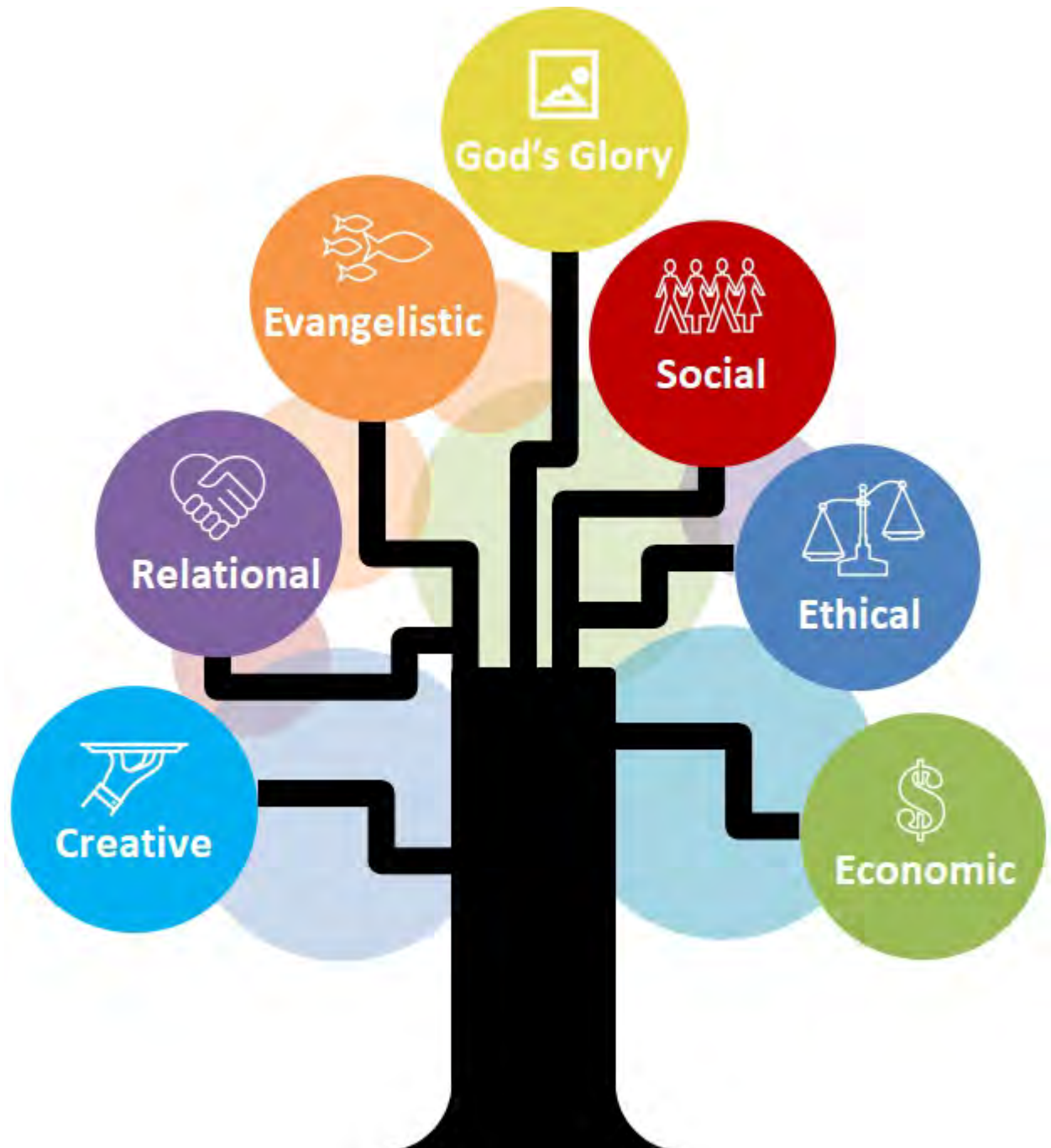
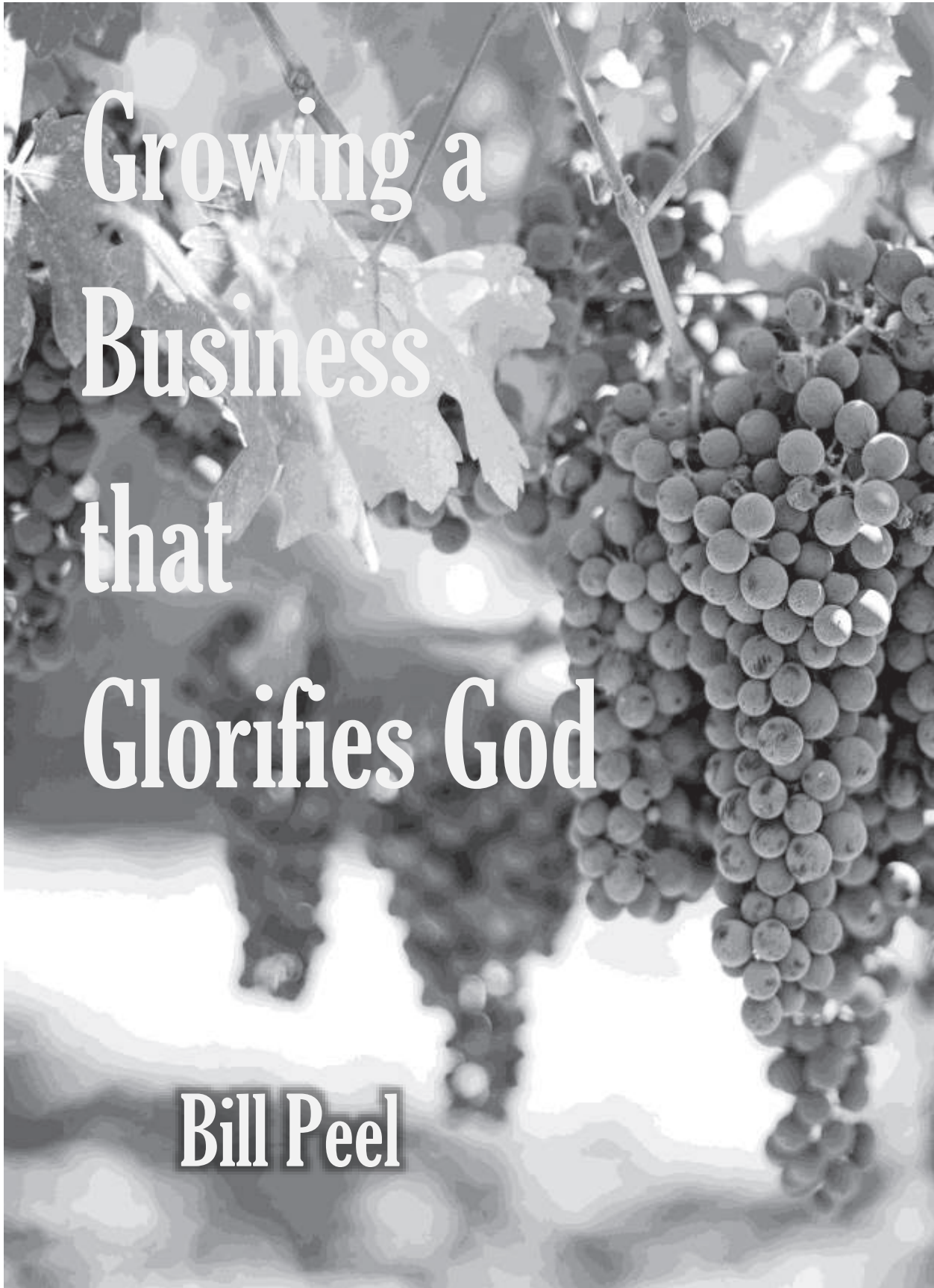


Growing a Business that Glorifies God

Bill Peel





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*So ...
whatever
you do,
do it all
for the glory
of God.*

—1 Corinthians 10:31

CONTENTS

Preface	1
Session 1: God Loves Business	2
<i>Business provides opportunities to create products and services that promote human flourishing.</i>	
Session 2: Creative Opportunity to Glorify God	8
<i>Business provides opportunities to create wealth to be enjoyed and used to enrich the lives of many.</i>	
Session 3: Economic Opportunity to Glorify God	15
<i>Business provides opportunities to create wealth to be enjoyed and used to enrich the lives of many.</i>	
Session 4: Ethical Opportunities to Glorify God	23
<i>Business provides opportunities to reflect God's character by operating in an ethically upright manner in both word and deed.</i>	
Session 5: Relational Opportunity to Glorify God	29
<i>Business provides opportunities to create workplace environments where people can flourish and use their unique God-given abilities.</i>	
Session 6: Evangelistic Opportunity to Glorify God	36
<i>Business provides opportunities to make faith attractive by how we act and speak, and can open doors for gospel conversations.</i>	
Session 7: Social Opportunity to Glorify God	45
<i>Business provides opportunities to leverage resources and influence to address social needs in the community and around the world.</i>	
Session 8: Postscript	52

PREFACE

Do you see your work as a way to serve God and His kingdom purposes?

If you don't, you're not alone.

Many Christians view business as second-class work in God's kingdom economy—a necessary evil in the fallen world. They think that God cares about church affairs, mission work, and getting people to heaven, but not about business and building out civilization.

Such dichotomized thinking fuels inner turmoil and confusion caused by the disconnect between what *we think* matters most to God and where we spend the bulk of our time—the so-called secular world of work—while we look for leftover time to invest in things we believe God values. Yet, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible portrays God as intensely interested in business and all aspects of our work.

You may be a business owner or someone who dreams of starting a business, a c-suite executive, or the company's newest hire. Wherever you are on the ladder, in this study you'll find ...

- ▶ Your daily work matters because it matters to God.
- ▶ God has not changed his original intention to shape the world through our work and business.
- ▶ Six areas of business offer significant opportunities for you to bring God glory in your daily work.

This study gives you a template that allows you to evaluate, brainstorm, prayerfully plan' listen to the Holy Spirit, and take strategic steps that will help you both do business and grow a business in ways that fulfill God's kingdom purposes for you and His world.



SESSION 1

GOD LOVES BUSINESS

A growing number of Americans question the beneficial nature of business to our personal and social well-being—thanks to politicians and media pundits who portray business and market economies as destructive.

Christians aren't immune from such misinformation and, sadly, many deem business a hindrance to spiritual formation. They may believe "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever" but don't stop to consider how they glorify God in their work. As a result, they feel like kingdom bystanders who see no eternal significance in what they do between Sundays. Yet ...

Business is where God calls most Christians to serve Him.

When God is disconnected from our work, business itself will likely fill the vacuum created by His absence. This undermines God's authority in our lives in vital ways. It weakens our spiritual immune system and makes us susceptible to greed, selfishness, and dishonesty. It blinds us to our spiritual resources at work and leaves us oblivious to the fact that one day God will ask us to give an account for what we did with the business He entrusted us to do.

How do you view business?

Is it ...

- ☐ A necessary evil?
- ☐ A destructive force in society?
- ☐ A way to meet financial goals?
- ☐ A second-rate calling?
- ☐ A hindrance to your spiritual health?
- ☐ A means to fund God's "more important" work?
- ☐ Eternally valuable?
- ☐ Fundamentally good but morally corruptible?
- ☐ A way you bring glory to God and serve your fellowman?
- ☐ A channel to bring positive good to your community?

Business Was God's Idea from the Beginning

God could have created and furnished the earth with houses, roads, bridges, buildings, equipment, technology, and everything necessary for modern life as we know it. Instead, He spoke the world into existence, filling it with bountiful resources and magnificent creatures. He then created the first two human beings and endowed

them with all the gifts and abilities necessary to develop the earth's vast resources to the fullest. Their job was to build civilization.

As the first couple and their progeny multiplied and populated the earth, human potential and natural resources would combine to envision, invent, design, and create tools, wares, machines, music, art, and technology. Economic systems would develop—from trading and bartering commodities, to setting metrics and writing financial laws to creating coinage and economic practices—many of which still influence today's global economic system.

**Though we live in a fallen world,
God has never rescinded His mandate.**

Why God Values Business and Our Daily Work

*All of this great human
economic endeavour is
an essential part of
God's purpose for
human life.*

—Christopher J.H. Wright
The Mission of God's People

1. God is a worker and an owner.

Genesis 1 and 2 introduce us to God as a worker—thinking, choosing, planning, creating, designing, shaping, building, naming, ruling, relating, executing, and evaluating. Working—purposefully interacting with creation—is central to God's identity and to our identity as human beings made in His image. Our business matters because it has been God's intention for us since the beginning.

2. Business is valuable to God and His creation.

Business is inherently good and has both intrinsic and instrumental value. But like any God-given gift, it can be corrupted and used to harm rather than help. Nevertheless, business is fundamentally valuable because it was God's idea. In essence, business is men and women working together to create value by cooperatively combining their labor with God's resources and exchanging it with others who value what they've created.

If God did not care about business, what would that mean?

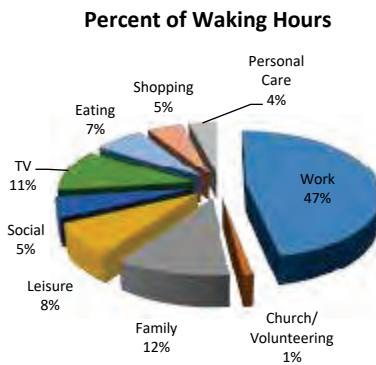
Why is it dangerous if we fail to understand the value of business to God?

3. Business has the power to shape life.

By sheer force of time and focus, business has an overwhelmingly strong shaping influence on human hearts and character. For Christians called to business, the marketplace is where character is formed, tried, and tested. Those who derive their ultimate goals and values in life from scripture can be used by God in powerful ways to shape the hearts and lives of people who cross their paths. They are the presence of God's kingdom in a broken world.

But today's marketplace values and practices can whittle away at the thin influence of a few hours of worship on Sunday. Consider Jesus' warning about the power of the workplace to shape us.

Matthew 6:24. 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.



As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be “in the world” but not “of the world.” Scripture attests that work is a good gift of God. But it also warns of the temptation to turn work into an idol—to live for what we can achieve and let this be the source of our identity and fulfillment. The idols of career, success, prestige, power, and wealth—a few examples among many—all stem from a dominant marketplace god: consumerism.

The gospel provides an antidote to our misplaced desires. It gives us the capacity to subordinate our longings to love for Christ and His glory, and it empowers us to love others and seek their welfare. The business world is both the world of God's creation and the world of Satan's temporary dominion. Through the power of Christ's indwelling Spirit, we can recognize and resist idolatry in the workplace.

How has the workplace shaped your life?

Although conditions since the Garden have changed drastically, God's intention to bless the world through business has not changed.

In what ways do some business values conflict with biblical values?

4. Business has the power to shape the world.

Every day in manifold ways, business affects the world. In *Why Business Matters to God*, Jeff Van Duzer explains,

Companies doing business, in many ways, dictate the kind of world we will live in. Thus, for Christians interested in advancing God's agenda of peace, justice, and reconciliation, a focus on business and its role in society is critical.

God endowed human beings with power to shape the world. In *Playing God*, Andy Crouch explained that our power is diminished and distorted by sin, but it is still a gift from God, rooted in creation, and inextricably tied to our role as God's image bearers. Through business, power allows us to reshape the world in ways that create beauty, foster flourishing, and produce shalom.

*Power is meant for
image bearing, and
image bearing is meant
for flourishing.*
—Andy Crouch
Playing God

But ever since our first ancestors rebelled against God and were banished to the distorted post-Fall world, humankind has continued to rebel and exploit God’s gift of power for our own ends. We need look no further than the story of Babel and today’s 24-hour news cycle to see how people misuse and abuse power—which is nothing less than playing God. Motivated by greed, self-interest, scarcity, and aggression, people use their power to dominate and deprive others of power. Perverted power plays are enacted by individuals, companies, and institutions, but all produce similar outcomes: poverty, injustice, and powerless victims who are unable to change their circumstances, an abhorrent antithesis to the flourishing God intended.

We have a choice: We can misuse God’s gift of power by exchanging lies for the true image of God and His good world. Or we can believe and live by the Truth and do business in a way that brings glory to God and promotes flourishing.

How is your business shaping the world?

How do you want your business to shape the world?

How are you using your God-given power? In what ways could you use it more effectively?

The Instrumental Value of Business

Sessions 2 through 7 build on the intrinsic value of business. We will examine six instrumental values of business that provide opportunities to grow a business that glorifies God.

1. Creative Opportunity
2. Economic Opportunity
3. Ethical Opportunity
4. Relational Opportunity
5. Evangelistic Opportunity
6. Social Opportunity



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Establishing a Baseline

Take a few minutes to look over the six instrumental values of business and use the Likert scale to evaluate where your business is today. Jot down any thoughts/ideas you want to refer to as you pray about changes God may want you to make as you seek to bring Him glory in these areas.

1. Creative Opportunity. Business provides opportunities to create products and services that promote human flourishing. Do your products and/or services foster human flourishing?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
STRONGLY AGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.
—Jeremiah 29:7

2. Economic Opportunity. Business provides opportunities to create wealth to be enjoyed and used to enrich the lives of many. Are you generating wealth and using it well?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
STRONGLY AGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

3. Ethical Opportunity. Business provides opportunities to reflect God's character by operating in an ethically upright manner in both word and deed. Are you reflecting God in your words, deeds, and daily decisions?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
STRONGLY AGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

What metrics can you put in place to measure your progress?

4. Relational Opportunity. Business provides opportunities to create workplace environments where people can flourish and use their unique God-given abilities. Does this describe the workplace at your business?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
STRONGLY AGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

5. Evangelistic Opportunity. Business provides opportunities to make faith attractive by how we act and speak, and can open doors for gospel conversations. Are you fostering the spiritual development of people associated with your business?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
STRONGLY AGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

6. Social Opportunity. Business provides opportunities to leverage resources and influence to address social needs in the community and around the world. Are you seeking the peace and prosperity of your community and the world?

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
STRONGLY AGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE