

My Business

My Mission

Study Guide

My Business, My Mission: Study Guide by Renita Reed. © 2009, Partners Worldwide, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Dear Friend and Partner,

Thank you for investing your time and energy to read the book, *My Business, My Mission: Fighting Poverty Through Partnerships*. I am also so glad that you are utilizing this study guide to dive even deeper into the rich lessons and insights you will glean from the stories in the book.

Indeed, there is a quiet but radical revolution happening in the global marketplace. Entrepreneurs around the world are changing the lives of tens of thousands in the most marginalized communities on earth. Their mission: to love God, and serve their neighbor by using their business skills in the marketplace. Their work is not typically viewed as ministry. But by creating wealth and providing sustainable jobs, they are freeing people from the shackles of poverty. The stories you'll read are stories of struggle and pain, vision and astonishing tenacity, slow but steady growth, and, in some cases, exceptional success.

This study guide can be used by individuals or small groups, to help facilitate your discussions and reflections on *My Business, My Mission*. The guide is organized into eight sessions that correspond with the eight major sections and regions of the world covered in the book. The objective of this study guide is to help you better understand and develop your personal (or business/group) mission related to:

- Business as a calling
- Doing business as ministry
- Personal faith and your business
- Mutual transformation of the poor and the rich
- Healthy cross-cultural partnerships

I know you are called to business, just as pastors, missionaries, social workers or doctors are called to their particular profession. I hope you will be inspired and encouraged by the people in the stories, that you will be challenged and stretched by the lessons learned, and that you will be eager to engage in the work that God has prepared in advance for you to do.

Join the movement of those seeking "Business as ministry for a world without poverty."

Gratefully yours,



Doug Seebeck,
Executive Director of Partners Worldwide and co-author of *My Business, My Mission*

To download the reading materials mentioned in this study guide and for further resources related to My Business, My Mission please go to www.mybusiness-mymission.com . To find opportunities to get engaged or to support entrepreneurs around the world working to end poverty, go to www.partnersworldwide.org .

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Partners Worldwide

The Vision

1. One of Partners Worldwide's key premises is that business can be a calling. At the end of this study guide, we will encourage you to articulate your own calling. But before we begin, let's come to an understanding of what a calling is. Michael Novak, in his book *Business as a Calling*, states that there are four characteristics of a calling:

- Each calling is unique to each individual.
- A calling requires certain preconditions. It requires more than desires; it requires talent . . . For a calling to be right, it must fit our abilities. Another precondition is love—not just love of the final product but . . . love of the long hours, frustrations, small steps forward, struggles: unless these too are welcomed with a certain joy, the claim to being called has a hollow ring.
- A true calling reveals its presence by the enjoyment and sense of renewed energies its practice yields us. Enjoying what we do is not always a feeling of enjoyment; it is sometimes the gritty resolution a man or woman shows in doing what must be done.
- Callings are not usually easy to discover.

2. Many Scripture texts refer to people being called to serve. One is Ephesians 2:10, which says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Notice the words "prepared in advance." These words imply that God gives us gifts or talents. As you work through this study guide, ask yourself these three questions:

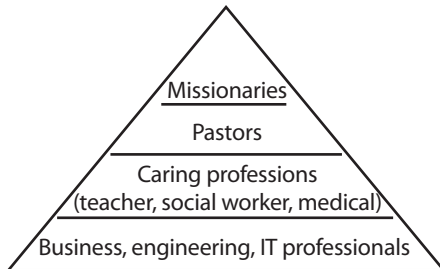
- What makes me unique?
- What are my talents and gifts?
- What brings me joy?

3. On page 10 Doug Seebeck writes, "I came to see that what they lacked was not ability but acreage." Think through this statement and its implications, first from the perspective of a North American and then from the perspective of someone from a developing country. How are the two perspectives different? How are they similar?

4. On page 11, Doug makes a deal with God, later feels convicted about it, and then decides to obey God's call without conditions. Deal-making or testing certainly has precedents in the Bible: Abraham, Gideon, Hannah, and even God all say, "If you . . . then . . ." Was Doug correct in his convictions? Is there an appropriate time to make a deal with God?

5. Twice Gail Seebeck gave birth under dangerous conditions during political turmoil. You may wonder about Doug and Gail's choices and priorities, especially when they resulted in the family living in risky situations. What do you think about following God as it relates to children and safety? Might there be differing views on this issue depending on whether you are in a developed country or in a developing country? Why or why not?

6. Read the quote from John Vander Ploeg on page 13 that begins, "Doug, here's the thing." Below is a picture of the hierarchy John describes. How does this relate to your church? Does John's observation ring true for how people in various professions are treated? If so, is this a cultural issue or a worldwide phenomenon?



7. John's thoughts continue: "Is there a way for businesspeople to become personally involved and use their management expertise, their leadership, and their financial and business skills to become part of the solution to ending poverty, instead of being seen as part of the problem?" (p. 13). What are your thoughts on this?

"Business is, bar none, the best real hope of the poor. And that is one of the noblest callings inherent in business activities: to raise up the poor."

Michael Novak
Business as a Calling

8. "In order for us to end poverty, we must connect the rich and poor directly" (p. 14). This statement brought about what Doug calls his "conversion." To some degree, this statement is simply common sense. But when you dig a little deeper, it's easier said than done. What are the barriers that keep rich and poor from connecting?

9. What ideas in this section most excited you? Bring those thoughts to the group.

Prayer

Creator God, thank you for forming each and every person as unique image-bearers of you. Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for us so we might live. Holy Spirit, please work in us to discover and fulfill the calling we have from God. Amen.



The Context

1. "One of the first obstacles to breaking the cycle of poverty is in the mind . . . a powerful cultural lie needs to be exposed and renounced: that it is God's will for the poor to be poor" (p. 17). Where have you encountered this lie? How can or should Christians expose and renounce it?

2. The quote continues: "What I did not expect . . . was the discovery that the rich were also being held hostage by beliefs that were equally false and just as oppressive." What "false beliefs" is Doug referring to? Do they apply only to rich Christians or to all rich people?

3. Do Christians perpetuate any other lies about the rich and the poor?

4. "Marketplace missionaries" and missionary/entrepreneurs are mentioned on pages 18 and 19. Who are they? Who can be a marketplace missionary? Business owners only? Secretaries? Factory employees? Read page 178 for more on "marketplace ministers." (See also Appendix A; if possible, watch segment #1 of the DVD "Transformation in the Marketplace with Ed Silvano." Available for purchase at www.faithandworkresources.com)

5. Page 18 refers to Thomas Friedman's book *The World Is Flat*, which states that Africa's greatest need is "patient capital." The following quote is from Friedman's article, "Patient Capital for an Africa That Can't Wait:"

Africa needs many things, but most of all it needs capitalists who can start and run legal companies. More Bill Gateses, fewer foundations. People grow out of poverty when they create small businesses that employ their neighbors. Nothing else lasts. Whenever you read about capital flowing into Africa, though, it tends to be from big lenders like the World Bank, which have very strict criteria and work on big projects, or from micro-financiers, giving out \$50 to a woman to buy a sewing machine. Microfinance has a role, but many people don't want the pressure of being an entrepreneur. They want the stability and prosperity of a job created by capitalist risk takers and innovators. See India. In some ways what Africa needs most today is more "patient" capital to spur its would-be capitalists. Patient capital has all the discipline of venture capital—demanding a return, and therefore rigor in how it is deployed—but expecting a return that is more in the 5 to 10 percent range, rather than the 35 percent that venture capitalists look for, and with a longer payback period.

Friedman, Thomas. "Patient Capital for an Africa That Can't Wait."

Describe your thoughts and reactions to this quote.

Milt Kuyers: Redefining Success

1. Milt Kuyers shares some personal and painful stories of family and debt. In developing countries the burden of supporting family members is often great, especially if one is perceived to be successful. This burden can destroy businesses and relationships. In North America we tend to avoid mixing business and family or friends. In developing countries, a family member is often treated as an outcast or shamed if they don't take care of family members or friends. How should Christians approach this complex cultural issue?

2. On page 23 Milt says, "The major problem for the poor in Milwaukee was not finding jobs, but holding onto them. Does this contradict Doug Seebeck's earlier statement about Bengali farmers not needing ability, but acreage?"

3. Milt describes his perseverance in forming a relationship with Pastor Carrington in spite of initial obstacles. How can we tell the difference between God closing a door and Satan trying to block our efforts?

4. On page 28 Milt says, "There is no biblical precedent for self-indulgence." Increasing numbers of Christians say they don't believe in "retirement." Read page 167 for another reference to this. What do you think about the concept of retirement? What about saving for your retirement years: how much is wise, and how much is "excessive?" This doesn't seem to be an issue in developing countries. Why is that?

5. "The strength that businesspeople bring to the table is that they have had a lot of experience with failure . . . Success in only 1 out of 10 ventures is not grounds for discouragement; it is better than never having made the attempt" (p. 28). What can Christians in other professions learn from the perseverance of business owners?

6. What are some lessons that you have learned about personal debt, reconciliation, or perseverance? Bring your thoughts to the group.

John Matheri: Sewing School Pastor

On page 36 Timothy Stoner writes, "John is a pastor in his business before he is one in his church." John Matheri's life displays an integration of faith and work that seems difficult for many Christians to achieve. What is the impact on life when there is this integration? What happens when there is a disconnect between faith and life?



Lord, we are mysteriously and wonderfully made as whole people by you. Help us to restore wholeness to your world, to people, to organizations, and to creation, reconciling all that is broken.

Nicaragua

Don and Bonnie Vos: Farmer to Farmer

1. Page 54 says, "Continual handouts rob the poor of something precious: the human need for self-respect and dignity." Reread the entire section. How does this relate to the idea that all people are created in the image of God?
2. The book often states that gifts or relief efforts can cause damage rather than aiding economic development. Page 102 says, "You can only move toward that place of self-support after mercy has pulled you from the brink of death." What does that mean? What are the driving motivations for North Americans who want to give? What are the impacts on those who receive? What are some healthy ways to approach this dilemma while still answering God's call to help the poor, to teach our children compassion, and so on? (*Refer to Appendix B: Healthy Versus Unhealthy Dependency.*)
3. On page 55 Don Vos contrasts the work that his family is doing in Nicaragua with short-term mission projects. Short-term missions is a \$6 billion-a-year industry. What's the net result? What are the pros and cons of business partnerships and of short-term missions? (*See Appendix D: "Short-term Missions" by Abram Huyser-Honig*)

Roberto and Rosa Espinoza: Business in the Barrio

1. Pastor Ricardo Hernandez prayed, ". . . Don't just pray that God will help the needy—maybe you're the answer to your own prayers" (p. 59). It is often said that an important component of prayer is how it changes us. How has prayer changed you?
2. Another theme that repeats itself in this book is stated by Roberto Espinoza, "Relationships are everything . . . Strategic relationships are even better" (p. 62). This is a difficult thing to hear, especially in a North American context where time is so valuable. Developing strategic relationships doesn't fit into our "quick-fix" mentality. What does this mean for us? For our church? For our approach to poverty?
3. North Americans approach relationships very differently from people in developing countries (refer to Doug's statement on page 73). How might these cultural differences impede relationships? What can we learn from each other?

Santos Apolonia Garcia Lopez: Transformation in the Pulperia

1. Page 70 states, "Though it would have been easy, Apolonia did not allow her growing business to become the consuming focus of her life." What do you think drove that decision? Couldn't one argue that it would have been wiser for Apolonia to do whatever was necessary for her business to grow and become even more successful?

2. One missionary who moved back from West Africa to North America observed a high level of unhappiness in North American Christians. She said, "In my conversations with people, it's not at all surprising for [them] to be reduced to tears because of how overwhelmed they feel by life. This was not the case in West Africa, where the fight for survival was palpable and right in front of us. Africans seemed to be more content in their life, as difficult as it was." This joy seems apparent in Apolonia as well. What might be some underlying reasons for joy in the face of hardship?

Reflections

1. This reflection focuses on the idea of bondage. Isaiah 58:1-12 discusses what a true fast is and tells how to break the bond of oppression. Review this text.

2. Page 72 says, "... many farmers feel condemned for taking loans because their church teaches that Christians should never incur debt." Where might this idea come from? Certainly there are Bible texts that support being debt-free. Romans 13:8 says, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another." Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Other passages, however, acknowledge that borrowing is sometimes necessary. Matthew 5:42 says, "Give to the one who asks you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." Where does or should the church stand on borrowing and debt?

3. Page 73: "Our North American partners, especially, need to faithfully and confidently take up the supernatural weapon of prayer as a vital tool for economic development." What does Doug Seebeck mean here? How can prayer be a tool for economic development?

4. What other things struck you while reading this chapter? Share with the group.

"No matter the occupation, Christians who work at secular jobs need to know that they are not perpetual privates in God's army just because they have not gone to seminary. They need to discover that they have the potential to become full-fledged generals whose ministry is in the heart of the city, instead of inside a religious building. It is imperative that they realize that not only is it OK to do ministry in the marketplace, but that God has explicitly called them and anointed them for it."

Ed Silvoso,
Anointed for Business

Prayer

Lord, open our hearts, minds, and hands to the poor among us. Help us to truly love our neighbor as we love ourselves, not doing anything we wouldn't want done to us—even with good intent.

Uganda

Timothy Jokkene: Financier to the Poor

1. Page 84 says, “Business logic told him the idea was a very bad risk . . . on the other hand, his friend was a Christian, directing a Christian NGO, and the need was desperate.” In situations such as the one Timothy Jokkene found himself in, should we follow our head or our heart? The answer is not black or white—sometimes we choose to follow our head; sometimes we follow our heart. But how do we handle possible guilt feelings when we follow our heart and the project fails, or when we follow our head and have to say no to someone?

2. On page 85 Timothy Stoner writes, “. . . what I want to do most of all is beg for forgiveness . . . for those in the West who claim to be the face of charity but live, oh so well, off poverty.” Ralph Edmond from Haiti states, “We can’t depend on something coming from abroad. All the outside help has not improved the country.” How do you react to these two statements?

3. What do you think about foreign aid? Some reports indicate that only pennies on the dollar actually reach people in need. Does this reinforce Partners Worldwide’s model of strategic long-term relationships?

4. “In Africa they say that one job feeds five people” (page 86). When we help develop businesses, we are helping families and children have access to medicine, school fees, and more. On page 108, Doug Seebeck writes, “When businesspeople in the U.S. invest in businesspeople like Timothy . . . they are indirectly helping to care for thousands of orphans in a healthy and sustainable way. . . .” What struggles do you have with Christians viewing missions through business?

5. On page 90 Timothy admits, “Some of the loans are not recoverable.” Life expectancy, medical issues, and animism play key roles in the success or failure of businesses in developing countries. For example, in West Africa when someone dies, business owners in the family are expected to pay a greater portion of the funeral expenses, which are high due to the common belief that if a person is not buried properly, others in the family will die. How should we react when differing beliefs result in financial loss?

Hope Okeny: Driven to Compassion

1. The majority of businesses that are supported by Partners Worldwide are owned by women. Yet less than 10% of their North American partners are women. Why might this be, and what can be done about it?

2. In Hope Okeny’s story, Timothy Stoner writes, “The depth and the scope of the needs dwarfed her abilities. It was easy to convince herself that there was really nothing she could do to make a difference” (p. 98) How often do we feel like quitting before we even start to help others? What motivates some to persevere despite this feeling?

Reflections

1. Doug Seebeck writes, "What if an army of Christians had arrived in one jet airplane after another at the Entebbe airport, then moved in convoys to the north—not to fight, but to be present, to make a big scene, to expose the evil to the rest of the world" (p.105). Can you visualize this scene? What a powerful statement it would make! Advocacy is one of Partners Worldwide's "three pillars." What is our role as global citizens and advocates?

2. Page 105 says, "As a businessperson and a follower of Christ, Timothy could not separate his corporate responsibility from his community commitment." If businesspeople began to see themselves as ministers in their local community, what would that look like?

3. Doug writes, "Our dual-commitment principle is one I trust we can continue to maintain because it prevents us from becoming (out of compassion) another NGO in which donors fund a staff of professionals to do the work for them" (p. 106). Does this type of structure seem idealistic, or is it reasonable to assume that the work of economic development can be done by volunteers?

"I believe the only long-term solution to world poverty is business. That is because business produces goods, and businesses produce jobs. And businesses continue producing goods year after year, and continue providing jobs and paying wages year after year. Therefore if we are ever going to see long-term solutions to world poverty, I believe it will come through starting and maintaining productive, profitable business."

Wayne Grudem,

Business for the Glory of God

4. On page 108 Francis Ssenyonjo says, "We want you to fight with us, not for us, in our war on poverty. No, we never want you to think you need to fight for us—that takes away our dignity. But, if you fight with us, and we understand each other at a deep level, then we can go a long way together." North Americans tend to want to fix things. How can we learn to fight with people in need?

5. How can you apply the ideas in this chapter to your life, especially as it relates to your role at work, at church, or in your community? Please share with the group.

Prayer

Dear Lord, your love made it so clear and so simple: we are to "be Christ" wherever we live and move and have our being. Burn brightly in us, Holy Spirit, so that Christ will shine through us and the world will be irresistibly drawn to you.

Haiti

Ernso Jean-Louis: Bearing Much Fruit

1. “Ernso tells us that he believes his call and the call of others like him is to change Haiti not only with the gospel, but with business. He observes that missionaries have done a marvelous job of personal conversion but have had virtually no impact on society. . . . If the story you tell the unemployed leaves them still starving and unemployed, you have not brought them very good news” (p. 116). For years, missionaries have only been bringing the good news of salvation. Has this been the wrong approach? Might a North American and a person from a developing country have a different view of this? What might be the perceived obstacles to developing a new breed of missionaries? (Refer to Appendix C for more discussion of this topic.)

2. On page 120 Ernso Jean-Louis says, “It was ‘hard work to overcome cultural differences.’” The feelings that accompany these cultural differences are often frustration, annoyance, disappointment, hurt, and sadness. These are painful emotions, and it takes work to frame them as cultural differences and not as personal attacks. How should we react when we encounter disappointments when we’re trying to “do good”?

3. Timothy Stoner writes, “In an entrepreneurial context, fruitful Christians are those who impart their business skills to others who can create enterprises that provide the blessing of employment. And they do so through the love, ability, and energy Christ gives them to display the Father’s compassion for the poor and needy” (p. 123). How can we encourage our youth in regard to business? What about older business owners? How do we help old and young use their entrepreneurial gifts in a way that grows the kingdom of God?

Ralph Edmond: Community Builder

1. Corruption occurs often in developing nations as people fight for survival, but there certainly are ethical problems in North America as well. On page 126 Ralph Edmond says, “But who is stealing first, the government who misuses the money, or the business owner who keeps the money?” How should Christians operate when we don’t approve of how people use “our” money (government, churches, business owners who take large bonuses for themselves, and so on)? Understanding the implications of operating in a corrupt environment is important for North Americans; understanding the implications of participating in this environment is important for those facing these situations. Advocacy, prayer, encouragement, and understanding need to be part of any relationship where this is an issue.

2. On page 127 Dave Smies “mentioned that he and his wife, Deb, had decided to give 50% of their earnings to God.” Later in the book we read about a couple who gives an even higher percentage. The Barna Research Group tells us that in 2007 only 5% of adults tithed. How should we decide how much to give away? Do we truly live as if everything we have belongs to God?

3. On page 129 Ralph Edmond defines mentoring as “two people sharing their lives.” Often when Partners Worldwide staff talk with people about becoming a mentor, they wonder if they will be able to relate to someone from the developing world, or if they have anything to teach. What do you think of Ralph’s definition?

4. What does it mean to “let God be involved” in a business? How might this impact wages, product quality, employee benefits, transparency, decentralization, and other aspects?

5. On page 132 Ralph Edmond makes a powerful statement. “I’m not worried about whether Haiti is going to be changed. Now what I realize is that if what I am doing changes others, I will be changed. Whether Haiti is changed is God’s issue.” Discuss this statement.

6. Page 132 says, “If we build strong families, we can build a nation.” How can each of us participate in that process?

"The good news of the gospel becomes real when the unemployed get jobs . . . the hearts of the poor are opened up to the claims of Jesus when they are given hope as they tangibly experience the love of God."

John Perkins

Reflections

1. Speaking of Hugo Philemy, Doug Seebeck states, “His success increased his personal risk” (p. 135). This is a very real issue in developing countries. When we give gifts to people or walk alongside someone whose business succeeds, their personal safety can become an issue. What can we do in situations like that?

2. Madame Lefèvre pays her employees double what their peers earn in the marketplace. This would not be considered a good business practice in many areas, but God is blessing her business with great growth. Do we need to revisit the way we “reward” people who work with/for us?

3. Review the survey results on page 137. How do these numbers strike you, both in terms of sustainability and as the work of the church in developing countries?

4. What were your “Aha” moments during this chapter? Share with the group.



Father, forgive us for treating the poor as charity cases. Help us to see our neighbors with your eyes as people full of beauty and unlimited potential. Help us to be a source of encouragement as they develop their gifts.

The Philippines

The Context

Tim Stoner, speaking to Doug Seebeck, says, "You said we wanted to have a realistic picture. We know that it isn't all success. We know how painful the partnership journey can be, and we want those who get involved to have a realistic perspective." In the church we often want to hear good news from people working in developing countries. We want to hear the numbers of people converted, numbers of new jobs, loan repayment rates, new churches planted, etc. We don't really want to hear the bad news. People working in developing countries are often unwilling to share the bad news because they don't trust that partners will stay with them through the bad or that they really want to know the "good, the bad, and the ugly." How do we bridge this gap?

Tito Contado: Agriculturalist to Entrepreneur

1. Page 147 says, "Paul began receiving angry letters accusing him of having a patronizing, colonialist attitude of mistrust toward Filipinos." Those words show the pain involved for both parties. North American and European Christians share a history that includes colonization, devastation of people groups, promotion of slavery, and so on. Colonization only ended in many countries in the 1960s. This makes for very fresh memories and very real issues that need to be explored and not avoided. How might this history affect partnerships, and what can be done to heal past hurts?

2. We are called upon to be peacemakers. Yet to get to peace, we often have to go through conflict. Avoiding conflict is natural, but it usually is not healthy, nor does it resolve the problem. Christians must learn how to handle conflict if we want to reach justice or reconciliation. The website www.mediate.com lists some principles of effective conflict resolution:

- Think before reacting.
- Listen actively.
- Assure a fair process.
- Attack the problem.
- Accept responsibility.
- Use direct communication.
- Look for common interests.
- Focus on the future.
- Find options for mutual gain.

Discuss which of these principles might be the most difficult for you to enact.

3. On page 151 Tito Contado says, "Success in business is not measured by how much you make but how much you have helped others advance God's kingdom in the world." That's not a common definition of success. Do you agree with it?

4. The story of Tito Contado and the General Secretary (GS) continues after the book ended. Tito ended up forgiving the total debt of the GS and taking the debt on himself so that the GS and his wife would not be jailed. 1 Corinthians 6:7 says, "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?" This ideal would be very difficult for most people around the world to practice, yet it can lead to reconciliation. Reflect on the choices you have when you are wronged.

Reflections

1. Page 153 quotes Peter Drucker as saying, "All of our best-laid plans must eventually degenerate into hard work." Ecclesiastes 7:8 says, "The end of the matter is better than the beginning, and patience is better than pride." New beginnings and new plans are exciting. Then comes the work. This is where calling fits in. Are you ready to roll up your sleeves in the areas where you feel called to serve?

2. "We exhaust ourselves fighting the battles on our own strength. The apostle Paul makes it very plain that prayer tears down strongholds. . . . But prayer also serves to build us up in strength, hope and love" (p. 153). In the heat of a battle, we often forget to pray. Our partners in developing countries often say the most important thing that they need is prayer and encouragement. How can you participate in that?

3. How can you apply lessons learned from this chapter to your life? Please share with the group.



Lord, we put on the full armor of God once again: salvation, righteousness, truth, peace, the Spirit, and faith. We are renewed and ready to be ambassadors of reconciliation, because we know the battle is yours.

"God's promise to Israel as they left slavery in Egypt was not isolated to blessings of an unseen nature. He promised He would bless them in every area of life including their crops, livestock and business . . . What the Bible emphasizes for the poor is opportunity versus aid. Aid is reserved for those certainly in this kind of circumstance in the wilderness. And God provides for the Israelites, however . . . the day they had the feasibility to provide for themselves the manna was withdrawn . . . God does not want to create a dependent people but a people who drew on the gifts, talents and resources He had given to see them provide for themselves."

Landa Cope,
Old Testament Template

Zambia and North America

Benedict and Kathleen Schwartz: Remembering the Orphan

1. Page 160 says, “The traditional orphanage model, though providing real benefits, has been responsible for creating a welfare mentality in Africa. . . . Failing to begin with an end-strategy has locked in a cycle of paternalism and co-dependence.” But the Bible instructs us to “care for the orphan.” How can we support orphans in a way that is meaningful?

2. In the West, mechanization has resulted both in major development and in the loss of many jobs. How should we approach the use of new technology in developing countries where there is high unemployment?

Jerry and Rosie Haak: Marketplace Ministers

1. Page 173 says, “There is wisdom in allowing local needs to initiate local ideas that sprout into solutions that the Americans can partner with.” An example of this took place in Liberia, where the World Food Program helped women with HIV/AIDS start businesses. WFP contracted with LEAD, the in-country affiliate of Partners Worldwide, to train the women and provide the goods to start their businesses. But most of these businesses failed because the idea didn’t come from the women themselves. Many of them took the goods and sold them the next day and used the money for their immediate needs. What are your thoughts on this?

2. At a Partners Worldwide conference, Cheryl Broetje spoke some bold words, suggesting that many people “were just using the partnership model as a hobby . . . You don’t want the poor mingling with you. You don’t want anyone to mess with your social clubs. . . .” She asked participants to consider the following question: “Is this international partnership work really my lifestyle, or is it just something I do on the side?” These are some very tough challenges. How would you respond?

3. Jerry Haak says, “Transformation has to be a lifestyle—if it is only helping out the poor domestically or internationally, it is just a tithe or a hobby. We have to take Jesus into every facet of our life—our business, our workplace—every area” (p. 176). This seems to be very difficult. Can you see yourself living like this?

4. On page 176 Jerry says, “I tended to focus on church, home, and school—what I called the three legged-stool . . . Transformation needs to take place here [in North America] maybe more than there [overseas].” What is Jerry referring to? What type of transformation needs to take place in North America?

"The biblical worldview provides a framework for work being sacred, for labor having dignity. This concept of work is that it is a vocation – one's calling . . . This biblical concept understands that God is at work in the world building His Kingdom, and that, among other things, He calls us to participate in the building of His Kingdom through our work."

Darrow L. Miller,
Developing a Biblical Theology of Vocation

Reflections

1. We are told that there are enough resources in the world for all to have their basic needs met. Advocacy is one of the pillars of Partners Worldwide and is an area that we can engage in, on behalf of our brothers and sisters in developing countries. Partners Worldwide has gotten behind the Africa Trade and Growth Opportunities Act, which created 100,000 jobs in Kenya by allowing textiles to be imported to the United States. Debt forgiveness and agricultural subsidies are other issues. A great place to start is to join the One Campaign (www.one.org) or Micah Challenge (www.micahchallenge.org) advocating for the Millennium Development Goals.

2. What other issues or ideas grabbed your attention while reading this chapter? Please share with the group.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, just as you gave us your wonderful Spirit, Counselor, and Advocate to be with us forever, empower us to be your advocates for our neighbors who have no one to speak for them.

Making Your Business Your Mission

Let's take a look at each of the four themes Doug identifies in this chapter.

1. God wants to bless the world he made. While this may seem like an obvious statement, Doug Seebeck points out some disturbing statistics that certainly make one wonder if it's true. Yet there are also some hopeful signs, such as the reduction over the years of the number of people in poverty, and the increase of wealth for many. What do you think? Are things getting better? Could it be possible that when Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you," he was questioning the strength of our will to make it different? Colossians 1:22 says we have been made "holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." What does this text mean to us in light of poverty and wealth?

2. God works through relationships. Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-27. Then reread the passage as Pastor Muriu from Kenya wrote it (page 183-184). According to him, partnership requires interdependence, reciprocity, mutual respect, and humility. It is suggested that we enter partnerships with a "commitment to elevate, to affirm, to bless, to acknowledge the strengths that our partners have." This takes time, self-control to listen rather than act, recognition of personal needs, and other key qualities. How is this approach countercultural in developed countries? How about in developing countries?

3. We all have much to give and much to learn. Both things are scary because both take time. Do you tend to want to give more than learn? Learn more than give? Can the rich learn from the poor? As a member of a developed country, do you need a relationship with someone from a developing country for your personal growth? As a member of a developing country, do you need a relationship with someone from a developed country for your personal growth? Why or why not?

4. Each one of us is called to become an agent of change. God saved the world; now we have to reclaim it for his kingdom. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. This passage establishes a new viewpoint for us. God is imploring us to be ambassadors of reconciliation. We used to be sin, and now have been made "the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Do you feel the power of this passage? How can this change the way we view our world, our work, other people, and our relationships? Can we actually hasten the day of the Lord's return by preparing this earth for him?

YOU Can Make a Difference

So you've read My Business, My Mission and worked through this study guide. Maybe you feel inspired. Maybe you're ready to help make a difference. Maybe you want to reevaluate your priorities. Now's the time!

In the beginning of this study we looked at the meaning of "calling" and encouraged you to consider how you are uniquely made for "good works." Your gifts and talents have been "prepared in advance" by God!

We now challenge you to write your own personal mission statement—a statement of how you want to live out this calling personally, locally, and globally. Remember that a new desire to live your life as a calling does not necessarily mean that you need to move or leave your job. It may simply mean that you should keep doing what you already do, but differently—with a new focus on pleasing God and serving your neighbor.

Developing Your Personal Mission Statement

What makes me unique? _____

What gifts and talents has God given me? _____

What are my passions? _____

What brings me joy? _____

What is God calling me to do:

personally _____

professionally _____

locally _____

nationally _____

internationally _____

If you feel God is calling you to get involved internationally and would like to know more about Partners Worldwide, please visit our website at www.partnersworldwide.org and fill out the Mentor Profile.



Lord, thank you for revealing yourself in these stories of how business partnerships are changing the world. I want to love you more follow you better. I give myself to you right now for your glory and purpose. Amen.

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