

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.” Habakkuk 3:17–19

Even if... I will

This Scripture passage is definitely ‘on point’ for Christian business leaders! Habakkuk, the prophet, displays a heart attitude at the conclusion of his short book that well expresses something we often need as we trust in God while leading businesses for Him. Together, let’s see if we can glean a helpful insight or two.

The fig tree, the olive crop, the fields, and the livestock yards all symbolize the potential or capacity to produce an economic livelihood, or “living,” through business. Habakkuk is saying that, even if all his effort in these areas is fruitless, he will still trust in God. Using today’s business vernacular, he’s saying that if his marketing plan fails, the product falls apart, customers defect in droves, and cash flow dries up... he will *still* trust in God.

You know, there’s something powerful about such a faith! It’s easy to praise God when our harvest (i.e., pace of business) is strong and our barns (i.e., cash reserves) are full. It’s not hard to thank Him when sales are trending up and our work – though challenging – is profitable. But what about when things go poorly and our results are disappointing? Do we still praise Him?

Consider the key to our passage that’s so easy to skip past. Habakkuk is speaking prospectively about the future. These droughts and failures haven’t yet happened. His statement of faith is ‘front-end loaded.’ Though Habakkuk doesn’t yet know the results, he’s praising God, the provider of all things, upfront and staying the course. He’s confident that, no matter how things work out, God will provide and deliver him.

Habakkuk’s example is a beautiful demonstration of making a firm, unconditional decision to trust God no matter what circumstances or outcomes lies ahead. In no way does this imply that he will give less than diligent effort and planning to the tasks along the way. It’s not a “sloppy agape” instance of resting on God’s grace while being personally apathetic or negligent. The writer is simply acknowledging that, even given his best efforts, things may still not ‘work out’ the way he’d choose. He lives in the real world, with a real faith, trusting God from the beginning. Can we learn anything from this Old Testament prophet? Let’s talk!

MONTHLY TAKE-AWAYS

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

What's Your Leadership 'IQ'?

“Lech Walesa told Congress that there is a declining world market for words. He’s right. The only thing the world believes anymore is behavior, because we all see it instantaneously. None of us may preach anymore. We must behave.”

Max DePree, Chairman - Herman Miller (retired)

Leadership-by-example is perhaps the best and most time-tested basic leadership technique. Over all of human history, no truly great leader has ever displayed a “*Do as I say, not as I do*” attitude. Over and over again, in studies of leadership, this fact rises to the top. We earn the right to lead others by first demonstrating that we can manage *ourselves*. As Christians, this should come with the territory as we display competence, demonstrate self-control, seek to serve God and others, and demonstrate trustworthiness by producing fruit in keeping with our God-given opportunities. The greatest leaders have volunteer followers. Inspiring others by our example moves people to follow us more readily and for longer than anything else. Influencing others to follow voluntarily is leadership in its purest form.

There are, of course, many leadership forms: monarchical, totalitarian authority, positional, democratically-elected, servant leadership, and so on. As we consider the many possible leadership approaches for building and operating a successful, enduring company, it’s clear that volunteer followers are what we need; not slaves, serfs, pawns, or robots. Recent research¹ shows that just 10-15% of U.S. employees trust their leaders to truly share their values, make the right decisions in uncertain times, genuinely listen, and care about them. Fully 25% of respondents report having *less* trust in management than they did a year ago and 30% say their senior leaders lack transparency.

In a bustling and transient marketplace, where alternative job choices exist for the most talented team members, the *antithesis* of the leadership type most likely to attract volunteers is the military command-and-control model based purely upon positional/authoritarian control. Little choice is given to employees in this paradigm, where anything other than prompt obedience leads to negative career consequences. In this model, leaders are identified by their titles, which alone qualify them to direct, give orders, and make decisions. Just imagine the percentage of employees’ effort, mind, and heart that are left untapped.

Another Way

Jesus might be the greatest historical example of true and compelling leadership. Yet He had no title or positional power in the Roman/Jewish culture of first century Palestine. His power to lead, inspire, and disciple others grew from His unshakeable truth, example, and eternal vision.

In the 20th century, world-changers such as Lech Walesa, Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn are widely acknowledged examples of seemingly ‘powerless’ individuals who were initially viewed as great leaders principally through the strength of their longstanding personal examples. This enabled them to influence millions during their lifetime and has produced influential legacies that will outlive them.

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In our companies, we are the leaders. We have a title which demands respect and we can certainly opt to utilize the military command-and-control management model. Many companies do. But most top-performing contemporary businesses operate differently. In today's marketplace, and perhaps increasingly as we move into the future, the best companies use a far different management style: servant leadership. Modern leaders need to be more like Jesus than Patton since influence is a more effective lever for change and progress than positional power. Jim Collins described this type of leader in *Good to Great* (HarperCollins, 2001) as a *Level Five leader*, combining humble and selfless dedication to the company's agenda with worthy character and firm adherence to non-negotiable core values, purpose, and a plan. In every instance, in Collins' exhaustive study of the attributes of 1435 publicly-traded firms over three decades, the 11 companies that stood out from the pack as enduring superlative performers had such servant leaders at the helm.

Developing the ability to wield influence in an effective way is *vital* for any CEO hoping to maximize organizational performance.

An Eight-Point Check-up

Let's kick-off today's discussion by assessing our own leadership "IQ" (i.e., "Influence Quotient"). This test, adapted from one developed by Forum Corporation², is designed to provide a simple baseline to evaluate our influencing skills. Though originally developed for use with professional managers, not CEOs, this test has been validated through more than 4000 previous samples and has proven to be helpful for our purposes. We'll simply read each question and then select the answer that best reflects our opinion, scoring our answers on the ***Application Worksheet***.

1. CEOs are generally successful, energetic, and influential group leaders. Hopefully, the group you lead is a good one. But what would happen if you stepped away from your leadership role without warning? What would your team most likely do?
 - A. Suffer "analysis paralysis" and spend tons of time clarifying procedures and rules.
 - B. Probably take the initiative to establish workable, flexible ground rules early on.
 - C. Leave the starting gate at a fast, confident clip, but get lost somewhere along the way, needing to regroup in order to maintain proper direction.
2. You've got a problem, and the only way you can solve it is by through the help and cooperation of your colleagues. How will they respond to your request for assistance? You know the answer. Now, if the shoe was on the other foot, and we asked your team members how *you* respond to *their* cries for help, what would they say?
 - A. That I'm often willing to go the extra mile to promptly provide needed information.
 - B. That I want to help but I'm so busy that I have little time to talk. It takes my office longer than it should to supply needed information.
 - C. That I'm a person who has a multitude of 'high priority' responsibilities and am reluctant to take time out to help anyone else.
3. You're at a difficult meeting with business colleagues when pandemonium breaks out. The pressure is on, it's the eleventh hour and, after months of work, the problem still hasn't been solved. Accusations are flying, confusion and anarchy reign, and decisions must be made on the spot or the meeting will end in disaster. What do you do as one facilitating a meeting of professionals?
 - A. Make a 'battlefield' determination to take control of the meeting by restoring order and making the decision.

- B. Suggest an agenda and get the consent of everyone present.
 - C. Make helpful, informed decisions without altering the meeting's format.
4. You've worked for months to get your part of a major project ready to present to the rest of the company. Just when you're ready to present your work, another member of the project team asks you to make some major modifications. The rework effort will be enormous. What do you do?
- A. Stall or deflect the other person while going to another, uninvolved, key leader for advice, direction, or mediation.
 - B. Request information about the change you've been asked to make and objectively determine how the change will affect the overall project.
 - C. Call the team together and ask them whether this last minute request makes sense.
5. You're busy facilitating a meeting when, out of left field, comes a badly-timed suggestion that has little or no merit and contradicts everything the group as a whole has just agreed upon. You hear gasps of disbelief from around the table. You feel everyone's eyes on you. How do you handle the situation?
- A. Ignore the outburst and move the meeting along to another subject.
 - B. Firmly, but politely look the speaker in the eye and say, "We've already been over this ground, George."
 - C. Throw the ball into the troublemaker's court and challenge him or her to quickly test and justify their suggestion against the group's prior decision.
6. You've got to make a critical decision and make it fast. Sally's proposal is sound and straightforward. While a bit conservative, it will definitely get the job done. Harold's proposal is 'off the wall.' He's offered you a radical solution filled with novel ideas that, if fleshed out, just might work. A decision must be made. What do you decide?
- A. Time is short. You go with Sally's idea because it's a known quantity. Her idea is a good one and, besides, the last thing you need right now is emotional conflict.
 - B. Push personalities aside and pursue the ideas and evidence instead, since Harold just might have a better idea. He'll have to work fast to make it work and you'll need to work with him.
 - C. Share Harold's plan with Sally and ask her to adopt and integrate some of his breakthrough ideas into her plan.
7. In the ideal workplace environment, influencers rarely feel like they're going it alone or have trouble getting people to take risks and implement decisions. Effective influencers never have to solve problems single-handedly due to not being able to persuade others to help. Which of the following best describes your own "influence environment?"
- A. We're winning the day-to-day battles and the long-term war. My people realize that this involves shouldering responsibility, risk, and extra effort to make things happen.
 - B. We're surviving, but things could be better. Our people still have a few things to learn about teamwork.
 - C. Red tape snarls up everything, and what gets done is rarely right the first time!
8. Your rise to the top didn't happen overnight. The things you learned along the way – like influencing others to help achieve objectives – weren't learned in a day. From your experience, what must a person do, or have, in order to become a *master* influencer?
- A. Practice, observation, and sheer experience, coupled with a strong focus on gaining and maintaining trust by leading without alienating others and by sharing power.

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- B. It doesn't take anything special to influence others. All you have to know is how to push the right peoples' buttons.
- C. You've got to be born with the ability to influence. Most leaders had what it takes even before they entered the business world.

Now score your test by using the **Applications Worksheet** to come up with a total score.

Most leaders score below 50. If you're well above 50, you've probably developed a healthy performance environment at work. Whatever your score, this test simply measures where you are at this point in time. If your score is above 50, be diligent in maintaining the attitudes and skills you have in influencing others and perhaps begin to help other managers in your company develop or enhance similar leadership attributes. If your score is lower, you're probably suffering slightly from the tendency toward authoritarian, 'close-to-the-vest' leadership, the predominant historical model. Before we share our results, a few summary thoughts:

- Marketplace and cultural trends over the past generation have helped many to see the need to change. Globalization, digital commerce, faster transactions and logistics, customer sophistication, employee mobility, multiculturalism, and rapid technological change are all pushing us in the direction of a 'new normal.'
- To have long-term 'legs,' a company's leadership must oversee an environment in which: others are able to shoulder delegated responsibilities, lifelong learning is embraced, shared information and a win/win 'team' culture prevail, and stakeholders actively 'sign-up' for the company's long-term values and purpose.
- In order to survive and prosper in today's marketplace, we must be willing to learn, adapt, and adjust how we interact with others to maximize our influence. Still, as Christians, our underlying principles, beliefs, and purpose are *unchanging!*
- We should begin to look at our team members as a volunteer labor force since, in a very real sense, that's what our most valuable employees really are. 'Best-in-class' professionals are marketable and able to move to greener pastures!

What's **your** leadership IQ? Let's take a few minutes to share our scores and observations.

Considering the Scope of Workplace Influence

As senior leaders, our opportunities *abound* for positively influencing others as we pursue our company's values, purpose and plans. Yet it's so easy to simply react to the daily ups and downs as we work *in* our business based on our personal expertise or comfort. Our stakeholders are relying on us to actually *lead* and develop a winning team! Just think about how many 'spheres of influence' are available to us as we work to shape a high-performance environment. Check any of the 20 areas below where you have work to do in influencing your company toward attaining excellence:

- _____ Your personal example (godly and disciplined; *not* the bottleneck)
- _____ Clearly communicating non-negotiable company core principles
- _____ Screening/hiring with both core principles and technical competency in mind
- _____ Developing, mentoring, discipling and sharing Christ's gospel with others
- _____ Instilling a team-based 'plan and execute' culture

- _____ Teaching business fundamentals (e.g., financials, key metrics, price/cost management)
- _____ Motivating individuals and healthy teams with encouragement, delegation, follow-up
- _____ Closing the loop on performance via regular reviews and incentive compensation
- _____ Creating an open and accessible environment with regular, unfiltered input from customers, suppliers and employees
- _____ Enlisting stakeholders as company promoters, ambassadors, and salespeople
- _____ Encouraging and actively supporting healthy, balanced, and integrated lives, emphasizing faith and family, and business *as* ministry
- _____ Demonstrating/teaching basic skills, with a specific company protocol and 'language':
 - _____ *Negotiation skills (related to pricing, supplier management, and hiring)*
 - _____ *Decision-making*
 - _____ *SMART goal-setting*
 - _____ *Conflict resolution*
 - _____ *Project management*
 - _____ *Basic planning/execution/financials/forecasting*
 - _____ *Effective communication and meeting skills*
 - _____ *Customer service orientation (with internal and external customers)*
 - _____ *Continuous process improvement mentality (optimizing cost, quality and service)*

Today's **Appendix** discusses just one example. At the time of this writing, government overspending and intervention has produced both a difficult business climate (i.e., slow revenue growth and difficulty charging more across most sectors) and a bias toward increased inflation in key commodities. This makes company-wide training in how to manage the price/cost 'squeeze' that threatens the profit margins of many companies a vital current topic. In addition, the underlying fundamental business processes are worth managing well in both strong and weak economic times. Companies that keep this in focus will consistently outperform their peers in profitability and/or customer value. Please be sure to read this timely **Appendix** and discuss it at your company while also considering which handful of the 20 'competencies' listed above should be on your company's 'influencing others' top ten list.

Let's wrap-up this segment, by considering the poetic words of Edgar Guest:

The Sermons We See

*I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing, but examples always clear;
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,
for to see the good in action is what everybody needs.
I can soon learn how to do it if you'll let me see it done.
I can watch your hands in action but your tongue too fast may run.
And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true;
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.*

Let's discuss those areas in which we've done a solid job of influencing others, and then identify the one or two key areas where we know we have work to do.

¹A composite of findings from Maritz Research (poll of 1857 full-time employees published July 2011) and CareerBuilder's 2010 survey of employee satisfaction

²See www.forum.com

Appendix A

Managing the Price/Cost Squeeze in Inflationary Times

Arguably, the 2011 U.S. economy is entering a period of *stagflation* where growing inflation is being added to already high unemployment and weak demand. This last happened in the 1970s and early 1980s. In many business sectors, a combination of soft demand and inflating commodity prices has created a challenging environment for sustaining healthy profit margins.

The combination of a weak dollar and a rapidly expanding U.S. money supply has put significant inflationary pressure on many raw material and service categories. In the 12-month period ending June 30, 2011, overall commodities exchange prices had risen 36% (fuel/energy 40%, agricultural materials 32%, metals 31%, and food/beverage 25%). Even with flat housing prices, the annualized Consumer Price Index (CPI-urban) has already jumped more than 50% from its 2007/2010 average of 2.2% to 3.6% (based on 7/15/11 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data). In a weak economy this means that most service companies, producers, wholesalers, and retailers will face inflationary cost pressures coupled with weak, price-sensitive demand.

In this environment, a 'do nothing' strategy results in declining margins when inflating costs on the inputs side (e.g., purchased materials and services and wages paid) aren't offset by increased prices or operational yield/productivity improvement on the goods and services we're selling. For example, let's say that you have a business operating at a 10% operating profit margin and 75% of your revenue is used to pay for purchased materials, services and labor (i.e., the rest goes to cover fixed costs and profit). Further let's say that you don't feel you can pass increased prices on to your customers, but you also don't think that you can avoid seeing a net 4% inflation on your purchases and compensation costs, given commodity inflation and increasing insurance premiums. Assuming nothing else changes, your profitable business will quickly decline to breakeven in just three years.

Simplified Operating Profit & Loss Statement (%-sales)

	Current	1 Year Out	2 Years Out	3 Years Out
Sales Revenue	100	100	100	100
Prime Cost: Mat'l 40% Labor 35%	75	$75 \times 1.04 = 78$	$78 \times 1.04 = 81.1$	$81.1 \times 1.04 = 84.4$
Fixed Cost	15	15	15	15
Total Cost	90	93	96.1	99.4
Operating Profit	10	7	3.9	0.6

To successfully lead our businesses through such an economy and avoid the *price/cost squeeze* that chokes the life (i.e., net cash flow) out of otherwise competent companies, we must properly focus on managing both the price and cost sides of this equation. Imagine, instead of eroding our 10% operating margin, the following scenario in which we actually increase our margins during a long period of stagflation, by:

- (1) Getting a firm handle on the underlying commodity cost inflation that impacts our industry (let's say a weighted average of 6%) and passing on a portion of it in our pricing each year (say 2%), while communicating to our customers the many things we are doing to offset the rest. Explained properly, we'll be seen as a responsible, high value partner.

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- (2) Communicating the need to address commodity inflation to our own staff and our true day-to-day 'gatekeepers,' and through them to our suppliers by:
- (a) instituting a short-term '*no price increases accepted without CEO approval*' policy
 - (b) being clear that every major purchases category will be evaluated for substitute solutions (i.e., the item and/or the supplier), and
 - (c) no increases will ultimately be taken without prompting a supplier rebidding competition and/or requiring offsetting cost reduction ideas (e.g., reduced costs due to waste, spoilage, logistics, and inventory/leadtimes) from incumbent suppliers.

In tough economic times, this disciplined approach will stave off many increases. Let's say that the combination of linking arms internally to fend off price increases, while driving cost reductions across various commodities, keeps our net materials cost inflation at 2%.

- (3) Communicating to our employees that in this environment (and forevermore) all increases in annual compensation costs (i.e., wages + benefits + incentives) must be offset by increased productivity to maintain the profitability of the company. If compensation needs to go up, say 4%, in order to maintain our standard of living by offsetting CPI inflation and medical insurance premiums, then we need to identify at least 4% in productivity improvements related to how we do business. Let's say our company has 25 people and has a turnover rate of 4% per year (i.e., we lose/retire one employee annually). We simply must figure out how to run the same business at the same volume with 24 people instead of 25. This may involve streamlining processes, adopting technology, or cross-training those with slack in their weekly workload. For the sake of this example, let's say that we successfully offset compensation inflation with productivity improvements.

Based on this entirely plausible scenario – with sales price edging up at 2% per year, net materials costs rising at 2% per year, and payroll costs stay flat due to productivity improvements – our operating profit increases steadily in a sluggish economy, rising from 10% to 12.8% of sales in three years (see below).

***Revised* Simplified Operating Profit & Loss Statement (\$)**

	Current	1 Year Out	2 Years Out	3 Years Out
Sales Revenue	100	$100 \times 1.02 = 102$	$102 \times 1.02 = 104$	$104 \times 1.02 = 106$
Prime Cost: Mat'l	40	$40 \times 1.02 = 40.8$	$40.8 \times 1.02 = 41.6$	$41.6 \times 1.02 = 42.4$
Labor	35	35	35	35
Fixed Cost	15	15	15	15
Total Cost	90	90.8	91.6	99.4
Operating Profit	10 = 10%-sales	11.2 = 11%-sales	12.4 = 11.9%-sales	13.6 = 12.8%-sales

With what attitude and specific operating goals is your team facing the price/cost squeeze?

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Application Worksheet

1. Tally your self-assessment score:

Question	Answer	Scoring	My Score
1	A	0	
	B	10	
	C	6	
2	A	10	
	B	6	
	C	0	
3	A	0	
	B	10	
	C	6	
4	A	0	
	B	8	
	C	10	
5	A	0	
	B	2	
	C	10	
6	A	5	
	B	10	
	C	5	
7	A	10	
	B	6	
	C	3	
8	A	10	
	B	0	
	C	0	
Totals		8-80	

2. Review your answers and answer the following:

a. What can you learn from the preferred or “correct” answers?

b. What do the answers you selected tell you about both your strengths as a ‘person of influence’ and your opportunities to grow?

3. Don’t forget to look at today’s **Appendix**, which addresses a timely area for leadership influence, effectively handling the *price/cost squeeze*. If you don’t have a handle on how you’ll manage to get added price in a tough economy, while offsetting inflationary pressures on purchases and payroll, you’re likely to see dwindling profits in your future!

A House Divided

Jesus said, "*If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand*" (Mk 3:25). He was answering doubters who said that He was casting out demons by the power of Satan, rather than by the power of God. He countered their assertion with a principle that applied not just to the specific situation, but to a wide variety of settings, including organizations such as families, churches, nations, and companies. The principle that no organization can survive, let alone thrive, with continuing inner strife, antagonism, and division, is universally true.

Jesus' 'house divided' statement is also true whether we're talking about spiritual or secular issues. While this segment focuses on the ministry dimension, the same precept applies in the purely pragmatic commercial and organizational development aspects of the business. Just like the law of gravity, this basic truth doesn't care where you apply it in this world; it always works. To consider how the 'house divided' principle applies to our ministry as we lead the businesses that God has entrusted to us, we'll examine two specific areas today.

Uncovering Design Flaws

First, let's look at applying this truth given the many *structural* aspects of our companies. Ministering the love of Christ in and through our businesses relies on activity flowing across various structures (i.e., basic elements, processes and methods) that will either enhance or diminish our eternal impact. When these elements enhance our ministry, everything works synergistically and harmoniously to encourage ministry. But when we allow structural friction to detract from ministry – creating a house divided – we're setting ourselves up in opposition to the very principle we're trying to promote.

One example of a structural element that can detract from ministry is a compensation system that rewards one portion of the team disproportionately compared to other parts of the organization. For instance, some companies might provide special, very visible, perks to particular employees. Others still lavishly compensate their senior executives even while they're instituting deep cuts in other areas. Others seemingly create a 'class system' within the company where certain sales or field employees are treated differently from home office or factory employees. Over time, these things serve to divide our team.

Another example that might hinder ministry is a work scheduling system that forces some employees to work excessive overtime hours or routinely be away from their families on weekends. If we expect to be credible, we can't preach the value that God places on family as our first ministry priority and then enforce operating practices that harm them!

Any structural part of our business that's contrary to God's way, as expressed in His Word, needs to be changed. We need to purposefully design the structures and processes of our businesses to demonstrate and benefit from God's ways, not conflict with them. This takes a focused, sober, and objective assessment. Contradictory

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structures can quietly creep into our businesses. We normally don't set out to work against ourselves by putting harmful and confusing structures in place. In companies with more than a handful of employees, such practices can slip in over time through decisions made 'on the run' or through the activities and work habits of those to whom you've delegated various tasks and responsibilities. Don't be deceived; the Devil is right there in those details! Jesus repeatedly warned us about Satan (e.g., Jn 14:30, Rev 2:12-17). We must be diligent in constantly aligning ourselves and our practices with God's purposes. Allowing contradictory practices to stand diminishes our fruitfulness and ability to build credible ministry through the company.

Nothing that wars against the clear and clean expression of God's truth and practice is *from* God. And if it's not from God, it's from the pit. Among the dangerous lies that Satan uses to neutralize Christians is that such things are benign, neutral, or aren't worthy of our attention. The truth is that many small things combine to either build or tear down the trust that must underpin our ministry. Nothing is neutral. Each element is either supportive, and consistent with God's ways, or from our adversary. We'd do well to spend some time with our team looking carefully at how our various structures and practices (e.g., compensation, work scheduling, discipline, performance management, incentives, paying bills and taxes, processing of personal expense reports, warranties, hiring, training, and promotions) fit with our understanding of Biblical teaching. We shouldn't use a standard at work that we wouldn't be pleased to see operating at our church. Consistency, fairness, and transparency should reign if we're to truly operate as servant leaders. On the other hand, favoritism, selective enforcement, and personal expediency are team killers. A periodic internal review process is a great staff teaching opportunity that will, in turn, enable managers to look at the detailed practices in their own areas to clear-up any confusion and conflict.

Let's stop at this point and share a few thoughts about existing areas, practices, or traditions in our companies that we know in our hearts to be root causes of confusion, distrust, and division. What specific structural issues flashed through your mind over the past few minutes?

Looking at the Human Element

Our second area of focus is even more important than the first. While 'structures' guide action and behavior, *people* actually conduct our day-to-day business as they interact with customers, suppliers, and each other. So, let's turn our attention to the team we're relying on to serve and minister to those we do business with.

Before we examine our team with respect to possibly being 'a house divided,' let's examine our own objectives in business. What are we hoping to build from the ministry perspective? Do we see ourselves building something that will have impact and last far beyond our watch? Are we merely concerned about our own *personal* ministry through business or do we see our company as a dynamic platform, much larger than ourselves, providentially provided and intended to conduct ministry?

If we see our companies as simply *our* ministry, we're not much better off than a person working for a 'secular' business. Sure, we have a bit more freedom and

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resources, but we're still one person with the limitations that brings in terms of daily contacts, awareness, influence, and follow-up effort. The reality is that the business has the potential to be a ministry, in and of itself. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this thought is by comparing very fruitful versus not-so-fruitful churches. While our business isn't exactly a church, the analogy is applicable wherever two or three come together in His name (Mt 18:20)!

In a church, the pastor is the spiritual leader of the organization. If he sees himself as the one who does *all* of the ministry, and fails to equip and enlist others to minister with him, the ministry is limited and stops when he leaves, gets sick, or dies. Conversely, if the pastor sees his job as building a church body committed to the ministry of the saints, he will devote his energy to equipping his flock and calling them to be a transformational influence for Christ in their community (see 2Cor 8:1-5, Eph 4:11-12, 1Pe 2:9, Jude v3). In this case, even if the pastor leaves or is disabled, the ministry continues. We face this same choice in business. If we see ourselves as the only one, or even the *main* one, called to do the work of ministry, we're building a self-limiting, crippled ministry. To be a leader, we must actively lead *others*!

Perhaps we've given the wrong impression by calling these segments *Working 'on' My Ministry in God's Business*. Maybe the emphasis on 'My' has subconsciously encouraged us to think in too small a way about our total potential and stewardship responsibility in building a ministry through our workplace. In fact, some C12 members have even developed ministries which enlist community 'stakeholders' outside the 'four walls' of the business. While we certainly have a key role, our stewardship responsibilities don't end there. God expects us to cultivate the whole field, not just one corner. Paying attention only to what we can personally do to serve God through our companies represents cultivating a small and short-lived part of the opportunity. When ministry is approached in this way, the weeds will soon retake the field after we leave. Just like with the church that never equips or empowers its members for ministry, our eternal fruitfulness dries up when we stop.

As a leader, one of our most important jobs is to recruit, select, train, cultivate and promote those that can replace us in time. If we're wise, we'll look for those who will bring additional gifts which will enable them to do a far better job than we've ever done! It's easy to recognize this in the temporal dimensions of the business. We easily give assent to the idea that we either need to groom a long-term successor or perhaps face a rocky and costly transition, sale, or liquidation later on. But it's also true of the ministry dimension, where delegation of key on-going responsibilities into capable hands will ensure future success.

Practical Truth in Building a Healthy Team Ministry

This brings us back to the teaching of Jesus: *a house divided against itself cannot stand*. When we consider maximizing the long-term success of our business *as ministry*, it's critical to attain practical unity – regarding our values, purpose, and vision – with key team members. Here are a few key issues to consider:

- ***Only Christians can minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*** Unbelievers may be wonderful people, possessing marvelous talents, kindness, and experience...

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but they can't truly share in the ministry of the Gospel. It's impossible to build a ministry that will last using unconverted team members. They can work for, or alongside, you in practically serving others (e.g., building homes for the homeless, feeding the hungry, etc.) and in making wonderful contributions to the temporal strength of the business. But they aren't truly able to participate in the most sacred mission of the business: to share the love of Christ with others. In fact, they are primarily *objects* of our ministry.

- **No one is *neutral* towards Jesus Christ.** Jesus said, "*He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters*" (Mt 12:30). This is a practical fact that we're wise to embrace. Many, in seeking comfort, fool themselves into thinking that they can maintain a position of neutrality regarding Jesus, often viewing Him as just one of many routes to God and eternity. Jesus doesn't give us this option (Jn 14:6). Being "double-minded" is to reject Him (Ja 1:8 & 4:8, Rev 3:16). As committed Christians, when we hire a non-believer into a key position it's inevitable that one of three things will happen: (1) they will be converted, (2) they will leave the company, or (3) we will practically compromise our beliefs. This may take time to play out, since the newcomer often "signs up" for our core values as a part of securing the position, but make no mistake; it will ultimately shakeout in one of these three ways. Darkness and light simply can't co-exist in the same space (2Cor 6:14, 1Jn 1:5-7). One must flee!
- **To the extent you have unbelievers working for you, especially in key management and sales positions, you have a house divided.** The division may be subtle, or very obvious, but it's certainly there and experience has shown that it will ultimately manifest itself at the least desirable times and in the most harmful ways.

Sometimes, typically in the early stages of division, there's only subtle resistance. This may include inconsistent participation, or non-participation, in spiritual activities such as ministry projects, discipling discussions, Bible studies, prayer, etc. At this level, the divide is easy to dismiss simply as folks harmlessly pursuing "personal freedom." As time passes, however, resistance can become more obvious, ultimately graduating into active behind-the-scenes talk about the "unreasonableness" of the company's unique core principles in this day and time. Seeking to salve their own flesh by spreading their discontent (and disloyalty), unbelievers will sometimes actively seek out poorly-disciplined believers and try to recruit them into discomfort or even rebellion against the authority they deem oppressive. The fact that we're unlikely to be oppressing them is irrelevant. They're reacting to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, Who is doing His holy job, convicting them of sin, unrighteousness, and judgment, rooted in the eternal Truth of Christ's Gospel. They don't know or acknowledge Him, but they know us and they know they've somehow been made to feel uncomfortable with the status quo. So we become an enemy. You can take this scenario 'to the bank' as an active limitation to your ministry if your firm employs many unbelievers and poorly disciplined Christians. This is reality. Light and darkness cannot exist coequally in an equilibrium state. Over the long-term, they're incompatible!

Given that not everyone working for us is a Christian, and that in today's America it's illegal, for most of us, to use religion as a basis for hiring or promoting others,¹ **what are we to do?** The old saying, "*Being forewarned is forearmed,*" is on target here. Jesus made it clear that we're to be wise stewards who are fully alert to the enemy's methods (Mt 10:16). The clarity with which we hire according to Christian core principles, and

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solicit on-going objective assessments from customers, employees and suppliers regarding how we're doing in living out our stated values and purpose, is *key* to minimizing any potential damage to our reputation, unity, and ministry.

Since we aren't typically able to hire only Christians, we need to be clear about what to expect when we don't. This isn't to say that simply hiring Christians solves all of our potential 'house divided' problems. All "Christians" aren't likeminded, saved, or in possession of a Biblical worldview. In fact, contemporary research clearly shows that the Christian church in America is much more like the three (out of four) soils in Jesus' parable (Mt 13:1-23)... only one of three that *apparently* receive the Good News truly produce good fruit. Barna Research reveals that just half that claim Christ are truly born again, and just one-in-five of them (i.e., 8% of adult Americans) possess a Biblical, evangelical Christian faith.²

With this sobering statistic in mind, the main benefit you gain when you hire a Christian is the opportunity to discuss the problems and issues that occur from a Christian perspective. This doesn't eliminate the frequency or magnitude of problems, by any means! The upside with believers, is that there's at least a chance to disciple and equip them, and to perpetuate ministry in Christ's name (as opposed to conveying a typical 'good citizen' sensibility comparable to, say, United Way). With unbelievers there's no basis to minister with such a distinctive impact until they're saved.

So, what's the remedy to a house divided? How can we guard against the impact of influences that will diminish our fruitfulness and threaten to undermine the active and unified ministry of our team? Just being aware, vigilant, and proactive regarding the sound fundamentals in building an aligned organization will greatly help.

We've advocated many of the elements of such an approach in previous segments on casting a clear vision based on non-negotiable company core principles, hiring based on character and buy-in, planning and executing, key performance metrics, performance-based compensation, building a team-based Christian culture, purposeful communication and accountability. All of these practices require the consistent involvement and reinforcement of the leadership team, beginning with us. We must consistently 'walk our talk.' Over time, the genuine love of Christ will melt opposition. Chaplaincy is one such expression. Perhaps more than any other safeguard, prayer is the key. Asking God to first bring us the people He wants to use to build His team, and then asking for His wisdom and guidance in leading them for His purposes, is where we must start. Diligence in prayerfully asking Him to reveal any resident antagonists – both structural and human – coupled with regular and clear communication and accountability – down, up and across our team – is our greatest protection.

This challenging segment has surely ruffled the feathers of a few folks around the table. Let's talk about your specific ideas, observations, and issues... while leaning into the truth, not our fleshly comfort or emotion.

¹Employers with 15+ employees are subject to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, forbidding discriminatory hiring, compensation, or promotions based on race, sex, age, gender, religion, etc. Refer to October, 2010 C12 business segment, ***Our Legal Freedom to Lead.***

²See www.barna.org

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Appendix A

Systematically Building Our Team for Ministry

Ramping up our company's capacity for ministry relies on our intentionality and relationships. As with most organization-wide topics, we must have a specific approach or method if we're to make and track progress over time. Many larger companies use an annual 'organizational review process' which looks both at overall 'structural' issues (i.e., compensation, organization structure levels and span-of-control, etc.) and at individual employee performance, potential, and career development. It's not too big a reach for Christian companies to extend such a systematic approach to include reviewing where each employee (and perhaps key customers and suppliers) stand with respect to their faith and walk with Christ. There's something energizing, clarifying, and pro-active about simply taking inventory and prayerfully considering how we (and our likeminded team members) might be a practical blessing to those in our midst who are unsaved, undisciplined, or otherwise unengaged. While there are many ways we might do this, one way to begin (adapted from Regi Campbell's book, *About My Father's Business*) might be to simply personally list each employee, starting with managers and influential company ambassadors, such as salespeople and buyers, and then categorize them based on their currently status. This enables us to confidentially come alongside each individual (or encourage likeminded associates assist) with the goal of seeing more eventually opting to join our flourishing ministry through the company. An example is provided below:

Team Member	Active Antagonist	Apathetic, Disinterested	Curious & Open	Private/ Passive Christian	Actively Being Disciplined	Actively Ministering	Follow-up Action
Ann S.							Share faith w/others
Susie Q.							Lunch talk
John D.							Lunch talk
Lesley I.							Remedial action
Morley B.							Recruit as Leader
Norm T.							Ann to pursue

Armed with this inventory, we can be more strategic in our follow-up and creative thinking about how to best engage each individual using our God-given team resources to help move each individual from left to right over time. Those in the first column should be confronted regarding the shared core values and purpose of the business to which they're accountable. It's better to dismiss an antagonist than to let the poison of division fester and spread.

C12 members and Key Players can also use their monthly C12 materials in a systematic way to mentor others. As reflected in the *Mentors Program Leaders Guide* on the C12 member web portal, it's simple and inexpensive to use our normal flow of C12 monthly materials to regularly disciple others in the marketplace.

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Two excellent hands-on books, helpful for those wanting to minister through business (as well as in their families and neighborhoods), have been written by Christian CEO Regi Campbell:

- ***About My Father's Business*** (Multnomah, 2009) offers a proven, natural process for becoming a spiritual leader at work, regardless of position or title. Much like the example above, Campbell uses a five-category "intentionality map" (IMAP) to assess a workplace, identify opportunities, neutralize obstacles, and impact lives for eternity. By attempting to see others as Christ sees them, we can be more intentional in serving our people and others through them. The goal is to help each individual move up to the next level of awareness, intimacy, and ministry activity in their walk with Christ. Armed with this continually updated spreadsheet, we can regularly scan the names and ask the Lord who we should be praying for and how we might be involved with them (e.g., phone call, meal, sharing books and or articles, golf, fishing, etc.). It's about developing a trustworthy relationship to earn the right to share the Gospel or recruit them into further discipling and ministry activities. When we put flesh on the Gospel and develop true fellowship we're plowing the soil for increased depth and breadth in our relationships and workplace ministry.
- ***Mentor Like Jesus*** (B&H Books, 2009) encourages us to use the proven mentoring approach demonstrated by Christ in the gospels. Group interaction is recommended to provide accountability and help mentorees see that their problem isn't always unique to them. Mutual intentionality and commitment are key. Mentorees are invited to apply and, if chosen, must commit to reliable attendance, completing assignments, and showing up on time. Scripture memorization helps us to respond God's way to situations as they arise and communicates the importance of God's Word in developing character and leadership. Further, mentoring is a great role for 'second tier' leaders who are often in a better position to engage particular individuals in the flow of daily business.

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Application Worksheet

C12

1. Look closely at your organizational chart and answer the following:
 - a. Where do you think your house might be actively being divided?
 - b. How might you test for evidence of such division?
 - c. What can you do to address and potentially eliminate these negative issues?
2. Meet with your closest advisors and your key players. Discuss the various structural elements and processes at work in your company, checking each to see if it complies with Biblical principles and basic notions of godly living/operation. Examine all the items listed in today's segment (e.g., compensation criteria, work scheduling, incentives, payment of bills and taxes, hiring and promotion, personal expense management, etc.) and any others you can think of. Agree that specific plans must be made to bring each of these areas in-line with Biblical standards as best you know how.
3. To provide a healthy foundation for growing the fruitfulness of your ministry over time, consider adopting a systematic approach to engaging, evangelizing, and discipling your team and other company stakeholders (see today's **Appendix**). Just as with any workplace training and entrepreneurial initiatives, ministry progress comes as more folks are challenged and equipped... this time to embrace the truth and freedom they have in Christ to serve others in His name!
4. Decide to commit to a few of the action steps coming out of items 2 and 3 as C12 **To-Do List** items and receive the open table input of your C12 peers and Chair to test your thinking.

KP

1. Consider where you are in the mix of what we've discussed in this segment and in the application items above. Be brutally honest before God and your sponsoring CEO. Pray for God's strength, truth and clarity to deal with any issues and consequences that arise. If you're likeminded and committed to see Christian ministry flourish through the company, ask your CEO how you can help.

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