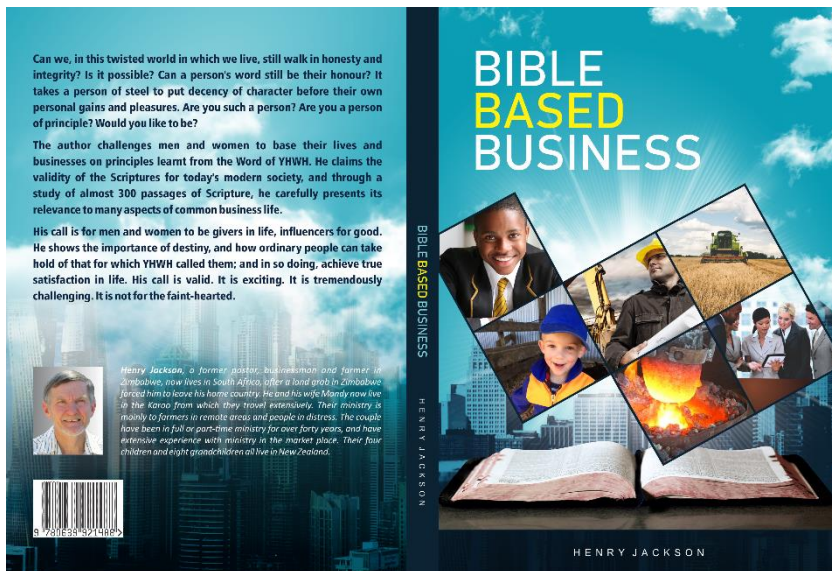


Herewith the third part of **chapter 10** of my book

Bible based business



This article (the third 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 (c)

Customers and Suppliers

Apart from dealing in integrity, humility, diligence and the other principles already mentioned, I believe that there are some principles which relate specifically to those with whom we have business dealings; both in the purchasing of supplies and the selling of our products. Without other people who supply us with raw materials or who purchase from us, we would have no businesses. It is therefore important for us to realise that **we need other people**.

Prov 18:1 *“He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.”*

It is foolish to think that one can live a fulfilled life without interaction with other people. Nevertheless, interaction often comes with its own difficulties, and we regularly have to deal with people of different characters, opinions, temperaments and principles of business.

At times, such interaction can be difficult, and one’s tendency might be to avoid all interaction with certain people. Such action would naturally also, not only cause a loss of business which they might have brought, but more importantly, one would lose out on the added richness of character-building which such interaction might have brought upon one’s own life.

Prov 27:17 *“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”*

This is a significant Scripture in showing the value of relationships, even those coarse, difficult-to-handle, relationships. It builds character, and it is character that tempers us and gives us value.

What should our attitudes be towards our customers on the one hand, and our suppliers on the other? Let us consider a number of verses of

Scripture which apply generally to our relationships with other people, and then see how we can apply them in our interaction with our customers and suppliers (let's call the combination of these two, 'clients').

Rom 12:16 *"Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.*

17 *"Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*

18 *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*

19 *"Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for as it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay', says the Lord.*

20 *"But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.'*

21 *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

There are three obvious lessons in these few verses.

Lesson 1

The first is that we should not try to show ourselves to be the 'wise guy' by trying to outsmart our clients. Yes, we might know more than they do. Must we let them know? Why not rather be humble in our approach by honouring and respecting them for who they are?

We do not have to buy their products or agree to sell goods to them. Nevertheless, there is no need to be harsh or unreasonable. Kindness and politeness does not cost anything except for a little patience at times, along with self-control! Never be too proud to speak a kind word to the lowly worker or salesman.

Lesson 2

The second lesson is how we should deal with difficult clients. Paul writes that we should,

Rom 12:18 *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”*

In his letter to Timothy Paul adds some valuable thoughts.

2Tim 2:24 *“And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,*

25 *“with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition...”*

At times I have come across salesmen who have argued with me, trying to convince me that the product I need should be like this or that. I have then had to be quite firm, yet kind, and tell them plainly,

“With respect, sir, you do not know the operation or needs of my company. I do not need what you are trying to sell me, and will therefore not be buying what you are trying to sell to me.”

It is annoying for a customer who wants to buy something from a supplier, to have an argumentative salesman. As far as it depends on us, we should be at peace - listening carefully to our customers’ requirements, and doing our best to supply them with exactly that which they are asking for. If we cannot supply the exact product, tell him so,

“We cannot supply you with exactly what you are asking for, however, the closest to it is this or that.”

Then let him make his own decisions. We should not sell a product which we know the customer does not need, if we also know that he is unaware of the fact that this product is not exactly what he thinks it is. That is dishonest!

In the early 1970s I took out an insurance policy. I signed the documents, having told the agent exactly what I wanted. Some years later I found out, to my detriment, that he had included a clause which I had specifically opposed. As a young apprentice, I had no idea of legal

jargon, and he obviously realised that, and taking advantage of the situation, cheated me.

Never take advantage of a man when you see that he does not fully understand every detail of that which you are selling. Do your best to give him the best advantage, even if this might mean no sale for you.

I also remember how a person, who repaired something for me which he was also hiring from me, brought me the invoices for approval, having taken its value off remuneration due to me. I was only nineteen at the time, (recently orphaned and feeling quite alone). I noticed immediately that most of the invoices of goods supposedly spent on the repairs, were hardly legible, and some that I could read consisted of tools and equipment that obviously had nothing to do with the repairs.

I kept quiet, approved the invoices, and loved and cared for that family for many years. But, though I forgave them in my heart, I never forgot the fact that they took advantage of me when I was at a weak and vulnerable point in my life. I took the lesson for myself to remember for my own future dealings.

Do not take advantage of weak and disadvantaged people. Rather go out of your way to help them. Rather be at a loss yourself.

Lesson 3

The third lesson we learn from the passage in Romans is to not pay back wrong for wrong. We do find in the business world that people wrong us. I have been wronged many times. I have had to write off several long-outstanding debts. We must be careful that our own attitude in such circumstances does not become bitter and unforgiving. Let us not take vengeance ourselves. Let the Lord repay the evil done to us, and do not desire their downfall. Remember what King Solomon said:

Prov 24:17 *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;*

18 *“Lest the Lord see it and be displeased, and turn His anger away from him.”*

Always act in a friendly way even to the most difficult of customers. Do not rejoice over someone’s calamity - even though they are wicked. YHWH often speaks against the wicked, yet He says,

Ezek 18:23 *“... Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord YHWH, “rather that he should turn from his ways and live...?”*

It is true that we might profit at times as a direct result of the calamity or downfall of another, however, this is second-best. The best way is for every person and every company to prosper. Therefore, we should look for the good of another, and know that YHWH will in turn reward us with good. A “win-win” business transaction is always the best.

The fourth part of Chapter 10 to follow –

“RELATIONSHIPS -

Gaining from reproof”