives, to truly motivate individuals we can't simply rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. The Golden Rule (Mt 7:12) is a sound foundation in doing to others what you would have them do to you. Sometimes, however, you'll know about something that uniquely drives or motivates someone (e.g., their children's issues and activities, a particular favorite cause or hobby, etc.). This enables you to maximize their motivation by how you manage and reward them. For example, some like public recognition, others like material rewards, still others may desire a scholarship for more education and training, and others might appreciate a paid leave with family. Some companies make the effort to learn of employee preferences regarding rewards and recognition (e.g., public, private, cash, gift certificates, family interests, favorite candy bars, pizza toppings, cake flavors, etc.) so that later rewards have maximum impact.
- **Say "thank you" a lot and work to build others up.** Personal appreciation, given to employees as well as to our Lord *for* them, speaks volumes. Not only is it free, but it's always available to us and can be used even when a good effort fails to produce the desired result. Even giving thanks for the mundane becomes contagious in an organization where the leader's positive outlook begins to be replicated through various work teams. People often rise to the level of expectation expressed by those they trust and respect. Positive, forward-looking, feedback can embolden employees to take on goals they would otherwise avoid or give up on. This can breed a workplace where peers begin to see each other in a more positive and hopeful light.

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- **Develop a healthy, winning workplace environment.** Some workplaces are intrinsically motivating, if they're positive places that embrace fun, learning, action-oriented continuous improvement, and provide growing opportunities to benefit those who build their careers there. Leaders invest in their people by instilling business literacy, using performance-based compensation, and helping them with problem-solving and decision-making tools and resources. When these things combine with unity around company core principles and long-term objectives, it's a hard-to-beat combination!
- **Enable them to enjoy living one life** rooted in the truth and with the balance to be good stewards of their personal and spiritual health, as well as their family and church responsibilities. This extends to a healthy working environment as well as helpful resources that enable them to be more fruitful outside of their working hours.

Consistent with the above eight attributes of a 'motivational' workplace, there are **many** creative ways to recognize and reward team members and even 'external' stakeholders. One helpful brainstorming resource is *How to Recognize and Reward Employees: 150 Ways to Inspire Peak Performance* by Donna Deeprise (AMACOM, 2007).

## Application Worksheet

### C12

1. Your Super Bowl Championship is defined by your firm's Purpose, Vision and Value statements. How well do your players know and identify with them?  
 Very Well    A Little    Not At All
2. Your managers or supervisors are your assistant coaches. How well are they teaching your players their roles in the context of your plan for winning?  
 Very Well    Some, but not Enough    Not Well At All
3. Who are your three weakest players?
4. What are your plans to improve their performance or replace them?
5. Who is your weakest Assistant Coach?
6. What is your plan to improve their performance or replace them?
7. Are you stronger on offense or defense?  
Offense (Proactive... pioneering, taking the initiative)  
Defense (Reaction... counter-punching, applying/refining proven ideas)

### KP

1. Answer the same seven questions, from your perspective, for your area of responsibility and for the company as a whole. Offer to share and discuss your answers (and any follow-up action plans) with your sponsoring CEO.

*Priorities are what we do.  
Everything else is just talk!*

*Application Notes*

*Priorities are what we **do**.  
Everything else is just talk!*

## *Hindrances to God's Greater Work in Our Business*

Among the last century's most influential pastors and Christian authors, A.W. Tozer wrote about the root causes of the Church not being all that it can be.<sup>1</sup> In his opinion, while surely a marvelous God-ordained institution, the Church pales in comparison to what God desires. A minister for four decades, Tozer spoke out of a love for God and His Church, not as a critic. He longed for the Body of Christ to be the glorious and powerfully transforming force God intends.

Our title is CEO or President, not pastor or minister. Our businesses aren't churches. We don't operate in all of the same arenas or engage all of the same societal groups as churches. Venues, focus, strategies, and tactics certainly differ between companies and churches. But, with regard to vision, purpose, and provision, we should see convergence! Our business, like our church, belongs to God. Since they're His, they share the same ultimate purpose and vision: to care for His people and to bring His Truth and Love to those who don't already know Him. We're to share and model His ways and character on the earth, in the midst of a people who need Him, but may not know Him.

Even though we're not called Pastor or Minister, we *are* called to pastor and minister in Christ's name *wherever* He plants us; whether behind a desk, on a sales call, or behind a pulpit. Our constituency differs from that of a church, since stakeholders look to us for material goods or services, but our eternal role in their lives is the same. We're to care for His people, to bring His Truth and love to those who don't know Him, and to show them His ways. In this spirit, we'll identify nine specific hindrances that Tozer recognized as hurting the fruitfulness of the Church. He viewed Christ's Church as 'surrounded' by a hostile world and viewed these hindrances as traps that diminish and destroy her work. These are tactics used by the enemies that we're called to actively resist: the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph 6:10-18, Ja 4:7, 1Jn 2:16, 1Pe 5:8-9). Today, we'll consider whether these hindrances also limit us in our efforts to honor Christ in the marketplace.

### ***Identifying the Nine Hindrances***

Although constituencies and contexts differ between church and business, our enemies remain the same. Believers are peppered with ungodly influences on all sides. It's well said that *"If God's work were unopposed, it would already be accomplished."* The first step in countering an enemy is to identify him and his methods. Let's review each of Tozer's nine hindrances to consider *how* our adversary tries to derail our ministry. As we do, check off each area where your thoughts, words, or actions might cause you or others to stumble.

- Unbelief** How might unbelief hinder God's work in our business? It can manifest in a number of ways, but perhaps the most damaging is not trusting in God's complete sovereignty. We tend to think that God is in control of *some* aspects of our lives, but not all. How else can we comfortably explain our habitual sin or insensitivity to ministry opportunities? By maintaining this dualistic or schizophrenic divide in our thoughts and actions, we try to live out of two different value systems by not believing that Christ is Lord of *all*. We often act as if we believe that God has one set of values for His church and another for His business. We pray about healing the sick or saving

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the lost, but imagine we're quite self-sufficient regarding 'hard' business issues such as sales, cash, or recruiting. We easily see lies in church as sin, but may excuse intentional deception at work as a "negotiating tactic." We find ourselves weeping at the altar and praying for God to save our lost family members, but rarely think to pray for customers, conflict resolution, or help in loving unruly employees.

We don't suffer from *total* unbelief as much as we settle for bifurcated or fractured belief as we apply spiritual disciplines in some areas but not others. This unbelief weakens our effectiveness in several ways. It causes many who observe us to conclude that we're hypocrites since they see us saying one thing while doing another. It also greatly diminishes our ability to see God working in our lives, thereby compromising the depth of our learning and faith.

- Complacency** This may be one of the most devious enemies we face in this generation. We live in a time of such material abundance, with such freedom of worship and access to Christian teaching, that a subtle arrogance exists in American Christianity. It's hard not to be complacent. The prosperity heresy heightens the problem by claiming that such abundance is proof of being specially blessed. Those enjoying great blessing are presumably just a bit more right with God than others. This is unbiblical. The fact is that abundant material resources aren't a blessing as much as an increased stewardship responsibility. God doesn't entrust us with much without expecting more from us (Lk 12:48). What we 'have' is His, not ours, and it's to be used for His eternal purposes, not our temporal pleasures. As we look around the world, it's hard to resist complacency if our goal is simply material comfort.

Just a few generations ago, Europe – the home of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley – was sending out thousands of global missionaries. European nations were the world's most powerful. No longer. Very few French and English citizens now attend church. Just 10-15% of those surveyed<sup>2</sup> claim to be 'regular' church attenders (versus 41% in the U.S.). Further, half of all respondents simply reported what interviewers 'wanted to hear' and seldom, if ever, attend worship services. In the beautiful cathedrals of Europe, tourists have replaced worshippers. Missionaries are now sent *to* Europe. If you believe that this sad pattern can't repeat in America, you just may be complacent!

- Self-Righteousness** This is a danger for every leader. Since God has entrusted us with authority to be exercised in the normal conduct of business, we can easily develop the wrong idea. Although our leadership role is a gift from God, it can prompt others – particularly employees and suppliers – to treat us deferentially. They may tell us what they think we want to hear, rather than what we need to hear. Over time, this can lead us to think we have all the answers and that those who disagree are disobedient or less enlightened. We can easily become what the Bible calls "*puffed up*" (e.g., Hab 2:3-5, 1Cor 4:6 & 13:4, 1Tim 3:6). Thinking that we're the final authority in work-related matters can infect spiritual matters as well. It's particularly damaging to our ministry when we fall into the trap of Phariseism (see C12's October, 2008 segment, *Am I a Pharisaical Leader?*). Self-righteousness hinders our witness and relationships. Even the truth, when conveyed in a self-righteous way, will be poorly received.
- Fear of Man** This enemy limits God's good works through our lives and severely hinders marketplace ministry. What else do we CEOs fear more than to be poorly thought of by our peers, stakeholders, and markets? The fear of appearing different,

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odd, or even radical shuts the mouth of many saints in the marketplace. The truth is that respect and reputation are built over time. Research has shown that those willing to consistently stand by their convictions actually tend to be *more* trusted. They're more likely to attract than repel others with their consistency and submission to a higher authority. Conversely, being people-pleasers rather than God-pleasers is a losing long-term proposition. Peter made this clear when he said that God is not a respecter of persons and that showing partiality or favoritism is inconsistent with being disciples of Christ (Acts 10:34). Such behavior is a flawed and counterfeit approach as we fulfill our calling to serve others (Mt 7:12 & 22:39) and speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

- Love of Luxury** The fear of man frequently combines with this fifth enemy to choke the flow of the gospel in countless day-to-day marketplace situations. The evil one whispers:

*"If you witness they'll laugh at you! You'll be the butt of jokes! No one will want to be seen with you. Then what? They won't do business with such a religious radical! You'll lose your fancy home, car, and your head start on the 'American Dream'! No more high life for you! You'll be back to mundane living!"*

When we listen to the lies of the enemy, we choke back the very words the Holy Spirit urges us to speak. We justify it by saying we must protect our livelihood and that of our employees, but that's also a lie from the pit! We can't truly hurt anyone by obeying the Holy Spirit. God is the trustworthy sustainer of *all* that is. Scripture is true in saying, *"I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his descendents begging bread"* (Ps 37:25). The love of luxury also has roots in unbelief. We don't really believe that God owns everything and is the source of all that we have. We confuse stewarding material things with the stewardship of eternal opportunities, and think we're doing God's work by preserving money. Yet money doesn't determine eternal blessing. Can you believe that? God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply (Php 4:19, 1Jn 5:13-15). If we really believe this then we know that customers seek us not solely due to our brilliant efforts, but because God sends them in proportion to our need to do His will by serving them. If you're unsure of this truth, here's a way to settle it once and for all. Simply pray as follows:

*"God, I don't believe my customers are from you. I believe they're solely the result of my own hard work and ingenuity. So, God, to prove it once and for all, take away all of the customers You have given me. Don't give me any more and just let me keep those I've earned myself."*

Many of us are stuck somewhere between saying this prayer and totally depending on God. Being double-minded is very uncomfortable and eternally costly. Certainly we're to work with excellence, *"as unto the Lord"* (Col 3:23). But anything less than total surrender and trust is unacceptable to God (see Ja 4:8) and, while he doesn't give up on us as we struggle, He doesn't let us off the hook either. He wants *all* of our trust and affection, not what's left over after we've finished impressing the world!

- Secret Sympathy with the World** This sometimes hidden, often subconscious, enemy can be tricky to identify. But we know it exists when we desire in our hearts to have freedom to sin the way the world promotes, like indulging in the sensual pleasures of the flesh. This is costly even when we stop short of actually indulging ourselves. Sometimes this enemy rears its head when we use business as an excuse to enter into compromising situations; doing worldly things we wouldn't otherwise do, or going places we wouldn't otherwise go. An example would be responding to a customer's

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request to go to a risqué club, show, or buy personal luxuries. We try to excuse these acts as necessary business-related activities and expenses when, in fact, they're not.

Such thoughts betray a mindset that believes that the world has the right idea and that, as Christians, we must occasionally compromise the things that are best for us. This is a lie. There is **no** sacrifice in obeying God, unless we consider it a sacrifice to give-up pain, frustration, emptiness, and spiritual death! God's ways, commands, and direction for His children are never harmful or less than the very best for us (Ro 8:28, Ja 1:17). His love is the foundation of His commandments. If He forbids something, it's because to do it would hurt us, not because He wants to deprive us of something good. When we don't totally believe that, by longing to be free from His restrictions, we harbor secret sympathy with the world.

**Self-Confidence** is the underlying belief that we're sufficient to handle our day-to-day needs and can navigate based on our own strength and ability. In America, to refer to such an attitude as a hindrance seems heretical. It challenges the heroic, self-promoting, rags-to-riches American ideal, but is in-line with the gospel. Beginning with Eve's original sin, wanting to be like God, our desire for independence is at the heart of all sin. Our fallen nature hates to be told what to do or being dependent on God or anyone else. Perhaps the anthem for such prideful self-confidence is Frank Sinatra's hit song, "My Way." His signature song and informal epitaph struck a popular chord by embracing the base human desire for ultimate control. It illustrates what the Bible calls the "war" between the flesh and the spirit (Mt 26:41, Jn 3:6 & 6:63, Php 3:3). A true expression of Godly confidence is "*I can do **all** things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Php 4:13, NKJV). Our confidence and testimony is in Him, not ourselves.

**Pride** is closely related to self-confidence. It seeks personal credit and directs glory from 'good' situations to ourselves. The opposite of pride is true humility which reflects total dependence on God and gives Him all glory. Paul said, "*What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*" (1Cor 4:7). There's something in all of us that hates to concede this truth; that all we have, even the very breath of life, is *given* to us. We didn't earn it, nor do we deserve it. It's fueled by God's grace. Pride denies our dependence on God, resulting in immeasurable personal cost. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (Pr 3:34).

Self-focus causes a great deal of our frustration when an otherwise apparently successful leader struggles to develop a flourishing ministry. God doesn't honor what's done out of self-confidence and pride. "*Unless The Lord builds the house, they who build it labor in vain*" (Ps 127:1). We really can't build a ministry that pleases God in our own strength. Actions rooted in self-confidence or pride can't produce godly results.

**Unholy Thoughts** Tozer's final enemy is a strong and insidious foe of God's work. Our thought life is what ultimately manifests in our actions. Every act – holy or depraved – begins as a thought. Learning to control our thoughts is vital to our spiritual growth and eternal blessing. We can't maximize our fruitfulness if we regularly entertain unholy thoughts. Paul says that we must learn to "*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*" (2Cor 10:5). This spiritual battle is primarily waged between our ears. It's been said, "*The circumstances of life don't make me who I am, they reveal whose I am.*" Our existence and character are shaped by *what* we spend time thinking about.

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Sure, it's impossible to completely stop the adversary from whispering in our ear. But we don't have to listen for long. We have a measure of control in choosing the thoughts we actively entertain. Martin Luther said, *"I can't stop the birds of the air from flying over my head, but I don't have to let them make nests in my hair."* Taking every thought captive begins with realizing our need to do so. We become effective at resisting the enemy by simply confessing to God when we harbor an unworthy thought: *"Father, I don't want to think about that anymore. Please take the thought away."* His Spirit will help us, but we must first recognize that a thought is unedifying and then prayerfully ask Him.

Unholy thoughts hinder our ministry by keeping our 'door' cracked open to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Holy Spirit is our doorkeeper and will always tell us the truth about any thought, if we'll listen. The sins and scandals that have handicapped or destroyed the ministries that you've seen crash and burn, began with a single thought. One sinful thought entertained grew into another, and so on, until damaging action was taken. This ultimately compounds into other unholy thoughts and actions until unhealthy habits are established. This destructive cycle *can* be prevented if we act by taking the first unholy thought captive to Christ. By pursuing daily intimacy with the Lord, we keep our hearts soft and repentant, and heighten our sensitivity and awareness to such thoughts. Scripture says, *"...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things"* (Php 4:8). We're commanded to "set our minds" and "meditate" on such things. A simple test we can use to separate right thoughts from unholy thoughts is to imagine ourselves articulating them to Jesus. If we're uneasy with the idea, we probably need to take the thought captive to Him and dispose of it!

A.W. Tozer has been at home with the Lord since 1963, and is now one of the heavenly throng cheering us on as we run our race and work as unto the Lord (He 12:1). He might close today by saying: *"Someday the Church will be able to relax her guard, call her watchmen down from the wall, and live in safety and peace - but not yet! All that's good in the world stands as a target for all that's evil and manages to stay alive only by constant watchfulness and the providential protection of Almighty God."* We – you and I – and our ministries in and through business are an integral part of *"all that's good in the world."* Let's be personally alert and on guard, as our enemies are present even today.

Hopefully, this segment has prompted sober reflection and repentance. Next month we'll look at specific antidotes for these nine hindrances. Your thoughts?

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from *That Incredible Christian*, by A. W. Tozer (Christian Publications, 1964). See chapter titled "Resisting the Enemy."

<sup>2</sup>According to Gallup International ([www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com))

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## *Application Worksheet*

### C12 & KP

1. Get to a quiet place and go over the nine hindrances to your life and ministry listed in the segment. Ask God to reveal their presence. Which of these enemies is an active part of your life?
  - (1) Unbelief
  - (2) Complacency
  - (3) Self-Righteousness
  - (4) Fear of Man
  - (5) Love of Luxury
  - (6) Secret Sympathy with the World
  - (7) Self-Confidence
  - (8) Pride
  - (9) Unholy Thoughts
2. If the Holy Spirit speaks to you, ask Him to deliver you from your enemies and to show you how to remove the effects of their presence.
3. Be on guard. You're often most vulnerable when you don't believe you have a problem. This dangerous condition can be related to pride, complacency, self-confidence, etc. Review the list of hindrances regularly as you go about your day-to-day affairs. Ask a close Christian friend, spouse, or associate to help you by giving you brutally honest feedback.

*Priorities are what we do.  
Everything else is just talk!*