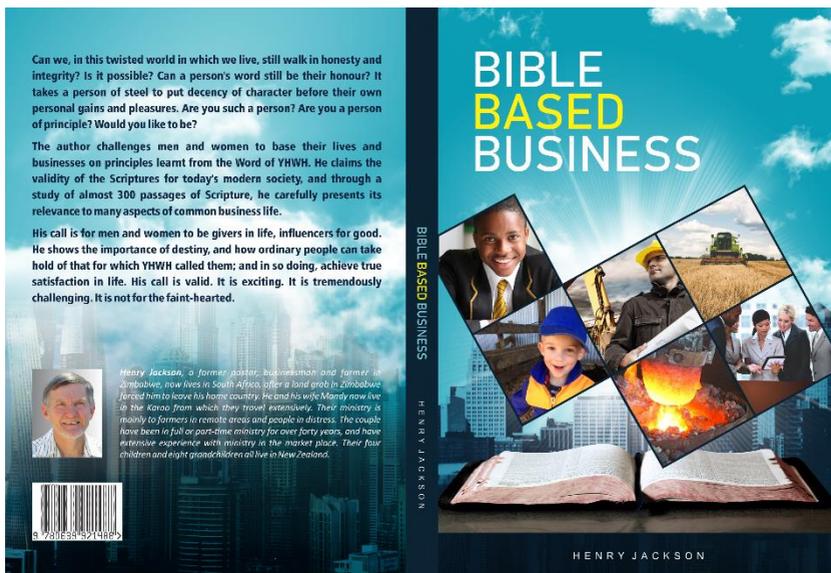


Herewith the second part of **chapter 10** of my book
Bible based business



This article (the second part of chapter 10) is sent out free of charge, with the prayer that it will be a blessing and encouragement to all who read it. It may be freely copied in its entirety and sent to family and friends as far as it will go.

Should you, however, wish to acquire the book itself, it may be ordered from Magda Du Plessis. She can be contacted at the following address:

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Chapter 10

RELATIONSHIPS (b)

Staff & Labour

One of the loveliest pictures painted in the Scriptures regarding labour relations, is that of Boaz and his workers. The brief account reads as follows:

Ruth 2:4 *“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, ‘May the Lord be with you.’ And they said to him, ‘May the Lord be with you.’”*

Here we see an exchange of blessing and an obviously excellent relationship between the master and his team of workers. There is also an obvious respect from the workers to the master, and the workers are obedient to their master, fulfilling their duties (as can be seen later in the passage).

There is no reason why we should not be able to work well with those under or over us. I believe that our work environment should be enjoyable. We should mutually respect one another. This necessitates recognition of each other’s talents as well as weaknesses. Let us see what the Scriptures have to say regarding the duties or requirements for the master as well as the servants.

Duties of masters

Prov 28:16 *“A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.”*

YHWH does not want us to oppress those under us. Oppress means *“to govern harshly, to treat with continual cruelty or injustice. To weigh down with cares or unhappiness.”* (Oxford Dictionary)

Col 4:1 *“Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing*

that you too have a Master in heaven.”

I have often been required to act as a judge in matters of staff relationships. I feel acutely the need for wisdom as I have to decide upon a fair and just solution for the problems which are brought to me. Do not be rash or harsh in your treatment of your labourers. One day it is you and I who must stand before the judgement throne of YHWH; and in that day I will certainly need His mercy – how about you?! Did Jesus Himself not say,

Mat 5:7 *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy”?*

Eph 6:9 *“And, masters, do the same things to them, (rendering service with good will – vs7) and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”*

Threatening gets the company nowhere and causes the labourer to lose respect for the master. It is better to have clear-cut goals and objectives which are well explained to the labourers. Some system of monitoring the progress of the labourer is also to be recommended. If labourers do not wish to work well with the leaders, then such people should be carefully made to understand that,

“This is the way we work here. If you wish to work with us, this is what we expect. If you do not wish to comply with our requirements, you are welcome to leave and find other employment.”

There is no need for shouting matches. Just calmly and clearly define your principles of operation, and discipline according to these principles.

Jam 1:19 *“... Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;*

20 *“For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”*

Prov 15:1 *“A **gentle answer** turns away wrath, but a **harsh word** stirs*

up anger.”

Let your words be few, carefully chosen and used to maximum effect.

John 13:14 *“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to **wash one another’s feet.***

15 *“For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.*

16 *“Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.*

17 *“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”*

Here we find Jesus teaching the principle that the leader must serve those under him. Even in the secular world we find books and teachings where this principle has been discovered to be effective.

Naturally, Jesus was emphasizing an attitude of heart here. Those with authoritarian attitudes, who rule as dictators, may get good temporary results, but they are only there while the *‘whip is wielded’* and they do not accomplish a long-lasting, spontaneous, self-motivated labour force. Neither does such a management style accomplish the righteousness of YHWH. Learn how to serve others, and they will also serve you.

Jam 5:1 *“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.*

2 *“Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.*

3 *“Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!*

4 *“Behold, the pay of the labourers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the*

ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 *"You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.*

6 *"You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you."*

Why does James speak out so strongly against this group of rich people? It is not against the fact that they are rich, but rather against the method by which they gained their riches.

They had withheld the wages of their labourers. They had cheated them, using their own superior positions against which the poorer folk were powerless. This is an abomination in the sight of YHWH. Be fair to those who work for you. Pay them wages that are fair according to the work that they do – and pay them on time.

Lev 19:13 *"... The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning."*

Deut 24:14 *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.*

15 *"You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he may not cry against you to the Lord and it become sin in you."*

As a result of the injunction of these Scriptures, I am careful to make sure that my workers are paid on the due day, and if there is any particular difficulty with the calculations of the payment, I try to ensure that they have sufficient to cover their needs until the problems can be resolved at the earliest possible convenience.

I believe in treating my labourers with respect, however lowly they might be, and having a good working relationship with them. It pays dividends, and it is the right thing to do before YHWH.

Duties of servants

Col 3:22 *“Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.*

23 *“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;*

24 *“Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ Whom you serve.*

25 *“For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”*

The passage is clear. Those who serve and work for others must do so heartily, giving of their best. We should not continually be on the lookout for our own *‘rights’*, like the right to have a tea break and a lunch break; the right to a particular wage; the right to all the regulations which are contained in the thick books which we all have to wade through from time to time!

Let us give a little **more** than our duty. Work a little longer when the need requires it. Be the first to volunteer for those extra duties without making demands. I believe that the Lord, who sees our heart in secret, will reward us openly in time to come. We are serving **the Lord** in our service for other people. **Let’s give it our best!**

(Eph 6:5-8 has a similar passage to the above.)

To the Roman soldiers, John the Baptist preached that they should **not**,

Luke 3:14 *“... take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and **be content with your wages.**”*

Contentment, especially regarding wages, is at times difficult for an employee to achieve. It is a heart issue. Money can become the source of great disputes at times.

Let us not be like those who are the first to call the labour unions. Rather, let us prove ourselves worthy of the wages we receive, and

hold the matter of personal financial struggles up to the Lord long before we gently approach management – if we feel such an approach is necessary. We should always show appreciation for anything we receive and be sure to have an attitude of contentment.

1Tim 6:1 *“Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of double honour so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against.*

2 *“And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved ...”*

Again, the teaching is simple and clear. Those who serve others should do so with a mind to give of their best, and also to show respect and honour to their masters - especially if they are believers. This is obviously dealing with **heart attitudes**. It should not be just an outward show of feigned obedience, but rather true faithfulness, humility and diligence.

I notice in the passage above that Paul says that the masters who are believers ‘*partake of the benefit...*’ and that this should cause the servant to serve even more! In other words, the servant is helping the master to make profits. **That is what business is all about**. Make your peace with it if you are an employee!

The masters carefully plan the business enterprise with a view to **making profits**, and to this end he hires labourers to work for him and help him to achieve these goals. The labourers should **not begrudge** the master his profits, and the master should **not hold back their pay**.

Many labourers find the principle of profit-making difficult to grasp, and often begrudge the owner his profits. Paul is warning here that the servants should be careful of their own attitudes in this regard.

Pray for YHWH’s blessing on your master’s business and home. The house of Potiphar was blessed because of Joseph, even though he was only a slave in the home (Gen 39:1-6). Joseph gave his best to his

master. The testimony of Joseph was that he was trustworthy, and consequently, his master, Potiphar, exalted him to the highest position, and put him in charge of all the affairs of his house.

Just think of the conditions under which Joseph worked. He was sold to Potiphar as a slave, remember – no pay, no benefits, no future, no possibility, humanly speaking, of ever seeing his family again. **Yet he gave his best!** He was a man of principle, and as such refused to bow to the temptations of sin. He lived an upright, uncompromising lifestyle, and this quickly showed itself in his attitude to work.

He did not consider the gross unfairness of his own situation to be a good enough reason to relax his godly vigil. Even when the tables seemed to turn even worse for him and he was thrown into an Egyptian jail for a crime he did not commit, he still refused to compromise. He still gave his best, and the jailhouse was blessed because of his presence. What a wonderful example to follow!

If you give your best, **you will be noticed**, and even if man stands in the way, YHWH will see to it that your continual diligence is rewarded – in His time. He **will** lift you up in **his time**, and His timing is always the best timing. Do not destroy YHWH's best plan for your life by wanting to get to the top before you are ready for it. Put your life and future into His hands. Exercise patience and trust in YHWH. He will not let you down.

Discipline of staff

This is one area that I recognise as imperative, but I do not like doing it. There are principles which apply to various areas where discipline is needed. For example, the two areas where I found it necessary to act strongly are for theft and rebellion.

I believe that it is always important to give the employee concerned a fair hearing. But if he is found to be guilty of either of the above, I dismiss them immediately without giving a second chance. Only in two exceptional cases of theft have I given a second chance, and this not without strong warnings and some means of punishment or other.

Theft

Naturally theft is more clear-cut than rebellion – which deals with a heart attitude. Rebellion is far more subtle and hard to pin down. I often prayed for wisdom in dealing fairly and correctly with staff.

Regarding these two areas of discipline, let us consider the following Scriptures:

Prov 29:24 *“He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life; He hears the oath but tells nothing.”*

Exod 20:15 *“Thou shalt not steal.”*

This commandment appears no less than seven times in the Scriptures, and the subject is raised at least forty times. Theft is a terrible thing. The devil is called a “thief” and a “liar”. When theft takes place within a group of people working together, the whole working environment becomes uncomfortable and suspicions are felt everywhere.

Whenever we have had such situations, I have prayed earnestly and publicly in the workplace for the thief to be discovered and taken out from among us, and every time my prayers have been answered – sometimes in the most remarkable ways. The thief has been found and dismissed, and the situation has returned to the peaceful trusting environment that we enjoy working in.

Once, when we had a particular spate of theft, I called all the labourers together and said to them,

“One of you who are standing here is a thief, and all the others are innocent.”

(I had a strong suspicion as to who the thief was.)

“All are looking at me so innocently just like the twelve disciples looked at Jesus on the night of the last supper when He had said to them, ‘One of you will betray Me’, and all twelve including Judas said, ‘Is it me Lord?’

“Theft is a terrible thing. How is it that a man’s heart can become so hard that he can receive a gift of employment with the one hand, thereby supplying food for his household, and with the other hand steal from the person who is feeding him? No, we do not want anyone like this working for us. This one is troubling all of us just like Achan in the Bible troubled the nation of Israel when he stole things that should have been destroyed at Jericho. Because of that one man’s sin, the army of Israel was defeated by their enemies, and many people died.

“It is the same here. Many people are affected. Suspensions are everywhere, and the working environment is not pleasant. The one person’s sin is making things unpleasant for all of us. Now I am going to pray that the Lord will cause the trouble that this man is giving us, to turn upon himself. I am going to pray that the Lord will expose you and remove you from our company.

“If you wish to repent of your sin, you may come and see me in my office, and I will pray with you and nothing more will be said. However, if you do not repent, then may the Lord do to you as I have said.”

I earnestly prayed in front of the assembled factory workers and then left the matter. The next morning the person whom I had suspected, came to me, looking troubled indeed. He told me that he had some troubles at home and would like to resign immediately. I accepted his resignation, and he left, and, yes, you guessed it, the spate of theft stopped. When we act upon the Word of YHWH, we always see results.

Rebellion

1Sam 15:23 *“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry ...”*

Rebellion is a most destructive sin. It permeates a whole group of people; defiling, destroying wherever it goes. Bitterness can be closely associated with this evil heart attitude, and we see how this can defile not only individuals but whole families, even generation upon generation of nations.

Heb 12:15 *“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it may be defiled,*

16 *“That there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birth right for a single meal.*

17 *“For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.”*

This story of Esau’s bitterness is an interesting one. You might like to read it for yourself in Gen 25:27-34 and Gen 27:1-45. Esau grew to hate his brother intensely. He had made a foolish decision in a moment of weakness, and his brother Jacob, aware of the significance of the birth right, took advantage of the situation, buying Esau’s birth right from him for a pot of stew. A root of bitterness crept into Esau’s life and he started to have murderous thoughts towards his brother.

Trace the history of these two brothers if you will, right to their present-day descendants, some four thousand years later, and you still have the nations in the Middle East, bitterly opposed to each other with a deep-seated hatred. No politician can smooth those troubled waters.

Bitterness, which develops into rebellion, must be dealt with immediately.

It must be routed out and destroyed in one of two ways. Firstly, repentance and forgiveness needs to be sought from both parties. If this cannot be accomplished, the employee needs to find other employment, for it is unprofitable to continue working in a hateful and bitter environment.

The following Scripture puts this whole principle in a nutshell.

Prov 26:20 "For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.

21 *"Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.*

22 *"The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.*

23 *"Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross are burning lips and a wicked heart.*

24 *"He who hates disguises it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart.*

25 *"When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart.*

26 *"Though his hatred covers itself with guile, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.*

27 *"He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.*

28 *"A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin."*

This is why I do not allow thieves or rebellious, lying people to continue working for me. They defile the whole working environment, and, like a cancer, need to be removed as early as possible lest the whole body becomes diseased and 'major surgery' is needed or 'death' is imminent.

Observe, if you will, the rebellions that have taken place within companies or even on a national scale. They are almost always stirred up by a small group of rebels who have a chip on their shoulders and with whom it is difficult or impossible to negotiate.

It is also true that they always try to get as many other people involved as they possibly can, often by force, and they claim that *'the people'* are not satisfied with the prevailing conditions. Yet, if you remove the key players, the whole uprising wanes, and everyone is at peace and satisfied again.

Naturally, the leadership must always be humble enough to listen to people's requests so that a *'French Revolution'* type of situation does not arise where the leadership were entirely unaware of, and unconcerned with the difficulties that their people were facing.

We as leaders must have our eyes open to the real needs of our employees. Nevertheless, when we have done what is right and fair, and a rebellious person still stirs up strife, then such a person should be dismissed, as the whole workforce can be poisoned by one man's disgruntlement.

Discipline, Judgement and Unity

Other cases of discipline are less severe, such as mistakes made on the job. Anyone can make a mistake, but it is also important that discipline be carried out in some measure or other to instil the importance of quality output in the workforce.

However, it is of vital importance that good, clear judgement is made. I do not believe that employers should act as dictators at their workplaces. We also have a Master in heaven, and one day it will be us who will have to appear before **His** great judgement throne.

Some feel that the Scriptures say that we should not judge one another, and thus they avoid situations where judgement is needed. If we study such passages (such as Mat 7:1, 2) we find that it is speaking about a negative judgement, in other words, unfair criticism one of another –

the illustration given of taking a speck out of a brother's eye whilst a log remains in our own.

However, there is a place for judgement within the context of godly Christian living. Paul, in admonishing the Corinthian Christians, says to them:

1Cor 6:2 *“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?”*

3 *“Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?”*

5 *“...Is it so, that there is no wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren?”*

We must be able to gain sufficient wisdom to judge righteously. Some who are not involved in business might find it strange that I speak here of judgement. Actually, most employers of staff have to make decisions requiring some kind of judgement or other, virtually every day.

In fact, the one thing that I pray for more than any other thing, and I pray it daily, is for YHWH to give me a heart of wisdom so as to judge matters fairly and correctly. If we become leaders of men, we also automatically become a judge, whether we like it or not.

I take comfort in the knowledge that king Solomon prayed to YHWH for wisdom and YHWH was so pleased with that prayer, that He not only gave him wisdom, but also many other blessings. YHWH is pleased with prayers for wisdom. He instructs us to pray for wisdom:

Jam 1:5 *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

6 *“But let him ask in faith without any doubting ...”*

What an open invitation.

Prov 2:1 *“My son, if you will receive My words and treasure My*

commandments within you,

- 2 *“Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding;*
- 3 *“For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding;*
- 4 *“If you SEEK HER AS SILVER AND SEARCH FOR HER AS FOR HIDDEN TREASURES;*
- 5 *“Then you will discern the fear of YHWH and discover the knowledge of God.*
- 6 *“For YHWH GIVES WISDOM; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
- 7 *“He **stores up sound wisdom for the upright**; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,*
- 8 *“Guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones.*
- 9 *“Then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course.*
- 10 *“For **wisdom will enter your heart** and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;*
- 11 *“Discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you,*
- 12 *“To **deliver you from the way of evil**, from the man who speaks perverse things.”*

This is a most wonderful passage, so full of promise, so full of hope. If we earnestly search for wisdom from YHWH, it will not be withheld from us. Oh, how we need to have wisdom in this dark, scheming, crafty wicked world in which we live. How dark the world is! But here is an offer of light from YHWH Himself. Truly,

Psalm 119:105 *“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

Do not stand alone in judgement. Seek advice, and rather let two sit together in agreement in any matter of judgement. You will find that,

Eccl 4:9 *“Two are (much) better than one ...”*

I used my Board of Directors as a backup for any difficult judgements that I had to make. How good it is to have a group of godly men to back me whenever difficult decisions have to be made. I just say that I have to refer this matter to the Board of Directors, and that gives ample time for thought before a more thorough discussion takes place.

Don't be in a hurry to make big decisions. Rather purposefully give more time for thought even if you are already sure of what you have to do.

Judge with mercy. Rather let a wrongdoer trip himself up than judging too harshly - especially for a first or second offence. Teach the offender the principles of Scripture that you are applying, and make sure that he understands clearly that you will in no way compromise the principles by which you operate.

Working conditions may be negotiable, but principles are not negotiable.

In closing this section, I should point out the truth of two more verses of Scripture:

Prov 30:29 *“There are three things which are stately in their march, Even four which are stately when they walk:*

30 *“The lion which is mighty among beasts and does not retreat before any.*

31 *“The strutting cock, the male goat also, and **a king when his army is with him.**”*

Just consider the thoughts expressed here. King Solomon is obviously not much interested in the lions, cocks or goats. They are merely used to illustrate a point: how majestic they look, and with what confidence they walk about. Similarly, a king, whose army is **with him**, can walk

with confidence. In the same way, when a manager knows that he has a team who is **with him all the way**, he is able to be confident in his business endeavours.

It is imperative to have a unity of purpose and vision. Continual negative undercurrents within a business environment are tremendously destructive. King David emphasised the positive attributes of such a unity.

Psalm 133:1 *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!...”*

Unity is an extremely powerful force, and its virtues can be studied in many places in the Scriptures. Work towards unity. Prize it above getting your own way. It can be one of the **most valuable assets of your business!**

The third part of Chapter 10 to follow –

“RELATIONSHIPS

Customers and suppliers”