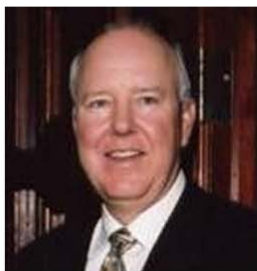


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Gleanings

by Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.

Does the Principle of Equal Yoking Apply in Business?



An architect, who loved his profession, wanted to build his company based on biblical principles. He was enamored with the elegance and beauty that he saw in architectural design. Sharing his passion with his pastor proved disappointing. The pastor showed little interest in the architect's joy in seeing the revelation of God in building design.

To satisfy his desire to honor God by applying biblical principles to his business, the architect began reading books dealing with the subject. In the course of his study, he read my book, *Beyond Babel*, and was particularly interested in the principle of equal yoking. The architect was preparing to expand his business and needed guidance as to whom to hire. The equal yoking principle gave him a new perspective on hiring—one he had never considered.

Despite his pastor's lack of interest, the architect sought his input. The pastor told him that the principle of equal yoking, as presented in 2 Corinthians 6:14, only applied to marriage; it did not apply in business.

The pastor's response represents a common perspective. This was the perspective I was taught early in my Christian experience. Upon closer examination of the text and the context, however, one finds that there is no mention of marriage. Hence, the limitation of the principle of equal yoking to marriage based on 2 Corinthians 6:14 is an inference. But is the inference valid?

In the NIV, 2 Corinthians 6:14 reads: *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?* The apostle Paul taught the equal yoking principle by contrasting it with unequal yoking using two illustrations—righteousness and wickedness, and light and darkness. Righteousness and wickedness are mutually exclusive. Something or someone that is righteous cannot be wicked. Likewise, light and darkness are mutually exclusive. By definition, darkness is the absence of light. Hence, nonbelievers and believers are mutually exclusive. Nonbelievers are by definition not believers.

Neither of the illustrations is limited to marriage. Righteousness and wickedness exist in all contexts of life—personal, marriage, church, business, and government. The same is true of light and darkness. Therefore the illustrations do not support the inference that equal yoking is limited to the context of marriage.

In any context, believers and nonbelievers yoked together in a relationship are unequally yoked. Whether it is in marriage, business, government, or church, unequally yoked relationships will impede an organization's ability to achieve its full potential.

The root issue of unequal yoking is different worldviews. Different worldviews lead to different values and principles; hence, unequal yoking leads to different ways of living, which leads to conflict. And conflict impedes one's ability to live efficiently.

To steward a business well, it is requisite that the workers be equally yoked. Only then will they be able to maximize their individual potential in a unified coordinated manner for the good of the organization.

The architect was wise to recognize the efficacy of the principle of equal yoking. If he follows this biblical principle, he will practice one of the key principles necessary to build a company that is excellent, which will bring glory to God.

Sadly, the architect's pastor did not fully understand the application of the principle of equal yoking. Limiting the principle to marriage is truncating the application of the Word of God.

The apostle Paul believed that the Scripture was applicable to all of life. Note his statement in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV): *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We need to be equipped for the challenges of business. There is no better way to begin the equipping process than with biblical principles.

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