



Minding HIS business

Following Christ in the marketplace

by Meghan Baxter

FROM BIG MONEY to church life to the home front, B.C. entrepreneur and professor Richard Goossen understands the important role Christians play in the Canadian marketplace. Goossen – CEO of M&A Capital Corp. and adjunct professor of Entrepreneurship & Strategy at Trinity Western University – has years of experience following Christ through the ups and downs of corporate ventures around the globe.

In searching for guidance on applying a values-based system in business, the lack of available information inspired him to compile his own research on the subject. Goossen's TWU business students interviewed successful Christian entrepreneurs and CEOs for their practical, spiritual and business insights. (Notable interviewees include Jimmy Pattison, of The Jim Pattison Group, and Ray

Loewen, of The Loewen Group.) The second volume of his book *The Christian Entrepreneur* was released in 2006. Here, Goossen shares some of what he's learned:

How has the Lord trained you in your business career?

RICHARD GOOSSEN: I have always felt strongly that the marketplace is a ministry. I have learned that Biblical wisdom provides principles for daily decision-making. God has worked in my life by, over time, revealing that the sum of my experiences, good and bad, are the training ground for future greater effectiveness.

What are your personal convictions about

Christians being "called" to business?

RG: Christian business people, including entrepreneurs, need to feel called and not just view their work as an outcome of circumstances or present [demands]. . . . I view calling as the ongoing discernment and pursuit of God's purpose for your entire life in relation to His Word, which is then applied to all relationships and circumstances. Part of this discernment is assessing gifts which will then allow an individual to maximize their God-given potential. . . . The entrepreneur is called – no less and no more – than any other believer.

What common characteristics have you observed in "successful" or "fulfilled" Christian entrepreneurs?

RG: First, they are very well-grounded in their faith and this provides an anchor independent of present circumstances or external pressures. Second, they are realists in terms of human behaviour, able to handle a wide range of human relations issues with discernment. Lastly, they are focused on the prize to which they are being called heavenward, and are striving to finish strong, and thus are focused on eternal success – which, by definition, is "long term" thinking!

How does home life and family fit into the life of a Christian entrepreneur?

RG: Since entrepreneurship can be all-consuming and involve a lot of ambiguity and risk, a spouse plays a critical role as sounding board, emotional support and concerned second opinion. One billionaire told me the more successful he became, the smaller his circle became. In other words, there were fewer people he could trust beyond his immediate family and long-time friends. Most

entrepreneurs will experience highs and lows. Everyone loves you on the way up – but don't look for them on the way down. Without the support of one's family, an entrepreneurial journey will be a desolate road.

How does church/ministry fit into the picture for most Christian business people?

RG: Entrepreneurs are often marginalized in churches and do not have an avenue to exercise their gifts; instead, they are usually prominent and active in parachurch organizations. In other situations, churches may welcome entrepreneurs, but it is for their chequebook. Church leadership can find entrepreneurs intimidating and challenging to work with. Entrepreneurs are independent-minded, strong-willed and action-oriented – by their own admission, they are not the easiest people to work with!

Where do you see Christian business in Canada being in 10 or 20 years?

RG: In another generation or so, perhaps Christians will view business as one of the primary ways to serve God, with a wide impact. One of the entrepreneurs I interviewed had 16,000 employees and \$2 billion in revenue at one time – that's a lot of influence!

Goossen is currently working on his third volume of *The Christian Entrepreneur*. The Third Annual Christian Entrepreneur Forum and book launch will be held this November in B.C. To find out more, visit **MandAcapital.com**.

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