

POSSIBILITIES FOR CHRIST-LED ENTERPRISE



Strategic Possibilities

VOLUME 3



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Possibilities for Christ-Led Enterprise

Volume 3 Strategic Possibilities

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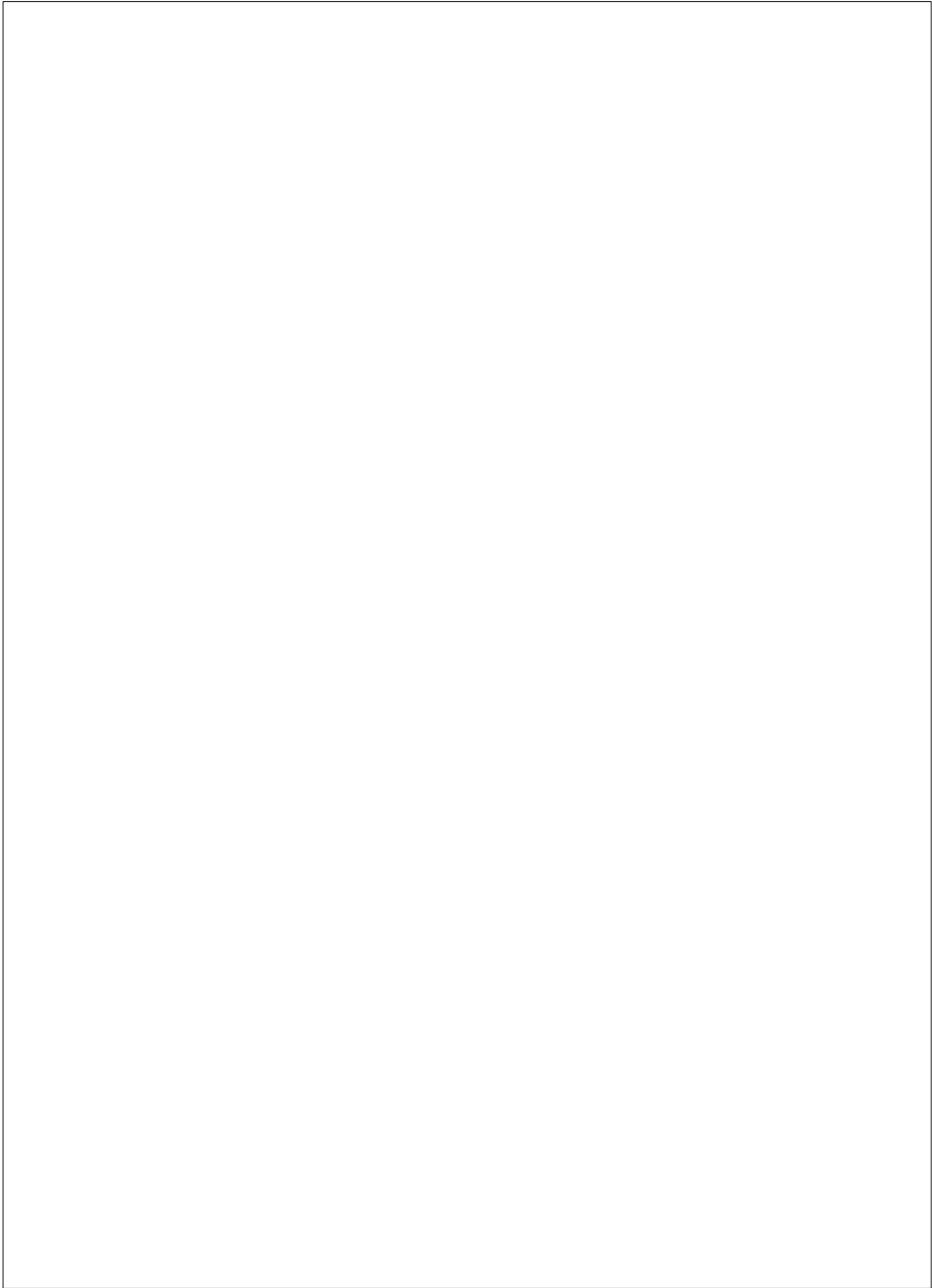
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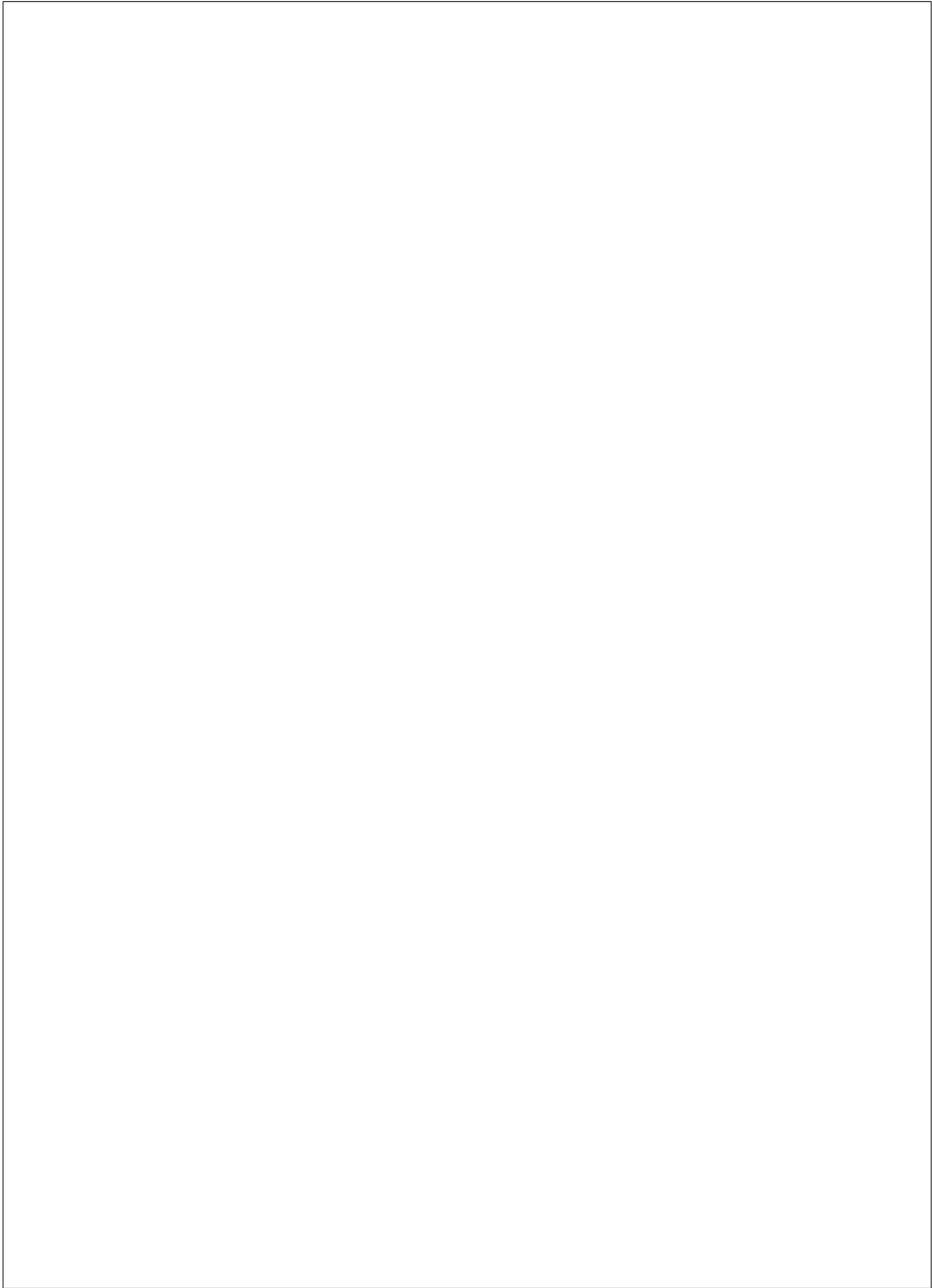
STRATEGIC POSSIBILITIES



Strategic Possibility #1

Beneficial & Constructive Actions





Strategic Possibility I - Beneficial & Constructive Actions

The Possibility

Although many actions can be considered as possible and within the law and even acceptable to the culture, only those actions that are beneficial and constructive are undertaken.

*“Everything is permissible – but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible – but not everything is constructive.”
– 1 Corinthians 10:23*

The Concept

In the first unit, the case was made that God cares about our work life. Not only does He care about it He has a kingdom purpose for it! Therefore, the following are unacceptable for Christ followers in the workplace.

- Going through the motions
- Purposeless activity
- Destructive pursuits

Rather, our workplace thoughts and decisions and actions are to be aimed at making a positive difference in our world. Our work has a higher purpose than simply providing a paycheck. Our work can:

- Benefit ourselves and others
- Be good in its nature
- Build something of importance
- Construct upon a foundation from others

Many Options and Choices

Think back to your last Thanksgiving feast. Think of the eating options that were available to you. How did you feel following the meal? How might have you felt if you had continued on with an extra serving?

It has been said that ‘good is the enemy of best’. We live in a world full of choices and options. Our Lord has not provided us with instructions that provide specific guidance in every choice. Rather, He has given us a life that constantly requires choices. And seemingly, just like the Thanksgiving feast, where there is an abundance to consume - there are many open doors for our behavior.

Think of a current work issue that is before you. This may be a career move, a new client you are pursuing, a new process you are considering or are being asked to adopt or a new relationship. **What are some of the “open doors” that now seem available for you to choose from regarding this situation or decision?**

Not all of the many choices available to you will result in beneficial and constructive action.

Not all of the many choices available to you will result in beneficial and constructive action. **How will you decide what action to take?**

Permissible, but...

In *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby tells us that relying upon open and shut doors to determine our actions is not a good approach to life for Christians. Our enemy is able to maneuver doors and God is certainly able to use any trials that may come our way when we choose something other than the seemingly easy path.

Paul gave us this challenge.

“‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial.

‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is constructive.” (1 Corinthians 10:23)

What does this mean to you?

Verse 24, gives us some context and guidance for our consideration of what is beneficial and constructive. Paul tells us “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.” Thus, even an action that is permissible and seemingly beneficial and constructive for us personally, does not pass the test of what Christ makes possible for us. Our choices are also to be beneficial and constructive for others!

Although possible, it can be difficult to make self-sacrificing decisions in the often harsh business world. When our jobs and wages are on the line, it is often difficult to think of others. Our confidence in God is essential in such moments. It is important for us to know the truth that Scriptures provide. For example, we are more likely to choose an action that is beneficial and constructive when we know and trust verses such as:

“Then Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. {28} If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire,

Our choices are also to be beneficial and constructive for others!

how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.” (Luke 12:22-31)

What other Scriptures would it be helpful for you to recall during times of choosing between that which is permissible and that which is constructive and beneficial?

A Determination That Will Serve Us Well

In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul also gives us a determination that will help us take the right action.

“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial.

“Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything.

It is possible that some of the doors that are open before us will lead to our slavery. Possessions can control us. And once obtained, we are tempted to bow down to almost anything in order to retain what we possess. The power and respect we receive because of our positions can become like euphoric drugs that change our behavior.

What are some other areas of business life that can become addictive and life altering?

But Paul has good news for us. In Christ, we can adopt an attitude of “we will not allow anything to master us.” **What would be an effective way for you to remind yourself that you can approach your work with such an attitude?**

Restrict Your Liberty

Many during Paul's time were claiming great liberty in their faith. They incorrectly reasoned that since, the body is temporal and since our actions do not bring eternal life, nothing they did had any spiritual significance. This led them to sexual immorality and idolatry. In effect they had secularized their lives. Today our secularized mind-set can also lead us into some 'permissible' business behavior. What business actions and attitudes are permissible in our time but might not be beneficial and constructive in God's eyes?

Below are some Scriptures that provide guidance for us in our quest for beneficial and constructive business actions that will not enslave us.

"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:25-28)

"Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint." (Proverbs 23:4)

What other Scriptures can you add to the list that may be particularly important for you at your point of vulnerability?

In terms of the open doors that you identified earlier, who else do you need to consider before making your decision and taking action?

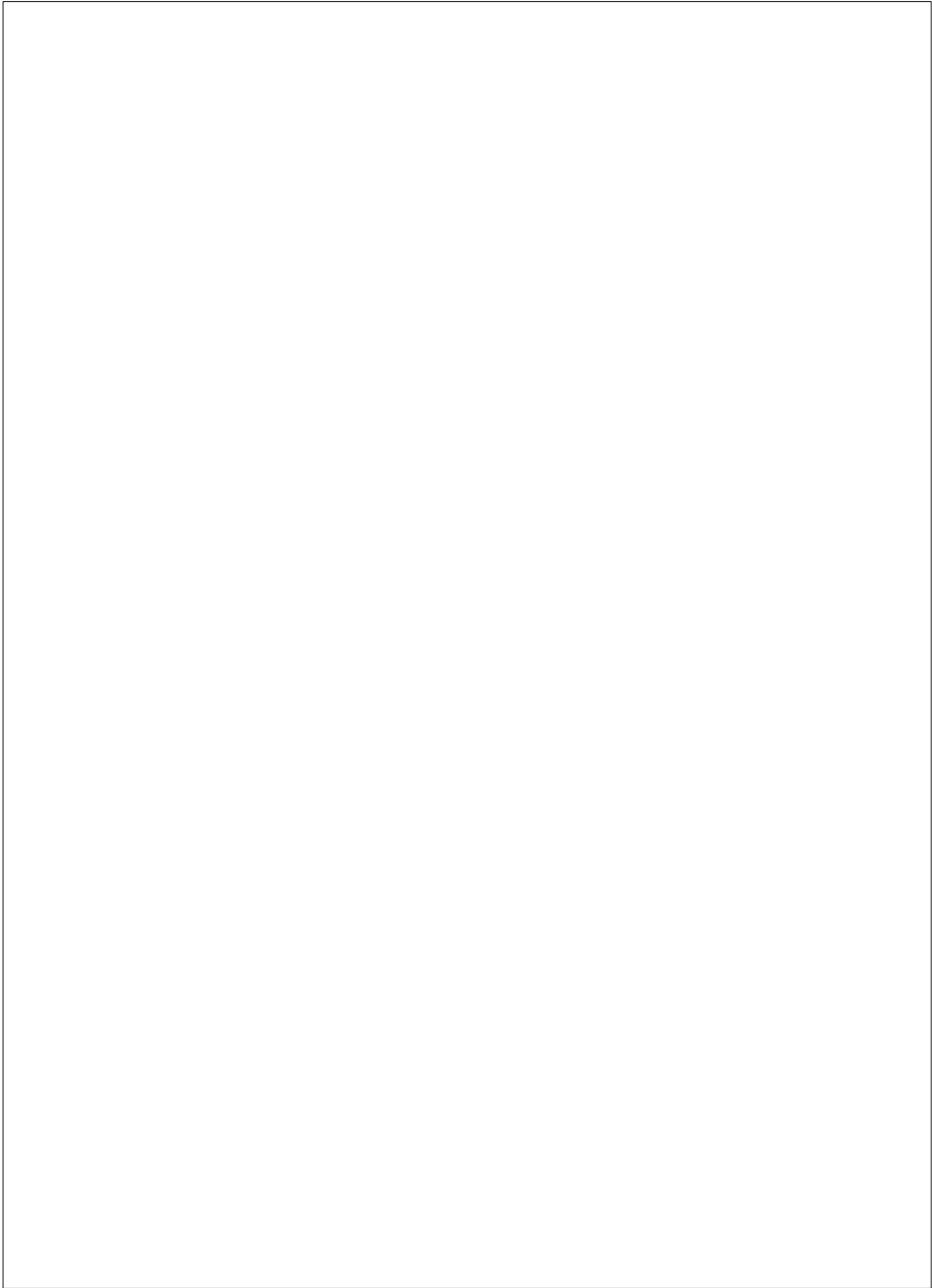
Applications of Strategic Possibility # 1: Beneficial and Constructive Actions

Review this lesson and record the key points and/or your personal insights.

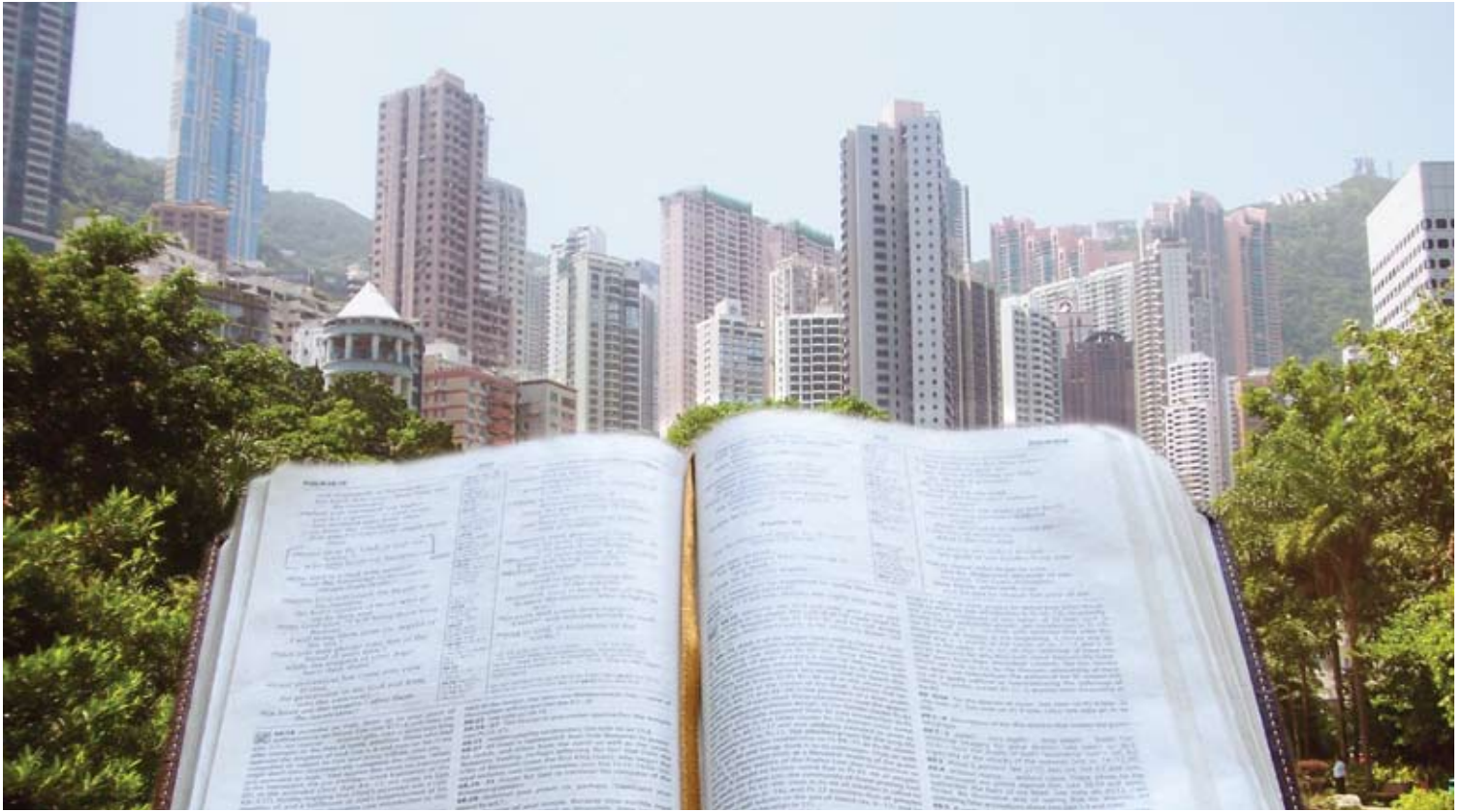
Record a personal action and/or application to which God has led you through this study.

Blessing

May the mind of Christ and His indwelling Spirit lead you into actions that are beneficial and constructive for others while you trust that and experience how He will meet all of your needs beyond your expectations.

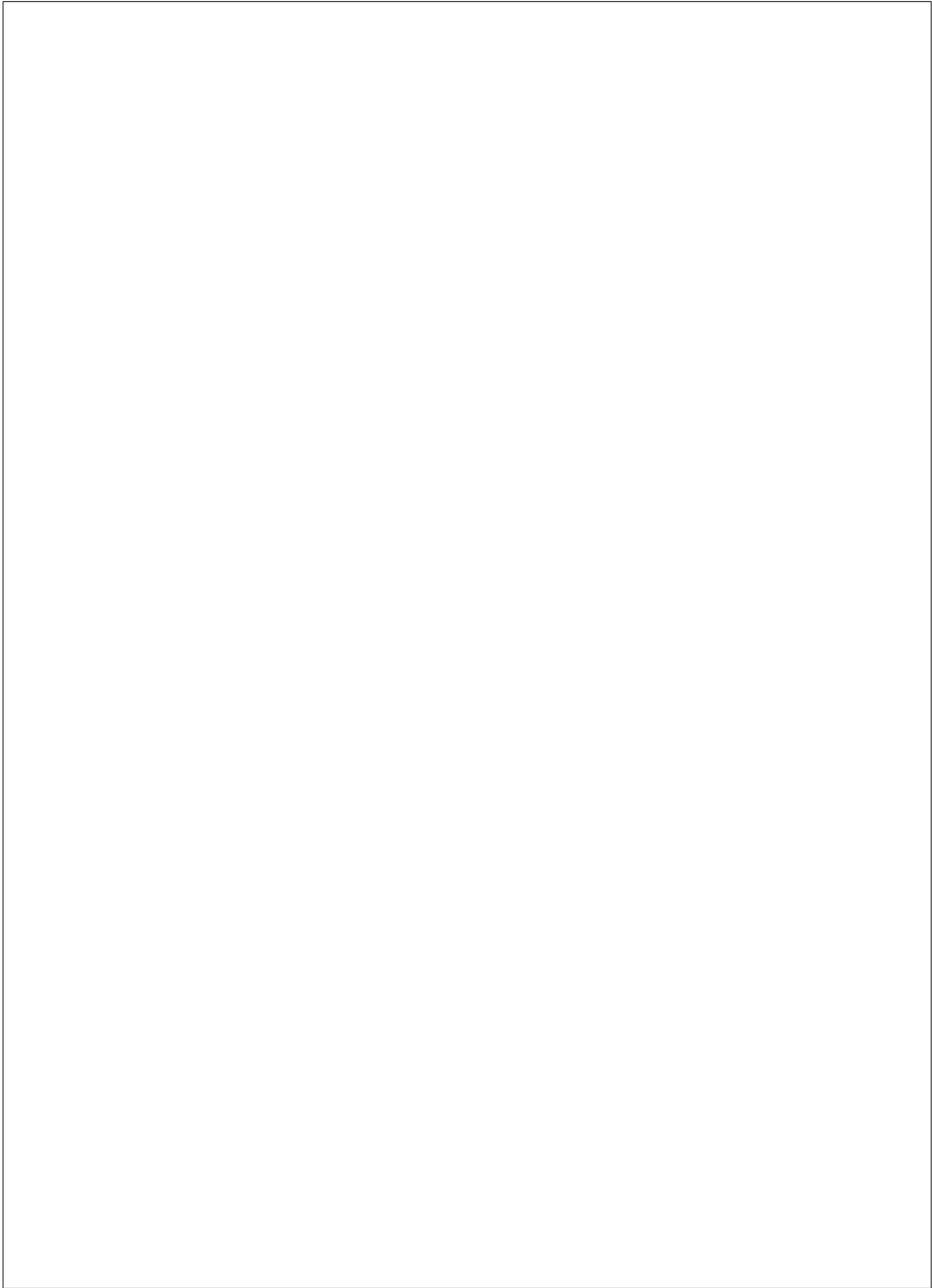


STRATEGIC POSSIBILITIES



Strategic Possibility #2 Best Thinking





Strategic Possibility 2 -Best Thinking

The Possibility

Thoughts are focused on whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever, is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - anything excellent or praiseworthy.

The Concept

The mind is a wonderful gift from our Lord. Even knowing that at times we would use the gift poorly, He gave use the ability to make choices - to think about life and make decisions. Our thinking can be:

- Poor or Excellent
- Shallow or Thoughtful
- Casual or Disciplined
- Biased or Balanced
- Incomplete or Detailed

To help us with our thinking God has provided us with a picture of what 'best thinking' is to be focused on. These guidelines can to used to channel our thinking about every business issue we face.

The Convergence Of Faith And Business Thinking

What are some of the more popular ideas that guide business thinking today?

How are these consistent or not consistent with Biblical truth?

*"...whatever is true,
whatever is noble,
whatever is right,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is admirable
– if anything is excellent
or praiseworthy – think
about such things."
– Philippians 4:8*

Consider the following taken from *Fortune*, July 9, 2001, *God and Business*:

Hamilton Beazley who teaches at George Washington University says, " Spirituality is in convergence with all the cutting-edge thinking in management and organizational behavior."

Jose Zeilstra, merger expert claim, "Leaders who are guided by spiritual principles should thrive in the new economy."

What does that tell you concerning your faith and your work?

Our thoughts can be focused on good or evil – on concepts that converge with our faith or cause dissonance.

God has given us free will. We are given the freedom to guide our thoughts and choose our actions. Our thoughts can be focused on good or evil, on concepts that converge with our faith or cause dissonance.

Although giving us a free will, God has not left us without guidance. In terms of thinking, He has provided the following specific advice.

"... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

If we are to experience all that God has for us, all that He makes possible for us, then our thought life should embrace this wise counsel. Is it reasonable to expect that our thinking about work issues can follow this model? Please explain your answer.

A Look At Each Aspect Of Right Thinking

Following is a definition of each word used by Paul. What does each say to you about your workday thinking?

True - true to fact

Noble - august, venerable, honest

Right - just, straight way, a state of being right whether judged by divine or human standards

Pure - not defiled or contaminated

Lovely - pleasing, agreeable

Admirable - well spoken of, reputable, of good report

Excellent - intrinsic eminence, moral goodness, virtue

Praiseworthy - a tale or narration of commendation

A Best Thinking Grid

As an application of this kind of Possibility thinking, we can use a grid such as the following to test our ideas and plans. If there is a strong degree of convergence, we can have a strong sense of God's leading, If not, a better solution probably awaits some better thinking.

If there is a strong degree of convergence between the focus of our thinking and what God has outlined, we can have a strong sense of God's leading. If not, a better solution probably awaits some better thinking.

Grid for Testing Our Thinking

Workplace Issue: _____

True	Thinking is based upon fact. Time is taken to uncover truth and not react to incomplete information.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Noble	Hidden agendas are exposed. Deception will not have to be used to 'sell' the idea.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Right	The most direct way is sought. Others will be treated properly.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Pure	Impure motives are discarded. Ideas are tested so that impurities can be separated.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Lovely	When decision makers leave the room, they still agree on the choice. All stakeholders will be in pleased.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Admirable	Give weight only to that which comes from credible sources.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Excellent	Rise above the facts and above what is permissible to what is Possible in Christ	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Praiseworthy	When told, the actions that will follow will be worthy of commendation.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Think of a current business decision that you are working on or one recently made. Record some descriptive of it in the second row. Next, test your thinking against each criteria and record your thoughts in the last column. Your thoughts might include an additional specific application that comes to your mind. **Based upon your assessment what did you learn about your thinking? If you pondered a decision you are facing have you gained confidence to move forward? If not, what additional God-honoring thinking are you led to?**

Before The Thought Process

Paul introduces the kind of thinking we have been looking at with the words “Finally, brothers.” Thus, there is a context we should also consider:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.” (Philippians 4:4-8)

To experience the best of thinking, there are some truths to “put into play” before we even begin our considerations. **According to Philippians 4:4-8, what might be good preparation for our business thinking and decision-making?**

To experience the best of thinking, there are some truths to “put into play” before we even begin our considerations.



Applications of Strategic Possibility #2: Best Thinking

Review this lesson and record the key points and/or your personal insights.

Record a personal action and/or application to which God has led you through this study.

Blessing

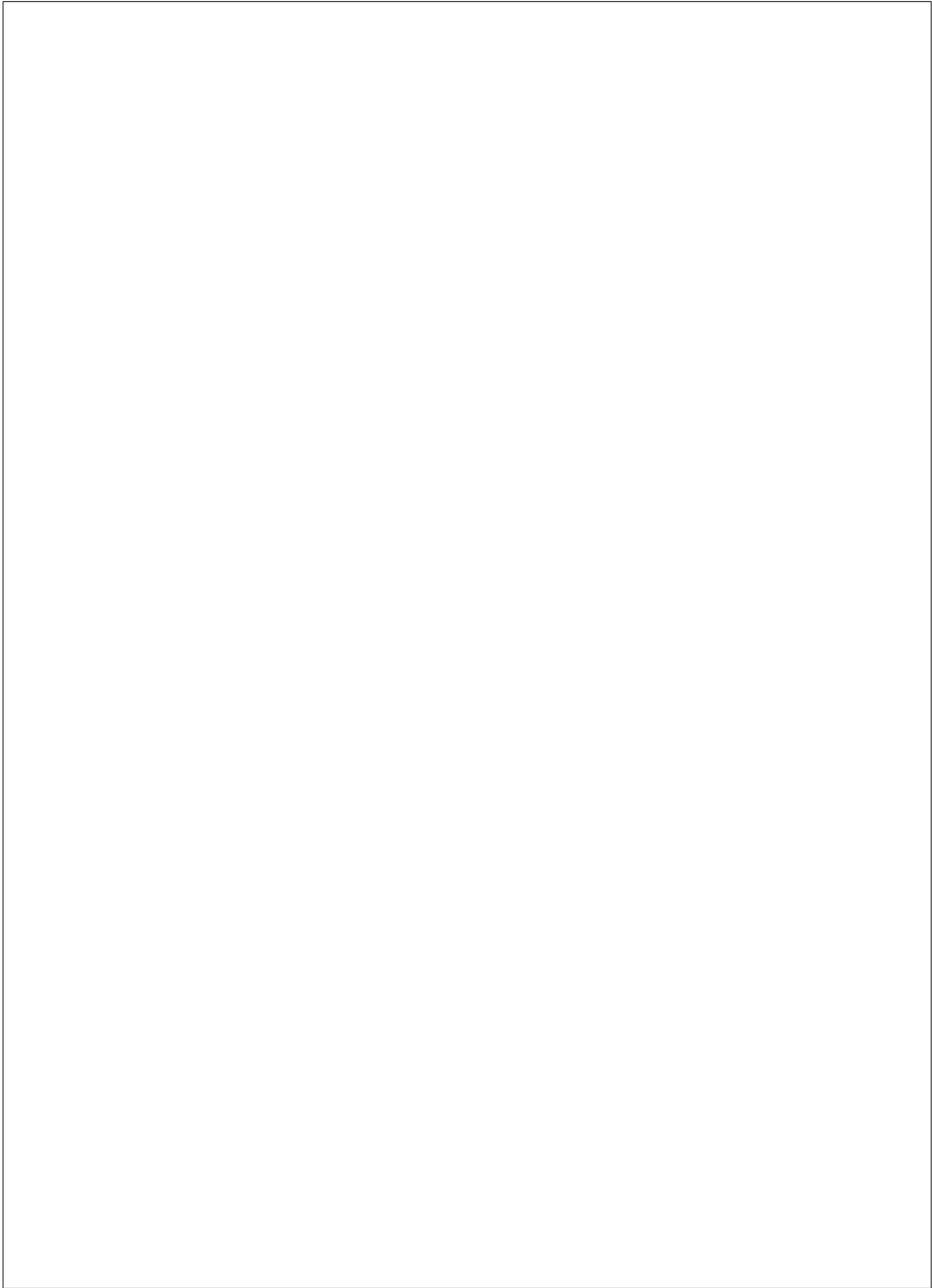
May the mind of Christ and His indwelling Spirit lead you into actions that are beneficial and constructive for others while you trust that and experience how He will meet all of your needs beyond your expectations.

STRATEGIC POSSIBILITIES



Strategic Possibility #3 Love





Strategic Possibility 3 - Love

The Possibility

Being known for love for neighboring business, competitors, staff, suppliers and every stakeholder.

*Whoever does not love
does not know God,
because God is love.
— 1 John 4:8*

The Concept

God is love. As His children, who are indwelt by His Holy Spirit, we have a relational possibility that can set us apart in the workplace. Loving others in the marketplace is both a possibility and an expectation. Importantly, the love we are capable of is not self-serving but distinctive in its concern for others.

Is Love Appropriate At Work?

What would the probable reaction be if, during a job interview, the candidate claimed love as his best strength?

What are some appropriate workplace expressions of love?

Most certainly at work, there are bounds on expressions of physical attractions. At times, because of affinity and the bond of working together, an appropriately tender (non-sexual) affection and respect can grow between coworkers. There is another powerful type of love that is available to the Christian and is in fact integral to his or her new nature.

To describe this kind of love, God gave us a new word, agape.

This is a love that is perfectly expressed by God through Jesus. To describe this kind of love, God gave us a new word, agape. Vine's Expository Dictionary states that there is no historical usage that throws much light on its distinctive usage. Rather, it is defined by the context of its use in the New Testament. Vine's uses the following ideas to help us grasp this love that, because of Christ, is now possible for us to express.

1. Not drawn out by the excellency of its objects
2. Deliberate choice made without assignable cause
3. Not an impulse from feeling
4. Does not always run with natural inclinations
5. Does not spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity exists

What would be a workplace application of each of the above?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The following passage helps us understand what is expected from agape.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:10)

How can you apply this to your work?

In Galatians 5:14 Paul wrote: “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Our neighbors are those we share the workplace with. They might be a coworker or a competitor - a supplier or a stakeholder - a boss or a business partner. By loving our marketplace neighbors we are engaged in God’s work. Rather than asking if love is appropriate at work, it might be more appropriate to ask ourselves, as children of God how can we justify withholding love from the marketplace?

*...as children of God
how can we justify
withholding love from
the marketplace?*

The Limitation of Knowledge

We live in what some call the Knowledge Age. Today much value is placed on intellectual capital. **What marketplace guidance does the following passage provide?**

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1b)

Consider the following.

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.” (1 Corinthians 13:1)

This speaks to a proud and arrogant heart that does not carefully consider the needs and ideas of those around him or her. Love builds up but pride is a destructive force in our relationships. Without love, our words are unpleasant to hear. Unloving words create relational noise that hamper good communications. What are some workplace examples of this?

Love As An Effective Leadership Style

Paul, in his letter to Philemon, a friend and fellow worker in the gospel, models how power, authority and superior knowledge can effectively yield to love as the way to “get things done.” While in prison Paul met Onesimus, a slave who had stolen and run away from Philemon. Paul leads Onesimus to Christ and Onesimus becomes very dear to Paul, helping Paul while Paul is in chains. Eventually, it seems right to Paul for Onesimus to return to Philemon. However, Onesimus’ crime was punishable by death. Paul wants Philemon to recognize that Onesimus is a new man and now, while once a thief, is very useful. Paul promises to make restitution and could, based upon his authority, demand that Philemon receive Onesimus. However, Paul used these words.

“Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love.” (Philemon 1:8-9)

Rather, than give an order, Paul called forth something from within Philemon - his ability to love.

How might you adopt this approach in your workplace responsibilities?

Rather, than give an order, Paul called forth something from within Philemon – his ability to love

Care must be taken when using this approach. Not everyone is capable of responding with agape. However, it is a Possibility for the community of believers. You can call forth love from the saints you work with.

When using this approach it is good to remember some additional ideas that are drawn from the letter. While agape is ours to give, we often need discipline and encouragement to express it.

- Express your care for the person being called upon for a loving act (vs 4)
- Acknowledge that you have seen love at work in them (vs 7)
- While not using it, Paul made his authority known (vs 8)
- Specify the hope you see or the beneficial result coming from the loving act (vs 9, 15-16)
- If restitution is appropriate, see that it is taken care of (vs 18-19)
- Express confidence, expecting obedience (vs 21)
- Provide accountability. In verse 22 Paul tells Philemon to prepare a place for Paul to stay when we visits.

The Meaning Of Love

Below is a chart summarizing the teaching on love found in Chapter 10 of **Significance Now** by Michael Bundy. The words are those found in 1 Corinthians 13 to describe love. Take some time to reflect upon this table with your workplace responsibilities in mind.



Descriptive Word	Meaning
Patient	Abides under circumstances or trials without retaliation or surrender
Kind	Is useful to the other person. Love is an action.
Not Envy	Does not allow feelings to move me toward a destructive act that would deprive another.
Not Boasting	Does not take more credit than due or make something sound more important than it is.
Not Proud	Does not inflate my own worth or consider myself more highly than we should
Not Rude	Maintains correct relational boundaries
Not Self-Seeking	Seeks the good of others and trusts God to meet personal needs
Not Easily Angered	Does not quickly take action upon revengeful feelings
Keeps No Record of Wrong	Does not inventory actions that have hurt
Not Delighting in Evil	Does not sympathize in gladness with injustices
Rejoices in Truth	Gladly participates when truth is revealed and sin is unconcealed
Always Protects	In confidence, covers with silence
Always Trusts	Maintains conviction that God is at work
Always Hopes	With a God-sized view of time, maintains a favorable and confident expectation
Always Perseveres	Courageously moves through (not around) the trial
Never Fails	Never falls out of love
Sincere	Comes from within and is not fake

It is probable that the Spirit spoke to you concerning a workplace application from the above. **What is (are) the new Possibility(ies) that God wants to work into your life at this time?**

Applications of Strategic Possibility #3: Love

Review this lesson and record the key points and/or your personal insights.

Record a personal action and/or application to which God has led you through this study.

Blessing

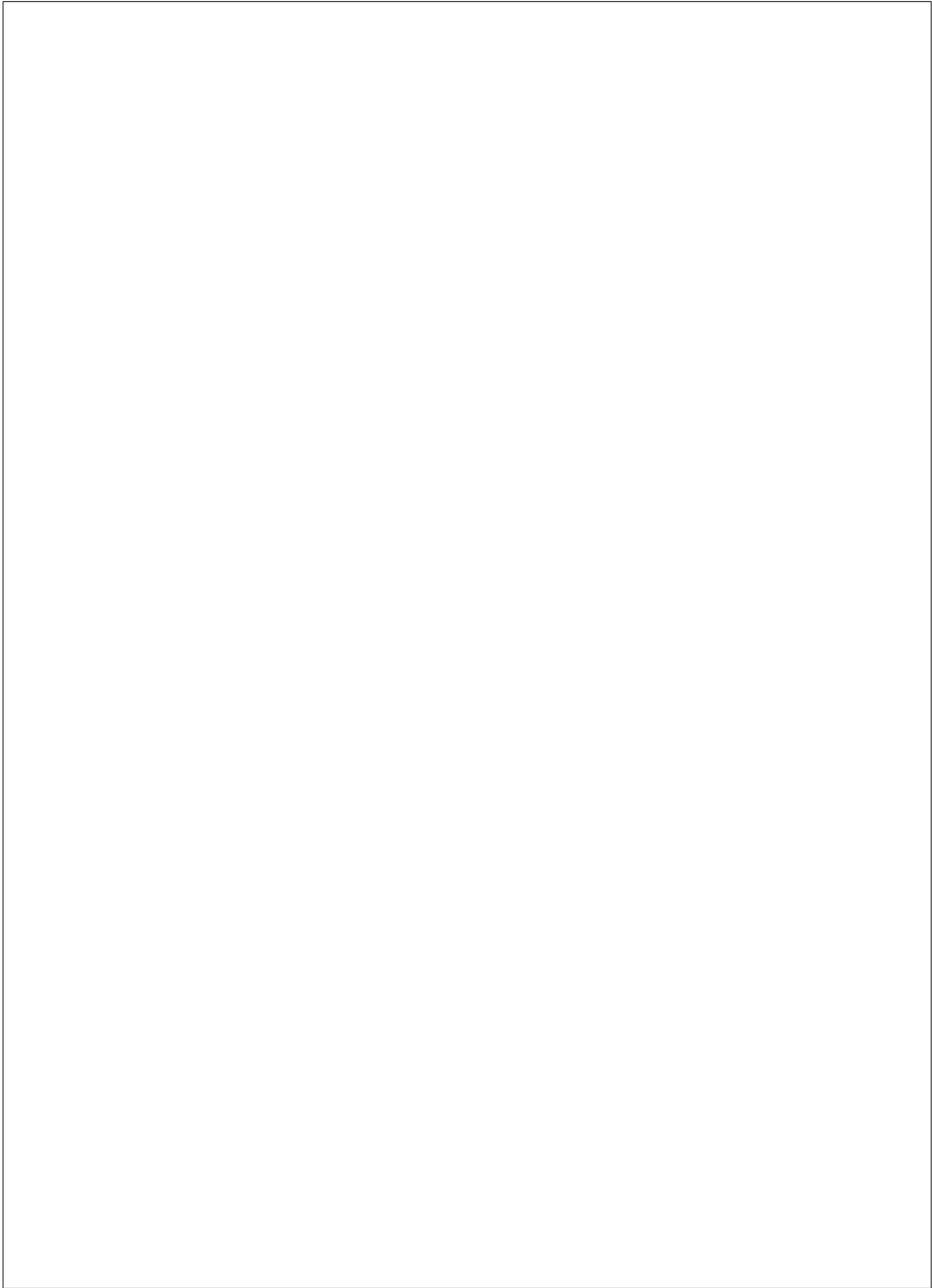
May the love that is within you be called forth for the benefit of your marketplace neighbors and may God be glorified by your distinctive presence in your workplace.

STRATEGIC POSSIBILITIES



Strategic Possibility #4 Obedience





Strategic Possibility 4 - Obedience

The Possibility

Obedience is seen as a positive quality.

The Concept

The importance of obedience is sometimes lost in our society. Our culture knows and reveres the importance of freedom. Taken to the extreme our freedom entitlement can cause us to rebel rather than obey. However, the very freedom we desire requires individual restraint and appropriate obedience.

The following expresses an attitude some have concerning obedience.

Obedience is for children and dogs but not a strong quality for mature adults with sound minds.

What do you think about that statement?

What do you believe is the proper relationship between obedience and independent thinking?

Submissive Listening

Holman's Bible Dictionary defines obedience as:

To hear God's Word and act accordingly. The word translated "obey" in the Old Testament means "to hear" and is often so translated. In the New Testament, several words describe obedience. One of those means: *To hear or listen in a state of submission.*

Once while seeking God's direction, a friend challenged me with the following idea. He said that if I wanted to hear what God's will was, I had to first be willing to "do His will." This sounds like the submissive listening spoken of in the Bible.

*"I call with all my heart;
answer me, O LORD
and I will obey your
decrees."
— Psalm 119:145*

What does the concept of 'submissive listening' mean to you?

...If I wanted to hear what God's will was, I had to first be willing to "do His will."

The Word Is Worth Listening To

Psalm 119 is a glowing report on the value of God's Word—His law, precepts and statutes. In that Psalm there are seventeen uses of "obey." Seventeen times we are encouraged to "hear and act." In verse 145 the psalmist expresses submissive listening in this way.

"I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD, and I will obey your decrees." (Psalm 119:145)

The writer of this Psalm had a very high view of the Word. He called it 'a delight' (v 24), 'the theme of my song' (v 54), 'more precious than a thousand pieces of silver and gold' (v 72), 'a lamp for his feet and a light for his path' (v 105), 'joy' (v 111), and 'wonderful' (v 129).

And submission to God's direction was a very positive influence in his life which yielded the following:

- Without it he would have perished (v 92)
- Preserved his life (v 93)
- Made him wiser than his enemies (v 98)
- Gave him understanding (v 104)

As workplace applications of the above, we might say things such as the following:

- Without the specific guidance I gained from your written Word, this venture would have failed.
- Lord, the direction you confirmed by your Word has preserved my company or my position.
- My obedience to your written counsel has made me wiser than those who have attempted to discredit me and take business and/or my good name from me.
- As I meditated on your Word, you illuminated it to provide the understanding I needed for the specific business issue that was before me.

How has God used the Bible in your work-life? Or what is a testimony you have heard concerning someone's marketplace obedience to Biblical instruction?

As a way to build appreciation for value of God's Word in your life, for the next 21 days consider reading one section of Psalm 119 each day.

Our Way Or God's

"Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.
Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart." (Psalm 119:1-2)

God has given us bodies and expects us to use them to perform tasks. He has given us minds that He also expects us to use. Importantly, we have a choice as to how we will use them. We can engage our bodies and minds fully and often very successfully in a secular pursuit of our needs and wants. Or we can seek to obey God and receive success as a blessing rather than a self-earned and self-gratifying result.

Write a statement that expresses this tension between the use of our body and mind to accomplish something versus acting with the kind of obedience that God blesses.

Solomon expressed in this way

"The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD."
(Proverbs 21:31)

As we prepare for our workplace challenges, our mind and body have important functions ordained by God. However, for lasting success, our heart must seek only that which God can bless.

The Love Connection

In our previous session, we explored how love can be operative at work. 2 John 1:6a links love and obedience: "And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands."

...receive success as a blessing rather than a self-earned and self-gratifying result.

Love is not an abstract concept. Love is clearly and precisely and practically described for us in God's laws, precepts, decrees and statutes. The Bible has something to say about every workplace issue we face. Our obedience to those commands is an expression of love.

Take a moment to clear your mind and reflect on a current business issue. Express to God your desire to hear from Him and your willingness to obey. Ask Him to bring to mind a Scripture that has some bearing on the issue. What is He telling you and how is this a loving response or solution?

If no Scripture came to mind, ask someone who can provide Godly counsel to offer some Bible verses that might apply and/or read the Scriptures yourself with an expectant and “submissively listening” heart. **Record the counsel or new insight below.**

The Bible has something to say about every workplace issue we face.

The following two Scriptures are provide us with clear obedience directives for the workplace.

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.” (Ephesians 6:5-6)

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:22-24)

Everyone in today’s marketplace has earthly masters. It might be the boss, the government, creditors, the board of directors or the client served. Obedience to God requires obedience to workplace authority. **From these verses how is God specifically speaking to you concerning a current workplace master of yours?**

Obedience to God requires obedience to workplace authority.

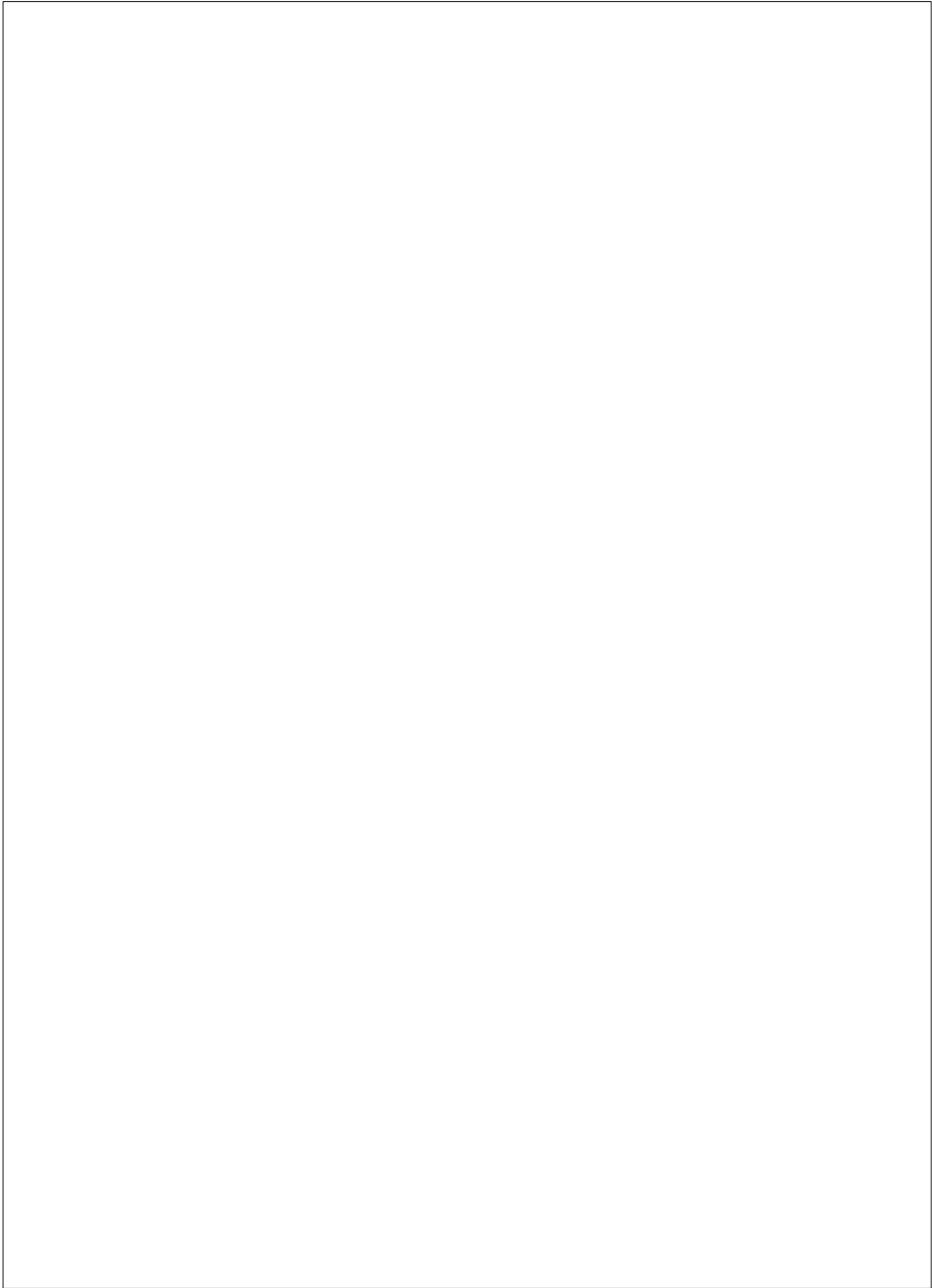
Applications of Strategic Possibility #4: Obedience

Review this lesson and record the key points and/or your personal insights.

Record a personal action and/or application to which God has led you through this study.

Blessing

May you be known as a man or woman of obedience and receive the many blessings God has for you through the acts of love that result.

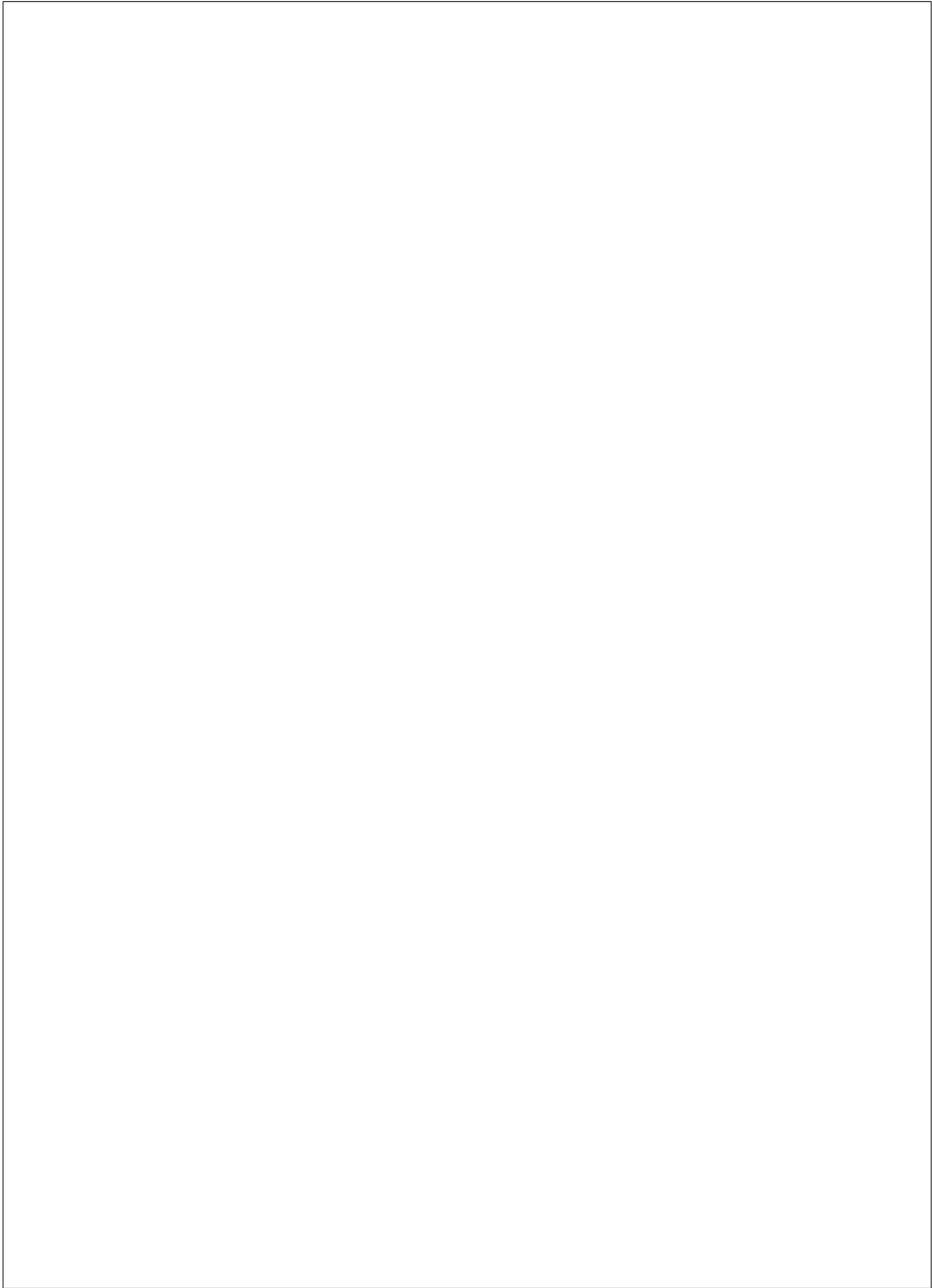


STRATEGIC POSSIBILITIES



Strategic Possibility #5 Wisdom





Strategic Possibility 5 - Wisdom

The Possibility

Recognition that Godly wisdom is available, appropriate and advantageous for business issues.

The Concept

Most of the time in Scripture the word translated as wisdom has the root meaning of 'insight into the true nature of things'. As such it carries a depth that goes beyond knowledge of facts and understanding of issues. It implies an insight so profound that action is required or suggested. Below are some expressions of what wisdom might be.

- The application of learning and knowledge
- Insight as to the root causes of a problem
- Ability to see beyond the surface of an issue

Is it possible to be smart but not wise? Explain your answer.

Write out your thoughts on the following statements.

- Godly wisdom is available for workplace decisions.

- Godly wisdom is appropriate to act on in my job.

- Applying Godly wisdom provides advantages for me in my career.

Much has been written over the last decade that applies Biblical truth to marketplace issues. The Bible makes it clear that God intends our life to reflect Him in all we do and thus use His wisdom in our work. Clear connections are made throughout Scriptures showing the relationship between righteousness and positive outcomes. One powerful example of the relevance of Godly wisdom for our workday activities is from the life of George Washington Carver, the prolific inventor. He once said that the only book he took into his laboratory was the Bible and that his every invention came by inspiration from God. Clearly, God's wisdom not only has a place at work, it can have a profound impact!

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." – James 3:17

God Gives Wisdom To All

Not only is Godly wisdom effective, it is readily available to us.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5)

What do the following mean to you?

God is willing to give wisdom generously.

God gives wisdom to all.

God gives wisdom without finding fault.

When we ask for wisdom, our ability to receive the Godly wisdom we need is not limited by God’s ability or willingness to provide it, nor by God’s desire to portion it to a few, nor by our personal issues.

A Limitation

Although abundantly available, there is one limitation to receiving it as seen in the next verses.

“But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” (James 1:6-8)

God is clear that if we doubt we will not receive the wisdom we seek.

Below are some cautions to consider as you seek His wisdom for your business decisions.

- Are you willing to act upon the truth God shows you?
- Will you take prompt action or rationalize away the wisdom?

- Will you stay the course when acting upon the wisdom or change course when adversity or challenge occurs?
- Will those around you be able to trust in the stability of your decision?

Thinking of your workplace responsibilities, which of the above presents the greatest challenge to you at this point in your walk with Christ? Explain your answer.

Before continuing with this study record in the space below a work issue you are facing - one for which you desire and need wisdom. You will refer back to this issue and as we explore what wisdom from God looks like.

The Elements of Heavenly Wisdom - A Decision Making Model

How will we know the wisdom we receive is from God? Our enemy, the devil, provides erroneous input that can send us on the wrong path or, at the least, cause great confusion. Importantly, God makes it possible for us to recognize His wisdom. This is critical because of the many competing ideas and agendas that we can consider

Many of our options are attractive. Many of our actionable ideas contain wise elements. Knowing of the confusion that could result God provides for us the following instruction.

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” (James 3:17)

A description of the terms that God uses to describe heavenly wisdom follows. Following each wisdom element, you will be asked to apply the teaching to the business issue you identified earlier.

A. Pure - Literally, this is to be clean, innocent, modest, perfect. It comes from the same root word as holy so carries the idea of not defiled or contaminated. Godly wisdom will be without sin, it will not be contaminated by hidden agendas, sinful pursuits or selfish desires. Since purity of thought is so difficult to obtain, it might be good to approach our decision-making with prayers such as the following.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. {24} See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

Application: Thinking of the business issue you listed, ask God to provide you with His wisdom and invite Him to search your heart and prepare you for his answer.

B. Peace-loving - The specific reference here is to harmonious relationships with others. Paul put this into proper perspective when he wrote: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18) Peace-loving is not peace. The right-responses of others is beyond our control. However, peace-lovers will make peaceful responses possible. Peace-lovers will respond in ways that can quiet a storm rather than fuel a fire. Examples of peace-loving responses that are possible for us are:

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1)

“A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.” (Proverbs 29:11)

In James 4:1, James points us to the root cause of the fights and quarrels that occur. “Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” he asks. Thus, our ability to be peace-loving is very dependent upon the purity of our heart.

Application: Of the options open to you at this time concerning the business issue you identified, which is the most peace-loving?

What alterations could make the action more peace-loving?

C. Considerate - This is to be gentle, mild and patient. Workplace applications include:

- Consider the capabilities or viewpoints of others.
- Gently give instruction and correction.
- Be mild in the presentation of your ideas.
- Showing patience during the learning curve and when opposition arises.

Application: As you ponder the decisions available to you how do they or do they not exhibit consideration for all who will be impacted? What actions can be taken to help with buy-in? What training will be appropriate?

D. Submissive - A more literal interpretation is found in the King James Version that says 'easy to be entreated'. This is, ready to obey, to be persuaded, compliant. Wisdom from above will be cooperative. The wisdom God provides will be ready to listen to all authority whether government or in the workplace chain of command. It will be open to the ideas of subordinates and others on project teams and the clients served.

It is interesting that the King James Version uses 'easy to be entreated.' Thus, we do not just see submission but an eagerness to do so. Godly wisdom springs from a willing heart.

Application: Does the decision you are pondering exhibit an openness to the input you have received from others? Is your heart eager to hear from and follow authority or you justifying your personal agenda?

E. Full of Mercy - This is to exhibit compassion - to demonstrate an outward manifestation of pity. It assumes need on part of receiver and resources by the giver.

A business decision that exhibits heavenly wisdom will go beyond the contractual requirements or rights to demonstrate a caring attitude. The needs of others will be taken into consideration. However, being full of mercy does not mean 'giving the farm away'. An assessment of available resources is essential.

Application: Is the potential decision to "go the extra mile" within your available resources? Are there additional resources that could be made available?

F. Good Fruit - The word used here has a much deeper meaning than favorable or positive. This describes that which is good in its character or constitution and beneficial in its effect. Not only are the results effective but the source of the idea or solution are good.

The solution that comes from heavenly wisdom is the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly. As an example, Samuel Morse said that when he got stumped he prayed, and so the first message he clicked off was "Look what God has done."

Application: Is it likely that the impact will be seen as positive? Do you sense that the solution has come from an inner inspiration? Can God glorified?

G. Impartial - Partiality primarily signifies 'not to be parted.' This can be related to the idea of being without uncertainty or indecision or wrangling or variance or doubtfulness. Wisdom from God comes with certainty and clarity. When acting upon it we can do so with confidence. We can boldly lead those who are depending upon our decision.

Application: As you move close to the decision, is God providing a settled resolve. Will you be able to stay the course, to stay focused when you face opposition and misunderstanding?

H. Sincere - The King James Version says "without hypocrisy." The Greek word carried the idea of play acting. Thus, we have a picture that heavenly wisdom represents who we are rather than someone or something we are pretending to be. When presenting the decision to others the true reasons for the decision will not need to be hidden.

Application: Is the decision honest? Can you openly divulge your true rationale? Does the decision reflect who you are or the values of your enterprise? If you make the decision would you be pretending?

Review - Review the applications that you have made thus far. How has this analysis—this study of the elements of heavenly wisdom—impacted your decision?

What wisdom concerning your business issue have you discovered?

In the space below record your next steps of discovery or acting upon the wisdom you have received?

The Wisdom Grid

If a decision we are about to make clearly reflects heavenly wisdom, we should be able to see every wisdom element God has given us through James. To find God's good pleasing and perfect will, we can test and adjust our future decisions using the wisdom grid that follows.

The Wisdom Grid		
Decision Pondered: _____		
Heavenly Wisdom Element	Ways Decision Exhibits Heavenly Wisdom	Ways Decision Does Not Exhibit Heavenly Wisdom
Pure	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Peace Loving	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Considerate	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Submissive	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Full of Mercy	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Good Fruit	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Impartial	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Sincere	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

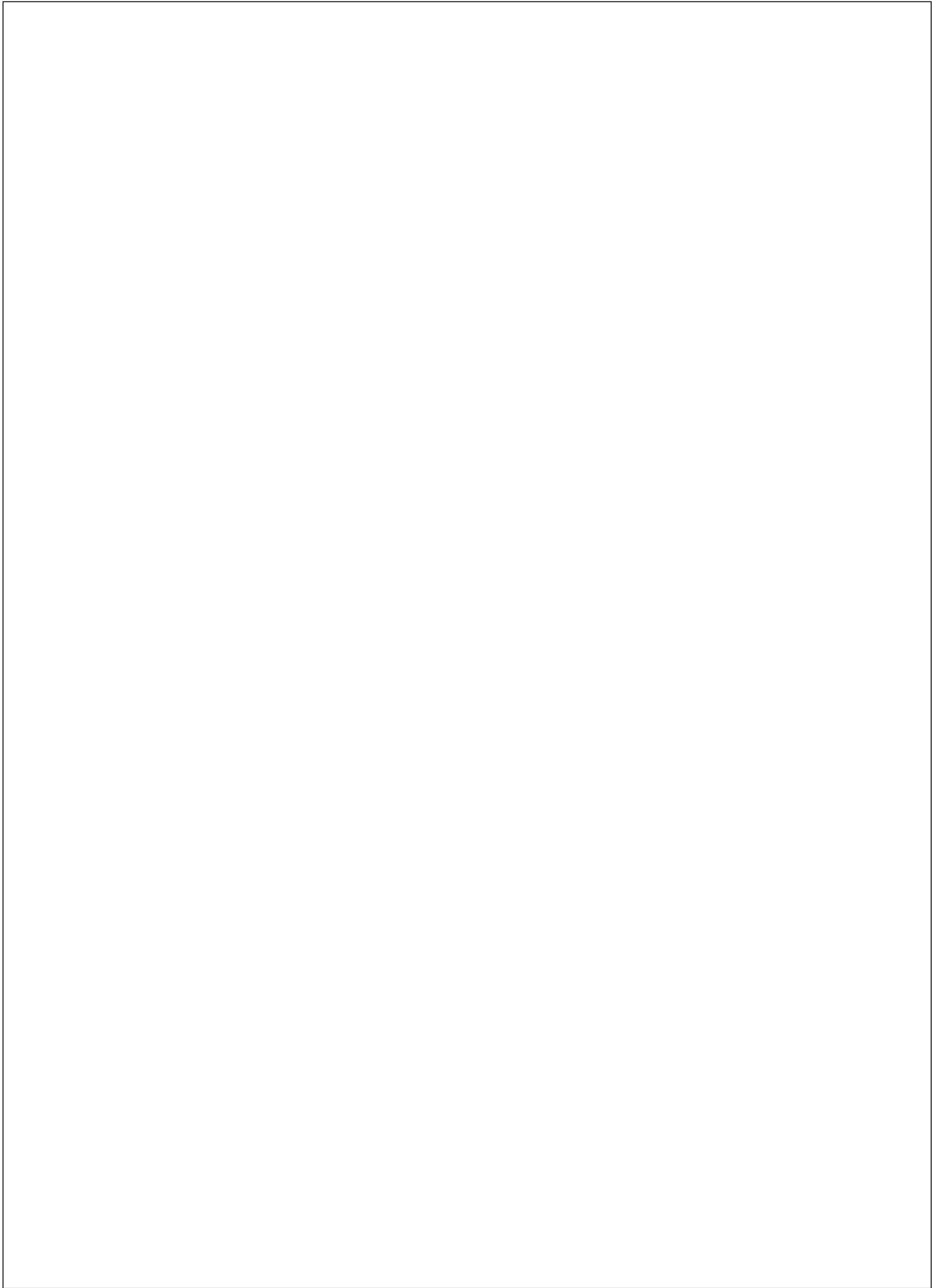
Applications of Strategic Possibility #5: Wisdom

Review this lesson and record the key points and/or your personal insights.

Record a personal action and/or application to which God has led you through this study.

Blessing

With confident expectation may you seek God's wisdom with resolve and perseverance to find what He is revealing to you.



Review and Reflection of the Possibilities for Christ-Led Enterprise

Application Review

Review the Application Sections of the five Possibilities in this study and respond to the following.

List the top three key points or insights that you recorded.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What has been the most important personal action and/or application to which God has led you through this study?

What difference has this study made in your life or your understanding of the connection between your faith and your work?

What transformational change do you expect this study will have in your life over the next few months?

Self-Assessment

Following is the self-assessment for the Possibilities covered in this study. Please circle the number that best represents the level at which you feel you are currently experiencing each Possibility.

Beneficial and Constructive Actions. Although many actions can be considered as possible and within the law and even acceptable to the culture, only those actions that are beneficial and constructive are undertaken.

	<i>Without moral or ethical code</i>		<i>Willing to occasionally bend the rules</i>		<i>Within standard business codes of acceptable behavior</i>		<i>Known for strong ethical and moral behavior</i>		<i>Only actions that are seen as beneficial from God's point of view are taken.</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Best Thinking. Thoughts are focused on whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—anything excellent or praiseworthy.

	<i>Falsehood is acceptable</i>								<i>Truth is Sought</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Ignoble Thinking</i>								<i>Noble Thinking</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Wrong is Okay if Effective</i>								<i>Effort to Discover the Right Action</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Defiled Thinking</i>								<i>Purity of Thought</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Destructive Actions</i>								<i>Focused on Loving Action</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Goals and Methods not Admirable</i>								<i>Admirable Business Practices</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Slovenly Business Practice Accepted</i>								<i>Excellence is Sought</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	<i>Reputation is Embarrassment</i>								<i>Praiseworthy Accomplishment is Sought</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Obedience. Obedience to God is seen as a positive quality.

<i>Obedience to God is seen as irrelevant</i>	<i>Ignorance as to what God is wanting</i>	<i>"Rational" thinking often wins out over obedience</i>	<i>God is heard and obedience has resulted in some positive outcomes</i>	<i>God's specific direction is expected and readily acted upon</i>					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Love. Being known for their love of neighboring business, competitors, staff, suppliers and every stakeholder.

<i>Hurtful attitudes and actions are tolerated</i>	<i>Selfish approaches are common</i>	<i>Compromises are often accepted</i>	<i>The good of others is sought</i>	<i>Sacrificial actions are common</i>					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Wisdom. Recognition that Godly wisdom is available, appropriated and advantageous for business issues.

<i>Christ's teachings are folly</i>	<i>The Bible is seen as inappropriate for business use</i>	<i>Bible is recognized as a rich source of practical business guidance</i>	<i>Application of Biblical principles in decision making is common</i>	<i>The grid of Godly wisdom is used routinely and valued highly</i>					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Using a distinctive marking, record the responses you made to these Possibilities on the Self-Assessment you took in the introduction. **What differences do you notice?**

How are you encouraged by any growth in marketplace maturity you sense?

What, if any, Possibilities has God revealed to you through this study?

God will not use this tool to condemn you but may well be using it to convict you of the next step He has for you in your transformation to marketplace maturity. If so, what is He speaking to you?

Possibilities for Christ-led Enterprise

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Beneficial and Constructive Actions. Although many actions can be considered as possible and within the law and even acceptable to the culture, only those actions that are beneficial and constructive are undertaken.

Best Thinking. Thoughts are focused on whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- anything excellent or praiseworthy.

Complementary Advantage. Christians have a special ability to work within God's economic realities and enjoy the marketplace benefits of doing so.

Fairness. Equal treatment, even beyond government standards is offered to all.

Love. Being known for love for neighboring business, competitors, staff, suppliers and every stakeholder.

Obedience. Obedience to God is seen as a positive quality.

Prayer. Praying continually brings the best that God has to offer into each business moment.

Reconciliation. A clear commitment to reconciliation exists – beginning with an articulated model for good communications that teaches a process for discussing and resolving differences.

Reputation. A good name is maintained within the community of faith and the community at large.

Respect. Respect and opportunity is given to everyone by the company and its employees.

Servant Leadership. Through the ethical use of power and authority true leaders help others grow, achieve success and attain organizational outcomes.

Submission. Willing submission to appropriate authority.

Trust. Trust and dependence are reinforced within the culture and result in value adding teamwork.

Wealth. Wealth is being created for personal use, for the benefit of all stakeholders and for sharing. The wealth created is through the complementary advantage of conducting business in a righteous and obedient manner.

Wisdom. Recognition that Godly wisdom is available, appropriate and advantageous for business issues.

Study Components

Introduction - The introduction to The Possibilities for Christ Led Enterprise looks at God's movement in today's marketplace and the Possibilities Christ has for us in it. The self-assessment contained in the study is designed for the believer to discover the next work-life growth area God has in mind for him or her.

Foundational Possibilities - The possibilities found in this study provide a foundational understanding of God's economic system and a basis for implementing the relational and strategic Possibilities. The Possibilities covered in this study are:

The Possibility

Complementary Advantage

Trust

Reputation

Prayerful

Wealth

The Workplace Impact

God's ways provide marketplace advantages

Trust and dependence produce positive results

Maintaining a good name has economic value

Prayer impacts marketplace transactions

God honoring creation of wealth benefits many

Relational Possibilities - Building upon the Foundational Possibilities, Christ offers a relational wholeness in the workplace that can improve business outcomes and reduce stress. God has workplace Possibilities for us in each of the following areas:

The Possibility

Respect

Fairness

Submission

Servant Leadership

Reconciliation

The Workplace Impact

Giving respect unlocks potential

Equal treatment enables God's blessings

Submission is a success pathway provided by God

Leaders who serve Christ lead well

Reconciliation yields career and business advantages.

Strategic Possibilities - Having a foundational understanding of God's involvement in the marketplace and a commitment to relational wholeness is not enough for business success. Decision-making and action are required. The following Strategic Possibilities will lead us in His purposes and help us realize our potential.

The Possibility

Beneficial & Constructive Actions

Best Thinking

Obedience

Love

Wisdom

The Workplace Impact

Seeking the beneficial and constructive course has long term value

God provides specific guidance that yields the best thinking about business issues

Applying Biblical principles and guidance is sound business strategy

Love is an effective management style

God's wisdom is available and effective for work place decision-making