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Of the Seventy



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MAKING A LIVING, Making a Life

May we all use our God-given talents in the service of our fellowmen and in making our communities and world better places to live.

When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, the Lord told Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). Adam really had only one choice as to his life’s work—he “began to till the earth” (Moses 5:1). He clearly had some challenges, but his work environment had some advantages as well. Among others, he was able to set his own hours and approve his own sick leave and vacation time, and he could not be fired.

Because pride can exist only in an environment of competition and comparison, it was unknown to Adam. There was no temptation to keep up with neighbors. There was no coveting, jealousy, envy, selfishness, or any other sins that feed on pride.

In fact, Satan had little with which to work. The competition he so anxiously awaited could not take place until Adam and Eve began to multiply and replenish the earth. When competition finally did occur, it happened in the workplace and in the acquiring of material possessions. It was here that Satan claimed Cain as his first victim when Cain fell prey to the Master Mahan principle “that I may murder and get gain” (Moses 5:31).

The acquiring of wealth and material possessions would become fertile ground for Satan as he tempted mankind with the cunning strategy that this world is our destiny and that anything and everything here is available for money.

Making a living was part of the Lord’s plan for His children, not just for our survival but also to see how we would get along with others in making that living—to see if we would be honest in our dealings with our fellowmen. Satan quickly recognized the work environment as a strategic setting to stir up all manner of sin, including covetousness, self-indulgence, living beyond one’s means, anger, infidelity, greed, and even theft and murder.

Motives in the Workplace

What you do to make a living and how much you earn aren’t nearly as important to the Lord as whether you are:

- Building His kingdom, including strong and valiant families.
- Honest in your dealings with your fellowmen and using your God-given talents in their service.



- Filling your life with good works that positively affect your community and world.

In Charles Dickens’s classic story *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge undergoes an amazing transformation from a ruthless moneylender to a caring and charitable businessman and philanthropist. As his motives evolve, transforming him from a cruel and stingy miser to a compassionate member of his community, we witness a marvelous impact on him and others.

The motives that drive people are the hinges upon which major outcomes swing. The Lord has identified two opposite motivators—God and mammon (see 3 Nephi 13:24). We know that money itself is not evil; in fact, it represents “the sweat of [our] face.” Mammon goes beyond money to “the love of money,” which is referred to as “the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

I want to share some illustrations of the interplay between a love of God and our fellowmen on the one hand and the need to make a living on the other. There are several combinations of these two motives that I will give the following grade levels:

A Level

At the A level, the Lord established the correct order of priorities, as we read in Jacob:

“Before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

“And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good” (Jacob 2:18–19).

At this level, the primary motivation is a love of God and our fellowmen. Of necessity, the secondary motivation is to earn a living.

If a love of God and our fellowmen is the primary motivation, then the workingman and workingwoman at this level will be kingdom builders and full-tithe payers. They will have a “zeal towards God, and also towards men; for

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they [will be] perfectly honest and upright in all things” (Alma 27:27). As laborers they will be “worthy of [their] hire” (Luke 10:7). As employers they will give “a just recompense of wages” (D&C 124:121). They will be beloved employers and endeavor to help not only their customers but also their employees and community. They will offer superior customer service. Sometimes they will even render service at no charge to help someone in need, such as those doctors who travel to third-world countries to help the disadvantaged. Their products and services are of the highest quality.

Those at the A level aren’t working for mankind but are living for mankind, trying to lift and help others. In addition to making a living, they are making a life. They have a higher vision than those at lower levels. Because of their love for their fellowmen, they define their business in terms of customers’ *needs*. At levels B through D, business is usually defined in terms of *products* and *services*.

B Level

At the B level, the primary motivation is money, but there is still a love of fellowmen and a genuine desire to provide good products and services to customers. A B-level company or person could even be an A-level company or person sidetracked by the world. If an A-level company goes public, concern for the stockholder and the bottom line will almost always force the company to the B level and sometimes lower.

C Level

At the C level, the love of money is the only motivator. The businessman and businesswoman engineer minimal quality, or the appearance of quality, into their products and services so that they may be competitive and survive,

but they look for the cheapest ways to produce, without any true concern for their customers or employees. Their personal integrity is compromised as they begin to engage in dishonest practices, such as deceptive advertising and meaningless guarantees.

D Level

At the D level, the unwary are more victims than customers. Once again the motivation is the love of money but this time at the peril of the customer, who may be injured or killed by the product. Profits at this level are known as filthy lucre.

“Filthy lucre,” President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985)

said, “is that had through sin or sinful operations and that which comes from the handling of liquor, beer, narcotics and those other many things which are displeasing in the sight of the Lord.”¹

F Level

Many at the F level may be identified at the D level but actually fit better here because of their negative impact on communities and nations. At this level, we find those who don’t contribute but only take—through organized

crime, Internet scams, Ponzi schemes, and so forth (see D&C 89:4). At this level, you have murder and elimination of competition. Secret combinations, which Moroni said would be a real threat in our day (see Ether 8:24), operate at this level.

Satan’s Influence

All professions, businesses, and services can be found at all levels. For example, there are A-level bankers and D-level bankers.

In the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*, the Bailey Brothers Building and Loan Association is an A-level institution where George Bailey and others have a love for their

GRADE LEVEL	PRIMARY MOTIVATION	SECONDARY MOTIVATION OR RESULT
A	Love of God and fellowmen	Income
B	Money	Love of fellowmen
C	Love of money	Indifference to clients or customers
D	Filthy lucre	Harm to clients and customers
F	Filthy lucre, crime	Harm to customers and society, wickedness



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together, and running over” (Luke 6:38), while the D-level store owner uses “a false balance” (Proverbs 11:1) tipped in his favor.

The Golden Rule

Sometimes we hear stories of D-level people who are not playing by the rules and appear to be prospering and outperforming

fellowmen and a genuine desire to help families get out of low-quality housing and into a respectable home of their own. Henry Potter, on the other hand, is a ruthless and uncaring slumlord who thinks nothing of stealing \$8,000 misplaced in a rolled-up newspaper.

At one point, Mr. Potter makes George an offer that would pay him many times his current salary and include some attractive benefits, including George’s dream—to travel. George is momentarily mesmerized by the offer but soon realizes he is being offered a job by a D-level employer. Upset with himself for even considering the offer, he calls Mr. Potter a scurvy little spider and walks out.

One reason we hear jokes about attorneys is that people often consider law a profession that rarely transcends the D level. The Book of Mormon says that those at this level are “learned in all the arts and cunning of the people” (Alma 10:15). Many lawyers, however, are A level—such as Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder Quentin L. Cook, and Elder D. Todd Christofferson, who practiced law prior to their callings to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

You can probably think of several D-level politicians, but A-level politicians are men like King Benjamin and Mosiah or George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. These men were true patriots whose primary motivation was a love of God, their fellowmen, and their country.

How about carpenters? What kind of carpenter do you think the carpenter from Nazareth was?

In retail, an A-level storeowner gives, in the Savior’s words, a “good measure, pressed down, and shaken

those who are playing by the rules, almost as if they had an unfair advantage. In such cases we feel a sense of injustice and frustration. (See Jeremiah 12:1; Malachi 3:14–15.)

Appearances can be deceiving. It may seem that the wicked are prosperous and happy, but we know that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). Whom do you think the customers would naturally gravitate to—a George Bailey or a Mr. Potter? Who will be most successful over the long run?

The most basic of all marketing principles is to give the customer what we would want. The Savior taught this principle, which we know as the Golden Rule: “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets” (3 Nephi 14:12). Many businesses forget that principle. Some cut corners and produce inferior products. Some are guilty of price fixing. Some are guilty of deceptive advertising. Satan uses these and many other strategies to tempt us to serve mammon.

In *Winners Never Cheat*, Jon M. Huntsman refers to a report that ranked attributes recruiters look for in hiring new personnel. The three highest-ranking traits were Christlike attributes—interpersonal skills, an ability to work well within a team, and personal integrity.² As the world becomes increasingly more wicked, it will become more difficult to find people of integrity. I believe the search for people of integrity is already drawing more and more recruiters to Latter-day Saints.

Three Helpful Questions

Some decisions that face members of the Church are not always easy or clear. Here are three questions to help you make A-level work choices:

1. *Can you ask the Lord's blessings with a clear conscience?* From *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, we read, "Members of the Church should endeavor to be involved in activities and employment upon which they can in good conscience ask the blessings of the Lord and which are consistent with the principles of the gospel and the teachings of the Savior."³

2. *When questionable products or services are involved, is your involvement direct or indirect?* Can an A-level grocer, for example, sell coffee and tea to those customers who know nothing of the Word of Wisdom and for whom it would not be a sin? The grocer might do so at the request of his customers to meet their demands when he clearly would never produce coffee himself. His involvement is indirect.

3. *Does your product or service hurt society?* Some products and services may be detrimental to the individual while others damage the community. Coffee and tea, for example, would be products that have individual consequences. Alcohol and pornography, however, have proven to also have negative community consequences. "Pornography damages individual lives, families, *and society*. . . . Church members should . . . oppose its production, *dissemination, and use*."⁴

Conclusion

In *A Christmas Carol*, Jacob Marley is living a nightmare, bound in the chains he "forged in life . . . link by link." He vocalizes his nightmare in response to a comment by Scrooge that he was always a good man of business.

"Business!" cries Marley. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! . . .

". . . Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me?"⁵

In your pursuit of an income, may you remember, as Marley stated, that mankind is your true business and that the Savior is your light to lead you to becoming an A-level individual.

May each of us be guided by the Spirit in all our employment decisions—in finding A-level employment and in being an A-level employee. And may we all use our God-given talents in the service of our fellowmen and in making our communities and world better places to live.

I bear my testimony of the Savior and His perfect exam-

ple. He desires us to be happy and successful—to make both a living and a life. He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He cares for us and will bless us as we follow true and correct principles in our dealings with others. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on October 12, 2010. For the full address, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 52; see also *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 356.
2. See Jon M. Huntsman, *Winners Never Cheat* (2005), 91.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.25.
4. *Handbook 2*, 21.4.9; emphasis added.
5. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1906), 21, 22–23.



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