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November 1, 2007

# Gleanings

Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.



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President

**Strategies@Work, LLC**  
*solutions that transform*

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## The Handbook of Business

Marion Wade started a pest control business in 1930, when the economy in the United States was struggling. Around the same time, he became a Christian. His conversion to Christianity was genuine, as evidenced by his commitment to learn the Bible and to live by its principles.

Marion's business struggled for fourteen years. He lived hand-to-mouth during this time, but he faithfully sought to learn and practice his Christian faith. His concept of living his faith in business, however, was limited to evangelizing and operating in an ethical manner. He did not perceive much application of biblical principles beyond this. By his own admission, Marion was a dualist; that is, he believed the Bible had little relevance to business beyond ethics and evangelism.

In 1944, Marion suffered a nearly fatal industrial accident. He was bedridden for the next year, which gave him an abundance of time to reflect on his life. As he searched his soul he knew there was something missing, even though he was a faithful Christian and was, in many ways, a pastor's dream. But Marion knew that there was something wrong with his life. He prayed, read Scripture, and meditated. Through this process he developed the conviction that he needed to view the Bible differently. He needed to view it not only as the source of revelation about his Savior, Jesus, but also as the handbook for life—all of life including business.

A handbook is a source of knowledge and wisdom on a particular topic. Recently I heard the venerable Dr. Bruce Waltke teach on the book of Proverbs. Dr. Waltke provided an excellent definition of *knowledge* and *wisdom*. *Knowledge* is the understanding of how God made the universe to work. *Wisdom* is the skill to apply that knowledge in the process of living life.

After a year of recovery from his accident, Marion returned to work with a new conviction—the Bible was now going to be his handbook, his source of knowledge and wisdom about business. He knew that he had to read and study the Bible to discover this knowledge and wisdom. In other words, Marion needed to read the Bible with the intent of discovering God's principles of business. Never before had he been taught business from a biblical perspective.

Reading the Bible with a specific intent is powerful, as Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminar, discovered during a vacation in New England during the 1930s. The weather was bad, so he decided to redeem

**E-mail**

[info@StrategiesWork.com](mailto:info@StrategiesWork.com)

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972 473-8655



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the time by reading the Bible. But instead of just reading the Bible, he decided to read with a specific purpose. He sought to discover everything that happened to him when he accepted Christ. The weather confined him to his cabin for several days, which enabled him to read through the New Testament a number of times each time finding more characteristics associated with salvation. Dr. Chafer developed a list of thirty-three benefits that accrue to people who accept Christ as their Savior. This list has been instrumental in the spiritual lives of countless people and demonstrates the value of reading the Bible with specific intent.

In 1945, Marion Wade determined to read the Bible with the intent of discovering God's principles of business, the requisite biblical knowledge and wisdom to build his company.

Today people use a variety of sources of business knowledge and wisdom. Some are disciples of Peter Drucker or W. Edwards Deming. Others embrace the tenets of Jim Collins or are students of "best practices," no matter the source. Everyone has a source of business knowledge and wisdom, but few people seem to share Marion Wade's conviction that the Bible is the handbook of business.

Consider this: if the God of the Bible created the universe, then He created all the rules of the universe, which include the rules of science, sociology, education, medicine, political science, mathematics, and yes—business. Hence, any pundit who has gleaned knowledge and wisdom about business has only discovered God's principles. And the value of any pundit's theory is proportional to the degree to which the theory captures the knowledge and wisdom of God.

Marion Wade's commitment to use the Bible as his handbook for business proved to be very successful. His company—Wade, Wenger and Associates—grew from a fledgling hand-to-mouth operation to a world-class publicly traded company. During the process the company changed its name to more accurately reflect its focus on service. Marion selected the name ServiceMaster.

What is your handbook for business? Where do you go when you need knowledge and wisdom to solve a management problem, deal with an employee issue, develop a key strategy, find the right employees, discover the right job, handle a conflict, decide how much debt is appropriate, address morale issues, find a fresh marketing strategy, or handle a cash flow problem? If you follow Marion Wade's example, you will use the Bible as your handbook. You will study and implement God's principles of business found in the Bible. And when you use God's principles, you align yourself with God, which releases blessing since God blesses alignment with Himself. Consider the words of the psalmist:

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Psalms 1:1–3 (NIV)*

This text connects prosperity to alignment with God's principles, which are revealed most clearly in the Bible.

Now consider the words of the Apostle Paul:

*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.*  
2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)

Scripture (a.k.a. the Bible) is a divinely ordained tool to be used to equip us for everything in life, including work. It is important to begin seeing the Bible not only as a book about spiritual redemption, but also as a handbook for all of life—yes, even business and work life.

If you want to prosper, there really is only one way—God’s way. In the tradition of the Marion Wade, the founder of ServiceMaster, I commend the Bible to you as the handbook for business. May you be richly blessed as you discover and practice the reality of God’s knowledge and wisdom for business.

## Learn More

### Biblical Principles of Business

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