

BUSINESS AS MISSION

By John Ridgway

Most of us are working as professionals. Some of us are running businesses. A few of us will be serving the LORD overseas in a professional or business capacity. Because much of the 10/40 Window is no longer open to full time missionaries, the working person becomes the person who can access many of the closed countries of the world. Also there will be some people who will set up businesses in the host country.

This approach has several benefits:

- ❖ It was the **approach of the New Testament**, where much of the progress of the gospel was accomplished through ordinary people, including the apostle Paul. All Pharisees worked for their living and Paul worked for most of his missionary career. All elders and deacons were responsible for their households. The Greek word “oikos”, translated “household” is where we derive the English word economy. The household economy was the responsibility of the elders and the deacons.
- ❖ It is a **reproducible approach** that every person can follow and enhances the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers, 1 Peter 2:5. Many people have the idea that only “full time” workers do the ministry.

The movements of the gospel throughout history were usually lay movements led by ordinary working people.

- ❖ It is an **approach that eliminates the dependency factor** that most churches and mission organizations create due to the appointment of full time national staff whose finances come in part or totally from a donor country.

NOTE: There is a place for full-time Christian workers. In Jesus’ time, the Levites were full-time (as they were in the Old Testament) and had specific responsibilities in the Temple. The apostles (including Jesus) were full-time since their calling as apostles required them to be on the move. Despite this privilege or right, we notice that Paul often seemed to forego this right for the sake of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12-18).

- Q1. Whether a professional person or business entrepreneur living here or working overseas, what are the three great qualities that should mark our lives? Examine Micah 6:8 and record how you see these qualities working out in your context.

- Q2. God's work reveals God's character. Look at Psalm 111:2-7 and record what you see about God's character.
- Q3. The city of Tyre was known as "the marketplace of the nations" (Isaiah 23:3). It became very wealthy, Ezekiel 27:33. What caused its downfall, Ezekiel 28:1-5?
- Q4. The first person whom the scriptures describe as being filled with the Spirit of God was a professional, a craftsman named Bezalel, son of Uri. As a result, what are the primary characteristics that described this professional, Exodus 31:1-5?
- Q5. King Solomon "undertook great projects" (Ecclesiastes 2:4). Read Ecclesiastes 2:4-11. Was he satisfied with what he had achieved? Explain your answer.

Q6. What advice did King Solomon have when it came to undertaking a successful enterprise? Proverbs 24:3-4 in the Living Bible states: “Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts”.

Describe your application of this advice.

Q7. Can God help us in the day to day business? Record your observations from Isaiah 28:23-29.

Q8. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem about 430 B.C. What can we learn from his successful undertaking?

a. Regarding capital. Nehemiah 2:4-9

b. Regarding market study. Nehemiah 2:13-16

c. Regarding motivation. Nehemiah 2:17-18

- d. Regarding opposition (competition). Nehemiah 2:19

- e. Regarding success. Nehemiah 2:20

- f. Regarding nobles (people born with a silver spoon). Nehemiah 3:5

- g. Regarding teamwork and delegation. Nehemiah 3:1-32

- h. Regarding change of strategy in the light of the changing circumstances.
Nehemiah 4:11-20

- i. Regarding excessive interest (asury), financial manipulation, abuse of workers, etc.
Nehemiah 5:1-13

- j. Regarding rights as the governor (manager). Nehemiah 5:14-19

k. Regarding negotiations with the competition. Nehemiah 6:1-9

l. Regarding intimidation, discrediting, and threats. Nehemiah 6:8-13

m. Regarding the end result of the project. Nehemiah 6:15-16

Q9. James gave helpful advice to the working, professional and business people of his day.

a. What causes bad relationships in the workplace, James 4:1-3?

b. What is a huge tension that all business people face, James 4:4-6?

c. Pride is normal in the working world. How do we overcome it, James 4:7-10?

d. Gossip, slander and judging others is common in the workplace. What is our approach to handling this, James 4:11-12?

- e. Taking initiative and expanding the business is normal. However, what precaution should we take, James 4:13-17? What attitude must we fight against?

- f. Wealth is not a problem. But it can come at the expense of others. Describe what wealthy people must not do, James 5:1-6.

- g. What is a very important quality of any businessman or professional, James 5:7-11?

- h. Describe the nature of your communication in the workplace, James 5:12.

Q10. Business is tough. Many people fail in business. In the USA, 80% of all businesses fail. Overseas, 80% of all joint ventures fail. Many missionaries try to do business (tentmakers) and fail. Many BAM (Business as Missions) which are set up by outside organizations also fail.

Romans 12:3-6 (Living Bible) tells us, “Be honest in your estimate of yourselves ... for we each have different work to do ... God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.”

Solomon had given excellent advice to succeed in business in Proverbs 24:3, 4 (Question 6). In Proverbs 24:5-6 he gives further advice for success. What is it?

Before you attempt any kind of business whether here or overseas, seek guidance and counsel about your gifts and abilities and what is the “workmanship” (Ephesians 2:10) that God has created and is in the process of creating in you in you. Describe your situation today.

WILLIAM CAREY

William Carey was born in England in 1761 and sailed for Calcutta with his family, never to return home. He died in 1834 leaving behind seven children. He is known to us as the “**Father of Modern Missions.**” He had two great prayer warriors: his sister and William Wilberforce.

But he was much more than a missionary. He worked for his living. He was an industrialist who introduced the steam engine to India. He was the father of print technology in India and built the largest press in India at that time. He established the first newspaper ever printed in any oriental language and was the first to make indigenous paper for the publishing industry. He was an economist and introduced the idea of savings banks to India, to fight the all-pervasive social evil of usury (interest rates of 36-72%). Carey founded India’s first Agri-Horticultural Society in the 1820s, thirty years before the Royal Agricultural Society was established in England. He was the first to campaign for the humane treatment for India’s leprosy patients.

William Carey was an outstanding translator and educator. His polyglot dictionary was the basis from which the Bible was translated into the 16 state languages of India. He was the first to translate and publish in English the great Indian religious classics. He wrote gospel ballads in Bengali. He wrote the first Sanskrit dictionary for scholars. He began dozens of schools for Indian children of all castes and launched the first college in Asia, at Serampore near Calcutta. Carey introduced the study of astronomy to the subcontinent. He introduced the idea of lending libraries to the Subcontinent. Carey was a persistent forest conservationist. He was a crusader for women’s rights, including polygamy, female infanticide, child marriage, widow-burning, euthanasia and forced female illiteracy. As professor of Bengali at Fort William College, he transformed the ethos of the British administration. Carey was a moral reformer and a cultural transformer becoming the father of the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

William Carey was an extraordinary pioneer and along with his two good friends, Marshman and Ward, completed the work that God had given him to do in the furtherance of God’s Kingdom in his generation.