

ink spots: opinions, news, and reviews from an inkjet

"Each of us must work out our own role in the common grace of our own lives, glorifying God by helping to restore his creation—by bringing the majesty of God and his righteousness to bear against the crumbling structures of a fallen society." Charles Colson, "Reclaiming Occupied Territory," *Christianity Today*, August 2004.



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What if kindness were contagious: could someone catch it from me?

It is easy to look at the recent wave of business scandals with disgust. Those who see capitalism as a system built on greed tend to think, "well, what can you expect?" Business, if not sinful, is at least distasteful.

Christians who have part-time home-based businesses, for example, are sometimes looked on with suspicion. Why would anyone want to make money by selling things to their friends? The idea of making a profit is probably ok for the big retailers, since they have all that overhead. But someone who works out of his or her home doesn't really have any expenses, so there must be some warnings in the Bible about loving money that should be applied to the situation.

I saved an article called "The profit of God" from the February 2003 *Christianity Today*. The authors, Jeff Van Duzer and Tim Dearborn, wrestle with some of the issues facing Christian businesspersons. To quote the authors:

"Historically, Christian thinking about business has swung between the two extremes of warm embrace and cynical rejection."

One side has "wrapped Christian doctrine, capitalism, profits, and business practice in one big group hug: Capitalism forms part of God's kingdom, and the

Lord rewards Christian ethics with an enhanced bottom line.

Another theology rejects business and "warns against the evils of accumulating wealth."

I'm not a theologian but I enjoy looking to scripture to examine the lives of people God called. Did he choose Abraham because his leadership skills would enable him to prosper him? Or were his riches the result of his love for God? Certainly his life was imperfect. We see both his generosity toward his nephew Lot, as well as the lies he told.

Van Duzer and Dearborn begin their discussion of biblical business principles with the account of Creation. "The opening lines of Genesis speak of God's purposes for humankind.... God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number: fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

"This call serves as the bedrock on which to build an understanding of the fundamental purpose of business in God's kingdom. Specifically, from God's perspective, business exists to:

- "Create and distribute goods and services to meet the needs of people.
- "Provide employment

that allows people to use their gifts and abilities creatively.

- "Act as a steward of creation's resources for the sake of all people and future generations.

"Under this model, which many Christian executives already practice, corporate managers direct their businesses according to objectives that help customers, employees, and local and broader communities to be fruitful. Profit is necessary to meet these objectives....

"Profit must be sufficient to permit business to attract the capital it needs to achieve its objectives—but profit is not the goal of business."

The article has more business theory than I can address in this space. Christians I know who have businesses also look to the stories that Jesus told in order to give direction to their goals. In one parable, Jesus describes a business man whose crops prospered so much in a year that he decided to store it all in new silos so that he could live the rest of his life comfortably, instead of using his excess to help others. Jesus calls him a fool because he was storing up wealth for himself without being rich toward God.

Recent news stories about corruption may not surprise us, but if the businesses are run by those who claim to be

godly, we grieve. Because God has made us in his image, we decry injustice, as he does. Personally, I want to support businesses that not only keep the law, but also

- treat people in a manner consistent with human dignity.
- pay just compensation.
- provide a safe, healthy working environment.
- engage in practices that sustain rather than threaten God's creation.
- respect God's intended rhythm of rest and work.

Those who have been with us for ten months in our Let's Be Well classes know that these are issues I care about. I wrestle with them in my journaling so I bring them up in class, especially in the lesson we call creation care. We talk about where to find fair trade bananas, or clothes that are not made in sweatshops. We support those who work hard to produce crops that are grown organically and sustainably, by shopping at farmers markets and local co-ops. We write letters that address injustices that we learn about. Although we may not change the world, we believe that we can make a difference when we vote with our dollars to support businesses that play fair.

Jesus called many businessmen and changed their [Continued on page 6]

Columbus was wrong: the world is flat

“The flattening process relentlessly trims the fat out of business, but...fat is what gives life taste and texture. Fat is also what keeps us warm. Yes, the consumer in us wants Wal-Mart prices, with all the fat gone. But the employee in us wants a little fat left on the bone, the way Costco does, so that it can offer health care to almost all of its employees, rather than less than half of them, as Wal-Mart does. But the shareholder in us wants Wal-Mart's profit margins, not Costco's.”

The World is Flat,
Thomas L.
Friedman, 2005.

Our daughter gave us two books for Christmas. I have finished one. I am still reading *The World is Flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*, by Thomas L. Friedman. Even if I had finished it, I would probably want to quote from Chapter 2, “The Ten Forces that Flattened the World.”

Friedman opens: “The Bible tells us that God created the world in six days and on the seventh day he rested. Flattening the world took a little longer. The world has been flattened by the convergence of ten major political events, innovations, and companies. None of us has rested since and maybe never will again.”

Flattener #1: The fall of the Berlin Wall “unleashed forces that ultimately liberated all the captive peoples of the Soviet Empire. But it actually did so much more. It tipped the balance of power across the world toward those advocating democratic, consensual, free-market-oriented governance, and away from those advocating authoritarian rule with centrally-planned economies....Communism was a great system for making people equally poor....Capitalism made people unequally rich, and for some who were used to the plodding, limited but secure Socialist lifestyle—where a job, a house, an education, and a pension were guaranteed, even if they were meager, the fall of the Berlin wall was deeply unsettling. But for many others, it was a get-out-of jail-free card.”

Because we could not think globally when the wall was there, we could not think about the world as a single market. Before 1989, there was an Eastern policy or a Western policy. Suddenly we could think about the world as a whole.

It's easy to forget how limited the internet was before 1989: “Yes, AOL users could communicate with CompuServe users, but neither was simple or reliable” But once “tens of millions of people around the world became programmers to make the PC do whatever they wanted in their own language,” the age of seamless global communication could get us ready for the next flattener, and the next.

Since it is folly to try to review a book of nearly 500 pages in three columns of a four page newsletter, the best I can do is whet your appetite to get the book and read it yourself. Remember Y2K? Ever wonder why the whole world did not shut down on the cusp of the millennium? Ever wonder why now when you call the help line for your Dell or your HP, you often get someone in India?

“As Johns Hopkins foreign policy expert Michael Mandelbaum, who spent part of his youth in India, put it, ‘Y2K should be called Indian Independence Day,’ because it was India's ability to collaborate with Western companies, thanks to the interdependence created by fiber-optic networks, that really vaulted it forward and gave more Indians than

ever real freedom of choice in how, for whom, and where they worked....Y2K made possible employment at midnight—but not any employment, employment of India's best knowledge workers.” When financial pressures on companies became enormous, they discovered that four smart Asian engineers at MIT would go back home and work for them there for what it would cost them to hire one in the US, and “they could use our computers overnight.”

If we have an aversion to buying goods made in China, we may as well get over it. “Because China can amass so many low-wage workers at the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled levels, because it has such a voracious appetite for factory, equipment, and knowledge jobs to keep its people employed..., it has become an unparalleled zone for offshoring.” China cannot be ignored. “The more attractive China makes itself as a base for offshoring, the more attractive other developed and developing countries...have to make themselves.”

Daniel H. Pink interviewed Thomas Friedman in the May 2005 issue of *Wired*. Pink asked him what advice we should give our kids, Friedman replied, “When I was growing up, my parents told me “Finish your dinner. People in China and India are starving.” I tell my daughters, “Finish your homework. People in India and China are starving for your job.” +++

The Ten Great Levelers, “forces driving globalization”

Thomas L. Friedman, foreign affairs columnist for *The New York Times* and the author of several books including, in 1999, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, “spent three years after 9/11 traveling to Arab and Muslim countries trying to get at the roots of the attack on the US. His columns on the subject earned him his third Pulitzer Prize. But Friedman realized that while he was writing about terrorism, he missed an even bigger story: Globalization had gone into overdrive.” So he wrote *The World is Flat* to explain his updated thinking on that subject.

Daniel H. Pink, writing in *Wired*, May 2005, compiled a chronological list of the “ten great levelers” that Friedman says resulted in the flattening of our world, causing a leveling of the global playing field. **How many had you noticed?**

#1 – Fall of the Berlin Wall: The events of November 9, 1989, “tilted the worldwide balance of power toward democracies and free markets.”

#2 – Netscape IPO: Netscape went public on August 9, 1995, resulting in massive investments in their fiber optic cables. Netscape also made the Internet simple enough so Grandma could use it, and commercialized a set of open transmission protocols so that no company could own the Net.

#3 – Workflow software: By the late 90s, “my apps could talk to your apps”: Software programmers at Microsoft, IBM, and a host of other companies learned to make all internal departments—sales, marketing, manufacturing, billing, inventory—operable not only within one company, but with other companies, so that my sales department could connect seamlessly with your supplier’s inventory and its supplier’s supplier, which is a factory in China, resulting in coordination among far-flung employees and customers.

#4 – Open-sourcing: If you remember free software or shareware that you could download off a website for free, you may be at least as old as we are. Bright people, who wanted everyone to know how brilliant they were, discovered things, and built their reputations by open-sourcing the first generation of web browsers and web servers.

#5 – Outsourcing: Moving certain business functions to India saved money and built a third world economy.

#6 – Offshoring: “Contract manufacturing elevated China to economic prominence.”

#7 – Supply-chaining: “Robust networks of suppliers, retailers, and customers increased business efficiency. See Wal-Mart.”

#8 – Insourcing: “Logistic giants took control of customer supply chains, helping mom-and-pop shops go global. See UPS and FedEx.”

#9 – In-forming: “Power searching allowed everyone to use the Internet as a ‘personal supply chain of knowledge.’ See Google.”

#10 – Wireless: “Wireless is what will allow you to take everything that has been digitized, made virtual and personal, and do it from anywhere.” +++

Going global: how do we compare with the rest of the world?

BANGALORE. IBM has 30,000 Indians on its payroll and plans to add more in "vibrant markets".

SINGAPORE. Biopolis is developing a world-class biomedical research and development complex. Scientists from around the world come to work on stem cells and other cutting edge biomedical issues.

KUALA KANGSAR. Malaysian 8th graders are better in math than American 8th graders.

Rank of American 8th graders in science proficiency among 45 countries: 9.

Rank of American 8th graders in math proficiency among 45 countries: 15.

SHANGHAI. Activist government policies have helped some nations leapfrog the US in infrastructure. [Pictured is a high-speed maglev train.]

SEOUL. South Korea's Samsung is gaining preeminence in the industry. The nation has developed a state of the art cellphone network.

Number of the world's Top 25 information-technology companies based in the US: 6.
Number of the world's top technology companies based in Asia: 14.

We eat too much. We eat too often. We are fat.

852 million people around the world are chronically hungry. 3 billion people live in poverty. Hunger and poverty claim 25,000 lives every day.

Stadium, theater, and airplane seats are being made larger. In the US, sales of plus-size woman's clothing are booming. Old Navy, Kohl's, and Wal-Mart have all added racks of clothes and lingerie sized 14-28. Sales of large sizes rose by 7 percent last year, double the rate of other clothes. "That's where the dollars are," says retail analyst Kurt Barnard of the Associated Press.

In the developing world, more than 1.2 billion people currently live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1 per day. Poor families spend more than 70% of their income on food. An average American family spends 10%.

We buy what we want; we buy "the latest." We have an entitlement mentality.

In 1990, US trade balance in high-tech manufactured goods was \$33 billion. In 2004, US trade balance in high-tech manufactured goods was minus 24 billion.

Globalization has created a "just in time" economy. Merchants in North America don't stock large quantities of merchandise, because they can project exactly when their stocks will need replenishing and exactly how long it will take to get new supplies.

China, the most populous nation, so far has been able to feed its people by drawing on its grain stocks. These stocks are nearly depleted, and China may soon need to import 50 million tons of grain a year. Such demand would tax world grain markets—creating major problems for the US, which controls nearly half the world's grain exports, as well as for the rest of the world. The last time world stocks of grains were this low, 1972-74, wheat and rice prices more than doubled. In spite of our farm subsidies, the costs of bread, meat, milk, eggs, and other grain-based livestock products skyrocketed. Exporting countries like the US restricted exports to keep domestic prices under control, and food aid requests were denied. Hundreds of thousands of hungry people in Ethiopia and Bangladesh starved to death. During our 2005 trip to Bangladesh we learned that their rice farmers cannot compete on the world market because of subsidies the US pays to our rice farmers, creating artificially cheap prices for rice.

Many observers now recognize that the world is facing water shortages, [by 2025, 2/3 of the world's population will not have enough water] but few have connected the dots to see that a future of water shortages means a future of grain shortages. No wonder there are protests in cities in India where Coca-Cola takes local water to make soft drinks to sell to Indians benefiting from the high tech boom. Does it strike you as odd that Starbucks sells its coffee for \$7 a cup in China where the average worker makes less than \$6 a day? [The Week, February 24, 2006] A series of cover stories in recent issues of US News and World Report describes Asian yuppies. Many live at home with their parents, so they spend their disposable income on designer clothes and eating in trendy restaurants. Have we also exported our values? +++

Sources: "The Fight for the Future: What America must do to keep up with roaring economies like those of China, India, and South Korea," March 27, 2006, *US NEWS*; "The Global Food Gap: overcoming scarcity," Lester R. Brown, *World Ark*, Jan/Feb 2006; "Talking Points," *THE WEEK*, May 5, 2006; "Learning to end Hunger and Poverty," *Education Programs, 2005-2006*, www.heifer.org

The high cost of shopping at Wal-Mart: let me count the ways

Some of my best friends shop at Wal-Mart. Here are some reasons why I do not.

THINK GLOBALLY; SHOP LOCALLY. We are privileged to live in a small city that is not yet suburbia. When we moved into our townhouse in 1979, a local farmer planted beans one year and corn the next, across the street from our home. Since I worked in the International Studies at St Olaf College, I was already thinking globally. During our 35 years in Northfield, I have watched one locally-owned business after another shut its doors. I can no longer go downtown and be called "Mrs Cover" by people who remember what I bought there the last time I shopped—except at Just Food, our year-old food co-op, which features food grown by local farmers and others to whom a *just* price for goods and services is paid. What closed down mom-and-pops in our community? The proximity of the Mall of America, perhaps, some strip malls, but also some Wal-Marts and Sam's Clubs close enough to make the trip worthwhile, apparently.

The spring issue of the *Co-op America Quarterly* has a 15-page cover story with the thesis: "There's no place for Wal-Mart in a sustainable society." Wal-Mart is the opposite of sustainable: it has "a business model riddled with negative repercussions—from its low-wage, environmentally-destructive factories in developing countries, to shuttered local businesses all across America."

SWEATSHOPS. "The problem with Wal-Mart begins with its supply chain, where many of the workers who make its products pay the price by toiling in sweatshop conditions." In 2004, the National Labor Committee reported that in a leather goods factory in China nearly half the workforce earns no wages at all, working instead to pay off debts for training, food, and lodging. *The Wall Street Journal* exposed a Wal-Mart toaster producer where workers' wages were 40% below minimum wage.

As the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart has the power to set higher labor standards within the industry; instead, "it continuously pressures its suppliers to produce cheaper and quicker, encouraging sweatshop abuses," says Ian Thompson, president of the Maquila Solidarity Network. Georgia-based Lovable Company was once a supplier of apparel to Wal-Mart. Frank Garson, Lovable's last president says, "If they don't like your prices...they'll find someone that will meet their terms." Once the sixth-largest in its field, Lovable closed its doors within three years of Wal-Mart's dropping them: "Wal-Mart chewed us up and spit us out."

LOW, LOW WAGES. In fiscal 2004, Wal-Mart earned \$10.3 billion in profits, which breaks down to \$20,000 per minute. At the same time that CEO H. Lee Scott was taking home \$17 million, the majority of Wal-Mart employees were working for wages that put them below the poverty line for a family of four. Depending on whether one uses the figures reported by Wal-Mart or someone else, Wal-Mart clerks make around \$14,000 a year, according to *The New York Times*, or \$18,000, according to the company. Even the last figure is \$1,000 below the poverty line. It is not only those who work for Wal-Mart that suffer. A 2005

study by the University of California-Berkeley found that Wal-Mart depressed total earnings of retail workers nationwide by \$4.7 billion. A Harvard Business School study learned that Wal-Mart spent \$3,500 per employee on health care in 2002, while the average corporation spends \$5,600. When in the face of rising public criticism, Wal-Mart proposed modest improvements in its health care coverage, *The New York Times* published internal Wal-Mart memos that admitted that the company would screen its pools of job applicants to hire only healthy workers.

Working conditions are less than ideal. Workers in 30 states have sued the company for failing to pay overtime wages, other class-action suits charge discrimination against women in pay and promotions, and a California jury ordered Wal-Mart to pay \$172 million to 116,000 of its employees who have been illegally denied meal breaks.

TAXPAYERS FOOT THE BILL. In three states the effect of Wal-Mart's health care coverage has been measured. In Georgia, Wal-Mart employees cost taxpayers an estimated \$6.6 million in 2002 when 10,000 children of Wal-Mart employees enrolled in a program for the poor—ten times more than from any other employer. In Wisconsin, the bill for Wal-Mart employees ran to \$4.75 million in 2004. In Tennessee, 25% of all Wal-Mart employees were enrolled in TennCare in 2005.

CANNIBALIZING MAIN STREET. In 1989, *The New York Times* profiled the decline of local businesses in Independence, Iowa. A year after Wal-Mart came to town, a dozen businesses, some of them having thrived downtown for more than 100 years, had closed their doors: "They move into town and the first year they are doing \$10 million. That money has to come from somewhere." University of Iowa researchers found that between 1983 and 1993, home-grown businesses in Iowa tended to lose between 16 and 46% of their sales after Wal-Mart came to town, causing many of them to collapse.

SPRAWL. When the vibrant city centers disappear, consumers drive to big-boxes on the outskirts. Then there's sprawl. An average Wal-Mart Super Center generates 7,000 to 10,000 car trips each day, resulting in massive emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. When the company shutteres its less profitable stores and builds even bigger ones, Wal-Mart stands in the way of those interested in purchasing its abandoned buildings. By the end of 2004, Sprawl-Busters reported that 365 empty Wal-Mart buildings would fill 534 football fields.

POLLUTION. Wal-Mart doubled its Chinese imports in the first five years of this century. Taking advantage of weak environmental laws, their factories spew toxins, contributing to the deaths of 400,000 Chinese who die annually of respiratory infections. Charles Fishman, in *The Wal-Mart Effect*, notes that Wal-Mart, now selling more groceries than any other retailer in the world, buys its salmon from Chile where salmon are raised in underwater pens. Toxic waste of a million salmon, because regulations are lax, collects on the ocean floor, killing life forms.

My reasons for not shopping at Wal-Mart? Injustice and destruction of God's creation grieve me. +++

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What if kindness... continued from page 1

lives. The fishermen had to learn that calling down fire from heaven on their neighbors was not a kingdom response to what they perceived as an affront. The calling of Zacchaeus resulted in his returning money to those he had cheated. We can look at Dorcas and Lydia as models of kind, generous business women. Max Lucado, in *The Cure for the Common Life*, encourages us to find the intersection of our unique talents, the glory of God, and our everyday lives. He says life comes at us a little at a time. A life well-lived is a series of moments well-lived: "It's about getting out of a mere survival mode, which so many of us live in, and living a life in which you bring your uniqueness to bear on the world around you."

People were attracted to Jesus because he lived in the present, noticing flowers and birds, wrapping his arms around children, and healing to those who were suffering. He said that he didn't come to be served but to serve. Servanthood can be our goal whether or not we are in business. We can ask God to change us not only through his principles but by redeeming us, buying us back from God's adversary, so that we can serve others with genuine kindness and joy. May it be so. +++

Notable quotables

Kindness (n.) 1. The state, quality, or habit of being friendly, gentle, and tenderhearted. 2. A kind act or kindly treatment. Synonyms: benevolence, goodwill, grace.

"To forgive is divine. This kindhearted act may benefit your health, according to a study conducted at the University of Tennessee. Researchers found that people who forgive report less stress and illness, and fewer visits to the doctor, than those who hold grudges. In addition, experts have found that letting bygones be bygones can help lower your heart rate and blood pressure." *Woman's Day*, Oct 2005.

A new book about serving and leading. If you read Ken Blanchard's influential *One Minute Manager*, you may be interested in his new book about the principles of servant leadership, *Lead Like Jesus*, co-authored with Phil Hodges. "Being a behaviorist and a leadership guru, [Blanchard] was struck by the way Jesus transformed 'twelve ordinary and unlikely people into the first generation of leaders of a movement that continues to affect the course of world history some two thousand years later.'" *Christianity Today*, Feb 2006.

To do justice. 1. to act justly. 2. to treat fairly. "The Messiah was sent to preach Good News to the poor, to proclaim freedom for prisoners....He did this by becoming incarnate, one of us. He did not commute from heaven in a fiery chariot....In urban ministry circles, we call this relocation. The...injustice fighter may discover that impersonal systems devastate the lives of the poor, and these systems must indeed be protested." Rodolpho Carrasco, "habits of highly effective justice workers," *Christianity Today*, Feb 2006.

Skip Wal-Mart, save money. Despite Wal-Mart's motto that it offers "everyday low prices," customers reported to the *Los Angeles Times* that the "huge variety of goods available in a giant Wal-Mart tempted them into spending more money than they intended when they shopped there, rather than less." One shopper told the *Times*, "I call it the \$100 store. You can't get out of there for less than \$100." *Co-op America Quarterly*, Spring 2006.

Choose Quality over Quantity. Economists who calculate the Consumer Price Index, a program that produces monthly data on changes in prices paid by urban consumers for a representative basket of goods, say, "Once you have adjusted for quality, it's no cheaper than anything else. The official US government position is that Wal-Mart's prices are no lower than anyone else's." *Business Week* senior writer Aaron Bernstein on NPR, November 2005.

Shop local. The cost of items goes up when transportation is added into the mix. By buying from the people who make or grow your items, you may save money, as well as enjoy the good feeling that comes from talking with the one who is serving you. Ask me for a copy of the Shopping Cart Comparison in the *Co-op America Quarterly*. Twenty items totaled \$101.58 at Wal-Mart and while comparable items cost \$70.81 purchased at local or green stores.

The bottom line. "Starbucks views China as its No. 1 growth market. But at \$6 a cup, the coffee costs more than the average Chinese worker earns in a day." Associated Press, *The Week*, February 6, 2006.

Pres. Bush meets Hu Jintao. "The US and China now have each other in an 'unhealthy economic stranglehold.' The US buys massive amounts of Chinese products—so China needs the US to keep its economy humming. At the same time, the US is buying those products on credit; China is now one of America's largest creditors, and there's a \$200 billion trade imbalance favoring the Chinese. Moreover, as China grows, it will increasingly compete with the energy-guzzling US for oil, gas, and raw materials. As its economic muscle grows, so does its political strength." *Handelsblad*, the Netherlands, quoted in "How they see us: challenged by the rise of China," *THE WEEK*, May 5, 2006. +++

"I believe that social transformation is high on God's agenda for this generation, and that the chief catalytic force to bring it about will be Christian believers ministering in the marketplace. Ed Silvosio shows more clearly than anyone else how you and I can help make this happen." C. Peter Wagner, Chancellor, Wagner Leadership Institute.

Circle of influence

spring 2006

LET'S TALK ABOUT BUSINESS

In spite of all the reading I do on issues, I sometimes think I am slower to catch on to trends than others. When Mary Ruth Swope, nutrition educator and personal friend, spoke here at our Super Saturday in the spring of 2003, she brought with her for her book table, *Anointed for Business*, by Ed Silvosio. I bought it, read it, and forgot about it. On the other hand, one of our dear friends, Helen Medin, has taken the concepts in the book and run with them. She not only started, last fall, a lunch hour prayer meeting in our community that meets in a local bank, she has just returned from a conference in NYC with hundreds of Christian leaders, including C. Peter Wagner and Ed Silvosio, called for the purpose of rallying Christians to serve God's purposes in the marketplace.

This week is the fifteenth anniversary of the local observance of the National Day of Prayer's prayer breakfast. The venue was changed this year to make room for the larger attendance. As a couple, Dick and I have, for all the years we have lived in Northfield, prayed for unity of purpose for the Body of Christ. It is heartwarming to gather where we can hear the testimonies and agree with the prayers of Northfielders from eleven different churches, as they pray for governments, national, state, and city; schools and colleges; churches, businesses, and service organizations. It was Helen who made the breakfast happen fifteen years ago. She has also organized prayer breakfasts for other nearby communities, one of which is now in its seventh year.

One of the most exciting aspects of the prayer gathering at the bank every Wednesday noon has been the emphasis on marketplace ministry. I wish believers from every community in North America could have the privilege we have had to read the book, *The Elk River Story*. It was edited by Rick Heeren, a successful businessman for 25 years, who now serves as vice president of the Midwest region of Harvest Evangelism, founded by Ed Silvosio. If you have a vision for changing your community, or wish you had a vision, you need to secure *The Elk River Story*, Ed Silvosio's *Anointed for Business*, or better yet, the DVD "Marketplace Transformation," in which you will meet people who watched God change Elk River, Minnesota, from a community with the highest rates of teen suicide per capita in the nation, to a city where God goes to work on weekdays, hurting lives are being touched by God in schools and businesses, and suicide is now uncommon. Call 612-278-1737, or log on www.harvestevan.org to order one, or all of the above.

Northfielders were privileged to meet Elk River's mayor, Stephanie Klinzing, when she and other Elk River leaders came to our community to tell their stories and to pray for God to move in Northfield. After lunch, which was provided by a local businessman, she spoke, as did Rick Heeren and several others who wrote chapters in *The Elk River Story*. Part of the DVD was shown, and at the end of the hour, Mayor Klinzing and those with her prayed for our mayor. This past Sunday hundreds of members of the local faith community filled the auditorium of the Middle School for an hour and a half of worship and inspiration, led by core pastors taking responsibility for praying into being whatever God may want to do to make Northfield a city where God is honored. The offering totaling \$6,707.30 was presented to our mayor to be used for any need that he and the council determine would be a blessing to the needy in our city. Each day this week "Bless Northfield" has a different emphasis, including prayer walking our neighborhoods, and staffing a prayer booth on the Square on Saturday, during Spring Fling, a Chamber of Commerce-sponsored event promoting local businesses.

There's a chapter in Ed Silvosio's book with a section called "Wealth, Power, and Fame: Getting it straight." Let me share from it.

"Two common misconceptions often prevent godly Christians from moving enthusiastically into the marketplace with a clear intent and determination to succeed. The Church widely, although perhaps not intentionally teaches, or at least implies, that God despises rich people and that success is something Christians can't handle well. These lies need to be debunked.

“Significant perils result from the improper handling of wealth. Jesus did not approve of the rich man dressed in purple and fine linen [who] refused to share with Lazarus the beggar, even the crumbs that fell from his luxurious table....James rebuked greedy people who sat on their wealth until it rusted while their workers’ wages went unpaid. But none of these cases represents a condemnation of rich people *per se*—only those who mishandled their wealth.

“How does God really feel about the rich? ...The whole world [John 3:16] was and remains the object of His love, and the gateway to salvation is open to “whosoever”....God loves everybody and does not make a distinction based on race, gender, or social status. Unfortunately, when it comes to the social divide between the rich and the poor, the Church often exhibits a negative bias toward the rich, the result of ascribing innate virtue to poverty, while suspecting intrinsic vices in wealth. The church that enthusiastically sends missionaries to a hidden group in the jungles of the Amazon will rarely consider sending one to the thousands of sinners in Monaco or the millions in Sweden, mostly because of the wealth of those countries....[Jesus, on the other hand] was a friend of all sinners, wealthy and destitute alike.” Silviso give the example of the dismay of the residents of Jericho when Jesus sought out Zacchaeus after he had healed Bartimaeus. “This prompted Jesus to explain Zacchaeus’s eligibility for salvation: “He too is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Silviso’s point is that if God is going to use us as ministers on Mondays, we need to see the innermost needs of everyone whose lives touch ours, and overcome any bias that “ascribes virtue to poverty and innate evil to wealth.” Jesus even followed up his lesson about why Zacchaeus needed God’s kindness as much as the beggar with the parable of the ten minas. “Notice how disappointed the king was with the slave who failed to invest, even at the passive level of a savings account. The key to the king’s approval was each servant’s willingness to use the capital entrusted to him in spite of having to operate in enemy-held territory. The reward was authority over cities. It is important not to miss this: authority over cities was granted in direct proportion to business success that came about as the result of obedience.”

By following the two incidents in Jericho with a story, Jesus highlighted a very important point. God calls rich people so that they can bring the kingdom of God to their cities by practicing God’s economics like the repentant Zacchaeus did.

Most of us are neither blind beggars nor wealthy ex-tax collectors. We simply work, or are retired from, ordinary jobs. God is careful to choose people from every walk of life. Silviso says, “The notion that labor for profit and worship of God are now, and always have been worlds apart, is patently false. The Early Church founders were mostly community leaders and highly successful business people. The writing of the Gospels was entrusted to Luke, a medical doctor; Matthew, a retired tax collector; Mark, the manager of a family trust. Lydia was a dealer in purple cloth. Dorcas was a clothes designer.”

Mother Teresa was not a business person. But she knew how to mobilize business people to do God’s work. On a flight to Mexico City she refused to eat the airline’s meal and insisted the airline donate the cost of her food to the poor. By her example, other people on the flight did the same. When she landed, she asked for a truck to transport the meals that were not eaten to a poor barrio where children subsisted on what they found in garbage. Here’s a quote for which she’s well-known:

People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway. If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. IT WAS NEVER BETWEEN YOU AND THEM ANYWAY.

When I quoted Charles Colson at the top of **ink spots**, I didn’t know what I was going to write about in **circle of influence**. But notice how it fits: “Each of us must work out our own role in the common grace of our lives, glorifying God by helping restore his creation—by bringing the majesty of God and his righteousness to bear against the crumbling structure of a fallen society.” Chapters 11 and 12 of *Anointed for Business* can be used by anyone who wants to impact his or her community with the glory of God, using his simple 5-step spiritual reorganization plan. The subtitle of his book is: *How Christians can use their influence in the marketplace to change the world*. If we can only reach out in kindness to one person at a time, why not reach out anyway?

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