

# THE REGENT BUSINESS REVIEW

ISSUE 8

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## Firing People

## Is There a Christian Approach?

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Corporate  
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Regent University Graduate School of Business

A Magazine for  
Christian Leaders  
and Managers

# THE REGENT BUSINESS REVIEW

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*The Regent Business Review* is an electronic magazine published at the Regent University Graduate School of Business. The mission of RBR is "to equip and encourage Christians to be more God-honoring leaders and managers." As such, we offer practical guidance about what it means to be an authentic Christian in the workplace, as well as tools for better communication, for character development, and for other building blocks of leadership excellence. Driven by a calling to make disciples in the marketplace, we seek to exhort and coach Christians to "excel still more" (1 Thess. 4:1) in their roles as leaders and managers.

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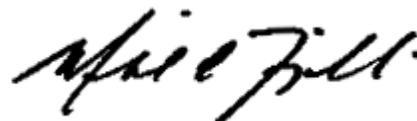
## So, You Always Wanted to Be a Pastor

So, you always wanted to be a pastor but never followed through on the call. Well here's your chance. Consider workplace chaplaincy as a vocation. No, you won't be earning that six figure salary or driving that fancy car you've had your eye on. And it might require a little belt tightening around the house. But no one ever promised that full-time kingdom work entails lavish temporal rewards. If God's been calling you to the clergy, but you've never understood how your background has qualified you for that daunting position, you might find some answers on page 17.

In his overview of the trend toward hiring workplace chaplains, Keith Starcher, former President of Zion Industries in Ohio – a president who himself invested in a chaplain for his employees – demystifies the nature and practice of this vocation. Many workplace chaplains come...well...from the workplace. Their extensive experience as employees or leaders, coupled with their bedrock Christian worldview and their heart to serve people, lay a firm foundation for success in this position. Mix in a few counseling courses and some training from one of the larger providers of workplace chaplains and you have a recipe for a wholesale, exciting career change.

And if you're not in the market for changing your career, how about changing the lives of your employees? As Starcher shows, workplace chaplains have a ministry of presence that is far more than an adjunct to the traditional employee assistance program. It's an employee benefit that offers innovative and life-altering care for employees experiencing relationship difficulties, financial problems, workplace conflict, job-related stress, substance abuse problems, and any number of life crises. The return in loyalty, commitment, productivity and retention will likely more than cover the cost of a chaplain program; more importantly, though, there is a spiritual return on this investment that has untold value as employees see God in the people serving them and in the one underwriting the program.

So whether God is nudging you toward full-time ministry or nudging you toward enhancing your care for those employees He has entrusted to you, don't miss Starcher's succinct primer on workplace chaplaincy.



Michael Zigarelli, Editor

**In our next issue:** "Opening the 9 to 5 Window," an overview of the faith-at-work movement, and "How to Launch a Work-Life Ministry in Your Local Church."

# A Christian Approach to Firing People

by Michael Zigarelli

Prior to 1985, the hotel chain Days Inns of America was a Christian company. Its founder, Lon Day, Jr., sought to honor God by running family-oriented facilities, by not serving alcohol, by giving away more than 2.5 million Bibles to customers, and by offering a large share of the profits to charity. He also honored God with his stewardship of the operation, growing the company to more than 300 locations in fifteen years.

Day also cared immensely about his employees and even hired four full-time workplace chaplains to counsel workers who were in need. At the same time, workplace realities occasionally dictated that problematic employees be terminated, especially for taking kickbacks or for harassing female co-workers. According to Day, dismissed employees would typically plead their case with a fervent: "You can't fire me. I thought this was a Christian company!"

Day's response to them? Simple and final: "God will always give you a second chance, but you have had your second chance with us!"

Some managers, like Day, seem to have little difficulty letting employees go. But for others, the prospects of terminating a subordinate can turn even a seasoned business professional into a nail-biting novice. And when that professional is also a Christian, there's the added

difficulty of reconciling the firing with God's call to servanthood, forgiveness, and love.

However, we need to make one thing perfectly clear up front: *no where does scripture support the notion that it is sinful or even poor witness for a Christian boss to fire a subordinate.* No where.

**No where does scripture support the notion that it is sinful to fire a subordinate. But God's Word does insist that we fulfill several responsibilities first**

God's Word does not *per se* prohibit firing people. Quite the opposite, as we'll see below, under certain circumstances, terminating employees is both sanctioned and encouraged in scripture.

It's also the case, though, that we Christians have several responsibilities before we can invoke capital punishment in the workplace – responsibilities that include, but go well beyond, respecting legal mandates. As usual, God has set a higher standard of conduct for those who follow Him.

## A Theology of Termination

Let's look more closely at the specifics of this "higher standard." On one hand, grace

is the central pillar of the New Covenant. Calvary is God's supreme sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, and as God forgives us, so we should forgive others. Even in the Old Testament we read of the virtues of forgiveness and patience with those who have offended us. Proverbs 19:11 is illustrative: "A man's wisdom gives him patience, it is to his glory to overlook an offense." One could argue, then, that since firing is the antithesis of forgiveness, Christian managers should not exercise this option.

On the other hand, both Testaments also indicate that it is entirely appropriate to excommunicate individuals from a group because of their behavior. For example, staying with Proverbs for the moment, at least two passages stand out in this regard:

"Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended" (Proverbs 22:10)

"Remove the dross from the silver, and out comes the material for the silversmith; remove the wicked from the king's presence, and his throne will be established through righteousness" (Proverbs 25:4-5)

Proverbs 22:10 makes plain that removing problematic individuals should reduce conflict. Digging a little

deeper, the word translated here as “mocker” carries the connotation of “scorner” and “arrogant talker.” This is a person whose inflated sense of himself creates disputes and generally disrupts the work environment. The verse, it

## **Lesson One from scripture is that we should avoid making hasty decisions about firing people**

seems, gives us the green light to oust such people from our workplaces.

Proverbs 25:4-5 builds on this thought with a promise that goes beyond reducing conflict. “Dross” is the residue left behind after an ore has been purified by fire. From the smelter emerges pure silver, material that is productive metal for the silversmith. Likewise, for a work group to be as productive as possible, its dross – its “wicked” and, by implication, its “mockers” – must also be separated out. What should be the natural result of this “purification” process? The proverb teaches that the king’s “throne will be established by righteousness.” In a modern business context, purging of these employees from the group can pave the way for effective, God-honoring leadership.

We find a parallel New Testament instruction in 1 Corinthians 5, where Paul excoriates the believers in Corinth for tolerating an unrepentant, sexually immoral church member. Expel this

man immediately, the Apostle says unequivocally, because he will contaminate the church community. “Don’t you know that a little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough?” Paul asks rhetorically. “Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch...”

Juxtaposing all of these teachings, then, it appears that we may have a problem. There is no doubt a tension in the Biblical text between forgiveness and discipline – a tension that lies at the heart of the Christian manager’s dilemma about discharge. Since the Bible appears to support two different and competing paths, what is God’s will in this area?

As is sometimes the case in scripture, it is through wrestling with seemingly incompatible instructions that we ultimately hear God’s voice more distinctly. By affirming passages that point in different directions, we often gain comprehension of a more intricate scriptural principle, a principle that is unexpressed by any one passage. Such is the case here. Through texts like those cited above, God offers at least three lessons for the Christian manager who is contemplating discharging an employee.

### *Three Practical Lessons from Scripture*

First, we can interpret the tension in these teachings as a divine reminder that there is seldom a quick-and-easy answer for dysfunctional behavior. God shows us through His bi-fold teaching that the Christian manager

should neither impetuously fire a subordinate, nor overlook every offense. Neither extreme satisfies the Biblical edict. Lesson One, therefore, is this: *avoid hasty decisions about firing or retaining employees*, opting instead for the more time-consuming path of circumspection and prudent reflection.

Second, the Bible instructs that the default attitude throughout our decision-making process must be one of patience and forgiveness. Of the two teachings that hang in tension with one another – essentially, law and grace – grace is clearly the superior one. Again, this does not imply that we can never fire an employee. That’s an over-simplification. Rather, Lesson Two is that for the decision-maker, *grace must envelop law at every stage of this uncomfortable process*. In practice, this would mean that the Christian manager should (1) offer employees opportunities to correct problems, (2) evaluate whether

## **Lesson Two is that grace must envelop law at every stage of this uncomfortable process**

employee difficulties are really a function of poor management, and (3) consider assisting employees who will be exited from the organization.

Lesson Three acts as a counter-balance to Lesson Two: *occasionally, it will be not only appropriate but actually advisable to drop an employee from the payroll*. From a

scriptural perspective, an individual who undermines one's leadership, who arrogantly scorns others, who perpetually creates conflict, who is corrupt, or who cannot follow the work rules, is tantamount to "dross" that must be removed for the common good. The Christian manager, like all other

## **The Christian manager has a responsibility not just to employees, but to all other stakeholders as well**

managers, has a duty not just to employees, but to all other stakeholders as well. So, responsible corporate stewardship will sometimes dictate that troublemakers, criminals, and even perpetual under-performers have their relationship with the organization involuntarily severed. There is no sin in this, provided we've first followed Lessons One and Two.

Overall, then, harmonizing the difficulties in scripture gives way to important insights on this complex issue. God calls us to invest significant time and energy in this consequential decision, judiciously balancing compassion and standards – grace and law – whenever we are considering firing someone.

### **Termination Tips Based on Scriptural and Secular Realities**

In light of this theology of termination, let's consider the practice. Borrowing from the voluminous practitioner

literature on firing people, here is some Biblically-consistent guidance.

#### *Know and Respect Man's Law*

Even those who do not recognize God's prescription to terminate with care often do so anyway. That's largely because employee dismissal has evolved into risky business in most of the industrialized world. In the United States, governmental scrutiny of the employment relation is everywhere, from federal, state, and local statutes to administrative regulations to common law. One can hardly establish a personnel policy or make any employee-management decision without considering Big Brother's opinion. Moreover, people are growing more litigious. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, employee discrimination charges rose about 120 percent during the decade of the 1990s.

Consequently, one of the first termination tips offered by almost every expert is this: have a familiarity with the structure and parameters of employment law. Given the pervasiveness of the law, and given the scriptural mandate to respect man's law (e.g., Romans 13), this is wise counsel.

In the U.S., the basic structure of the law is that an employer has a free-hand to discharge for any reason unless the employer is constrained by some law, some court case, or some contractual arrangement. That is, the default condition, called "employment-at-will," does not require an employer

to have a performance-related reason or any "just cause" to dismiss an employee (this is not the case in many other industrialized countries, or in unionized environments). Rather, the only requirement is that the termination cannot be motivated by those criteria prohibited in anti-discrimination laws, common law, or contract.

Several websites provide a thorough overview of this legal dimension of employee-management (see, for example, [eeoc.gov](http://eeoc.gov), [nolopress.com](http://nolopress.com), and [ahipubs.com](http://ahipubs.com)), as do many popular press books. As a primer, though, the table below presents a snapshot of the current legal boundaries in the United States.

#### *Conduct the Termination Meeting Wisely*

First, it's always a good idea to have the meeting in a private setting. Commentators are unanimous on this point and for good reason. Public or quasi-public dismissal is humiliating and engenders revenge.

## **A central objective here is to avoid marring the cause of Christ in this seemingly heavy-handed action**

Second, keep the meeting relatively short and to the point. Your criticisms should be honest and factual, avoiding subjective or unsupportable conclusions. Calmly explain your rationale for the decision and avoid arguing with the

## A Basic Overview of U.S. Employment Law

Law	Provisions	Enforcement Agency
<b>Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964</b>	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, and sex	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<b>Age Discrimination in Employment Act</b>	Prohibits discrimination against individuals age forty and over	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<b>Americans With Disabilities Act</b>	Prohibits discrimination against any individual who meets the definition of “disabled.” Requires reasonable accommodation of disabled employees and applicants	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<b>National Labor Relations Act</b>	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of one’s union status or support	National Labor Relations Board
<b>State and Local Statutes</b>	These laws parallel the provisions of federal laws to cover employers of every size (Federal law typically applies to employers of 15 or more employees). Some states and cities also extend anti-discrimination law by prohibiting employer actions based on marital status, sexual preference, smoking habits, and other criteria.	State human rights agency or State Department of Labor  City administrative agencies for city ordinances
<b>Common Law</b>	Most states, through judge-made law, prohibit employer actions that would undermine public policy (e.g., terminating employees for serving jury duty) or that violate the employer’s own personnel handbook. A handful of states have even gone further in common law to require that the employer keep all of its promises, whether written or verbal.	No enforcement agency. Employee plaintiffs must retain their own legal counsel and pursue their claims in state court

employee. You may find this difficult, especially if the employee throws the blame back on management or becomes verbally abusive. But arguing will only escalate an already tense situation, so permit the employee to vent without responding in kind. Remember, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

Third, you may want to offer the employee a chance to resign in lieu of being fired. For some employees, this will seem like no choice at all, but for many others, it’s an opportunity to save face. Especially for employees who could see this coming, they may be less bitter about the situation if they can honestly tell others that they voluntarily resigned.

Fourth, and contrary to the conventional wisdom, it’s a good practice to dismiss early in the week rather than later. Traditionally, managers have fired employees on Fridays, but anecdotal evidence suggests that this simply prompts the employee to stew all weekend and to react more violently on Monday. Dismissing early in the week reduces this festering effect because the employee can begin seeking employment the very next day.

Lastly, be sure to have all information on benefits available for the employee. Can health insurance be continued? Will there be severance pay? Will you agree not to challenge any unemployment claims? Whatever the benefits

your organization confers on discharged employees, the termination meeting is the ideal time to present them since they offer a ray of light in an otherwise black conversation.

#### *Help the Employee to Transition*

A central objective here is to avoid marring the cause of Christ in this seemingly heavy-handed action. One way to do this, when appropriate, is to provide enough severance pay for the employee to transition

### **Our distinctive as Christians must be a humble willingness to invest the time to balance discipline and forgiveness**

to another job in a financially-seamless manner. Additionally, in light of God’s concern for family stability, you may also want to take into account the individual’s family situation in both the decision to terminate and the size of the severance.

Another way to keep this individual on his or her feet is to pay for a professional outplacement firm to assist the employee in locating suitable work. Maybe even draft a letter of recommendation for the employee as well, especially if you are letting him or her go because of a bad fit with the organization. The point is that we should maintain a servant’s heart in this process, since our Christian responsibility to love and serve our neighbors does

not terminate along with the employment relation.

### **Humility is the Key to a Godly Decision**

If you have yet to deal with dysfunctional or nefarious employee behaviors in your career, you will. And if you already have, you will again. There’s simply no avoiding it. So before that moment arrives (or arrives again), think through how to handle the situation in a Biblically-consistent manner.

As we’ve seen, though, there’s a real challenge here. God’s Word is always the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong, but on the issue of firing employees, the Bible offers a somewhat complicated teaching. One thing that we know for sure, though, is that in this process, as in all things, our first calling is to humility.

In practical terms, that means moving slowly and introspectively, asking questions like: “Did this person know the rules and expectations? Was improper training or some other management blunder the real culprit here? Have I really measured this person’s performance accurately? Is my decision motivated too much by profit concerns or by my personal dislike of this employee? Have I considered the individual’s family situation? And overall, am I honoring God as Boss and reflecting His face through my decision-making process?”

These are hard questions and they take time to answer. But

spending more time on our people is just part of the deal if we truly intend to take God seriously in management. We will put more effort into decision-making and we will respect inconvenient – sometimes counter-cultural – guidelines that our peers blithely ignore. That's humility before God.

No where is this more essential for the manager than when

contemplating termination. Our distinctive as Christians must be a humble willingness to invest the time to balance discipline and forgiveness – to always seek God's way. Sometimes God's way will entail giving second or third chances, retraining the employee, offering lateral transfers for fit, and so on. Other times it will entail delivering a pink slip. But one thing it will *always* entail is

walking with our employees in hard times, whether we're walking them back to their work station or out the door.

*Michael Zigarelli, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Management at the Regent University Graduate School of Business and the editor of the Regent Business Review. You can reach him at michzig@regent.edu*

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# Cultivating Corporate Character

by John Di Frances

One afternoon in 1983, I returned to my office following a thirty minute meeting of company directors with our bank. The bankers had left in disgust and our CEO responded by instructing the Vice President of Finance to “find a new bank.” There was no question in my mind that it was only a matter of time before the company would end in bankruptcy, even though our sales were currently \$400 million and our base business was very profitable. A drive for fast wealth had precipitated a series of reckless decisions – decisions that ultimately resulted in financial ruin and forced liquidation within two years.

As I sat silently in my office that day, I believed there was no longer any hope of turning the tide. Half the equity had been squandered in the past twelve months and now the final die was cast. We were going for broke, but going to be broke as result. The few prospective “voices of reason,” mine included, had been unable to convince the other directors that the bank’s “request” was nothing more than a prophesy: change or die. The best personal option, as I saw it, was to get off the sinking ship, so as not to have my reputation dragged down with it. However, I felt a deep responsibility for the millions of dollars of commitments I had signed on the company's behalf in the preceding six years. Thus, my priorities

became clear that autumn afternoon – to minimize the damage to those with whom I had contracted and then, to resign from what had once been a wonderful senior management position.

**You can minimize ethical lapses by cultivating corporate character – an environment where people do the right thing as standard operating procedure**

## Defining Corporate Character

Executives and middle managers across America have similar tales to tell. There is a crisis in corporate character, a crisis that extends well beyond the headlines. But how do organizations get into such dire straights? And how can we prevent corporate misconduct from happening in the first place?

The broad-brush answer to the first question is this: the business environment can easily stimulate the twin evils of greed and ambition, evils that are inherent to the human condition. When a person falls prey to either one of these, self-delusion soon follows, blinding him or her to the realities and inevitable consequences of his

or her actions. As a corporate consultant for the past twenty years, all too often I’ve met business leaders and managers who talk of having “the pulse” of their organization. In reality, though, many are totally out of touch, operating in a dimly lit, self-created vacuum. Tragically, then, this self-delusion, founded on greed and/or ambition, spawns a slow but steady death spiral for that manager’s department or organization.

The second question – how can we prevent these problems from occurring in the first place? – sometimes appears to be an inane or pointless question to many execs. You can’t fight human nature, right? Actually, you can. You can minimize ethical lapses in your organization by cultivating corporate character, even in those places that are currently the worst offenders.

What do I mean by “corporate character”? It is, in simplest terms, an environment where people do the right thing as standard operating procedure. To put a more formal definition on it, corporate character *is a cultural acceptance of truth, transparency, and accountability in all of our actions, and it is the courage to do what is right, regardless of the circumstances or consequences that might result.* It is evidenced not by placards or official statements in the employee handbook, but by behaviors –

by how business is actually conducted on a daily basis.

That may be relatively simple to understand conceptually, but again, execution is painstakingly difficult. It's not a fool's errand, though. In fact, quite the opposite: for anyone

## **There's no step-by-step formula here, but there are several best practices**

who wants to develop an ethical organization, pursuing the complex task of cultivating corporate character is imperative. There's no step-by-step formula here, but let me offer, from my experience, some of the best practices.

### **Cultivating Corporate Character**

#### ***Define the Character Vision Using Absolute Standards***

Some will argue that it is impossible to maintain absolute ethical standards today while still remaining profitable in the globally-competitive environment. But it *is* possible to have it both ways. There are myriad examples of extremely successful companies that have made a commitment to absolute standards of doing what is right, even though they operate in highly competitive markets. These corporations refuse to waiver from those standards, even when the short-term financial results will clearly be negative. And they have been blessed with prosperity as a result.

When researching my book, *Reclaiming the Ethical High Ground: Developing Organizations of Character*, I was impressed at the number of companies of this sort that I found. A typical example is Chick-fil-A, a company that adheres to an absolute, non-negotiable conviction that remaining closed on Sundays honors God. How many corporate leaders in any industry would willingly lose fourteen percent of their gross revenue for the sake of personal conviction? Yet, contrary to all marketplace wisdom, God continues to bless Chick-fil-A financially – and abundantly.

Similarly, The ServiceMaster Company, based in Illinois, operates on the principle of servant leadership and upholds two absolutes as its corporate ends: “To honor God in all we do” and “To help people develop.” Far from limiting growth and profitability, though, top management at ServiceMaster (which derives its name from “in service of the Master”), sees these standards as a business driver. Currently, this public company operates in dozens of countries and is the world's leading outsourcer of facilities management.

Corporate character begins with absolute corporate standards. Set these out boldly and communicate them often and you will have laid an essential foundation for success.

#### ***Leaders and Managers Must Model and Explain the Desired Culture***

St. Francis of Assisi said it well: “Preach the gospel to all the world. If necessary, use words.” Jesus, too, modeled the way, a quality that distinguished him from the religious leaders of his day. Our actions certainly can speak more persuasively than do our words. And this truth operates not just in evangelism, but also in establishing corporate character.

It's safe to say that the best and most effective manner of creating a culture of character is through daily modeling by the organization's leaders and managers. Their actions, especially when under fire in everyday decisions, set a powerful and visible standard. Moreover, these individuals should explain the motivations behind what they do – it's to “advance corporate character,” or it's to “honor God,” or it's to (fill in the blank).

## **Corporate character begins with absolute standards. Set these out boldly and communicate them often**

When leaders try to model desired behavior but do not make plain their motivations, the message is unclear and weak. Employees wonder: “Is this person merely a grown up boy scout, coached to never tell a lie? Is this just the tactic du jour that he read in the *Wall Street Journal*? Is this something we're required to do, or just something that he thinks is a good thing to do?”

Our motivation matters when it comes to our decisions and

processes. And if we truly want to cement corporate character, communicating that motivation is just as important as modeling the behavior.

### ***Ask the Ethics Question Pervasively***

Leaders and managers can also instill ethical thinking by frequently asking character-oriented questions in the presence of their peers and subordinates. Whenever we are discussing a new policy or making a business decision, we must raise the ethical implications, inconvenient or nebulous as they may be. A standard line might be: "Okay, we have three options before us. Prior to discussing them in depth, does anyone see any of these three posing an ethical problem?" Simple, right? Just raise the issue and deal with it early.

## **The most effective manner of cultivating corporate character is by having the leaders and managers model it daily**

Simple to say, at least. Raising the ethics issue – the issue of how certain options comport with our values – slows and complicates the process, adding a constraint that others may ignore. But it's indispensable for anyone who takes seriously the notion of cultivating corporate character. Once you've established guidelines of character, use them. Ask regularly the question: "do any of these alternatives before us

either promote or diminish our corporate character?"

In doing so, we establish a precedent and practice that will serve to eliminate unacceptable options from ever being suggested, much less implemented. It will also have a desirable trickle-down effect, as peer and subordinate managers throughout the organization begin to ask the same questions in their own meetings. Such questions take on astounding importance when people throughout the organization become fully cognizant that "the ethics consideration" is an important issue to the boss.

### ***Use Your Personnel Systems to Embed Character***

Organizational culture theorists have made abundantly clear that personnel systems and personnel decision-making are a driver of culture. Accordingly, it's vital that we incorporate our values into our hiring, firing, advancement, rewards, and discipline processes. When hiring and considering promotions, for example, we should weigh heavily an individual's personal character, not just his or her performance record. When evaluating and rewarding performance, we should use consistency with the corporate character values as a central compensable factor. Similarly, employees should be disciplined and, where necessary, even terminated for their unwillingness to comply with the values you seek to advance in the organization. Without embedding your corporate character standards

in such systems, these standards will likely be ignored by the very people whom you need to embrace them.

## **If you don't track advancement toward your cultural goal, how will you know when you're making progress?**

### ***Measure Corporate Character***

The old adage is "you get what you measure." So if you want corporate character, track it. How does one do this when the target is so obscure? Slowly and carefully, making it a priority to scrutinize whether one really has valid measures.

First, start with your stated values and define manifestations that may be reliable measures of success. Here are a few suggestions for measures that may be consistent with your target culture:

- Are we placing our values above short-term financial gain?
- Are we providing safe, quality goods and services?
- Are we instilling trust and confidence by communicating to all stakeholders, including the government, with integrity and transparency?
- Are we treating individual stakeholders fairly?
- Are we truly listening to employees, suppliers, and customers, getting

accurate indications of their needs and their satisfaction?

- Are we effecting our stated corporate values in our investment decisions?
- Are we achieving fairness in executive compensation?
- Do we take appropriate action to prevent and punish unethical behavior?
- Are we enforcing high supplier standards and human rights?
- Are we actively and responsibly participating in the local community?

Once you have your set of questions on the table, you can use various methodologies for collecting metrics, for example, quantitative surveying, qualitative interviews, and third party independent evaluations. The first two methods may require getting some expert assistance if you have no one in your organization with that particular skill set. But it will be money well spent. If you don't track advancement toward your cultural goal, how will you know when you are really making progress? And how will you know whether to make interventions to correct for problems? It's just management 101.

### **Corporate Character is a Direction, Not a Destination**

Developing corporate character is not an end point to be achieved, but rather a continuing process (and in most cases, a continuing struggle) of standing firm for truth, transparency, and accountability in the face of

those who would rather bend the rules to pursue financial success. Recently, I spoke with Bill Pollard, former Chairman and CEO of ServiceMaster, who reiterated that "even in companies with a healthy and strong corporate character, people can do the wrong

### **Developing corporate character is not an end point to be achieved, but rather a continuing process of standing firm for truth, transparency, and accountability**

things." That is, even in the best of companies, they have not arrived at a satisfactory level of character. They continue the quest forward.

According to Pollard, when ethical lapses happen, "leadership must acknowledge and accept responsibility for what has occurred, seek a resolution that provides a fair restitution for the harm done, identify the causes, and initiate the necessary steps for correction." Clearly, corporate character is a direction, not a destination. And, as shown above, there are many steps in the right direction we can take on this journey – steps that mirror good management practice for any new initiative.

For the Christian, there is, of course, a special imperative here, summarized well, I think, in the book of Joshua:

"...be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the

servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to obey His commands, to hold fast to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul" (Joshua 22:5)

When we Christians faithfully "walk in all His ways," "keep His commands," "hold fast to Him," and "serve Him" with our whole being in business, we will experience power and personal peace, and we will witness his provision to a secular marketplace. Tomorrow morning, that means rejecting the corrupt norm of bifurcated lives, integrating our faith into our personal work, and doing what we can to cultivate organizations of good character. The temporal rewards of business prosperity are probable if we persevere in this direction. The eternal rewards, though, are inevitable.

*John Di Frances is a professional speaker and consultant, a managing partner in Di Frances & Associates, and the author of Reclaiming the Ethical High Ground (Reliance Books, 2002). His career spans thirty years of global corporate, nonprofit, academic, and government agency experience in senior executive and industry leadership positions. You can reach him at [jdf@difrances.com](mailto:jdf@difrances.com)*

# Three Essentials of Christian Leadership

by William Heisler

There are abundant treatises available to Christians who want to enhance their leadership skills. Many focus on a single aspect of leadership; others attempt to integrate a multitude of factors. Having read that literature fairly closely for thirty years, and having lived in the worlds of academia and industry for the same amount of time, it seems to me that time and again, three things emerge as real distinctives for the Christian who wants to be a God-honoring leader. From what I've seen, leadership success is the result of a leader's **commitment** to a cause or goal, the personal **character** of the leader, and the extent to which the leader has real **compassion** for his or her followers. Here's how you can cultivate each.

## Commitment to a Cause

Many people fail as leaders because they are not committed to anything of value or significance. For whatever reason, they have little passion for the world around them or what takes place in that world.

But even a cursory review of history validates that successful leaders have had a passion for certain outcomes or principles, and that they have been committed unwaveringly to pursuing that outcome or to furthering that principle. We have the U.S. Constitution, for instance, because its framers were committed to bringing

forth a more perfect union. The United States achieved victories in World War One and World War Two because our nation, as a whole, was committed to defeating the tyranny that threatened us and others (such was not the case with the war in Vietnam). We excelled as a nation in space

**Leadership success is the result of a leader's commitment to a cause, the personal character of the leader, and the extent to which the leader has real compassion for his or her followers**

exploration because President Kennedy was able to rally support for his vision to place a man on the moon. Martin Luther King, Jr., advanced civil rights and human dignity because he had a dream and he was committed to its achievement.

In business, too, company greatness is often the result of the vision and commitment of a chief executive. Consider, for instance, the commitment-success connection of people like Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO of General Electric, Bill Gates of Microsoft, and Michael Dell of Dell Computers. And if we look at religious history, we reach the same conclusion. To

take but two examples, look at the passion and commitment shown by Jesus Christ for carrying out the mission of human redemption given to him by his Father. And consider Martin Luther, who felt so strongly about the state of the church in 1517 that he risked all to post his 95 Theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

If you desire to get others to follow you, then follow the example of history. Be absolutely committed to a goal or a cause. Followers must see your passion and draw from it enthusiasm and confidence in their ability to achieve what has heretofore seemed unachievable.

## Character

A second pillar of effective Christian leadership is character – who you are when everyone's looking and when no one's looking. Some object that we should separate a leader's character from his or her actions. In the case of former President Bill Clinton, for instance, a number of people argued that his personal life (and character) had no relevance to his performance as President of the United States. But how is that possible? If one cannot be trusted to maintain the sanctity of the Oval Office, or to tell the truth with regard to his personal affairs, how do we know that he can be trusted in affairs of State? Values, interests, and motives come from within, giving give birth

to action. So behavior is clearly born of character.

In positions of leadership, integrity is foremost among the essential character traits. Leaders must be credible and their followers must be able to

## Many people fail as leaders because they are not committed to anything of value or significance

rely upon their word. Trustworthiness is crucial and it's largely manifest in how well the leader "walks the talk." Stephen Covey articulated this principle in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* when he wrote, "The real key to your influence with me is your example, your actual conduct. Your example flows naturally out of your character" (p. 238).

All too often, though, there is a gap between the talk and the walk in corporate offices. The corporate credo or statement of values is intended for others to follow, not for the corporate leaders. These credos serve as "mandates for the masses," yet employees are quick to detect deviations from them in corporate behavior. And when they do, the organization is hamstrung by the hypocrisy. Productivity, innovation and morale all suffer as people comply with the dictates of leaders who lack credibility, but do not follow with enthusiasm or sacrifice.

The scripture is quite clear regarding character. When the

walk fell short of the talk, Jesus labeled the offenders "hypocrites." He railed against Jewish leaders who prayed publicly for display purposes, but had hearts of stone. He denounced them as whitewashed sepulchers – tombs that were immaculate on the outside but full of rot on the inside (Matthew 23). And it's the inside that matters to Jesus. He taught that "out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19). The internal drives the external. Character drives action.

That truth works in the affirmative as well as the negative. "The credibility of leadership is what determines whether people will want to give a little more of their time, talent, energy, experience, intelligence, creativity, and support," say Kouzes and Posner, perhaps the foremost experts on leadership of our day. Leaders of great character do great things!

### Compassion for Your Followers

Effective leaders create followers through their compassion – a genuine, heart-felt concern for the needs, feelings, and aspirations of those they lead. They are able to build effective teams – a community, if you will – because they care about those whom they are serving as much as they care about the goals they are seeking to achieve. Covey agrees: "No amount of technical administrative skill in laboring for the masses can make up for

lack of nobility of personal character in developing relationships. It is at a very essential, one-on-one level, that we live the primary laws of love and life" (p. 202). Indeed, goal attainment, in the long term, is best effected if the leader cares about people in such a way that they are encouraged in heart and united in love.

As many of us know from painful first-hand experience, though, often, people in organizations are instead made to do things out of fear. But *fear leads to compliance, not commitment*. People working in fear are not committed to the leader's goal or cause except in an instrumental sense: serving the leader avoids personal pain or economic loss. So followers often default to a "do the minimum" mind-set, discharging their duties and trying to stay off the radar screen.

## The internal drives the external. Character drives action

Compassionate, relational leadership is far more effective. As Peter Scholtes notes in *The Leader's Handbook*, "Where relationships are formed and sustained, leadership occurs." Jesus demonstrated this time and again in his work with his disciples. It was all about relationship – encouraging, sharing, loving, teaching, and when necessary, rebuking. But even the latter was acceptable because the disciples knew that Jesus cared greatly about them. His rebuke was for their growth and development.

In business, managers often seek administrative ways to maximize the performance of their people. What I mean is that they pursue the ideal form of performance appraisal, the ideal incentive package, the ideal organizational structure, etc., expecting that these systems will mechanically yield the desired results. That's short-sighted. The true key to success lies not as much with programs and practices as with the quality of the relationship the leader develops with his or her followers. Almost any performance appraisal system will work if employees trust their leader and believe that he or she truly cares about them. The same is true in the areas of compensation, promotion, and discipline. In their bestselling book, *Credibility*, Kouzes and Posner put it this way: "If we are reliable and others know that they can count on us, then our words and actions will have greater power to influence them. If we appreciate people

and show that we take their interests to heart, they can trust us to lead. ...On all fronts, developing the trust of their diverse constituents is critical to leaders" (p. 112).

**People in organizations can be made to do things out of fear. But fear leads only to compliance, never to commitment. Compassionate, relational leadership is far more effective.**

#### **Our Skill is Necessary but Not Sufficient**

Indeed, leadership requires a lot more than these "three C's" I've proposed. It requires situational knowledge, skills, and abilities, among other things. But while these latter attributes are necessary, they are by no means sufficient. Too

many leaders – Christians among them – don't seem to get that. All of us in leadership positions, and most especially those of us who seek to honor God in our work, would be well-advised to take inventory of our commitment to a cause, the content of our character, and the compassion in our hearts. These attributes, when coupled with our skills, will earn us loyal followers, enduring results, and God's "well done!"

*William Heisler, Ph.D. is a human resources consultant in Virginia. His background includes 20 years as a human resources executive with Northrop Grumman Newport News and faculty positions at the University of Notre Dame, Wake Forest University, the College of William and Mary, and Regent University. You can reach him at [heisler\\_wj@yahoo.com](mailto:heisler_wj@yahoo.com).*

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# Should You Hire a Workplace Chaplain?

by Keith Starcher

Aaron was a good employee. He worked in our shipping/receiving area, primarily third shift. He contracted cancer and fought it for a year before dying at the age of 26.

Aaron had no family living nearby, nor was he part of a local faith community. When his health crisis struck, our company chaplain shared the love of Jesus Christ with Aaron and his family, helped them cope throughout the year, and provided the family with an oasis of solace after his death. We at Zion Industries all cared for Aaron, but it was our chaplain who spent time with him, in the hospital and at home. We all could share many good stories about Aaron, but it was our chaplain who really knew him and who performed the funeral service. We, as a company, made some difference in the life of an employee and his family, but it was our chaplain who made a lasting difference.

## Who Uses Workplace Chaplains?

My company is not unique in its use of a workplace chaplain – not even peculiar. As of May 2003, approximately 47,000 employees had access to workplace chaplains employed by Corporate Chaplains of America. And, according to Marketplace Ministries, another provider of chaplains, over 250,000 employees and their family members across 36 states are ministered to by

their 1,200 chaplains. The demand is growing, too. The International Fellowship of Industrial Chaplains, a training and certification group, reports that company requests for workplace chaplains has out-paced their capacity to train them. Concurring, Rev. Robert Vickers, director of chaplaincy evangelism for the Southern

**My company is not unique in its use of workplace chaplains. Not even peculiar.**

Baptist Convention, says that business and industrial chaplaincy is growing within his denomination by about ten percent per year.

And it's not just private, Christian-owned-and-operated companies fueling this trend. Even publicly held companies employ workplace chaplains. To cite just two examples, Allied Holdings, based in Georgia, has employed chaplains since the mid-60s and after going public in 1993, maintained the program. Today, they employ 77 part-time chaplains (representing 17 denominations) at 97 locations in 35 states and 9 Canadian provinces. Similarly, Tyson Foods employs 52 part-time chaplains serving in 39 plants, with John Tyson (grandson of founder of the company and presently CEO

and Chairman of the Board) as the driving force behind the program.

## What Do Workplace Chaplains Do All Day?

Chaplains have what has been called a "ministry of presence." They are specifically trained to work in a secular environment, and they are on-site or on-call 24 hours a day to counsel any employee on any matter, personal or professional. Representative is Rodney Brown, director of employment counseling at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., who, speaking to the *National Catholic Reporter*, said: "In the workplace, our greatest service to employees is to be available—right now." Gil Stricklin, founder of Marketplace Ministries, agrees: "We don't work by the hour. We work by the needs."

Clad not in collars and robes, but in polo shirts and khaki pants, workplace chaplains regularly visit with employees at their work stations and offices, establishing a rapport with workers and making them aware that counseling is available at any time, especially during emergencies. Chaplains also visit sick and bereaved employees and their families, and when no other minister is available, they officiate services (as mine did with Aaron). Essentially, they are an extension of an employee assistance program (EAP), offering an indispensable spiritual dimension to the traditional EAP approach.

That spiritual dimension sometimes entails running on-site, voluntary Bible studies and prayer groups, and it occasionally entails sharing of the Gospel. But as Gil Stricklin notes, chaplains are not in the workplace to push religion. "My faith is not an instrument to offend you," he says. "It's an

## **Clad in polo shirts and khaki pants, workplace chaplains regularly visit with employees at their work stations and offices**

instrument for me to love you." In the same vein, Scott Toussaint from Chaplains at Work does not see his ministry as evangelistic, but one of providing "basic human kindness." He attempts to influence people for the kingdom of God by "being there for them when they need you."

Those who do offer someone a Bible tract, or who verbally share Jesus Christ's good news with employees, do so *only by permission of the employee*. Stricklin comments: "We do not go into the workplace to preach or proselytize, but if a worker asks a theological question, we will answer it from a Christian perspective." Gerald Rogers, company chaplain at McLane Corporation in Virginia, echoed this perspective in *Employee Benefit News*: "Some people we help come to Christ; some we just help. And that's okay, because that's why we're here—to help."

Still, a more-than-occasional outgrowth of that "help" is bringing people into God's family. Mark Cress of Corporate Chaplains reported in May 2003 that 600 employees had come to Christ through Corporate Chaplains of America since the beginning of the year. And Marketplace Ministries claims that during the past twelve months, approximately 4,000 people became Christians through their ministry, with 65 percent of those new believers now attending Bible-teaching fellowships.

### **Does All This Promote Litigation?**

Such statistics prompt predictable and legitimate questions in our litigious culture. Am I risking a lawsuit by launching a workplace chaplaincy program? Not if the chaplains approach their job in accordance with their training. In the United States, employers are permitted to offer faith-based services to employees, provided that they do so without discrimination and without creating an environment where employees feel pressured to conform to a particular faith. In practice, for example, this means that companies may employ chaplains and may have prayer or Bible-study sessions, as long as they are voluntary and those who don't attend are not discriminated against. Employees must not feel that their terms and conditions of employment are in any way contingent upon their religious beliefs.

Legalese aside, Mark Cress offers what might be the more

compelling answer to this question: "During more than 60 years of workplace chaplaincy history, no company offering a Chaplain Assistance Program, nor any chaplain agency, has been the target of litigation concerning chaplain care." He adds that his chaplains serve one company that has over 400 Jewish employees and there has never even been a complaint, much less a lawsuit. A representative from Allied Holdings says they, too, have never had a complaint in 35 years of providing workplace chaplains, even though Allied has a very religiously-diverse workforce. Gil Stricklin presents a similarly striking statistic: Marketplace Ministries has logged over 1.2 million hours of contracted service during the past nineteen plus years, without legal incident.

### **What About The Business Results?**

Although solid research does not exist to quantify the business value of workplace chaplains, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests a positive

## **In the U.S., employers are permitted to offer faith-based services to employees, provided that they do so without discrimination**

ROI. Testimonials abound on the websites of both Marketplace Ministries and Corporate Chaplains of America, attesting to the practical value of corporate chaplaincy. "This was the best business decision I ever made"

and “This is the only benefit that employees have ever thanked me for” are typical. Beyond the information from the chaplain providers, a widely-reported comment comes from Austaco, a large Pizza Hut and Taco Bell franchisee corporation, which credits its chaplain program for reducing its annual turnover from 300 percent to 125 percent. Moreover, in the trucking industry, where 100 percent turnover in drivers is not unusual, Allied Holdings has a turnover of four percent, partly, they claim, due to their employee care programs like chaplaincy. Kent Humphreys, President of Fellowship of Companies for Christ International, also suggests a competitive advantage, having employed corporate chaplains for fifteen years with, he says, significant results in the areas

of employee retention and morale.

### What Does This Cost?

Since there’s likely a positive return here, probably the better way to frame the question is: “How much will I need to invest to get a chaplain?” That will depend on variables like company size, number of employees, and number of shifts served. Typically, though, an employer will pay a flat fee per month, in the neighborhood of five to ten dollars per employee.

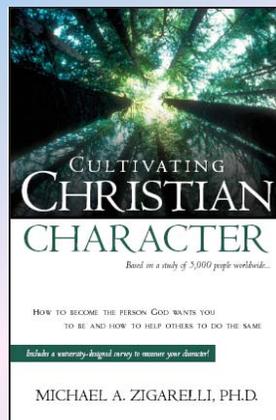
### Where Do I Go To Find More Information?

There are several organizations that offer clinically- and theologically-trained workplace chaplains. Among the larger organizations are:

- Marketplace Ministries: [markeplaceministries.com](http://markeplaceministries.com)
- Corporate Chaplains of America: [iamchap.org](http://iamchap.org)
- Chaplains at Work: [chaplainsatwork.com](http://chaplainsatwork.com)
- The National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains: [nibic.com](http://nibic.com)

*Keith Starcher's thirty year business career includes experience in large and small corporate settings, including General Electric. He recently joined the business department at Geneva College as a full-time faculty member, after serving as President of Zion Industries for seven years. He can be reached at [kostarch@geneva.edu](mailto:kostarch@geneva.edu).*

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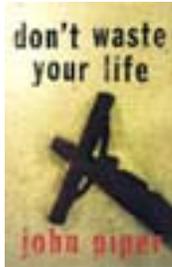
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# Bookshelf

## Don't Waste Your Life

By John Piper  
(Crossway Books, 2003)



John Piper's latest book is a work designed for one single purpose: to get the reader to focus on a life that is glorifying to God. A life that does not glorify God is a wasted life, Piper argues: "We waste our lives when we do not pray and think and dream and plan and work toward magnifying God in all spheres of life."

Conversely, a life is not wasted when one "is living life by a single, God-exalted, soul-satisfying passion. The well-lived life must be God-exalting and soul-satisfying because that is why God created us" (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 90:14). Piper depicts this passionate life as one that "boasts in the cross," where Christ – as we live to Him and die through Him – becomes our passion and focus. When we do this, we will become true image-bearers of Christ, where all the things we do in life will reflect Christ's sacrificial love.

Piper describes the inspiration for the book in some detail: a story that his father (an evangelist) often told of an old man who was hard and resistant to the Gospel for decades. Finally, at a very old

age, the man came to John Piper's father and humbly accepted the Lord. And although he was now saved from his sin and given eternal life, the old man wept uncontrollably. Through his tears cried, "I've wasted it, I've wasted it," realizing the lost time and work he could have used to glorify God during his earthly life. Piper emphasizes the tremendous impact that this story had on him and his consideration of his life's direction and purpose.

According to Piper, life is replete with a central tension: "a war...between Christ and Satan, truth and falsehood, belief and unbelief." Unless we are focused on Christ and maintain this sense of urgency, we can drift into "peace-time mindset" where we begin to "love the same toys that the world loves," calling luxuries needs and not thinking much about "people perishing." To maintain the right life-focus, Piper challenges Christians to ask specific questions regarding their behaviors: *How will this help me treasure Christ more? How will it help me show that I do treasure Christ? How will it help me know Christ or display Christ?* When we ask these questions of ourselves, we're challenged to "risk for the cause of Christ." We do not play life "safe" since our faith "frees us to risk and to find in our experience that it is better to lose our life than to waste it."

Nowhere do we need to take this risk, experience our faith, and take serious our call to

wartime living more than in our vocations, in our work. In Chapter 8, "Making Much of Christ from 8 to 5," Piper urges Christians to consider that it is not so important that we get ahead in our work, but that God gets ahead because of our work. He opens this chapter by clearing the air: Christians don't need to quit their (secular) jobs and enter full-time ministry work in order to glorify God. "You don't waste your life by where you work, but how and why" you work. To help us think through out the "how's and why's," Piper encourages us to ask: *How can my life count for the glory of God in my secular vocation?* Then, Piper describes six biblical answers to this question. Among his trenchant advice here is the following: "...as his image-bearers, our ditches are to be dug straight, our pipe-fittings are not to leak, our cabinet corners should be flush, our surgical incisions should be clean, our word-processing accurate and appealing, and our meals nutritious and attractive, because God is a God of order and beauty and competence."

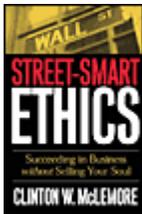
This book is not a quick read, nor is it a simple "how-to" guide to Christian living. If you are looking for the *Top Ten Christian Things to Do at Work* or *The Ten-Minute Christian Worker* devotional, this book is probably not for you. Rather, Piper's approach is to provide deep, powerful insights into man's relationship with God and specifically, how that relationship may be developed and ultimately glorifying to

God. To reap the benefits of the author's experience and wisdom, readers should study the author's words and consider them prayerfully.

*Reviewed by Michael Pregitzer. Michael holds an MS in human resource management from Rutgers University and is currently a Support Services Manager with ADP. You can reach him at [pregitzer@worldnet.att.net](mailto:pregitzer@worldnet.att.net)*

### **Street-Smart Ethics: Succeeding in Business without Selling Your Soul**

by Clinton W. McLemore.  
(John Knox Press, 2003)



Few business ethics books seem to actually help business leaders understand how to use ethics effectively in business. But *Street-Smart Ethics* does, showing how leaders can develop an ethical sensibility and how they can deal with

daily and strategic decisions in a way that honors ethical commitments.

Clinton McLemore, formerly a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and now president of Relational Dynamics, an organizational development consulting firm, stresses that any workplace is filled with ethical challenges and conflicts. People are coerced into obeying laws, he notes, but ethical conduct generally is a voluntary position. Indeed, sometimes the voluntary interest in treating customers or clients with honesty and fairness conflicts with an opportunity to “make a killing,” thereby leading to a common dilemma for the business person.

But more often—and this is where McLemore's approach is most helpful—there are “complex dilemmas” which force a choice between the lesser of two evils (a well-known problem), and sometimes between two generally equal goods. What can a person, especially with a Christian commitment, do in these tangled situations? McLemore suggests two guidelines based on preserving

relationships: the moral duty or obligation of relationships, and the cost in monetary as well as relational terms. The ethical business person lives in a web of relationships, and the business person's approach should be to maximize grace and blessing in his or her choices.

The second part of his book is subtitled “Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times,” and draws upon the Book of Proverbs as an interpretive method for examining specific ethical dilemmas and their outcomes. Case studies and abundant examples help to illuminate the principles in action, and reflection questions after each of the fifty sections provide a quick and practical way to think through the application of Biblical truth.

*Reviewed by John R. Throop. Dr. Throop earned his D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary and he is currently is president of The Summit Planning Group in Peoria, Illinois. He also is an Episcopal priest. You can reach him at [throop@consultsummit.com](mailto:throop@consultsummit.com)*

## **WANT TO WRITE FOR *REGENT BUSINESS REVIEW*?**

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# GM's Hit-and-Run on Christian Employees Cannot Be Ignored

Want to start a group for Hispanic employees at General Motors? No problema, amigo. Just follow these few steps and you'll be recognized as an official "affinity group," a sanctioned network of GM employees. As such, you'll be able to use the company's facilities for meetings and social events, you'll be able to use official communication channels like our newsletters, and you'll be able to collectively advance your agenda within the company, whatever it may be.

Well, how 'bout a group for Asians? Or for women? Or for African-Americans? Or for people with disabilities? Same answer. Really? Even gays and lesbians? Yup. Just sign here. The beneficent gatekeepers in human resources will gladly assist you as part of their world-class diversity initiative

But for this initiative, the beneficence does not extend to religious employee groups. In fact, when John Moranski, a GM employee in Indianapolis, sought to establish the "GM Christian Employee Network" in December 2002, the HR department abruptly slammed the gate in his face. The April 2003 response from GM's omnipotent diversity czar – one that you probably haven't heard reported in the mainstream media – was that the company will not sanction groups that have a religious or political agenda. Their PR guy

elaborated on the rationale for those criteria: GM "does not recognize religious or political organizations as company-sponsored affinity groups because of the divisiveness inherent in trying to accommodate their widely disparate views" (Brian Akre, GM's Director of News

## If GM succeeds in putting the brakes on this Christian employee group, it gives license to other companies to do the same

Relations, as quoted by Cybercast News Service, [cnsnews.com](http://cnsnews.com)). Notwithstanding, the company recognizes GM PLUS, a gay affinity group whose stated mission is to "advocate benefit programs that recognize domestic partners and non-traditional families." No divisiveness or political agenda there, I guess.

Backed by the Christian Law Association in Florida, John persisted, exhausting internal channels to persuade GM that it is unfair to recognize some groups and not others based on the values held by those groups. To no avail, though. Now he's trying to convince them through more formal means that it's not only unfair,

it's also illegal. On June 20, 2003, John filed a complaint with the EEOC alleging that GM is discriminating against him and all Christians in the company. The case seems like a slam dunk, since Title VII of the Civil Rights Act mandates that companies can't deny rights and privileges of employment based on religious beliefs. Then again, one never knows what the left-leaning EEOC will do with such cases. After all, this is the agency that has spent taxpayer dollars to try to remove Bibles from office desks and pro-life pins from employee clothing.

John Moranski's case matters. And it matters a lot. Christian affinity groups, networks, and clubs have sprung up in a growing number of companies, including American Express, Intel, Coca-Cola, and Texas Instruments. They are an indispensable vehicle for Christian employees to gather, to pray, to encourage one another, and when necessary, to use their collective voice to effect change in the organization. If GM succeeds in putting the brakes on this Christian employee group, it gives license to other companies to do the same, which will, over time, deprive countless Christians of both workplace fellowship and a concerted voice in employment matters.

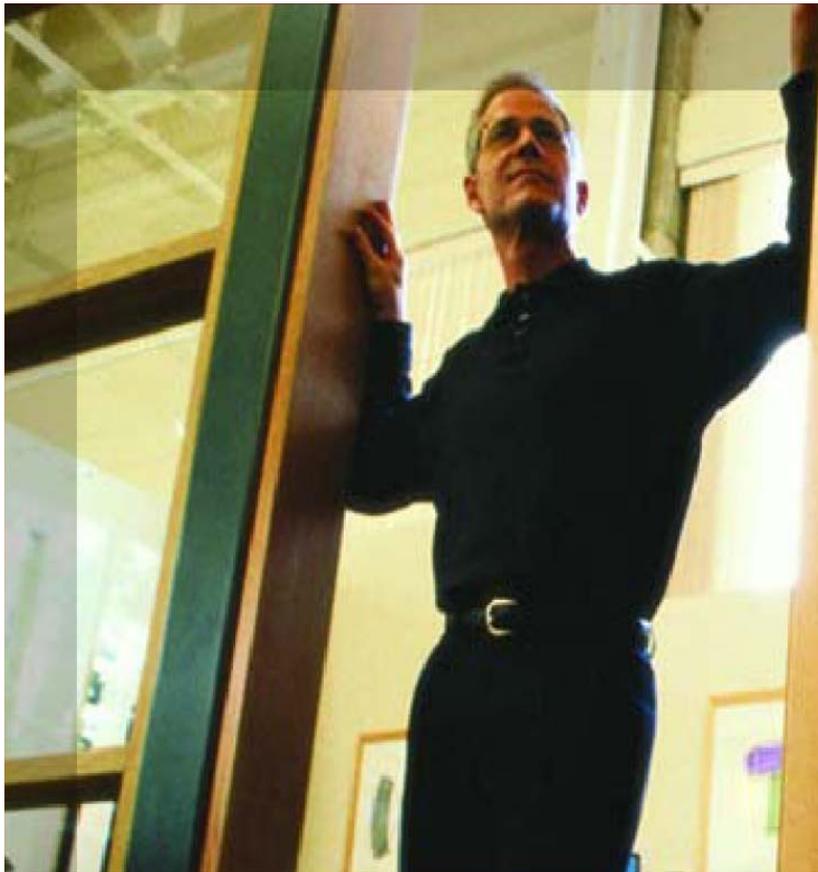
There are other reasons that this case matters, though.

Broader, more urgent reasons. What we are witnessing here at GM is nothing less than the opening of another front in the cultural war against sincerely held religious belief. With public schools, the government, most universities, Hollywood, and the media becoming increasingly inhospitable to orthodoxy, we simply cannot afford to lose the workplace as well. We Christians meet more spiritually-needy people in the secular workplace than we do anywhere else, so if GM triumphs here, we could eventually lose our best secular

venue to openly share the truth of the gospel. Additionally, and even more disconcertingly, a GM victory takes the United States another step down that dubious road toward the criminalization of evangelism. If you think that's an overstatement, just look at the French experience. Their 2001 "anti-sect law" is being interpreted to mean that evangelicals are cultists, and some evangelical churches are now on the official government list of suspicious sects. We in the U.S. must either fight our local battles, like GM, or risk losing our right to practice our

faith authentically, just as Christians in France are losing it. The choice is that simple and it's that consequential.

We at *RBR* are grateful that John Moranski has made the stalwart choice to press on here. We all should join together in prayer for him, for the Christian Law Association, and for the decision-makers at GM and the EEOC that this issue be resolved fairly, privately, and expediently. And absent that resolution, we should wholly support John's quest for legal recourse.



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# The Parable of the Janitor and the CEO

by Buck Jacobs

There once lived a janitor who worked for the same company for 40 years. He never rose above the position of janitor and never had anyone report to him. He never owned a home, never had an investment, never bought a new car. But he was a fine janitor. With the highest standards, he maintained all of the areas for which he was responsible. The brass shone, the windows glistened, the carpets were never dirty. He would occasionally be seen on his hands and knees, with a toothbrush, cleaning the corner where the floor meets the tile wall. And through it all, he always had a smile and a cheerful good word for his co-workers. After he retired, several folks remarked that they had never once heard him complain.

Over the 40 years, from time to time, he would be asked, "How come you work so hard? You don't really have to put in all that extra effort." He would answer, "You don't understand. I'm doing this work for Jesus and for Him it has got to be good. You see, He is my best friend. I love Him and owe Him my best because He gave His life for me."

Some of these people laughed and just passed on. But some said, "Jesus? Your friend? I don't know about that. How can Jesus be a friend? I don't know Him in that way."

The janitor would smile when this happened, and no one

could miss the love in his eyes when he answered, "Well, let me tell you about me and Jesus." He was never too busy to share how the love of his Lord had touched his life.

**Jesus said to the CEO,  
"Son, you labored long  
and hard, but unwisely.  
You have gained the  
good, but missed  
the best."**

In this same company there was another man who worked there for 40 years, starting his career at the same time as the janitor. He had attended a fine university and had done well, working hard and making good grades. He joined the company as a salesman right out of college and quickly became the top salesman in his department. In record time he was promoted, becoming the youngest sales manager, regional manager, vice president of sales, and ultimately, the youngest CEO the company ever had.

Under his leadership, the company grew and expanded, eventually becoming an international leader in its industry. The firm acquired other companies and under his shrewd and wise direction, these companies prospered as well.

Because of his obvious skills, gifts, and success, he was often asked to speak to organizations and groups. Even peer CEOs would visit and inquire how he had done so well. He always gave the same answer, "This is the greatest land in the world and the opportunities are limitless. America is the land of freedom to excel and I've worked very hard. What I have done, you can too if you believe you can and if you give your all."

He was also active in many civic organizations and government advisory panels. He was elected to the board of regents of his university and was a respected member of a fine church. He and his family could regularly be seen Sunday morning seated in the fourth row on the left side for the 11 a.m. service.

But Sunday had little to do with Monday. Sometime when he was young, his father had told him, "Son, two things you cannot mix with your business: politics and religion. They are like oil and water." It never occurred to him to question his father's advice, although deep in his heart he knew it just didn't seem right.

So he never gave it much thought. In fact, he was so busy that God was crowded out of much of his life. With the business, the cottage at the beach, the club memberships for golf and tennis (when he could find time), and trying to fit in family ski trips between

board meetings, his time – and his life – flew by. Widely revered by multitudes, he retired after a long and successful career.

It happened that both men died in the same day. And as the scripture promises (1 Cor. 3), each man in turn went to stand before Jesus to give an account of what he had done with his life.

The CEO went first, as usual, and stepped before the Lord. Jesus put His hand on his shoulder and said to him, “My son, you have done well with your life. I gave you intelligence and opportunity. You worked hard and you took advantage of all that I set before you. You accomplished much. But son, all that you built must remain behind. Your homes and cars, your company and clubs were good, but they are not a part of my kingdom. The university that you loved and served refused to honor me and it will burn up and be destroyed. Your money is not needed here. My son, you labored long and hard, but unwisely. You have gained the good, but missed the best.”

The janitor stood humbly nearby, fearful and in awe. If a CEO could receive no commendation from the Lord, what could a mere janitor expect? His eyes were cast down and tears covered his cheeks when Jesus put His hands on the janitor’s shoulders.

“Son, lift your eyes.” The janitor looked into the face of the Lord he loved. The smile on Jesus’ face caused a thrill to

leap through the janitor’s heart and in astonishment he heard Jesus say: “Turn around, son, and tell me what you see.”

With the Lord’s strong arm around his shoulders, the janitor turned. To his amazement, he saw crowds of jubilant people coming toward him. Their expressions reflected a pure love and joy that he had never seen.

He turned to Jesus and said, “Lord, I recognize only a few. Who are the others?”

Jesus said, “Those you recognize are the ones you told of my love. The others are those they told. They are here now to thank you. Enter into the joy prepared for you from the foundations of the world.”

Nearby, angels sang “Glory to God and to the Lamb” as the

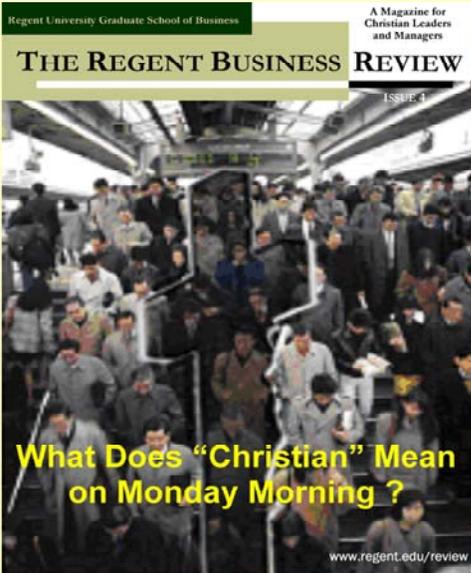
janitor was reunited with his friends and stepped into paradise.

You see, both men had opportunities, just as you and I do. One built a fortune here, the other, there. One fortune was temporary, the other, eternal. Both were the result of choices. Which fortune are you pursuing?

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*Buck Jacobs is the Founder and President of The C12 Group (www.thec12group.com), an organization that brings Christian business owners together to increase their business skills and show them how to use business as a platform for Christian ministry for Jesus.*

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