

Does God Own Your Business?

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Does God Own Your Business? In a word – No. I know the expected answer to this question is that God is the “Owner” of my business, and I am a “Steward” of what is really His asset. This is certainly a noble sentiment, and a position taken by many outstanding Christians who serve the Lord in business. But this article takes the contrary position – that the expected answer is neither the Biblical answer, nor is it the answer that the Lord wants to hear. Rather, we should rethink the question, and seek to grow in understanding our common salvation in Jesus Christ.

Most often, when a Christian says that “my business really belongs to the Lord” he or she is quoting Old Testament verses with instructions the Lord gave to Israel under the Law of Moses. The words of the Law left no doubt that the land in which Israel dwelt was not their own, but belonged to the Lord. The point is starkly made in Leviticus 25: 23 (NIV):

The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is Mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.

The Lord is speaking of the Land of Canaan, which He had sworn with an oath to the descendants of Abraham and Israel. The Lord promised that he would bring them into the land and drive out their enemies so that they would possess it. But they would not own it. There is a big difference between possessing the land, and owning the land.

Israel would sow, reap, and grow their livestock on the land. But “the land is mine” said the Lord. “You are tenants and sharecroppers on it.” The tithe that Israel paid under the Law (which was paid exclusively from its produce of the land or the livestock that was raised on it) was like the portion of the crops that a sharecropper paid to the owner of the land.

Most of us have been tenants at one time or another, whether in our business, our ministry, or our homes. A landlord – tenant relationship is not one that engenders a close, personal connection. The best you can hope for is a clean arms-length business arrangement. People do not naturally love their landlord. In Matthew 25 we have the Parable of the Talents, where the Master gives talents to three of his servants. He goes on a journey to a far country, and wants an accounting when He gets back. We all know the images: the Lord is the Master, we

think of ourselves as the servants, and we focus on the phrase *well done good and faithful servant* as what we want to hear from the Lord when He returns.

But consider this in the context we are discussing. Two servants go out and increase their Master's wealth. The third servant buries his talent, and when the Master gets back the discussion goes like this:

Lord, I knew you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown ... and I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. ... But his lord answered ... You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown ...

Consider carefully this relationship. The servant says that the Master is a hard man – and the fact the Master is going to throw the servant into outer darkness rather confirms it. He cuts you no slack and accepts no excuses. He reaps where He does not sow, because His tenants are doing the sowing. He takes part of the harvest because He is the owner.

Is that the way you think about the Lord? He “owns” your business while you merely work it? Is your relationship with the Lord a Landlord – Tenant or Master – Servant relationship? If so, you are running an old obsolete operating system, one that causes disputes and hard feelings – the way many Christians become angry with God when their plans to do not turn out or a business venture ends in disappointment.

In Matthew 21, Jesus told another parable about *“a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.”*

You know the rest of the story. The tenants became greedy and bitter. They refused to pay the rent. The Landlord sent His Son, and the tenants killed Him. When the leaders of Israel heard the parable, they knew it was about them.

The revolution of Jesus Christ changed that relationship forever. His death and resurrection changed the very nature of our position with the Lord – changed us from being servants, stewards, and tenants who worked the land the Lord owned, to adopted sons and daughters. As Paul wrote to the Galatians:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus ... and heirs according to the promise... and because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out Abba Father! Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

In Jesus Christ, I am no longer God's steward or a servant in His house. I am His son. My relationship with the Lord is no longer that He owns everything, I own nothing and work His land. In Jesus Christ, I am now an heir. As Jesus talked with Peter in Matthew 17:

“What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?” Peter said to Him, “From strangers.” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free.”



As Christians in business and ministry, we should take these words to heart, and bring our Father – Son/Daughter relationship with us to work every day.

My own father has been involved in my business in three ways. First, he gave me encouragement and the confidence that I could succeed. Second, he provided a business loan when banks would not, to give our firm the capital that it needed.

Third, because my business is a law firm, my name is on the door – and because my name is on the door, his name is there too. He does not own the business nor is engaged in its daily operations; but he is very interested in its progress, and the values he taught me are built into its culture.

So it is with my Heavenly Father. Respectfully, He does not own this business, but a son of His does. He provides daily encouragement, and is there to share my success and disappointments. The values of His Word and His Spirit are in everything I do.

Finally, because I choose to be known as a Christian in business, I am putting daily His name on my company.

The idea that God owns my business certainly comes from a noble sentiment, but respectfully, it is running the old software and hearkens back to spiritually poorer days, before Jesus Christ made it all new. It hearkens back to when men and women – even the redeemed – approached God as a hard master, who owned the land and collected His share. It puts us in the position of the Prodigal Son, returning to his father, asking to be treated like a hired servant.

Not me – and not you. The father of the prodigal would not hear of his son talking like a servant. Jesus said *I no longer call you servants.*

I am God's son. The sons are free. And if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.