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## Gleanings

### Hiring the Wicked



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One of the key activities of every organization is making hiring decisions. Most of the decisions are based on the perceived skills needed by the organization. Candidates are screened to determine the most qualified people. Many times there are laws that prohibit discrimination based on various criteria such as race, gender, handicaps, religious affiliation, national origin, familial status, and so forth.

In the typical hiring process, however, there is generally little consideration of the spiritual status of the candidates. And in some countries, the laws will not permit such consideration. Notwithstanding the potential legal issues, there is still a question about the correlation of the spiritual reality operative in people and the physical tangible work they produce.

To disregard the spiritual reality of workers in making hiring decisions, one must assume spiritual reality is not relevant to the workplace. This is a naturalistic/deistic view of reality.

A biblical view of reality provides a different perspective. To enjoy favor and tangible blessings in the workplace requires sound spiritual reality in the lives of the workers of the organization. Consider Psalm 1.

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. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (Psalms 1:1-6 NIV)

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In this text, prosperity in the natural (favor and blessing in the tangible realm) is linked to the spiritual reality of delighting in the law of the Lord (God's written revelation). In other words, a person who delights in the Word of God is aligning with the will and ways of God. Conversely, the wicked, those who do not align with the will and ways of God, will not prosper, but will perish. The idea of *perishing* suggests judgment. We might assume that the psalmist is referring to physical death, but, barring the return of Christ, everyone will die physically. So this interpretation is suspect. Or we might assume that *perish* refers to the second death. The wicked will experience the second death but those who know the Lord will be spared this death. Therefore this interpretation is possible. But I suggest another possible way to understand *perish* is to note the contrast between the two spiritual states. Namely, alignment with the will and ways of God that leads to prosperity in the tangible and misalignment leads to the opposite of prosperity, that is, failure to prosper in the tangible.

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As further support for this understanding, consider the following verses, which in each case connects the wicked (or ungodly) to the opposite of prosperity.

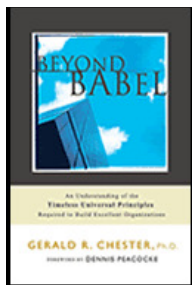
The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. (Proverbs 3:33 NIV)

The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness. (Proverbs 11:5 NIV)

The righteous man is rescued from trouble, and it comes on the wicked instead. (Proverbs 11:8 NIV)

Scripture seems clear: spiritual reality affects a person's ability to work and prosper in the natural world.





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We might ask, however, that if prosperity is connected to alignment with the will and ways of God, then why do some wicked people seem to prosper? Psalm 73 answers this question. When wicked people prosper, the prosperity is a setup for divine judgment (see Psalm 73:16–19). Any prosperity of the wicked in the natural is short term and will end badly. Enduring prosperity can only come through alignment with the will and ways of God.

Others argue that the righteous should hire the wicked to evangelize them. While this sounds noble, it is a difficult position to support. Consider the truth that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he/she has been born again, which is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit (see John 3). So if you don't see evidence of the Holy Spirit working in a person's life, you have no assurance that the person knows Christ or will come to Christ. It would therefore be presumptions to hire people who do not show any spiritual life. Furthermore, since organizational leaders are responsible to steward their organizations to produce a profit (see Luke 19:11–27), presuming to hire the wicked to scratch an evangelistic itch will not justify irresponsible stewardship. There are plenty of opportunities to bear witness to Christ before wicked people. One of the best ways is to build world-class organizations that reflect Christ (Colossians 3:17).

Some may think that I am making the case to hire only Christians. I am not making the case for hiring people who claim to be followers of Christ but whose lives do not reflect it. I would agree that one should hire genuine Christians—those whose lives reflect the reality of Christ.

Sometimes, however, genuine Christians are immature and hard to distinguish from those who profess Christ but do not know him. Consequently wise hiring decisions require spiritual discernment.

If you are persuaded that Scripture connects tangible blessings with sound spiritual reality in the lives of workers, why would you hire the wicked?

Sadly most Christian employers are happy hiring based on worldly practices, perhaps because they perceive that worldly practices work. But if Scripture is true, the seeming prosperity of the wicked can only be short term. Long term, the wicked will not prosper in any area of life, including work.

If hiring the wicked will not bring blessing to your organization, what should you do? May I suggest that you hire people who seek to align with the will and ways of God. But, you might say, there are so few. I agree. So what then? If you cannot find people to hire who are aligned with the will and ways of God, then look for those who demonstrate humility, submission, and teachability. This is a sign of the Holy Spirit at work, which gives you reason to believe that they may be genuine Christians, but immature. If so, you may be able to disciple that person into maturity in the will and ways of God and consequently develop a great worker—someone who will prosper and therefore help your organization prosper.

What if you have a need but cannot find a genuine Christian? Have no fear; God is fully aware of your situation. Either you have not yet discerned God's provision or you are trying to grow faster than God wishes. Either way, slow down, seek the Lord, and trust him.

Remember the secret to hiring is not hiring professing Christians (Christians in name only); it is hiring genuine Christians, or those in the process of becoming genuine Christians.

Don't assume that you can hire the wicked and expect divine blessings. Don't be deceived into hiring wicked people who seem to have success in business. In the end, this success will prove to be an illusion. And don't rationalize hiring the wicked to evangelize to them. You cannot faithfully steward your organization by hiring those who will not be blessed at work. Follow the will and ways of God for hiring and you will enjoy the blessings of God—prosperity—in your organization. That is true success.

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