
Chapter 3

Defining Kingdom Business

Dan Carless is an American businessman with a passion to advance the kingdom of God. In his 33 years in business, this experienced real estate developer converted 30 condominium projects, primarily high-end properties in San Diego and Hawaii. Dan's company purchased existing apartment complexes, commissioned attractive upgrades and renovations to the units, and sold each one individually as a condominium. The business was a success. But was there a way to channel his business skills to advance the ministry of the Church? What if he could establish projects whose profits would finance Christian ministries? The wheels started to turn.

Dan turned his Kingdom focus on Colorado Springs, a city of 500,000 in which the housing authority reported that 30,000 frustrated tenants were unable to enter the market as homeowners. The plan was to bless that city's working poor physically, economically and spiritually. That was the example of Jesus' ministry. But rather than establish a ministry that relied on continual charitable donations, Dan sought to create a model that would yield recurring revenue and therefore require no outside gifts. Even better, it would be profitable, and investors would be encouraged to use part of their gains to promote other Kingdom efforts.

Having grown up in inner city Detroit as the son of a minister, Dan was familiar with the plight of the working poor. With little or no savings, the working poor of Colorado Springs would rather own than rent if they could get in with no money down and a monthly mortgage payment roughly equal to their current rent. Unfortunately, those favorable opportunities didn't exist—at least not until Dan put his business skills to use to provide a Kingdom business solution. He purchased a 111-unit complex with plans to upgrade and sell each unit at below-market entry points and formed alliances

with select lenders that had programs with liberal underwriting policies designed for the working poor.

One unit was set aside for a couple to act as community advocates/pastors, called “life coaches,” who would be commissioned to pastor the 110 resident families. The plan called for each resident to attend several classes taught by the community life coaches before he or she received approximately \$3,500 in assistance for closing costs, funds that enabled a no-money-down purchase. The instruction would be of particular help to the working poor: personal finance and family budgeting, proper home care, good neighboring, and living with a long-term perspective. Following the project’s completion, the life coaches would live in the community, guiding residents through life issues in a life-giving manner. The life coaches would also play a central role in the homeowners’ association, combining an opportunity to plant a church and minister to people.

In order to fund his Kingdom-focused venture, Dan sought investors who shared his vision. After 14 months, the estimated profit to investors would be 25 percent, and investors were invited to donate some portion of the proceeds to the ministry of their choice. For example, a Kingdom-focused investor might decide to give anything above the return he or she might have expected from a stock or money market mutual fund. In this way, the business venture would bless not only those receiving affordable housing but also others around the world.

Investors, the developer, the realtor, the renovator and the property manager would all be committed Christians, meeting a real need in the community. The church would demonstrate that it cares for the physical, economic and spiritual needs of the city, becoming a true friend of the city and its government. Dan Carless is using his business expertise and experience to further the kingdom of God.¹

Expressions of Kingdom Business

Dan’s business venture certainly has a number of noble objectives. But is it a Kingdom business? What do we mean by that term?

Kingdom business has several objectives, and a thorough discussion of it covers many facets. Yes, it is about missions, successful business practices, the integration of work and faith, economic development, spreading the gospel, transforming nations and

transforming lives. Yet Kingdom business is not characterized by any of these alone. Like Dan Carless's development venture, it combines all of these factors in a refreshingly integrated missions movement.

A while ago, I talked to a person at a Christian organization about the organization's mission. He explained that they are engaged in work with the poor. The organization equips Christian business people to help the poor and each other through partnerships. I described some of the work in which I am involved, using overseas for-profit companies to advance the gospel. So few of the terms we used were aligned that we seemed to be talking past each other. It took us almost an hour to realize we were essentially speaking about the same thing.

There is an ancient parable thought to have originated in China in which three blind men are asked to describe an elephant. One man, grasping the trunk, says, "An elephant is like a large snake." Another, holding the tail, claims the elephant is more like a rope. The third man, his arms wrapped around a leg, observes, "An elephant is like a tree." Like that elephant, multi-faceted Kingdom business presents a diversity of appearances. Kingdom business is conducted with businesses of many sizes, from one-person enterprises to large corporations. It is pursued in roles inside and outside companies, from business manager to financial investor. It is happening in locations all over the world, from Ecuador to China.

In exploring how other believers have been called to use business to preach the gospel in word and in deed, I discovered that those engaged in business as missions are conducting their work in a wide array of capacities. Interacting with employees, negotiating with suppliers, advising entrepreneurs, creating useful products, and building local wealth are all vehicles for advancing the kingdom of God. A definition of Kingdom business must encompass the following ways in which God is using His people in the worldwide missions effort.

- *Founder or manager of a Kingdom business.* Those with entrepreneurial or managerial skills are building and leading successful businesses in developing nations. They provide employment, training, income and the gospel of Jesus to many. For example, Clem Schultz is one of many American businessmen who started a number of successful manufacturing companies in East Asia that have Kingdom objectives.

His factories follow both a business plan concerned with economic results and a “Great Commission plan” concerned with spiritual impact goals.²

- *Lender to the poor.* Christians are extending microloans to those considered unbankable. They are also providing business and spiritual instruction to loan recipients who typically establish simple cottage industry ventures. Barclays Bank was started by devout Quakers in 1690 with a focus on the banking needs of the poor, a segment no other bank would serve. Today, Christian organizations like Opportunity International and World Vision are assisting the poor through loans and business training.
- *Mentor and financier of Kingdom businesses.* Christian business professionals are providing the necessary funding, advising and mentoring to local Christians who are establishing or operating businesses in the developing world. Staffed largely by business professionals, Integra Ventures, for example, assists those running Kingdom businesses by providing the funding, consulting and discipling they need to succeed as part of the financing package.
- *Trainer in Kingdom business.* Some are training local managers in the basic skills and principles of business. These training courses typically include instruction in biblical values and principles that lead to successful business. For example, SERVUS, a Swiss organization led by Christians, offers biblical business training courses to managers in developing nations.
- *Short-term consultant to Kingdom businesses.* Christian professionals are engaging in short-term missions work that seek to bless business owners in developing nations. In connecting with specific Kingdom businesses on short-term trips, these Western business people are consulting with Christian managers on business strategies, managerial issues and spiritual matters. Led by Brett Johnson, Equip has been taking young Silicon Valley professionals on short-term Kingdom business missions trips. Their objective is to help South African

businessmen and women re-purpose their companies as Kingdom businesses.

- *Expert advisor to Kingdom businesses.* Western Christians with relevant business experience are using their knowledge, expertise and contact network to assist Kingdom businesses in the developing world. Though they often reside on different continents and may even be retired from their careers, they are able to provide valuable help by lending their experience and by opening doors in the Western world. The Business Professional Network, led by John Warton in the United States, is an excellent example of an organization that connects experienced Western business people with Third World ventures.
- *Sales partner to Kingdom businesses.* Kingdom business professionals and organizations located in the First World are seeking to promote Kingdom business companies in developing nations. By marketing products or establishing sales channel partnerships, those in the West provide valuable assistance to Kingdom businesses. For example, a Christian wholesale distributor in the United States has become a sales partner of a company in China, adding a line of products the Kingdom business in China manufactures to the items he distributes. The Kingdom business organization EC Institute (Michigan) also assists Kingdom-focused companies overseas by connecting them with Western buyers for their products.
- *One-off support for Kingdom businesses.* Some Christians employed in the Western business world are in a position to open doors for Kingdom businesses. Simply acting in the interest of their own organizations, they can introduce the products or services of Kingdom business ventures. A Kingdom-focused friend at a major U.S. credit card company opened the doors for ET to present its call center services. This simple act made possible a business relationship that could potentially double the number of Indians employed at ET.
- *Investor in Kingdom businesses.* God has blessed some people with the financial resources to be major investors in Kingdom businesses around the world. These people are promoting Kingdom business by providing

capital to companies led by expatriates or by local Christians. For example, Evangelistic Commerce, led by Thomas Sudyk, has invested in the creation of several Kingdom businesses in the developing world.

- *Manager of Kingdom business funds.* Though this role is still emerging, Kingdom business professionals can also act as private equity fund managers. Working within existing laws governing the establishment and management of investment funds, they can serve entrepreneurs, managers and investors by assisting and funding Kingdom businesses. For example, the Business Professional Network U.S. has started a small exploratory fund to invest in promising Kingdom business ventures.

Various individuals and organizations are actively involved in Kingdom business, yet in many ways, the terms commonly used to speak about and describe Kingdom business have yet to be codified. To date, the practice of Kingdom business has outpaced efforts to define or study it in a systematic manner. We need to define the language and structure so that professionals can communicate clearly. The most foundational of these terms is “Kingdom business” itself.

Simply Stated . . .

Kingdom business is for-profit business ventures designed to facilitate God’s transformation of people and nations. Business becomes a missions tool for ministering to those with real needs, both economic and spiritual. Addressing both needs is important for either to succeed. Though the practice of Kingdom business takes on many forms, what unites these efforts is a commitment to sustainable transformation, captured by a three-fold objective: (1) profitability and sustainability, (2) local job and wealth creation and (3) advancement of the local church (the three-fold objective of Kingdom business is discussed in chapter 8). Kingdom business pursues each of these simultaneously.

Specifically, this book deals with Kingdom business in the missions field of the developing world. The term “Kingdom business” can and does apply to the many worthy efforts, like that of Dan Carless, to effect change in the developed First World, though they are not the subject of this book. For example, those Christians working with the poor in the inner city to build businesses and see spiritual and economic

transformation are pursuing Kingdom business objectives. Although many ideas in this book may apply to their much-needed and laudable efforts, our discussion of Kingdom business is focused on missions to developing nations and will not deal directly with attempts to reform Western pockets of poverty.

Kingdom Business Professionals

Kingdom business professionals are authentic, skilled business people who use their talents to further the worldwide mission of the Church through Kingdom business. They are called and equipped to use their spiritual gifts in a business context. Kingdom business professionals have hearts and minds both for growing businesses and for growing the Church. Rather than perceiving their work in business as a distraction from their ministry, Kingdom business professionals recognize it as the important vehicle through which they bring the gospel by word and by deed. Kingdom business professionals are so committed to meeting spiritual, economic and social needs in the driest places that they are willing to live and work in these locations.³

Kingdom business professionals see their mission as multi-fold: They seek to influence employees, partners, suppliers, customers and the local community for Christ. They use business itself to demonstrate biblical business principles and set values. They serve others through quality products and helpful services. They seek to provide a venue for people to use their gifts and earn a living. They desire to create a culture of light in and around the businesses that they develop through good, biblically based business principles and the love of Jesus Christ.

Kingdom Businesses

Kingdom businesses are for-profit commercial enterprises in the mission field of the developing world through which Christian business professionals are seeking to meet spiritual, social and economic needs. Kingdom businesses come in many sizes and shapes. However, we can point to some features that commonly characterize them.

As I noted in chapter 1, businesses are not Christian. People can be Christian; businesses cannot. Thus, the discussion centers around the characteristics of Christians

in business, not about the characteristics of Christian businesses. It's a subtle yet important distinction. People can have right standing and communion with God, businesses cannot. People can be indwelt by the Spirit of God, businesses cannot. People can become sons and daughters of God, businesses cannot. Confusion about this can lead to questionable business decisions. Some people might seek to establish a Christian company by only hiring Christians. But how are they going to be salt and light in the workplace if they are surrounded only by fellow Christians?

Jesus taught that the nature of a tree is observed by the fruit it bears. The follower of Jesus who has the Spirit of God as his or her guiding force will exhibit good fruit—sanctification is the primary sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Scripture explicitly lists what characterizes that fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Gal. 5:22-23). So what does the fruit of Kingdom business look like? R. Paul Stevens, scholar and author on the topic of faith in the marketplace, notes 10 characteristics of companies that are led by followers of Jesus whose goal is to advance the kingdom of God.⁴

1. *The presence of a Christian or Christians with a sphere of influence.* This does not necessarily mean that the Chief Executive Officer or the majority owner of the business must be a Christian. I am a board member of and minority investor in ET, an Indian company with few Christians in senior management but with a decidedly Christian influence. At Inmac, my partner was not a follower of Jesus, though we agreed that we would run the company on Christian business principles. The important characteristic is that Christians affect the policies and direction of the business.
2. *A product or service in harmony with God's creational purpose.* "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'" (Gen. 1:26). God's command to fill the earth and rule over His creation includes development of the world. To be sure, there are business activities and realms, such as pornography and illegal drugs, which do not fulfill this mandate. But most commercial activities, from

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- producing medical equipment to dry cleaning to selling groceries to farming, are helpful to society.
3. *A mission or business purpose that is larger and deeper than mere financial profit (though including it) so that the business contributes in some way to the kingdom of God.* For more than 25 years, my personal life goal has been to be a witness to employees and the business community and to fund Christian work around the world. I have moved from entrepreneurship to venture capital to philanthropy, yet my personal mission statement has not changed.
 4. *The product and service is offered with such excellence that it suggests the presence of the Kingdom and invites the opportunity to witness.* Though not situated in the developing world, Buck Knives is a prime example of this characteristic of Kingdom business. Located in Southern California, the company has been a manufacturer of high-quality pocket knives for more than 100 years. The company is renowned for the excellence of its products. In the warranty note to customers who purchase his knives, chairman Chuck Buck states, "From the beginning, management determined to make God the Senior Partner. . . . Each knife must reflect the integrity of management, including our Senior Partner."⁵ Buck's outstanding products allow the company to point to Jesus, whose life and teachings motivate this excellent service.
 5. *Customers are treated with dignity and respect and not just as a means of profit.* Outstanding service means that the customer is to be loved and respected as a person created in the image of God and that business transactions should be fair. "Welcome aboard," Buck tells its customers, "You are now part of a very large family. Although we're talking about a few million people, we still like to think of each one of our users as a member of the Buck Knives Family."⁶ We are to treat others with love and respect. If business is our ministry, genuine service to the customer is part of following God.
 6. *Employees and workers are equipped to achieve greater potential in their life and, if they are Christians, to work wholeheartedly with faith, hope and love.*

God has gifted individuals with talents and abilities. A primary concern toward employees should be the deployment of those gifts in meaningful ways that allow them to glorify God through their work. Those who are followers of Jesus should be fully committed to excellence in their work rather than neglecting their duties in favor of ministry. At Inmac, I saw my job in part as guiding the company and preparing people for larger roles in the company.

7. *All aspects of the business are considered to be potentially a ministry and the subject of prayer.* Kingdom business professionals think of their work in the marketplace as ministry, and guidance through prayer is an important aspect of surrendering the business to God. “The fantastic growth of Buck Knives, Inc. was no accident,” Chuck Buck tells his customers. “In a crisis, the problem was turned over to Him, and He hasn’t failed to help us with the answer.”⁷ Likewise, you will find recounted in these pages a number of instances in which God clearly answered prayers regarding aspects of my own work in business.
8. *The culture (values, symbols, governing beliefs) of the organization line up with God’s word and Kingdom purposes.* There is a renewed recognition in business education that a company’s culture is a key to its success. By explicitly promoting and adhering to biblical principles, such as integrity, service, justice, respect and trust, Kingdom business professionals can infuse both their companies and the local business community with values that bring honor to God. His Kingdom is advanced as individuals and their business practices honor God’s teaching.
9. *The business runs on grace.* The business world is full of inequalities. Organizational position, economic position and social position all result in the potential for power to be exerted with respect to others. God invites us to operate on grace, for He extends grace when we fail. “If sometimes we fail on our end, because we are human,” says Buck’s message, “we find it imperative to do our utmost to make it right.”⁸ Likewise, we told Inmac employees to admit it if they made a mistake—we would support them. We extended grace to our

customers by giving our customer service people the power to fix any problem on the spot, whether it was caused by our error or by the customer's. The customer service people were guided by one simple principle: If you had this problem, what would you like the company to do for you to fix it? There will be mistakes and failures, but Kingdom business professionals should operate within a spirit of grace.

10. *The leaders are servants, dedicated to serve the mission of the business, the best interests of the employees, the customers and the shareholders because they are first of all servants of God.* Servant leadership has recently become a concept embraced by some academics, but its origins are not at all modern. Jesus taught that status and heroism are not required for leadership. In fact, He taught that to be a leader, one must be a servant. Rather than seek honor and position, servant leaders are committed to the common mission, and they empower their team members to excel. As a servant of God, I sought to serve others at Inmac. The letter I mentioned in chapter 1 that was displayed in the Inmac's lobby made it very clear that employees, customers and partners could expect to be treated with respect, fairness and integrity because I was a follower of Jesus.

Counterfeit Kingdom Businesses

Kingdom business is a powerful vehicle for meeting spiritual, social and economic needs, but this does not sit well with those forces opposed to God. The enemy has a way of taking what is good and offering counterfeits that do harm to Christians and the gospel. In fact, if God is using something to His glory, you can almost be sure this is happening.

Thus, it may come as no surprise that we can already witness the enemy usurping Kingdom business. In November 2003, United States FBI and Internal Revenue Service agents arrested a former missionary to the Philippines, several members of his family, and a minister. They were charged with operating a Ponzi scheme that bilked Christian ministries of \$160 million. Under the name International Product Investment Corporation (IPIC), money was collected from Christians and

ministries with promises of 25 to 50 percent returns in three to six months. IPIC ostensibly imported products manufactured in developing nations, primarily in Panama, and sold them through well-known U.S. retail chains such as Costco, J.C. Penney and Pier 1 Imports. In fact, a suspicious ministry executive who performed due diligence and visited Panama claimed to have found a small mom and pop operation that was entirely unable to sustain the level of sales claimed by IPIC executives. The United States Securities and Exchange Commission found that IPIC had no legitimate operations; dollars contributed by new investors were paid out to earlier investors. In addition, federal investigators claimed that those who ran the scheme bought houses, a helicopter, and a yacht with investors' funds.⁹

I note this story to provide two words of caution: The first is illustrated by Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. While there are several interpretations of the parable, many believe it speaks of Satan's tendency to latch onto and exploit significant movements of God. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches" (Matt. 13:31-32). Earlier in the chapter, Jesus told the parable of the sower in which birds representing Satan eat some of the seed sown by the farmer representing Christ. Now the birds are nesting in the tree God has grown from the smallest of seeds. Unfortunately, when the Kingdom grows like that, the birds will come.

The second word of caution is that Christians cannot turn a blind eye toward bad business cases simply because there is a ministry aspect to the venture. We cannot justify support for poor—or illegal—business plans and inexperienced personnel under the guise of some ministry benefit. It is vital to work with knowledgeable professionals who operate within the law. A number of individuals and organizations that fit this profile are mentioned in this book.

Barriers to Kingdom Business in the Church

Many Christians hold views that represent significant barriers to the idea of Kingdom business being a viable missions tool. One barrier, as already mentioned, is the notion that only pastors or full-time Christian workers are engaged in God's work. I fell for

that misconception myself. As I discussed in chapter 1, it took me a while to discover that the passions and talents God had given me were best used in the business world, and that is where He wanted me to serve Him. It also became clear to me that the most spiritual calling for each individual is that to which God calls and equips him or her. There is no highest calling, not even that of working in the ministry. My ministry was to serve people and bring them the gospel through business.

Because this notion is so widespread, it must be addressed for Kingdom business to be embraced as a laudable mission of the Church. Additionally, I have found that sincere Christians sometimes hold several other misconceptions that are barriers to Kingdom business. What follows are brief observations about transformation, work, business, profit and wealth. (A more detailed discussion of these concepts is found in appendix A.)

Transformation

Various segments of the Church today emphasize different aspects of transformation. Some Christians focus exclusively on spiritual transformation, demonstrating great evangelistic zeal but showing little compassion for the economically needy or socially outcast. Others emphasize social and economic transformation by fostering harmony and unity and curing social and physical ills. The ministry of Jesus demonstrates that God cares about transforming people's spiritual, social and economic conditions. He fed the hungry, called people to personal holiness, healed the sick, taught in the synagogue, preached to thousands, and affirmed the social outcasts. His was a comprehensive ministry, not one limited to a single realm. Likewise, Kingdom business is committed to transforming nations and advancing the kingdom of God through a comprehensive ministry. It addresses spiritual, economic and social ills that plague many people in developing nations.

Work

The hierarchy found in much of the Church today, in which vocational Christian professionals are thought to be following a higher calling than those in secular work, is not supported by Scripture. Christians need to adopt a paradigm that views work itself as ministry and God's holy call on their lives, whether or not they are employed by the

Church. All believers, with a multitude of God-given gifts, are called to ministry (or service) and can be said to be in full-time Christian work. Work is inherently good and mandated by God. It is ministry, be it in a business, in a school, in a home or in a church.

Business

Christians are gifted for and called to vocations of every type, including those vocations in the business world. Though media and entertainment portrayals of business people might lead us to conclude that there is nothing redeeming in their profession, business can be a very noble pursuit. Successful commerce is about serving one's fellow man and increasing his standard of living. It is about discovering people's needs and meeting them. Business brings glory to God when it blesses man through the creation of needed products, the delivery of outstanding services, and the increase of society's living standard.

Profit

The wide-standing perception is that business is primarily about maximizing profits. However, the true purpose of business is to provide a vehicle for serving others through efficient delivery of useful goods and services. When this objective is pursued, there will be an opportunity for profit. Profit is like oxygen—it allows a company to grow and continue to serve others effectively. Another prevailing notion is that nonprofit organizations are inherently nobler than for-profit organizations. But there is no direct correlation between lack of profit and benefit to society. In fact, the greater the product or service's benefit to the recipient, the greater the potential for profit. We cannot consider business ignoble or unspiritual because it is profitable.

Wealth

Some Christians consider poverty and austerity to be more spiritual than wealth. Others believe health and financial blessing will necessarily follow from sincere faith. Both the "poverty gospel" and the "health and wealth gospel" fall short of the rich biblical teaching about prosperity. Wealth (material, physical and spiritual) is given by God,

and He expects us to manage it for His purpose. He also wants us to enjoy it. To be sure, both poverty and wealth pose potential pitfalls. But poverty is a disease, and a large segment of the world suffers from the cycle of despair that accompanies it. On the other hand, economic improvement brings with it a cycle of success that propels a nation to aggregate increases in wealth, self-esteem, health and the development and use of gifts.

Such attitudes in the Church, some prevalent and some less widespread, create real barriers to the acceptance and growth of Kingdom business as an effective missions movement. Those who devalue economic or spiritual results, consider work in the marketplace as second rate, see business as ignoble, view profit as dirty, or consider wealth as the enemy may have difficulty accepting Kingdom business as a laudable part of the missions movement. Kingdom business rests on notions that God cares about people's spiritual, social and economic transformation, that work in the business world is both a ministry and a calling, that profit is both necessary and a sign of useful service, and that poverty is a social disease to be addressed.

Relating Business to Missions

It is important that Christians, especially those in business, have a framework for connecting business and missions. There are three ways of relating business to missions: business *for* missions, business *and* missions, and business *as* missions.¹⁰

Business *for* Missions

Those who hold the notion that business should serve solely as a source of assistance to missionaries and evangelistic efforts view missionaries and vocational ministry professionals to be uniquely qualified to reach the world, and they believe the role of business is to support them. There are several variations on this notion of business *for* missions.

Support functions for missions. Some Christians see the role of business people in missions as providers of the professional and technical expertise needed for worldwide evangelism. For example, Christian computer consultants and publishing companies can assist missions agencies and missionaries in their work of spreading the gospel.

While these are indeed important functions often best filled by business professionals, a definition of Kingdom business that limits its role to professional support for missions agencies falls short of the concept presented here.

Front for missions. Some missionaries view a business as a helpful cover that provides much-needed visas. The business is a vehicle for gaining entry and maintaining residence, and the title of “businessperson” can be helpful in certain circumstances. Of course, the business is a distant second in the priority of the missionary. Lack of expertise, training and interest in business matters almost guarantees the business’s economic failure, but somehow the missionary manages to stay “in business” for years. This is certainly not the idea behind Kingdom business.

Kingdom business professional Clem Schultz has been founding and operating companies in East Asia for a number of years, and he is often approached by those who wish to use his businesses as a cover for their evangelism work in a region. Clem stipulates that those missionaries work no less than 20 hours per week in the business, and that they be competent, trained and fully committed to their jobs in his companies. He even mandates that there be no witnessing with fellow employees on the job, stipulating that it can be done after hours and that the believer must demonstrate a proper work ethic during the working hours he or she has committed to the company. The Kingdom business is a vehicle for missions, but it is not to be used as a front for missionaries who have no interest in working there.

Funding source for missions. Some Christians, not perceiving the intersection between work in the marketplace and work in missions, see the redeeming value of business in its ability to provide funding for missions work. Business is not really virtuous work, the thought goes, but money earned through business can be used to support spiritual work.

This, too, falls short of the full definition of Kingdom business. Whether in Canada or in Croatia, business continues to be an important source of funding for the local church. But to limit business to this role in the missions effort of the church is shortsighted. Business must not be relegated to the sidelines, because it is where everyday people are encountered and transformed.

Business and Missions

Others admit that there is a legitimate missions role for the businessperson himself in the world. The mission field is not just for church-funded missionaries. Especially in regions that are difficult for traditional missionaries to access, why not have Christians relocate there through employment? Their work in business grants them both the funding and the legal status to remain in the country, and they can do ministry outside of work hours. They can fulfill both purposes: They can engage in business *and* missions.

This concept, which has been termed “tentmaking,” should not be confused with the practice of Kingdom business described here. Tentmakers International Exchange defines this business and missions idea as follows: “Tentmakers are Christian witnesses from any nation who, using their vocational skills or experience, gain access and maintain themselves in another culture with the primary intention of making disciples for Christ Jesus and, where possible, establishing and strengthening churches.”¹¹ Instead of the three-fold objective of Kingdom business (profitability and sustainability, local job and wealth creation, and advancement of the local church), the goal of tentmakers is typically limited to spiritual results. Tentmakers are usually job takers, and the job is the means for gaining access to the country for evangelism purposes. The primary intention is making disciples for Christ Jesus. While Kingdom business professionals likewise seek to develop followers of Jesus, their mandate includes raising the standard of living and creating a better life for all by providing employment, financial resources, goods and services.

Tentmakers often find it difficult to deal with the tension between their secular employment and their real purpose, missions work. Operating in a framework that ascribes little eternal value to their jobs, tentmakers often view their nine-to-five work as a hindrance to ministry. It is the entrance fee that must be paid for access to the mission field. By contrast, Kingdom business professionals don’t consider their work as a hindrance to ministry—it *is* their ministry.

Tentmaking has achieved some level of popularity in recent decades, especially in countries less open to traditional missionaries. This approach has yielded some positive results, but there have also been failures along the way. Tentmakers have a critical role to play in the furtherance of the gospel worldwide, but the idea of Kingdom business goes beyond taking a corporate job to gain access to a foreign country for

ministry purposes. Kingdom business does not consider commerce and ministry as separate spheres of operation.

Business as Missions

The concept of Kingdom business sees business *as* missions. It considers business activity itself the missions work. Kingdom businesses are for-profit businesses that meet spiritual, social and economic needs. Kingdom business professionals work with real-world problems with which they can demonstrate the gospel in action. Perhaps most importantly, Kingdom businesses provide a powerful platform of respect for the furtherance of the gospel both within the enterprise and outside of it.

Individuals engaged in Kingdom business see their role as job-makers who provide work opportunities for those who are desperately lacking them (frequently, these are local believers). Their companies produce valuable goods and services. They create long-term value for all stakeholders: employees, partners, customers, investors and community members. And they effectively further the gospel in the local community in which they operate at no cost to the local or worldwide church. They are missions vehicles for sustainable transformation.

Conclusion

Kingdom business is for-profit business ventures designed to facilitate God's transformation of people and nations. The objective of Kingdom business in the developing world is to foster sustainable companies that both further the mission of the local church and provide jobs and financial resources. By leading, shaping, advising, funding and growing businesses, Kingdom business professionals are able to guide the culture, vision, hiring, compensation and business practices of organizations—all of which are important components of ministry to the nations. Though perhaps lacking formal training in theology or preaching, Kingdom business professionals are ideally suited to teach the gospel by word and by deed. By speaking truth and living out their faith in the workplace, they are able to lead many to Christ. They seek to bless the nations through business. They consider their work in business as ministry, not as a support or access vehicle for ministry. Kingdom business *is* missions.

The power of business to transform nations is illustrated by the following statement from former Chinese president Jiang Zemin: "I would make Christianity the official religion of China."¹² Why would the communist leader of the world's most populous country make such a statement? Is he convinced by apologetic arguments that Christianity is the truth? No, I'm afraid his astonishing statement does not flow from personal faith or theological analysis. But Jiang Zemin has noticed something about Christianity that makes it highly attractive to him. We will explore that next.