

Ancient Rules for Modern-Day Business

By Charles M. Jager

A former president of First Western Bank, Charles Jager, has served as the President of Jager Companies, Inc., in Birmingham, Alabama, since 1974. Jager Companies, a diversified holding company, has subsidiaries in engineering, manufacturing, retailing, and market research. A graduate of Auburn University and Rutgers University, Mr. Jager has also served as a Captain of the United States Air Force and has worked for the Alabama Power Company and the First National Bank of Montgomery. Mr. Jager is a member and elder of Briarwood Presbyterian Church. He and his wife Rosemary have four children and ten grandchildren. Mr. Jager shares here his love for God's law and how that law can be honored in the workplace.

As a child, I was required to memorize the Ten Commandments and to live by them. They were the first written set of rules I had to follow. Since then, I have made many decisions on the memory of "Thou shall not steal" and "Thou shall not bear false witness against my neighbor." But the absence of these ancient rules from our culture has had a tremendous effect on the conduct of business. It is now hard to find employees who come to work on time, who are loyal, and who display honesty in their relations with employers and clients. We now hang the Ten Commandments on the bulletin board of our business, as a basis for good company practice and relationship building. By their example, Christian leaders can communicate these Biblical standards in the workplace without preaching to their employees.

I've found three areas of emphasis that are essential to communicating a Biblical mandate: respect for persons, family-building, and honoring the Sabbath.

Respect for Persons

The primary way a business leader can show respect for employees is to be a respectable person. Maintaining a sense of fairness and consistency in what a company plan exemplifies is essential to gaining and showing respect. Business leaders can also show respect for employees by communicating to them how valuable they are to the company. I try to tell people that our work is a mutual effort, that there is no way we, as a company, can do without them or they can't do without us. When people feel that they are treated with fairness and with respect, they know

they are a part of a team that works together, and they appreciate that.

Family Building

By encouraging a model of Biblical family living at our workplace, I think we have been influential in the strengthening of employee families. When we become aware of spouses separating, we encourage them to stay together to work out problems. Showing personal concern and attention to our employees has meant a great deal to them and has encouraged their loyalty to and concern for the company. We sponsor family outings where children are invited for picnics and softball games, putting the emphasis on family activity instead of company parties or dinners.

Honoring the Sabbath

In our companies, we avoid ? as much as we can ? ever working on Sundays. We let people know that we endeavor not to work on Sundays. We feel like that is time when people need to be with their families and in worship. By modeling that commitment and by encouraging it among our employees, I think we've helped people understand God's design for the Sabbath and helped them use it properly.

Ancient Rules For Modern Living

When employees see leaders trusting God and living according to His plan, they are greatly influenced. We don't have to require employees to memorize the Commandments, as I once had to do. But by our example, we can make it clear that we conduct our lives by these ancient rules and that we expect our business relations to reflect these principles.

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