

*Running a Business
That
Honors God*



By Laurie Neumann

Day 1

*"The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."
James 5:16*

I think it's good from time to time to evaluate where we are with our businesses.

Are you seeing the level of success you want to? Do you have enough traffic (if there is such a thing as "enough" traffic:-) Do you have returning customers?

I have to admit that I can answer no to the first two. So, what should my reaction be? Well, too many times it has been frustration and discouragement. I let the blues set in and that gets me absolutely nowhere.

So, what's the right way to react when things aren't going as you had hoped? PRAY. Yes, I know you have heard it before, but I want to emphasize it again.

Pray for exactly what you need. Do you need more traffic? Pray about it and for wisdom on how to get more targeted traffic to your website. How about more customers? Pray for them. And while you're at it, pray for wisdom on what you can do to encourage them to return to you. Coupons, discounts, special pricing for returning customers are all good ways to get them to come back and buy from you again. In other words, give them special treatment. But pray and ask God what would work best in your particular market.

I believe to be praying fervently as it says in the above verse, our prayers need to be specific. I find, for myself, general type prayers are kind of lazy and do not produce much fervency.

Pray specifically for the things you need. Then go forward, do your best, and be sure to say thank you when you see your prayers get answered.

Action Step: What are three things your business needs right now? Write them down and take them to God in prayer. Ask Him for His guidance and provision for the things you need.

Day 2

Parable of the Talents Matthew 25:14-30

Are you using your talents in your business? I think we need to look at if we are using the gifts and abilities God has given us. He has entrusted to us certain skills and giftings. If we “hide” them or let them lie dormant, do you think this pleases God? This applies to all areas of our lives, but I want to relate it to our work or business.

I think by using our gifts and abilities, it demonstrates our faithfulness to use what we have been given. I understand that sometimes we just need to do something to earn income and take care of our families, etc. This is not what I am talking about. But I do think, as much as possible, it is important to use our giftings and talents.

As we use our gifts and talents, I believe God will bless us and help us to expand them. He will add to them or refine them (v.29) But we need to be using them for Him to do this. We see this happen in the Parable of the Talents. The servant who had received five talents used them to gain another five; the servant who had been given two talents gained another two. However, the servant who received only one talent hid it so he could return it to his master. What was the outcome? The servants who gained an additional five and two talents were rewarded with even more. They did not hide their talents ; they used them and gained more. The servant who hid his one talent had it taken away from him and given to the servant who had the most (ten talents at this point.)

I want to be sure that I am using what God gave me to my best ability. I am sure you feel the same way.

Action step: Take some time to evaluate if you are running a business that uses your gifts and talents. If so, great! If not, you may want to take it to God in prayer and be open if He wants to lead you down a different path.

Day 3

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6:33

Do you remember why you started your home based business? Was it to spend more time with your family? Take care of your kids? Take more vacations? Give more of your time to volunteering/ministry?

Think about your reasons. Have you accomplished those goals? Or has your business kind of “taken over?”

Take some time to examine what your priorities really are, and if your life shows that. We want to be sure our businesses are allowing us to do the things we originally wanted to when we started it.

Our businesses do need time and care to make them grow and be successful. There is no doubt about that. But we want to make sure that our priorities are straight and that we are also giving time to the other things God has put on our hearts to do.

As we look at this verse in Matthew, I believe that God wants us to seek Him in setting our goals and priorities. When we do, He promises to take care of everything else.

Are your goals ones that you believe are from God? If so, make sure you are in control of your business and not the other way around. It is so easy to let time get eaten up by answering emails or social networking. I do both of those things, but we need to keep them within reasonable limits.

If you started a home based business to spend more time with your kids and family, is it working out that way? I can only say this because I have been there. I have to re-examine my priorities from time to time and see if my life is lining up.

I hope you will do the same. Let your business be the blessing it can be.

Action step: Take some time to evaluate how you are doing with your goals and priorities. What were the reasons you wanted to have a home based business? Are those "reasons" a priority in your life now? Are you seeing the reality of your dreams? If not, do some soul searching and spend time in prayer asking God to help you reprioritize things in your life, so that you are truly seeking Him first and what He wants you to be doing. Let Him bring you to the balance in your life He wants for you.

Day 4

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

As a business owner, you can run into all kinds of challenges and obstacles. Here are just a few:

- Technology!
- Disgruntled customers/clients
- Time constraints
- Money constraints
- The need to learn new things
- and many more...

I know for me, technical issues can seem overwhelming, especially if I am trying to work them out on my own. I love writing eBooks and reports, but when it comes time to get all the "techie" stuff set up to actually sell my product, frustration sets in.

How should we handle these challenges? If we look at this verse in Philippians, we are reminded that we *can* handle these things, but not on our own – handle them through Christ who will give you the strength. But, I believe, you need to ask Him for it.

If your first reaction when one of the above scenarios presents itself, is to get all discouraged or angry, take a step back. Spend some time praying, asking God for His wisdom, strength and grace in dealing with the situation. I bet you will see some differences.

Action step: What are some of the challenges with your business you are facing right now? Do you feel frustrated or overwhelmed? Ask God for His wisdom and strength to get through them. Remember, with God, nothing is impossible. Luke 1:37

Day 5

"Love suffers long and is kind." I Corinthians 13:4

How can we apply this verse to how we run our businesses?

I believe "Love suffers long" means being patient with others, whether it be an employee or an irate customer. I don't see any restrictions on this verse that says that if someone treats you nicely, you need to love them. I think this means EVERYONE.

Are there times you will need to be firm? Absolutely. Are there times you will need to say no to someone? Yes. I like to think of it in terms of being a parent. There are times you will have to deny your children something or be firm with them. You don't let them walk all over you. But you always LOVE them and can respond to them with kindness.

I think we need to put this same principle into practice in our business. Treat others with kindness and be patient with them, but don't let them take advantage of you. You don't have to do everything people ask you to do, but you can refuse kindly.

Working with others, whether it be customers, clients or employees always opens the door up to challenges. People are people and may not always act the way you would like them to. But the important thing is, what is your reaction? You cannot control the way that others act to you, but you can control how you treat them.

I know there are times we all fail at this, but I think we should set this as a goal in how we run our businesses.

Action step: Think of how you have acted toward others you have had contact with through your business. Would it fulfill "love suffers long and is kind?" If not, pray for God's help and strength to act and react in a way that will be pleasing to Him.

Day 6

"Love does not envy" I Corinthians 13:4

As we relate this to our businesses, we need to ask ourselves if we envy anyone else. At first glance, you may say no. But if you look deeper, sometimes you find there is some envy going on when you see someone else's success. I know I have to admit I am guilty when it comes to this.

I may hear of another business owner who has a LOT more subscribers on their email list than I do. Or they may make a lot more money. Or they may have opportunities opened to them that I would love to have. All of these things can make us feel envious, if we let it. We have to guard ourselves and be truly happy for others when they achieve success.

I think one of the reasons why envy is warned against in the Bible is that it makes us feel inferior. We begin to compare where we are with where others are (or appear to be in our eyes) and we can come up short.

Comparisons can also cause ungratefulness. You might be very happy with where you are in your business until someone else comes along that seems to be doing better. All of a sudden, we're not so happy anymore. We don't feel very thankful for what we have because now we are looking at what we don't have. We become discontented and frustrated. Not very godly characteristics.

Isn't it wonderful that God says all these things for our benefit? He knows that if we give in to envy, we are going to suffer ourselves by bringing on the feelings I talked about above. We have a GREAT God who is always looking out for our best!

Action step: Do an attitude check the next time you hear of someone else's business that appears to be better than yours in some way. It could be they are making more money or doing something you think you would like better than what you are currently doing. How does it make you feel? If you notice feelings of ungratefulness or inferiority creeping in, repent and ask God to help you be more thankful and appreciative with where you are.

Day 7

*"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."
James 4:10*

We are told to be humble. Being humble doesn't mean being a doormat and letting people take advantage of you. On the contrary, being humble takes strength. It takes acknowledging our limitations and that God is the one who helps us succeed.

Pride can be a destroyer of relationships and of our own success, if we let it be. We are never meant to parade ourselves in arrogance before anyone. You might say, "I would never do that." But let's look a little deeper.

Have you ever been glad someone else has noticed your success? Have you ever gotten impatient with someone because they do not know what you know? Maybe you like to hang with the "gurus" because of the status it gives you. I don't believe these are very good indicators of humility.

This might seem like I'm going to extremes, but we have to be very careful about not letting pride enter in. I have seen in my own life, how pride can come in so quickly and in so many ways. And it sets us up to fail. Proverbs 16:18 says "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Being humble means looking to God for help, and going ahead and doing our part. It is acknowledging that we cannot do it on our own, but only with God's help. When success comes, do we pat ourselves on the back or get on our knees and thank God for it? Being humble is an attitude of the heart and it is a very safe place to be.

Action step: What is the attitude of your heart? Pride can come in so subtly at times, that we really need to examine our attitudes from time to time. If you notice there is pride, confess it and ask God to help you have a humble heart.

Day 8

"Love...does not behave rudely." I Corinthians 13:4-5

This encompasses all areas of our lives, but in this devotional, I want to stick to running our businesses.

What does behaving rudely mean? Here are some definitions of rude I found - disrespectful, rough, exhibiting unkind behavior or words, impolite, bad-mannered. Some synonyms were abrupt, inconsiderate, insulting, sarcastic. (<http://thesaurus.reference.com/browse/rude> and http://encarta.msn.com/thesaurus_561586689/rude.html)

When we look at these definitions and synonyms, that opens up a lot of behaviors. Do you speak unkind words or act impolitely to your customers or employees? I know we all have bad days. That's not what I am talking about. Is this ongoing behavior for you?

Do you notice any of these behaviors in you? Do you find yourself being impolite or saying unkind things back to an unhappy customer? Do you treat your employees disrespectfully or abruptly when trying to explain what you want done for the second or third time?

I have heard some people say "It's just my way - I tend to be sarcastic." I don't think that is a very good reason. It's giving an excuse, but excuses will not go very far with God.

Make it your aim to treat others with respect and kindness. Speak to them with gentleness and humility. Yes, you will be tested by others in this who may not care if they act rudely or not. Raise the bar and they just might notice the difference.

Action step: Take inventory of your attitudes as you interact with others in your business. Are they what they should be? Are you speaking words of kindness and being patient? Are you respectful of those you work with? If not, seek help from God to do better.

Day 9

*"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."
Philippians 2:3-4*

As business owners, sometimes we must make a choice of whether to do something that will be good for us or for someone else. I hope, when confronted with this choice, you will consider the above verse from Philippians.

Here we are exhorted to do nothing out of selfishness. Yes, we need to do things to better our businesses - that is absolutely essential. But, when faced with decisions of doing something for ourselves or for the good of someone else, we need to choose the latter.

Let's say you have the chance to make a sale, but you know deep down that it is not the best choice for the person wanting to buy it. Do you let them go ahead and buy it? Or should you be honest with them and let them know this is not what they need? I know we all know the answer to that.

Do you praise yourself and not give credit to others when it is due? We all want to be well thought of, but sing the praises of others when you have the opportunity. Be generous with your compliments and referrals. I am not suggesting sending your customers away, but when you cannot fill a need, refer them to someone who can. That would be in their best interest.

If you are in a direct sales or network marketing type of business, do you sign up recruits so you can expand your team, whether or not it is really a good opportunity for the person signing up?

The "WWJD" bracelets were very popular a few years ago. But that is not just a cliché saying. It really should be our barometer for making choices and decisions. How would Jesus run a business?

Putting others before yourself will not only please and honor God, but it will make you stand out from the other businesses in your field. When you bless others, you will be blessed too.

Action step: Do you hold on so tightly to customers that you end up selling them something that isn't really what they need, just so you can keep them with you or just to make a sale? Try to develop the attitude described in Philippians 2. When you do, customers will undoubtedly respect you more and will refer you to those you can help.

Day 10

*"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." I
Thessalonians 5:18*

Remember to thank God for your business along with the other things and people in your life. He wants us to appreciate what He gives us and it is good to daily give Him thanks.

It is easy to forget when we get busy or when our businesses are going less than perfect. There will be days when you aren't too sure how thankful you really are for your business:-) But give thanks anyway "in everything."

When we are facing challenges in our business, such as technical issues, unhappy customers, or a lack of business, we can thank God that we *have* a business at all. If there are specific issues that are challenging, ask Him for help. He has the answers you need. James 1:5 says, "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally..." Bring your concerns to Him and be thankful that you can leave them there and that He will give you wisdom in the situation.

When you begin to give Him thanks, your attitude will shortly follow. You will soon be actually *feeling* thankful again.

It is a huge blessing to me to be able to run my own business. It offers freedom and flexibility that a 9 to 5 job does not allow. But I also have a responsibility to run my business in a way that God is happy with.

Action step: Spend some time reflecting on what your business has meant to you. Also, imagine what your life would be like if it were different - say, going to a 9 to 5 job everyday.

Begin thanking God each day for your business and all that that means. Does it mean you can be home with your kids? Does it mean you are not so strapped financially, alleviating stress in your marriage/family? Meditate on what having a business has done for you and thank Him for it.

Running a Business that Honors God

Author Information:



Laurie Neumann is the owner of:

<http://www.christianhomebusinessconnection.com>

<http://www.legitimate-homebasedbusinesses.com>

<http://www.realtelecommutingjobs.com>

For more Biblical inspiration on running a business that honors God, visit:
<http://www.christianhomebusinessconnection.com/christian-business-ethics.html>