

# The Hallmarks of a Christian Business

What do we mean by the term “Christian business?” Ola Aroyehun argues that our businesses should be characterized and distinguished by certain minimum standards

Whether we like it or not, when own or manage a Christian business, our lives— both personal and business — are on display for all to see. Our activities and attitudes will be judged on the basis of our Christianity. The conduct of our businesses has a direct relationship to our witness as Christians. Christian businesses are indeed the church in the marketplace. Thus, there is a responsibility that comes with carrying that name into the business arena. A business or an individual’s role within the business environment can become a creative instrument to serve God as we have been called to be salt and light on the earth. This could also serve as an effective agent for evangelism and the opportunity for people to recognize that God is among us.

## What is going on?

In reality, however, Christian businesses are not always such a good advertisement for Christianity. They are often not what they are meant to be and there is little or no distinction between a business run by a Christian and one managed by a non-Christian. The following are comments that have been made about Christian businesses. As you go through these comments, try to assess whether any of them could be applied to your business or someone else, for the Bible encourages us to examine ourselves.

- They are disrespectful in their conduct
- They never pay their bills on time
- They take my business for granted
- They treat me as if they are doing me a favor
- They always think they are right
- You never get a direct answer to a question when you contact them
- The cheque is always ‘in the post’ and it never is
- They do not keep their promises
- The fact that he’s a Christian means nothing to me
- They are dishonest in their business dealings

Why aren’t our businesses distinctively different from those of unbelievers?

Why are we not outstanding? Here are a few suggestions:

- We have conformed to the world’s way and standard of conducting business
- We have become complacent in the discharge of our businesses
- These acts and attitudes have become a bad habit
- Our faith does not follow us into the business environment.

Whatever, the reasons, there is a need to change and reflect the distinctiveness that we have been called to walk in. Our light should so shine that people are attracted to our brightness. Both believers and unbelievers should be queuing up to conduct business with us.

So, what are the hallmarks of a Christian business, those characteristics that should set our businesses apart? While this is in no way a comprehensive list, it does serve in directing us towards the path of excellence that is expected of us as Christians.

## What is a Christian business?

A Christian business is one where the decisions that govern the day-to-day actions are made on the basis of the word of God, whether this proves popular or not and regardless of circumstances, feelings or its social acceptability. It will have at its core a commitment to do things according to biblical principles, in much the same way that some of the old laws governing the company were made on a biblical basis.

## Purpose of the Christian business

The purpose of a Christian business is to glorify God. Again, while this is not an exhaustive list, it provides food for thought about our roles and responsibilities as Christians in the marketplace. We are called to live as the people of God in a secular world.

- a) We are to be salt and light. As our lives reflect our personal relationship with God the Father, we “fertilize” others, stimulating their spiritual growth, enabling them to taste and see the goodness of our God. Without saltiness, what remains has little value to anyone. As children of God, we should let our light shine so that non-Christians may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16). The business arena provides an excellent context for this.
- b) We are His distinctive people. When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt into the promised land, He made it clear that they were to live as His people and be different from the nations surrounding them. “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6). Our businesses are representatives of the Lord whose name we carry. A successful Christian business reflects the goodness of God towards His chosen people - those who have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light to which unbelievers will be drawn.
- c) We demonstrate His presence among us. Our continual dependence on Him, together with a flow of supernatural gifts and abilities demonstrates God’s presence among us. God will continue to give us creative skills to run our business. He asks us to call on Him and He will show us great and mighty things. These things will set us apart as the children of God.
- d) We establish His kingdom. The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God among us. It is the ushering in of His rule and authority on the earth and the fullness of God bursting into everything

that we do. When the Lord reigns in our businesses, we bring His rule and authority into the business arena.

- e) We are a source of blessing. God's charge to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, is to go to the land that He will show him, and he will be made into a great nation and be a blessing and all the peoples of the earth shall be blessed through him. In the New Testament, we are reminded that we are the children of Abraham and that the promise is also for us. God wants us to be a channel of blessing. As we honor Him with our wealth and the firstfruits of our businesses, He promises to bless us in return. From these profits, we can be a source of blessing to our families, employees and those belonging to the household of faith.

## **The hallmarks of a Christian business**

What are some of the characteristics that should be demonstrated by those who claim to have a Christian business?

### **Excellence**

Daniel was a man who distinguished himself among others because an excellent spirit was in him (Dan. 6:3). There are many lessons that we can learn from his life. For example:

- a) he developed the natural gifts that God had given him and was willing to be trained. As businesspeople, we need to update our knowledge continually and to seek counsel from other Christians.
- b) he maintained a godly character so the enemy could find no fault with him and
- c) he was devoted to God and acknowledged Him as the source of wisdom and of all that he had and so God blessed him supernaturally.

### **Justice and fairness**

The word of God encourages us to treat others fairly, with justice and sincerity. "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you" (Deut. 24:14-15).

As businesspeople, we should pay and reward people what they deserve and according to what we have agreed. We should make sure that people are treated with dignity and respect and also that our policies and business conduct do not oppress others.

### **Godly character**

The standards required of those who carry His name in the marketplace are no less than those required of those called to be leaders in the church. We are God's leaders in the marketplace. The qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 reflect a character and attitude that

honor our heavenly Father. The Bible encourages us to examine ourselves. We might have to work at developing some of these attitudes, but we need to make a start, remembering that we have access to the throne room of grace.

### **Righteousness**

Righteousness here implies conformity to the moral and ethical norms revealed in God's word. Jesus said our righteousness should exceed that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, who expected to achieve salvation by zealously obeying the letter of the Old Testament laws (Matt. 5:20). Jesus went on to give a series of illustrations showing that, while the Law deals with external actions, it also reveals God's concerns with the attitudes and motives of those that generate these actions. God is concerned with inner righteousness: a character which is God-like in character. This inner righteousness will naturally lead to a righteous life.

### **Honesty**

Lying is commonplace in our society – sometimes for what may seem the best of reasons, often for personal gain and almost routinely for business convenience. The payoff for dishonesty might be enhanced reputation, the avoidance of conflict or embarrassment, or monetary gain.

The temptation to be dishonest or unethical can sneak quietly into our lives. However, complete honesty is the commandment of the Bible. "Behold, you desire truth in the inward paths" (Psa. 51:6); "Therefore putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25) and "To him who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). The bible is quite clear. We must know what is right and do it in truth at all times.

### **Integrity**

This simply implies that we keep our word, and a lack of integrity means that you cannot be trusted to keep your word. Nothing is more vital than integrity of the heart. When we choose to be people of integrity, The LORD will show us favor for the steps of a righteousness men are ordered of God. It is important that you develop impeccable and unwavering integrity when you give your word in a business transaction. Also, the degree of integrity we exhibit in our lives will be reflected in how we bless those who work for us in our businesses. Be aware that a man's name can impact those around him in the marketplace.

Why not kneel before the Lord today and ask that He makes your business the one that is worthy of carrying His name and would glorify Him. May the Lord grant us our request?