

## What Others Are Saying About Don Corder and *Minding His Business...*

The way a church conducts its business is a testimony to a world that is always watching. Church business needs to be done with professionalism and transparency. In short, easy-to-understand chapters, *Minding His Business* shows us the way to conduct church business in a way that honors God.

—Dan Busby

President, Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability  
Washington, D.C.

*Minding His Business* is one of the best books on managing ministry available today. It is practical and insightful, and it reflects years of real ministry experience. Don Corder keeps it real with a no-nonsense approach to getting things done in a ministry environment.

—Dr. Jeff Greenway

Lead pastor, Reynoldsburg United Methodist Church,  
Reynoldsburg, Ohio  
Former President, Asbury Theological Seminary

I have known Don Corder for over a decade. He is as wise as he is brilliant—one of the most effective leaders I've met in over thirty years. *Minding His Business* is a gift to the kingdom of God and a must-read for any pastor or ministry leader.

—Jon Laria

Chief Financial Officer, OneHope  
Pompano Beach, Florida

If talk and good intentions were money, the church would be a bank. Spreading the gospel is a job to be done, not discussed with good intentions. *Minding His Business* cuts through the clutter and clearly

describes how churches can be set free from a culture of decline to make the difference God desires them to make in the world.

—*Alan Didio*

Lead pastor, Encounter Ministries  
Red Cross, North Carolina

Don Corder is one of the smartest people I know. His ability to see through the urgent to what is important, and then to accomplish both, is inspiring. He is the best manager of ministry I've ever met. In *Minding His Business*, we are given the unique privilege of looking through the eyes of a true master to see ministry managed with wisdom and expertise.

—*Brad White*

President, Iak Donors  
Palm Coast, Florida

Don Corder is the real deal. In *Minding His Business*, he speaks truth to most pastors' pain. This book helped me and my ministry in so many ways. It is required reading for every leader in my church.

—*Matt Young*

Lead pastor, LifeChurch  
Amelia, Ohio

The wisdom on these pages is invaluable. Every pastor, church planter, and staff leader should put this on his must-read list.

—*Ronnie Harrison*

Pastor, The Kingdom Center Church  
Louisville, Kentucky

Yes! *Minding His Business* should be required reading for pastors everywhere. Young or old, pastors will find truth on these pages that will make their ministries easier to manage and more effective.

—*Matt Wright*

Senior pastor, Water's Edge Church  
Mason, Ohio

*Minding His Business* is unlike any other ministry management book I've read. The book illustrates business principles in short, easy-to-understand chapters that help me lead my ministry right now.

—*Michael Phillips*

Senior pastor, Kingdom Life Church  
Baltimore, Maryland

The twenty-first-century church is a different proposition from its twentieth-century counterpart. The message is unchanged, but the methods are in a state of flux. Many modern pastors are expected to be spiritual leaders, platform talents, marketing experts, and CEOs. Where does one go to be trained for all that? *Minding His Business* is a gift to pastors who are struggling to serve their ministries as spiritual leaders and business managers.

—*Dr. Mark Smith*

President, Ohio Christian University  
Circleville, Ohio

Having had the privilege of serving as Don Corder's pastor in the past, I can attest to his love for the church and for Christian ministers. *Minding His Business* imparts page after page of practical, useful advice. The wisdom found in this book will help pastors to manage the business of their ministries more efficiently. I wish that this book had been available when I was starting out in ministry thirty-five years ago!

—*Dr. Ken Alford*

Senior pastor, Crossroads Baptist Church  
Valdosta, Georgia

This book makes sense. I would be surprised if any pastor or ministry leader read it and did not see his or her ministry on the pages.

—*Steve Howard*

President, Centerpoint Interactive, Inc.  
Columbus, Ohio

In a Christian university, we work to integrate faith and learning on subjects ranging from science to literature, from psychology to technology. Unfortunately, we don't talk enough about the integration of faith and administration. Through Don Corder's rich experience and practical illustrations, his new book, *Minding His Business*, is a living example of that kind of integration. If thinking "Christianly" about administrative ministry is important to you, you will love this book.

—Don Meyer

President, University of Valley Forge  
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania

There could not be a timelier book to hit the church world than *Minding His Business*. Don will lighten your load and elevate your life's work as you apply the practical "how to's" of effective ministry leadership.

—Harvey A. Hook

Founder, Relā  
Columbus, Ohio

The stuff in this book really works! I've had the privilege and honor of working with Don in a ministry setting. He is an agent of change. He finds value where you wouldn't think it was possible. He has worked with people in the ministry to change the culture in positive ways, and the changes have stuck! Don's been there; he walks the talk, and he practices what you will read about in *Minding His Business*.

—Eric Walton

President, PL Coaches  
Phoenix, Arizona

Page after page of solutions to the problems churches face when trying to execute pastoral vision. I highly recommend this book.

—Jon Ferguson

Senior pastor, Stillwater Church  
Dayton, Ohio

MINDING  
HIS  
BUSINESS

DON CORDER



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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**MINDING HIS BUSINESS:**  
**40 DAYS TO BETTER CHURCH MANAGEMENT**

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# PREFACE

**M***inding His Business* was written to make the lives of pastors and ministry leaders easier by providing pragmatic steps toward executing vision, making things happen, and getting things done effectively and with wisdom. In the pages that follow, I've written candidly about some of the most embarrassing, frightening, disastrous, encouraging, and enlightening situations that I have witnessed in Christian churches and ministries. However, no reader—not even my wife—will ever be able to identify the people I've written about. And I will never tell. These vignettes have been thoroughly scrubbed and fictionalized so as to protect the innocent as well as the guilty. But the essence of what occurred is absolutely and completely accurate.

If you seem to recognize yourself somewhere in these pages, it is only an indication that your problems are not unique, that you are not alone. After thirty-plus years in leadership, I have come to the conclusion that there are very few “new problems,” just new people having the “same old problems,” usually for the same reasons, and often solved using similar solutions. As entertaining or appalling as certain of these stories may be, they very well could happen to you. Stay in ministry long enough, and some of them probably will.

When a church needs a lawyer, it hires a lawyer. When a church needs a plumber, it hires a plumber. But when a church needs to conduct business, it often calls a butcher, a baker, a mechanic, and a stay-at-home mom to form a committee that takes a month to approve the purchase of a gallon of paint so that a staff member may apply a fresh coat of paint to a door in the nursery. And if the job goes badly, who shoulders the blame? The pastor.

Chances are, if you work in a church, you are not an experienced businessperson, nor should you be. God called you into ministry to love people into heaven, to support people through their suffering, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. You wouldn't hire an accountant to lead worship. You wouldn't hire a Wall Street banker to run your nursery. So then, why does the church ask so many pastors and ministers to manage church business?

One of the first offices Jesus set up in His ministry was that of administration and operations. We read about it in the Luke 9, where the feeding of the five thousand is recorded. Thousands of hungry people had gathered to hear Jesus preach, and now the sun was going down. There was very little food, and even less money. He said to His disciples, "*You give them something to eat*" (Luke 9:13). Someone had to figure out how to feed all these people, not to mention how to pay for it.

Jesus solved that one for them, miraculously multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish. But, if we are being honest, the church has been struggling to execute spiritual vision ever since.

One of the best ways to learn is through our own failures; almost equally effective are the lessons learned from the failures of others. Experience is what you learn from your own mistakes. Wisdom is what you learn from the mistakes of others.

Airline pilots follow rules that are "written in blood," meaning they were recorded based on fatal mistakes so that other pilots

might avoid errors that might cost them their lives. In the same way, by following the principles contained in this book, churches and ministries can avoid crushing lawsuits, the perils of shrinking congregations, the agony of false employment claims, the pain of shrinking revenue, and other pitfalls. Maybe some ministry staffs will even have time and energy left over to grow, prosper, change lives, and spread the good news that will send a few more people to heaven.

I once worked with a ministry that had started with one man and grew into a megachurch. The pastor was driven and smart—probably one of the smartest people I ever met. Whenever he was asked how he'd managed to build such a huge ministry, he would answer, "By executing vision." He would go on to say, "A brilliant idea is worth a nickel. Executing that idea and turning it into reality is where kingdom value is created." This pastor understood that talk was cheap. He knew that a ministry that talks more than it achieves will struggle to grow.

There is a saying among operational executives that goes, "No job is too hard for the guy who doesn't have to do it." Surely, we can see the simple truth conveyed by those words. In this context, these words seem practical and true. But speak them to a person who is passionately advocating a big vision with grand ideas, and those same words can seem harsh and insensitive. Context is everything. And context was the toughest challenge I faced while writing *Minding His Business*. As I wrote this book, I struggled with wording each exhortation in a way that would ring practical and true, without coming across as harsh and insensitive. My goal was to speak the truth in love, as Paul exhorts believers to do in Ephesians 4:15.

While most spiritual vision is inspired by God in the heart of a pastor or ministry leader, the execution of that vision is mostly done in the natural—a process that's replete with physical, financial, and human constraints. It is from decades of successfully

executing and implementing vision in spite of these constraints that I gained the pragmatic and candid perspective I offer in this book. Throughout its pages, I challenge the reader to risk having his ego bruised a time or two, as an “investment” in the greater good and an important step in his pursuit of the Great Commission. It is no mistake that the first two chapters are titled “‘Price’ Is Not the Same as ‘Cost’” and “Nothing Moves Without Friction.”

By offering a pragmatic and candid perspective on executing and implementing the business of the church, my hope is to facilitate easier decision making and improved outcomes. May God bless you and your ministry as you mind His business.

—*Don Corder*

# INTRODUCTION: CATCH THE VISION OF THE “CALLED ONES”

**T**he mission of the church is to make disciples. (See, for example, Matthew 28:16–20.) To facilitate that mission, God has equipped each Christian to do the work of the ministry in a unique, specific way. And He has called out a particular group of people to build or to lead churches and ministries, whether as pastors, executive directors, presidents, speakers, authors, musicians, missionaries, principals, or another role.

These “called ones” are often labeled “crazy” by other people. Noah’s contemporaries surely didn’t understand what he was doing when he started constructing a massive ark in the middle of the desert. And even Jesus’ closest friends tried to talk him out of many of the things He did. The “called ones” care far more about serving people than about conducting business, and so should we.

“Called ones” are walking with an omnipotent God who always takes each ministry—as He takes each individual—to a place where even the keenest mind cannot predict what comes next. These obedient leaders often take those entrusted to their care to a place where faith is more important than sense. However,

someone has to execute that vision in the natural, and the successful execution relies largely on effectively conducted business. This is where faith intersects with the mechanics of getting the mission done.

The mechanics, or the “how,” of carrying out your mission ought to be based on sound principles—not on a feeling or a hunch. Not on an opinion. Keep in mind that the church is not a business; the church merely conducts business. In everything the church does, we can bring glory to the King just as we do in a song, in a gathering, or in a soup kitchen. While winning souls or feeding the hungry are important, those tasks are just the tip of the spear; its shaft comprises the staffers, the donors, and the board members doing the work of the church in the natural. It is the tip of the spear that makes the spear a spear, but it’s the shaft of the spear that makes the tip effective. Both parts need each other to be an effective tool in the hand of their heavenly Father.

Having spent decades conducting business for churches and ministries, I have seen leaders stretch the faith of the entire ministry many times by their God-led decisions that made little business sense. I’ve learned not to sweat it, but that wasn’t always the case. Dealing with the “called ones” and respecting the different ways God works in their lives is often a challenge, but it’s always an honor.

I once did some consulting work for a pastor whose ministry was facing a severe financial crisis. Bills were being paid late, and a payroll was coming up without any hope of being met. The bank accounts were almost depleted, and there was no expected income to count on. All they could do was wait until the tithes and offerings were collected the following Sunday. I had the unhappy job of telling the pastor how grim the situation looked.

When I stepped into his office, prepared with financial reports to prove the gravity of the situation, the pastor sat down at his desk, which was strewn with books and papers.

“I just don’t know where the next dollar will come from,” I told him bluntly. “We have bills we cannot pay. We need to think about shutting some things down.”

He looked at me with watery eyes set in a tranquil face. “What is the value of a soul in heaven?” he asked me.

I had come armed with answers to any financial question he could have asked—except that one.

“I don’t believe there is any way to measure that, sir,” I told him.

The pastor responded, “I have spent over forty years being faithful to God’s call on my life to win souls for His kingdom, and He has been faithful to provide the resources. If God has changed this plan, He has not told me; and until He does, I’m sticking to the plan. If, for some reason, God has decided He is done with me and this church—if this is my last day in ministry—I am going to be found faithful to the vision God gave me. God’s ways are not our ways. Sometimes, we simply have to slip our hand into the Lord’s and walk alongside Him in faith.” Then he stood up from the desk. “I’m going now, and I’ll be spending some time in prayer.”

I noticed for the first time how disheveled his clothes were; and when I saw the blanket draped over the sofa against the wall, I realized that he’d already been in prayer, and I had interrupted him.

“Yes, sir!” I said.

His faith, juxtaposed against my lack of faith, made me ashamed. I realized then that while my role as a church business administrator was important, it was clear why God chose the “called ones,” rather than businesspeople, to lead His church. I asked the Lord to forgive my doubt and to give me the courage and strength to stand in faith with this man who had such trust in Him.

This experience forever changed me. It was then that I submitted once and for all to God's call on my life to spend the rest of my days serving these choice servants of God.

It's true that businesspeople need to be among the voices heard at the table. But getting people to heaven, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those who are in prison—these goals are always of utmost importance. God grants vision to the “called ones,” and this is how He leads His church. Church staff, board members, consultants, and so forth—all those engaged in the business of ministry—have to adapt to this arrangement that Jesus has made for His church. If you don't believe in the leader of a church, then you shouldn't work there. If you don't believe in the vision of the church or charity, you should walk away quietly and do no harm. We must have enough faith to believe that when a leader is in the center of God's will, God will provide for the fulfillment of his vision.

Minding the Lord's business is a matter of stewardship. The church is not a business, but it *does* business. From lawyers to architects, computer programmers to Web developers, the church hires a host of professionals to carry out its goals in the natural. But when it comes to conducting business, many church leaders try to take care of things themselves, or to try to save money by hiring part-time or unqualified people—or, even worse, by delegating the job to volunteers. There are risks and costs, both seen and unseen, that arise when church business is left in the hands of the novice or underqualified. Yet these can be avoided rather than endured.

There is an ethic of business that should be followed. There are principles of business that are learned with time, training, and experience. In the end, it is the “called ones” whom God has appointed to lead His church, but they need the support of business leaders with enough faith to walk with these “crazy” people and say, “Yes, sir.”

The story I just shared about the faith-filled pastor in dire financial straits has a God-sized ending. The pastor led the staff and elders in many prayer meetings. We trimmed the budget of every department, first getting rid of waste and maximizing efficiency. But we also spent every last penny on soul-winning outreach. We met one payroll and clung to our faith to meet the next. A month passed. When we had exhausted everything we could think of doing in the natural—when we'd come to the end of our own ideas, when there was nothing left but faith—someone walked into the church office in the middle of the week and handed the church secretary an envelope. In it was the largest financial gift ever given to the church, and it covered all the loose ends.

Since then, I'll admit that when I have difficulty balancing a church's budget, I find myself asking the church secretary if something—anything—was left on her desk. It doesn't often happen that way, of course. But the value of faith cannot be overstated, even as businesspeople seek to operate Christian churches and ministries according to business principles that glorify God while also following whatever instructions God has spoken to the "called ones."

In the chapters that follow, I'd like to share some key business principles to employ in the church in order to move the mission forward and glorify God in the process.



PART I:  
MANAGEMENT





# CHAPTER 1

## “PRICE” IS NOT THE SAME AS “COST”

When your utmost desire is to win people to Christ, then the primary cost to concern yourself with should be the people who aren't won because of the things you choose not to do. In conducting Christian business, we need to keep in mind that we are talking about a really big God who says the stars and planets are but vapor in His breath. That's pretty big. The church incurs a cost because of what we fail to do for Him—a concept whose equivalent in the business realm is known as “opportunity cost,” or the price of either not doing a thing or doing nothing. This is the true cost of the western church in the last fifty years.

I was trying to help a certain pastor friend who was struggling with the question most churches have grappled with over the past three decades: Shall we change? This particular pastor wanted to shed the ministerial robe he traditionally donned on Sunday mornings, disband the choir, and stop using hymnals. He met with his team, all of whom were in favor of the proposed changes. They wanted to meet the needs of their contemporary neighborhood with contemporary means.

They talked about the changes endlessly, and even leaked the ideas to the parishioners. Many of them were thrilled at the prospect, while others grumbled. The pastor assured the grumblers that the changes wouldn't be forced on them but would rather be optional. This assurance settled them down. Meanwhile, the staff continued to discuss the myriad ways to effect a transition to a more contemporary service. A year went by, but no date was set for making the switch. No one could reach a decision.

The staff's lack of decisiveness had nothing to do with the will of God. They were all in agreement that God wanted them to change. Their indecision came right down to not wanting to deal with those whose feathers would be ruffled by the changes. They kept telling themselves they were easing into the change to be wise, but they weren't wise at all. Would Jesus have entered their staff meeting and said, "Please don't change things. This church has been shrinking for years. Keep it up"?

The biggest cost to most churches is "opportunity cost." There is no immediate physical cost for doing nothing. But the ongoing cost that's accrued by doing nothing is that no new people come to church, no new families are saved, fewer and fewer orphans are cared for, and so forth. When we talk something to death yet do nothing to act on it, we're accruing "opportunity cost."

Let's say a church missions committee plans a fund-raiser banquet, and in selecting the menu, someone has the bright idea not to offend the vegetarians. Now, I'm not bashing vegetarians. But this type of reasoning easily becomes a slippery slope that leads to distraction from the primary purpose—in this case, to raise funds. The committee's goal becomes not to offend people with diabetes, high blood pressure, or diverticulitis. They carefully look at every dollar spent, and yet they freely spend time and resources on all the wrong stuff. Because they spend so much time and effort planning a menu that caters to a select few instead of focusing on how they could raise the most money, their net profits are lower than

they otherwise would have been. And the money they didn't raise because they were focused on superficial things—that's “opportunity cost.” It's potential income that was sacrificed unnecessarily.

When you consider potential projects, you ask, “What is the cost of this?” and “What is the cost of that?” But what you're really asking for are prices. In business terms, the difference between price and cost is explained this way: Price is what you pay for a thing, and cost is what you give up, don't get, or give away.

It's like investing. You always measure the value of an investment by the return it produces for you. Price is what you pay; return is what you get. In the church, the most important return is the number of people we reach for Christ; the cost is a measure of the resources we allocate toward reaching people for Christ, plus the number of people we fail to reach (opportunity cost) because of our indecisiveness, ineffectiveness, and so forth.

Simply put, “opportunity costs” are the things that do not happen because of a course of action not taken. In the past forty years, the Western church has gone from being a leading force in a Christian culture to a religious sect in a secular culture. How did that happen?

Recently, while trying to help a local church raise funds for its building campaign, I was turned down for a loan at the bank. This church had been a beacon in the community for over a hundred years and a customer of the bank for almost four decades. When I asked the banker to explain his refusal, he said, “While the bank appreciates our long business relationship with the church, the loan committee views churches as depreciating assets in a declining industry, and the committee members have no appetite for lending to an organization in that environment.”

What the banker was saying is, “When we look at the church, we see nothing happening.” There was a time when banks fought to do business with the local church because of the resulting boost

in the bank's reputation. Do you think the church has come to this point for all it has *done* over the last forty years or for what it has *not done*?

What about your church? Do you spend more time talking about what people inside the church like or don't like—or what the people outside the church need? Do you expend more energy trying to avoid conflict or trying to change lives? Do you spend more time talking or doing? Every choice has a cost, and every cost has a corresponding return. On which does your church focus? "Return on investment" in the church is best measured by the number of lives changed. Cost should be measured by how many people won't hear the gospel and whose lives will never change because of the things we in the church choose not to do.

Here is a little exercise for you to try. Think of all the people you know of who gave their heart to Jesus at your church in the last year. Now, double that number to account for the people who gave their heart to Jesus without making it public knowledge. Next, divide your church's annual budget by that number. You now have a value that represents the dollar amount that your church spends for each new soul it sends to heaven. Are you proud of that amount?

Here is the really meaningful part of this exercise. If you wanted to cut the "cost per soul sent to heaven" at your church in half, would it be easier to double the number of salvations or to cut your budget in half? Now, take five minutes and write down every idea you can think of that could increase the number of salvations in your church in the next twelve months. For example, you could include an altar call at the end of each service, or you could invite a soul-winning evangelist to hold a revival at your church. Whatever ideas you generate, the souls that don't go to heaven next year, and the lives not changed—these represent the opportunity cost of not pursuing the ideas you just wrote down.

If you are a church leader, you should get this concept of opportunity cost into your own spirit, as well as into the spirit of the people you lead. Then, direct your budget accordingly. Call me in a year, and we will celebrate together how God honored your decision.

You cannot measure costs simply in terms of dollars, resources, and time. Start viewing the money your church spends as an investment in heaven, not an amount spent on goods and services. And then, most important, measure costs in people not going to heaven and the amount of people who won't hear the gospel if you do the safe, easy thing instead of the “scary,” God thing.



***Minding His Business Basic Principle:***

*The greatest cost most churches will incur is “opportunity cost”—the price of doing the safe, easy thing—or, even worse, doing nothing—instead of the “scary” God thing.*

MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 2

NOTHING MOVES  
WITHOUT FRICTION

A pastor and I walked out of church together after a wonderful Sunday morning service that had been capped off by a “pastor’s coffee” for new members. The church property had once seemed enormous for the tiny congregation the pastor led. They had started by building a small classroom complex and kept adding on. Now, the cavernous sanctuary was surrounded by newly paved parking lots to accommodate the exploding membership.

I had been called in to help fine-tune some growth strategies, nothing more. But as I surveyed the property, I couldn’t help noticing a major problem on a weed-covered corner of the lot, just beyond the last area that had been paved. The dilapidated shell of a small wooden building was still standing there, abandoned long before the congregation had purchased the parcel of land. The overgrowth had finally reached the edge of the property, posing just as big a hazard as the old, run-down building.

The pastor and I stood on the top step just outside the front doors of the church, breathing in the beautiful autumn air and

basking in the sense of satisfaction that comes after a successful service. It is not unusual for me to ruin such moments, and this day was no different. I was ethically compelled to bring up the problem I'd identified.

"Wonderful day!" I said. "But let me show you something. Look how close your parking lot is to that abandoned building."

The pastor looked straight at the building. He knew without my needing to indicate what I was talking about.

"It really concerns me," I said. "While you were speaking with the new members, I saw some children playing in and around that building as they waited for their parents. I'm sorry to tell you that it looks like an accident or a lawsuit just waiting to happen."

"I've meant to tear that down for a long time," the pastor said. "With so much going on, I just haven't given it much thought."

"We can get a local construction company to tear it down and haul it away," I told him.

"How much will it cost?" he wanted to know.

"I have no idea," I said. "I've never had to destroy a building before. I'll get some bids, and we'll find out."

"Don't bother getting bids," the pastor said. "Larry Green is a contractor in our church. He'll do a great job. I'll call him tomorrow."

I was handed Larry's proposal the following week. I didn't know the first thing about tearing down a building and hauling it away, but I had predicted the cost would be in the thousands of dollars. Instead, the bid was in the high five figures. Just looking at the number made me feel uneasy. All I could think of were all those new members, and that the outreach budget would need to be slashed just because of an old building that needed to be properly disposed of.

I took the proposal into the pastor's office. "We can't spend this much just to clear away that building," I told him.

"Well, we can't offend Larry, now that we've asked him to give us a price," the pastor countered. "I'm sure he's done his best."

This was not a happy moment, but all forward movement causes friction. What I had to do was get the facts—to gather bids from other local contractors. Then, I asked for a special meeting with the pastor to lay out those facts. All the other bids were cheaper than Larry's by far. The pastor saw the problem. Now, he would have to talk to Larry and let him know that his bid was rejected—an unpleasant prospect. We can tell ourselves that, as Christians, we should always want what is best for the church. But "should" is no guarantee of what actually is.

When we are faced with unpleasant circumstances, such as a difficult conversation, we have to remember that wherever there is movement, there is going to be friction. Even an airplane flying has a coefficient of airflow that creates lift. If there's no friction, nothing is moving. Churches are known for easing the friction in people's lives, by smoothing the aftermath of suffering caused by sin. But whenever the church makes progress in its mission, there is going to be friction; otherwise, there won't be forward movement.

Think of the game of football. Every time I played as a kid, I came home bruised. Being banged up at least a little was part of the game. No one was too concerned about the bruises, either. My parents, the schoolteachers, the rest of the guys—we all knew that some scrapes and scars were part and parcel of playing the game we loved.

As it turned out, Larry handled the situation well. He told the pastor that his company wasn't equipped to handle a small job like that efficiently, anyway. Instead of balking at being passed over for the task, he asked to see the other bids. He warned the pastor about one of the companies that he knew not to be reputable, and

the pastor ended up asking Larry to select the company to use. The job was done properly, and at a fraction of the cost we would have incurred by hiring Larry.

In ministry, as we make progress in doing what we love—seeing people come to Christ—we are bound to get a bit banged up. We create friction. It's not just *part* of advancing the ministry; it's *essential* to advancing the ministry. The church, especially in the western hemisphere, has been bending over backward so as not to offend anyone for the last forty years. And where has it gotten us? Avoiding conflict is a luxury no church or ministry can afford.

Again, nothing moves without friction. A responsible businessperson in the church doesn't worry about the anxiety he might create by bringing a problem to the attention of a church leader. Church business leaders owe it to their spiritual leaders to speak the truth, regardless of the inevitable friction. It's like football: Even if you love the sport, you can expect to come home a little bruised after every game.



***Minding His Business* Basic Principle:**

***There is always friction when there is movement. Don't fear it. You can't have one without the other.***

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ETHIC OF BUSINESS

**I**t's not personal, it's business." In many movies, that line is spoken just before someone gets murdered, fired, or dumped on in some way—usually, an act that springs from motives that are, in fact, quite personal.

But in real life, business really *must* be just business. Business isn't personal unless someone makes something personal out of a business activity or decision. Decisions have to be made. One idea has to be chosen among all the options. One vendor will always outbid the others. One employee will always do a better job than the rest. These are the business realities of life, and they apply to kingdom work, as well.

One day, a friend called me to ask a favor. He wanted me to talk to a friend of his who pastored an older church in a rough part of town. For five years, young people had been streaming into the area and taking over. Run-down convenience stores, upholsterers, barber shops, and shoe repair stores were being replaced by gourmet taco stands, bagel bakeries, and trendy novelty shops that were attracting a new clientele.

After looking over the demographics of the area around the church, I called the pastor. He was excited right from the start of the conversation.

“For twenty-five years, this area has been in decline,” the pastor said. “We’ve shrunk along with it and were able to keep going only because we had the property paid for. But now, all of a sudden, we cannot open our doors without new visitors streaming in. People are even dropping by in the middle of the week to shake my hand and ask about our beliefs. They’re not even put off by my age. They’re young and just seeking a way to find the Lord. It’s wonderful.”

I thought he was going to burst into tears. His genuine desire to reach the newcomers in his community touched my heart. This was someone I felt I could really help. It would be a challenge, but it was exciting.

At our first face-to-face meeting, I learned that the pastor’s support staff consisted of a part-time associate pastor, a director of children’s ministries, a facilities manager, and a volunteer worship leader. Those positions were all they really needed for the size of the congregation at that time. One of the first things I talked to him about was the need for a church Web site. We discussed a few potential strategies, and I made an appointment to meet with his staff members.

By the time of the next meeting, the pastor had already talked to the staff about constructing a Web site. They had all agreed that they needed one. I had pulled some strings for them and found a way to develop what they needed, complete with a strategy to make members out of visitors, all for just a few thousand dollars. I laid the plan out for them, but as soon as I mentioned the cost, they pulled back.

“I have a friend whose brother is a really talented Web designer,” the associate pastor said. “I already talked to him.

He and his friend can build what we need for only five hundred dollars.”

Several others made suggestions of their own before I brought the conversation back around to my original idea. I explained that maintaining a professional Web site would require more than a couple of guys doing it in their free time, regardless of how talented they might be. That led to another round of discussions.

Although the staff still wasn't sold on the idea, I went ahead and showed them a visual conceptualization of the Web design. This led to even more discussion. Everyone on the team seemed to lose sight of the purpose behind the Web site as they advanced their personal opinions on how it ought to look.

“I'd like for the team to get in agreement on this,” the pastor said. “If we can't be unanimous, then maybe we should think about it some more.”

We scheduled another meeting, at which the staff rehashed the same pros and cons that had been established at the previous meeting. And the associate pastor recommended the exact same Web designer he'd suggested in the first meeting.

“I think I've done all that I can do,” I told my friend over the phone later that week.

“So fast?” he asked. “Is the church going to grow?”

“That's going to be up to them,” I told him. “The pastor doesn't want to be the ‘bad guy’ and make a decision that might be unpopular with his staff. He's listening to people who don't know what they're talking about, as well as listening to me, the business guy.”

My friend went to bat behind the scenes and explained to his pastor buddy that he should heed the voice of experience rather than continue giving ear to the opinions of his staff, none of whom had experience in Web design or building a business. But the pastor never contacted me again. My friend kept me abreast

of their progress. Two years after my second meeting with the staff, the church still didn't have a Web site in place. Meanwhile, a church just three blocks down the street had a fantastic Web site—and a youthful congregation that was growing steadily.

The pastor had taken what should have been a business decision, turned it into a personal decision, and thereby put a stop to any forward progress. Please don't make the same mistake.



***Minding His Business* Basic Principle:**

*Turning business decisions into matters of personal preference causes progress to grind to a halt. It is better to reach many outside your church and risk upsetting a few inside your church than to reach only a few and upset no one.*