



IMPULSE 1

BUSINESS FINANCE

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A discussion series on what the Bible has to say about navigating business finance – God’s way!

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IMPULSE 1

Driven by relationships! That is the motivating force behind everything that EUROPARTNERS is involved with.

Impulse wants to help initiate discussion amongst business leaders about enjoying the relationships within and around the business. These short studies are designed to be a stimulus for reflection on how decisions are made in doing business, with a focus on relationships.

These Impulse studies are about making financial decisions. Business disciplines such as accounting, bookkeeping, financial planning, budgeting, forecasting are based on figures, but they represent a collection of decisions on the priorities of tasks and roles and have a major influence on relationships between people within and around a business.

Financial management is essentially a relational activity. Our task as managers actually involves a series of connections with colleagues, employees, consultants, suppliers and clients, with whom we work together negotiating, motivating, reporting, educating and coaching.

We want to look at the managing of finances in a business from a relational perspective. We will discuss the way in which financial decisions influence relationships and what effect they have on the health of the company. We will look at financial decisions through relational glasses which have two lenses. One lens is focused on God and the other on those around us.

Neither money, profit nor revenue is the goal of a Christian business. The goal must be to honour God, to give him the place that is his due both in our own personal lives and in our relationships. His priorities are about restoring relationships and developing them, so that God and his people can enjoy the best of each other! Financial management is a spiritual discipline for the Christian. It has been said that there are no financial problems, only spiritual problems, that are revealed in monetary terms and that financial problems can never be solved with money!

The goal of this series of Impulses is to get the Christian businessman to think about his role in the management of money within the business and to look at

it through relational and spiritual glasses. This series will not offer ready-made solutions, but hopefully will inspire the readers to discuss their dilemmas with fellow entrepreneurs, so that they can develop their own leadership style in a way that will honour God and best serve the people within and around the business.

“Relational thinking” stands right alongside “rational thinking”. We will look at business decisions in the light of their effect on relationships, but also on the continuity of the business in making choices as a good steward.

The financial health of a business is dependent on relationships. Sales growth is based on good relationships with clients and a good name in the market; productivity has everything to do with well-trained, motivated employees. You can work out a remuneration policy on a spreadsheet, but the figures don't mean anything if they aren't experienced as fair and motivating by the people involved. A high income, with an attractive system of benefits doesn't mean anything if the manager breaks under the stress and his family suffers as a result.

In this series of relational financial management, we will be looking at the decisions that two directors of a trading company have to make. Eric and Simon run E.S. Supplies Ltd. They have just become Christians, and hold a management meeting every Monday to discuss their business problems. They are of course curious to discover how their new faith should influence their leadership of the company! Use these notes to discuss with fellow business leaders and discover how God would want to lead you in managing the finances of your business!

A friend of theirs who is also a Christian businessman has said to them that the name of their company shouldn't be E.S. (Eric & Simon) Supplies any more, but E.S. (El Shaddai) Supplies! From now on, they are in the service of the Almighty! Eric and Simon want to know what this involves!

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1 FINANCIAL FREEDOM FOR THE BUSINESS!

CASE STUDY

“You know Simon; we’ve just become slaves to the bank! I feel like I’ve been squeezed into a strait jacket and can’t get out. The only thing I think about is that bank balance. The suppliers call every 5 minutes, I’m really worried that we haven’t enough in the account to pay the salaries this month, and I had a very difficult phone call from the bank manager on Friday. He was threatening to pull the plug and cancel our credit line soon!”

“Me too, Eric, I don’t exactly feel free to be creative and go in search of new clients. The idea that we might have to let go of our people is crippling. How can we keep up with our orders with even fewer personnel? We’re Christians now! Surely we should be able to turn to God for answers, shouldn’t we? How can he set us free to get on with being entrepreneurs without all these financial worries?”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As a Christian, I’ve been bought with the best that God could pay – his Son. So, my business, with all its benefits and its burdens, now belongs to God. God has entrusted me with his business and from now on, I am His manager. God has called me to be free in order that I can focus on His objectives. Financial freedom for my business comes first of all through being prepared to follow his leading, being dependent on him and independent from my creditors. I want to make it a priority to improve the solvency of the business so that I am not dependent on creditors.



DISCUSSION

1. God has a unique role as the owner of the business – what does this mean?
2. Have you consciously given your business over to the Lord as the new owner? Your balance sheet will tell you what that means in financial terms. So God is now the owner of your assets and your liabilities. You have now become his financial director! What is the main task of a financial director?
3. If you look at your balance sheet, what do you think God would like to improve first?
4. The solvency of a business gives an insight into how well your business fulfil its liquidity and all its obligations. Why is this so important to our freedom to do business?
5. What are the most important indicators of healthy, solvent business?

After the discussion, have a look at what God says about financial freedom for a business ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. God is the Owner

“You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.”

(1 Cor 6:20) This means:

a. He leads me, even through difficulties.

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20)

b. He foresees what I may need.

“Fear the Lord, you his holy people, or those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the lord lack no good thing.” (Psalm 34:9-10)

c. He gives out tasks in proportion to my own ability.

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey ...” (Matt 25:14,15)

2. I am his manager

God has ... “made them [you] rulers over the works of your hands;

You put everything under their feet.” (Psalm 8:6)

Therefore, I must be trustworthy with money. “So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:11)



APPLICATION

1. Put together a balance sheet of the business, sign it, date it and give your company to the Lord!
2. With your accountant, make a plan to improve the solvency of the company and to regularly check on it, in order to stay free of your creditors.
3. Can I invest in restoring/developing relationships at work, within the family etc.?
4. Can I fully and on time meet all my responsibilities to personnel and creditors?
5. Is my company, also financially, a visible witness to the goodness of God?
6. In the weekly management meeting, ask God for his guidance, his provision and his commissions! See if you've been faithful in your stewardship of God's money over the last week!



SUMMARY

If you don't own anything, you can't lose anything either! Freedom begins through giving yourself fully over to God with everything that you have and with all your worries and problems. He wants to play an active role in his company and doesn't want to be dependent on creditors. He wants to help His director to serve everyone around the business with all his heart! Stewardship brings its own responsibilities and freedoms. God won't direct everything and will give room for these responsibilities. The way in which we lead our company says a lot about our heart. It is our heart which God longs for.

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 2

What are the objectives of the new owner?
 What financial consequences does this bring with it?



2

GOD'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE BUSINESS

CASE STUDY

"A weight has fallen from my shoulders, Eric! Realising that God has also taken over the liabilities and debts of the business is such a relief. I know for sure that he will guide us in making E.S. Supplies financially healthy! Our first prayer point should be to follow his way in this."

"Simon, when I read the Bible, it seems to me that we are in for a real challenge. Finding God's ways will not be easy. I wonder what his purpose for the business is. How does he see the business and what are his priorities? As His managers, we need to find out what the new owner expects from us! In any case, I know that he doesn't want to be in debt to anyone – and that relationships are crucial. I also read that we are made 'to honour him', but what does that mean in practice?"



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A new owner comes with new plans and new expectations. His expectations are made clear in the great commandment – to love God "with all that you have" and to love your neighbour as you love yourself. The business is there to serve him by raising his honour high in the market. So maintaining healthy relationships comes first; between God and the people, and between all the people who come into contact with the business. Six functions are at the heart of this; making a profit, providing a product or service, providing income, generosity, working fairly and with integrity, and witnessing.



DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to honour God?
2. Discuss the six functions of a business given in the guiding principles above.
3. How can God be honoured through performing these six functions?
4. How can we best serve people through performing these six functions?
5. What financial consequences could result from focussing on these six functions?

After the discussion, look at what God says about the objective of God's business ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. The objective of the business is: "To honour God."

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

2. God's priorities are described in the mission of Jesus – to restore relationships and to serve

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

3. The six functions of a business which honours God have been described in the following verse:

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." (2 Cor 9:10,11)

- Seed to sow = investment capital and profit.
- Bread for food = income for all involved.
- Supply and increase your store of food = to multiply and sell your products.
- Harvest of righteousness = the manner in which you do business, fairly and equitably.
- Enriched so that you can be generous = being generous, investing in God's Kingdom.
- Thanksgiving to God = that God will be recognised in the marketplace and shown in the right light.

4. Financial decisions should be taken in the light of the eternal relationship with God and to maintain healthy relationships with people.

"I (Jesus) tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." (Luke 16:9)

- 4. Can I resist to financial temptation to deal dishonestly or unfairly?
- 5. Can I set aside a portion of the profit for God's work through his church?
- 6. Can I invest in the restoration/development of relationships at work, at home etc.?



SUMMARY

The meaning of the word 'company', originally a Latin word is; com = together; panis = bread; breaking bread together. Every financial decision should be taken in light of its impact on human relationships. God's company is focused on people; purposeful work, training, developing talents and developing as children of God. A director of Gods Company invests in people!

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 3

Financial management is not a technical exercise but a spiritual discipline. There is a fearsome competitor, who tries to disrupt relationships. Jesus called him 'mammon', a driving force behind money. How can we conquer mammon?



APPLICATION

- 1. How can God provide sufficient working capital?
- 2. Can I meet all my responsibilities to personnel and creditors fully and on time?
- 3. Do I invest in innovation and quality to best serve people with my product/service?

3 STAYING AHEAD OF THE COMPETITOR

CASE STUDY

“Simon, it’s as if the devil is playing with us! Everything that could go wrong, is going wrong! Rob, our top salesman is leaving us to go to the competitor, and I was furious with him! What are we going to do about it? I heard from the accountant that some bills have disappeared from the bookkeeping and that the petty cash book doesn’t add up. We need to have a serious meeting with Sophie about this.”

“Yes, Eric, I know! It’s as if everything is happening at once. I heard that our biggest competitor has offered MBI, our best client, a visit to their factory. That contract with MBI is really important to us. Our client ‘Hunter & Co’ has had a major offer from us – the project proposal cost a lot of money and time– and now they say that from now on they are going to purchase elsewhere. Who can you still trust? And I had prayed to God about this! Why is it not going ahead?”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In financial management, mammon is out to disrupt relationships. Jesus unmasked mammon as a driving force behind money. Mammon wants to drive a wedge between us and God and between people. The way in which we handle money is an outward display of our internal spiritual orientation. If the business belongs to God, every financial decision is in fact a spiritual decision! Jesus said “you can’t serve God and mammon!” He wants us to be free and not to be slaves! The choice is ours!



DISCUSSION

1. Where do you see mammon destroying relationships in business?
2. How does “the power of money” reveal itself in your business?
3. How can you use money correctly to restore relationships?
4. What are some of the signs of “serving mammon”?
5. How can you defeat mammon?

After the discussion, have a look at what God says about the role of mammon in and around the business ...

4 DEBT ... AND FREEDOM!

CASE STUDY

“Why do I feel like our borrowings put me in a sort of strait-jacket? Every month I really worry about it, Simon. What is it that is bothering me so much? Maybe it is time to have a good look at our loans and our credit facilities. I would really like to be free from them, but surely we can’t manage without outside investment?”

“Yes, I feel the same, Eric. We’ve lost the contract with MBI and our outstanding invoices are behind by more than 70 days. We should have a bigger credit facility. The accountant was talking about how the Bible has a lot to say about that. Maybe we should look into that, Eric. I would really like to know if borrowing is discouraged in the Bible, and how you can borrow without worrying, and why it causes so much anxiety.”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A major pitfall in doing business is having too much debt. Borrowing is one of the most important weapons of mammon in manoeuvring us into a dangerous financial position. Borrowing is taking a gamble on the future which is extremely uncertain. Debt is a banana skin on a steep slope. A priority for the Christian business person is to arrange the financing of the business in such a way that all obligations in both the short and long term can be met, so that you can remain free in all economic circumstances.



DISCUSSION

1. Why does debt make you anxious?
2. What is the difference between having a loan and being in debt?
3. Should it be a priority to not have any loans?
4. How does mammon use debt?
5. What is healthy borrowing?

After the discussion, have a look at what God says about the role of debt in the business ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. **Borrowing can rob you of your freedom.**
 “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.” (Prov 22:7)
2. **The obligation to repay is inescapable.**
 “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.” (Rom 13:8)
3. **Not paying back is a sin.**
 “The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.” (Psalm 37:21)
4. **Borrowing is not forbidden, but brings danger with it.**
 “‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say – but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’ – but I will not be mastered by anything.” (1 Cor 6:12)
5. **The future is uncertain.**
 “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.” (James 4:13-16)
6. **God wants to actively work with you to pay off debts from his business.**
 “She went and told the man of God, and he said, ‘Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.’” (2 Kings 4:7)



APPLICATION

1. Analyse your debt situation and ask in prayer for God’s assistance. Ask yourself if there is an underlying spiritual or practical reason for your problems.
2. Try and find extra cash to pay off your debts quicker, e.g. through selling off inventory and other assets, better management of debtors, new (risk-bearing) capital investment ...
3. Keep to a strict cost management protocol!
4. Make a deal with your creditors; keep the lines of communication open.
 [see Matt 5:25,26]



SUMMARY

God wants to maintain absolute freedom and peace in our business. Debt can cause anxiety and can be debilitating. Not keeping up with obligations can seriously disrupt relationships. Bringing down debt to a manageable and safe level is a priority!

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 5

It has been said, “Turnover is vanity, profit is health, but liquidity is reality!”
 Sufficient cashflow is essential to keep the engine of the business ticking over.



5 IF THE STREAM RUNS DRY ...

CASE STUDY

“Simon, it’s nearly the 25th day of the month. Payroll! I find this the most nerve-racking time, especially when you don’t have enough in the account to pay the salaries and payroll taxes. It shouldn’t be this way. Why do we always end up in the same boat? The bank is never going to extend our credit facility.”

“You’re right, Eric, and my phone is regularly ringing off the hook by suppliers asking for payment. We’ve got to set their minds at rest, otherwise we won’t have any business any more. CMG is threatening to stop deliveries until we pay everything and then only doing business if we pay up front!”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

If I make an agreement to pay personnel or a supplier within a particular time-frame and I fail to do so, then I have broken a promise and I put my reputation at risk. It should be a priority to pay everyone in time and in full, not only for my own reputation but also to honour God! Paying on time can improve my credit rating and reputation with suppliers and help to secure timely deliveries with good terms and long-lasting contracts.



DISCUSSION

1. What do you think of the statement “your best client is the one who pays on time!”
2. Whenever I get into the position that the payment deadlines of a number of bills have passed and I do not have sufficient means to pay them, which creditors do I pay first? Personnel, suppliers, advisers, taxes, myself, loans etc.?
3. What preparations should I make to improve my cash situation, so that I have sufficient liquidity to be able to pay all bills on time and in full?
4. How do I keep a good balance between my relationship with my suppliers and the financing of my business from their credit?
5. How does debt influence your ability to love others? (Rom 13:8)
6. When someone reproaches me for a bill I didn’t pay, what consequences does this have for my work for God? (Matt 5:23-26)
7. If I can’t pay a creditor on time or in full, what steps can I take towards satisfying my creditors?

After the discussion, read what God has to say about the management of credit within the business ...

OPEN THE BIBLE

1. Do not be in debt to anyone.

“Give to everyone what you owe them: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.” (Rom 13:7,8)

2. Faithfulness is measured through the timely fulfilment of obligations!

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.” (Matt 24:45,46)

3. God ignores sacrifices until bills have been paid.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.” (Matt. 5:23-26)

4. Not keeping your promises is a sin.

“The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.” (Psalm 37:21)

APPLICATION

Paying my creditors on time and in full means that I need to work hard to achieve a healthy cash flow. I realise that making a profit without having a healthy cash situation, can bring me into problems with payments.

1. Every month I need to analyse my cash flow and make a plan for it.
2. Whenever I realise that I can't pay a creditor, I will make sure that this is discussed so that we can sort it out together.
3. Make a plan to improve liquidity.

SUMMARY

The development of healthy, long-lasting relationships is indispensable for my company. I don't want my relationships with creditors to suffer because I let a bill, salary, or debt remain unpaid. My credit rating is an important aspect of my witness as a Christian in the marketplace. Christ lives in us and does not want to be involved in the breaking of promises. He always keeps his word!

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 6

It is often difficult to pay bills in time.
How do I deal with getting money in from my debtors?



6 RECEIVABLES – DEALING WITH DEBTORS

CASE STUDY

“Eric, we have a problem with our debtors. Last week I said that we’re in a payment schedule of more than 70 days. I am honestly fed up that our customers are using us as financiers. On top of it all, MB Construction are threatening to go bankrupt, and Hunter & Co don’t want to pay us because of a quality issue. How can I deal with this according to a Biblical perspective?”

“Yes, this is becoming a real priority! If we lose this money then it is a direct threat to our profit, and we’ll get into problems with our own payments! Really, we should get a collection agency. I find it a dilemma, Simon. On the one hand, we need to crack down on customers who fail to pay on time, on the other hand I know that you are worried that they’ll then go over to the competition. We want to stay friends with them! Let’s first pray about it.”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Because the business belongs to God, maintaining the good name of the owner and the management is extremely important. For God it is all about relationships, and his decisions about collecting debts are heavily influenced by the influence they have on maintaining long-lasting business relationships. The management of debtors must be governed by a balance between making sure payments are received within the agreed timeframe, and active cooperation to solve payment problems.



DISCUSSION

1. What should you do if a debtor can pay, but won't?
2. What should you do if a debtor can't pay? How far should you go in getting involved in the affairs of a defaulter?
3. In what circumstances should you write off a debt?
4. What would be the problems for a Christian business person by calling in a collection agency?
5. How do you sort out a problem over invoices?

After the discussion, look at what God says about the debtor management of the new business ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. **Never extend more credit than you are prepared to lose.**
 “But to you who are listening I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.” (Luke 6:27-30)
2. **Above all, keep your good name – it’s about His name, even at the cost of income!**
 “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.” (Prov 22:1)
3. **If a debtor can, but won’t pay, act quickly and decisively.**
 “When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people’s hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.” (Eccl 8:11)
4. **Investigate the circumstances of your debtor, try and help him.**
 “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Rom 12:17-18)
5. **Try to sort out conflicts as much as possible without resorting to the law courts.**
 “But instead, one brother takes another to court – and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? (1 Cor 6:6,7)



APPLICATION

1. Know your customer! Check out important customer’s ability to pay.
2. Set apart an amount on the balance to be able to write off debts, whether under duress or willingly.
3. Always choose for the relationship over the money in conflict situations.
4. Set a deadline for payment and make sure that it is maintained! Make clear agreements.
5. Avoid legal action as much as possible.



SUMMARY

As Christian business people we strive for healthy, long-lasting relationships. Jesus was described as ‘full of grace and truth.’ We want to deal with our debtors on the basis of the truth by good deliveries and meeting conditions, and proactively ensure payments are received. We want to be as God’s representatives, where possible, demonstrating grace to our debtors whenever they have difficulty meeting their obligations to us.

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 7

How do we finance the new business without losing our freedom of movement?



7 FINANCING THE BUSINESS

CASE STUDY

“Eric, considering our plans for growth, I can’t see how we can get these new contracts without being able to inject extra finance. We need to have a lot more cash in hand to pay for supplies and work. I’ve made the best possible plans to improve our liquidity, but I can see a number of months when we’re going to be deep into the red. Do we need to ask the bank to increase our credit facility, or can you see other options?”

“You know how much loans prey on our peace of mind, Simon. And since we have given the business to God, we need ask him first for his provision. He may well have other ideas! I want to keep as much room for movement as possible and to limit the risks as much as we can. Maybe he can provide for this without extra hassle with the bank?”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

An important aspect of God’s role as owner of the business is in providing sufficient finance. He can sometimes provide in unexpected ways. The major temptation is to use the bank as a first resort for funds. The Bible helps us to set limits on the risks that come with loans. Financing through equity is preferable. Standing as personal guarantor for a loan is very risky and to be avoided. There are two guiding principles: share the risk and avoid bondage!



DISCUSSION

1. What methods, without bank loans, could God use to finance the business?
2. What are the pros-and-cons of arranging finance by going into a partnership?
3. Why is it so difficult to get capital from equity?
4. Is it good to use our credit with suppliers as finance?
5. What reasons are there why I should not personally sign for a loan?

After the discussion, have a look at what God says about financing the new business ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. God's desire for the business is not to borrow!

"The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom." (Deut 28:12,13)

2. He is the Source of capital!

"But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today." (Deut 8:18)

3. Financing by supplier credit.

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbour, 'Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you,' when you already have it with you. Do not plot harm against your neighbour, who lives trustfully near you." (Prov 3:27-19)

4. Partnerships

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Cor 6:14)

5. God can provide if we seek him first.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt 6:33)



APPLICATION

1. Have I asked God for his provision, and am I prepared to wait on him?
2. Never put your family in a risky situation by standing guarantor for a loan (1 Tim 5:8)
3. Can I pay a loan in full and on time?
4. Am I giving too much power into the hands of a non-believing partner?
5. Do I have peace about the transaction? (Isa 32:17)



SUMMARY

If God owns the business, then He will provide for its needs. God can do this in unexpected ways and wants us to turn to Him for wisdom and provision in financing our business. Remember, he wants us to maintain our freedom, being independent from the world and dependent upon Him, as we design the financing of the company! We should be able to finance all transactions and meet all obligations to those dependent on the business.

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 8

What is an honest and motivating remuneration structure for the business?



8

REMUNERATION POLICY

CASE STUDY

“Eric, I have a problem with Denis, the head of the internal sales service for our A brand. He knows that Frank, our best salesman, has received a large bonus alongside his normal salary. Denis says that getting the USC contract was an achievement by the whole team and that they should all get a bonus. On top of that, Frank thinks that he isn’t being sufficiently rewarded.”

“Simon, we’ve got several different salary issues at the same time! I’ve also been approached by Sophie, who does the bookkeeping. Her husband has left her for someone else, and she has two kids. One of them is frequently ill which means that she has to stay at home every now and then. Now she’s come to ask for a pay rise, because she’s not making ends meet! On top of that John came along with the wonderful news that he’s leaving for another company because we don’t pay him enough!”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A principle for a Christian business person, who strives to achieve God’s objectives, is that he treats his employees, with whom he has been entrusted, as his family. With God, it is about relationships, and a guiding question in decisions over salary is, “how would I treat her if she was my daughter?” Being trustworthy and righteous are pillars of God’s covenant with his people. The salary management of the employer is made clear through these two qualities, doing right and demonstrating faithfulness.



DISCUSSION

1. What constitutes a “fair wage”?
2. How do you find a balance between treating each employee the same and still recognising and rewarding the unique contribution of a particular employee?
3. How do we find a balance between remaining faithful to an employee who fails to meet standards, and doing right by the financial demands of the company?
4. How far do we let ourselves be influenced by our business environment (government regulations, market forces) in doing what is right for an individual and for the worth of our organisation?
5. In our remuneration policy, do we try to pay more than the norm, or do we go for a minimum level of payment?
6. What is the difference between a “covenant relationship” and a “contractual relationship” in terms of wages?

After the discussion, look at what God says about paying employees in the new business ...

9 ACCOUNTABILITY

CASE STUDY

“Eric, I’ve had a call from Jan Swart, you know, from our competitors Visser & Co? He said that Visser & Co have no chance of extending their contract with the government because of financial problems, and his team are likely to lose their jobs. He heard that E.S. Supplies are going to bid for the contract and he said that our chances of getting the contract will be significantly increased if we can include his five man team in our contract proposal. This is a great opportunity for us! Surely we’ve got to do it?”

“Simon, I need to have a good think about this. Is this going to cause problems with Visser & Co? And do the team fit into our company? What are they asking? What will the customer think? You know, I’m a member of a Forum for Christian business leaders. I’d like to discuss this with them. Last time they gave advice over a problem and it saved us a lot of money!”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Business people are often strong personalities who want to go it alone. At the core of stewardship is “accountability”, the need to be accountable/responsible to God and to fellow man. Our accountability to God is a model for our system of accountability in our own affairs. The standard is very high – God’s holiness. “... walk before me faithfully and be blameless,” says God. Accountability to our superiors, equals and those under us, helps us in living out an authentic faith in the marketplace, and helps to protect us from taking a wrong path.



DISCUSSION

1. Imagine a society without any accountability. What would the consequences be?
2. What does our accountability to God have to do with our accountability to people?
3. Discuss the advantages of displaying “360 degrees” accountability to the people in my environment.
4. Why is accountability to fellow business people important?
5. One condition for good evaluation and counsel is to be transparent. This brings vulnerability with it. Discuss the pros and cons of this.
6. Do you discuss your business decisions with your life partner?

After the discussion, look at what God says about being accountable ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. **The standard against which we are judged is God’s holiness.**
 “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do: for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Pet 1:14-16)

2. **We have to be fully accountable.**
 “For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.” (Rom 14:7,10)

3. **Accountability is reciprocal.**
 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph 5:21)

4. **Accountability comes with advantages.**
 “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labour: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls, and has no one to help them up.” (Eccl 4:9,10)

5. **We are kept sharp in our walk and in our work by others.**
 “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Prov 27:17)



APPLICATION

1. Be accountable to: God, your spouse, the government, shareholders, board members, fellow Christian business people, good friends, church etc.
2. Consciously make systems for regularly being accountable and receiving evaluation.
3. Standards in the business must be fair and clear for everyone.
4. Become a member of a Forum for Christian business people for reciprocal support.



SUMMARY

Being accountable is an essential exercise in applying the teachings of Jesus in our business practice. It provides protection, produces good advice and raises the effectiveness of the business in honouring God through all decisions and in all relationships.

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 10

The contract doesn’t go through, business goes badly and the money dries up. What now?



10

WHEN THE STREAM DRIES UP ...

CASE STUDY

“Simon, the bank has called again to say that we’re nearing the limit of our credit. We’ve been praying for the last few weeks for extra cash to pay off our deficit, but it doesn’t seem to be working. Hasn’t God promised to meet all our needs? If so, why are we short of cash again? And we probably need even more money for the new contract with the government!”

“Eric, I think this week we need to fast and ask God for an answer. Let’s skip eating every lunch and use the time for Bible study and prayer. Let’s see if we’ve let things slide somewhere, or if God just wants to teach us an important lesson. I know for sure that he knows our situation very well, and already knows what the outcome is! Let’s wait on Him and expect Him to provide a solution.”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Just as important as God’s provision, is the fact that God can also bless us through withholding. Sometimes we get into situations where the cash flow starts to dry up and there is the danger of more going out than is coming in. God uses situations where he withholds his provision to lead us, to form us, to warn or discipline us. A crisis is God’s way of teaching us how to deal with problems, and is our opportunity to focus on Biblical truths and to experience God at work in overcoming problems. Problems are opportunities for growth!



DISCUSSION

1. Describe a period when God withheld his provision or let you wait a long time. What lessons have you learned from that experience?
2. What advantages and opportunities come from “waiting on God”?
3. Discuss a number of reasons why God may not provide what we think we need!
4. Whenever it seems “the heaven is closed”, and prayer for funding seems to get no response, discuss what attitude and action should be taken.
5. Discuss the following suggestion: “Financial problems will never be solved with money!”

After the discussion, look at what God has to say about his reasons for withholding his provision ...

OPEN THE BIBLE

1. **God uses money to create boundaries so that we can safely grow within them.**
 “‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say – but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’ – but I will not be mastered by anything.”
 (1 Cor 6:12)
2. **Being thankful to God because he withheld money is a sign that God thinks something else is more important for me!** (1 Thess 5:18)
3. **Money problems are always symptoms of deeper, underlying problems that aren’t always completely obvious. God wants me to learn a lesson first.**
 (Matt 6:21)
4. **Is God withholding something from me because of sin in my life?** (Isa 59:1-2)
5. **Am I convinced that this project is God’s will for me? Am I prepared to strive for this in prayer and fasting?** (James 4:13-16)
6. **Am I taking too many risks by taking on too much credit or getting involved with people whom I don’t entirely trust? Is my ambition stronger than my acceptance of God’s sovereignty over the situation?** (Prov 22:7)
7. **Do I have enough management and business talent to handle this injection of capital? If not, what skills or people do I need to bring in to deal with it? Remember that amassing riches without the ability to properly handle them can seriously damage us.** (Matt 25:11)
8. **Do I deal with these situations according to Biblical principles? Have I diligently investigated God’s Word or are there economic or business principles that I may be ignoring?** (Acts 17:11)

APPLICATION

1. Thank God for the situation you are in and let him do his work. (Psalm 50:23)
2. Take time to pray and fast and ask God to show you the way.
3. Have a good look at your situation. Make sure you know what your debt position is (will be) and your current assets. Resist the temptation to let debts run up even further; focus on core indicators such as supply, debtors, creditors, petty cash, orders, etc.

4. Make a list of what you already have in your own hands, give it to God, and work a plan out with him. (read 1 Kings 4:1-7)

SUMMARY

There are typically three reasons why God may withhold his provision. Firstly, because he wants to take us to a higher level of belief and wants to create trust in preparation for greater works; secondly, because we have been unfaithful with what he has entrusted us, and thirdly, because he foresees that in giving us what we ask, we will be unfaithful or be dishonest in our dealings. God pays for everything that he has ordered!

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 11

If God is a shareholder in our enterprise, then he will want to use a share of the profits for His own goals. How can we give generously and give from the company profits?



11

GIVING FROM THE BUSINESS ...

CASE STUDY

“Simon, I’m so thankful we can end the year with a profit! We were sometimes a little short of cash, but the Lord helped us through! This month I would really like to look how we could set apart a tenth of the profits in a separate account in order to give it away. I’m thinking about setting up a fund from the profits of E.S. Supply.”

“That’s good, Eric, and maybe we should set apart an amount every month in our planning for next year. Now that E.S. Supply is God’s, I would like to look at the possibility of putting 10% of the shares in a charity fund, so that God’s share of the profits is guaranteed. As well as the tithe, I’m curious about what God means by “the giving of the first fruits”. This seems to be different from tithing.”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

If God is the owner of the company, than he will want to use the profits to achieve his own objectives. Alongside continuity for the business, he wants to use a share of the profits for other activities that he has on his heart. Giving out of the profits of the business is proof that we do fulfil the role of manager and not of owner, it blesses God’s kingdom, en protects the business. In the agrarian economy of Israel, it was commanded to give the “first fruits” of the harvest as well as the tithe.



DISCUSSION

1. Why is it so important to give from the business?
2. What do we give, how much and to whom?
3. Should you budget for donations from within the business?
4. The Bible says: “Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.” (Deut 14:22) Should this also be applied today?
5. In the agrarian economy of Israel it was also expected that; “You are to give them the first fruits of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep.” (Deut 18:4) What should “first fruits” be in our economy?

After the discussion, look at what God says about giving from the business ...



OPEN THE BIBLE

1. Giving is honouring God!

“Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.” (Prov 3:9,10)

2. Giving is a decision of the heart!

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor 9:7)

3. We give to God only what he first gave us!

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” (1 Chron 29:14)

4. The tithe is the minimum standard.

“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you? In tithes and offerings. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’” (Mal 3:8,10)

5. The tithe protects the business.

“I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. (Mal 3:11)

6. Offering the “first fruits” was a recognition of God’s provision.

“We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the Lord each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.” (Neh 10:35)



SUMMARY

Giving is an act of worship, the recognition that God is the Owner and He can use the profits as He likes! Out of gratitude for his provision, I can set apart his share of the company’s assets for his purposes.

NOTES

NEXT TIME ... IN MANAGEMENT MEETING 12

How do I put together a faith-based plan for the financial development of the business?



APPLICATION

1. Decide what the “first fruits” in my business work are, as sacrifice to the Lord.
2. Decide what your harvest is and make a budget plan to set apart a tenth for God’s work.
3. Make a list of opportunities to give from the company through “non-financial” means (time, facilities etc.)

12 FINANCIAL PLANNING – FAITH-BASED!

CASE STUDY

“Simon, I am very thankful that we made a profit last year, but I think God has got more in store for us. Last year we thought that if we grew by 10%, we would be doing very well, but is that really so? What has faith got to do with our planning? What would God think about the size of our business? Bigger, smaller? Improvements?”

“Yes, I recently read in Hebrews 11:6 that it is impossible to please God without faith. Eric, I think we should go away for a few days and ask God what his will is for E.S. Supplies in the coming years. Up to now, we have never done that. We want to discover his vision for E.S. Supplies and know how he sees the future of the business.”



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Most financial plans are based on what has happened in the past. For a Christian entrepreneur, a strategic financial plan should be made on the basis of what God's vision for the business is! This is based on faith! God will make his desires for the company known to those who genuinely seek him. A faith-based plan is made on the basis of God's revelation, with the consultation of advisors. God's plan for the business reflects his character and glory! Through this, the entrepreneur realises that through prayer and our relationship with God, he can be a channel through which God's will becomes reality.



DISCUSSION

1. Can you explain your vision of the business?
2. What are your dreams for the business? Discuss: “A dream is a dream. A goal is a dream with a deadline and a plan.”
3. What do you understand by “faith-based planning”?
4. Vision has been described as; “In the light of what is, to see what could be, with the determination that it should be so, with the discipline to see it happen!” Discuss this in the context of financial planning!
5. The most important financial indicators for your “faith-based financial plan” are liquidity, solvency and profitability. Do you agree with this?

After the discussion, look at what God has to say about making faith-based financial plans ...

EUROPARTNERS

EUROPARTNERS IS A MOVEMENT OF BUSINESS LEADERS AND (YOUNG) PROFESSIONALS WHO DESIRE TO HELP THEIR FRIENDS AND PEERS TO CONNECT TO JESUS CHRIST

OUR DREAM

It is our dream that all business leaders, -owners and (young) professionals accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Moreover, that they will reflect Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God in the way they behave, speak and do business, so that all people will honour and glorify God for who He is.

OUR STRATEGY

We mobilize and train Christian business leaders, -owners and (young) professionals to be an ambassador of Christ in their everyday life. We do this according to 2 Corinthians 5:20: "As Christian businesspeople we are marketplace ambassadors of Christ. God is making His appeal through us; to beg the world on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God."

OUR ACTIVITIES

- **Resources and training programs** to help businesspeople and (young) professionals grow spiritually and reflect the Kingdom in the way they do business.
- **An Annual Conference** where businesspeople, (young) professionals and ministry leaders can meet for friendship and encouragement. It is a place of inspiration, reflection and training.
- **The Young Professionals Academy** to equip and inspire young professionals to become a marketplace ambassador and a ministry leader in their nation. With mid-weeks or weekend meetings, trainings and a mentoring program.
- **Personal support and coaching** of business leaders and their teams on spiritual growth and achieving their goals in the best possible way.
- **CBMC training and support** to start a national CBMC ministry based on teams, prayer, leadership, evangelism and discipleship.
- **Event support** with a network of volunteers, professionals, speakers and businesspeople that can serve the various national ministries in outreach and in reaching businesspeople and (young) professionals in their nation.

TARGET GROUPS OF EUROPARTNERS

We focus on business leaders, business owners, (young) professionals and ministry leaders in business.

More information: www.europartners.org

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