**Holiness, Justice, and Love in Business**

Everyday Christianity requires us to display biblically ethical behaviors in our dealings with people. And in business, there is no exemption. **Ethics** can be described as the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. Ethics can also mean a set of moral principles, a theory, or system of moral values. In Christianity, our ethical guidance is the word of God and not mankind’s philosophy. **Holiness** has three primary attributes: zeal for God, purity, and accountability. The first attribute, **zeal for God,** requires that all human concerns-material goods, career- goals and personal relationships be of secondary importance. Jesus stated having only one master (Matthew 6:24). This doesn’t mean God is opposed to business successes; however, holiness is fundamentally about priorities. Business practices must honor God. Holiness keeps all endeavors from becoming an idol. The second attribute is **purity** which reflects God’s moral perfection and separation from impurity. Jesus beckons his followers to “be perfect… as our heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48), and Paul encourages believers to be “holy and blameless” (Ephes. 5:27). This means being morally different than one’s peers. Exercise truth in financial reports, don’t manipulate contract language, and don’t use innuendo to undercut others. Purity in sexuality in business, (no making lewd comments, no flirting, and no sexual discrimination). The third attribute of holiness is **accountability**. Scripture abounds with accounts where righteousness is rewarded and sin punished. Paul lets us know that in (1Cor. 11:31), For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

Scripture abounds with illustrations of righteousness being rewarded and of sin being punished. The analogy may be rough, but accountability is not solely a theological concept. It is an economic principle as well. For while the market neither credits righteousness nor sanctions sin per se, it does tend to reward companies that keep promises and are honest while punishing enterprises that regularly miss deadlines and produce substandard products. (Prov. 10:4 NLT)
Lazy people are soon poor; hard workers get rich. (Prov. 15:6 NLT)
There is treasure in the house of the godly, but the earnings of the wicked bring trouble. Any lifestyles in business based on half-truths ends up looking grotesque rather than glorious. There are three misguided views of holiness, legalism, judgmentalism, and withdrawal. **Legalism** reduces holiness to rule keeping, the Pharisees were rigid not being concern about welfare, Jesus questioned them on this concerning finding food on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-6 NLT) At about that time Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating them. But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.” Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry?He went into the house of God, and they broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. And haven’t you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath?  I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! Legalistic managers tend to be procedurally rigid, emphasizing policies and petty rules over employee welfare.

**Judgmentalist** justify themselves by pointing out even greater moral lapses in others, having long memories of subordinates’ errors. Their lives are doomed to hypocrisy because of their inability to measure up to their own standards. **Withdrawals**’ define holiness as removing themselves from society rather than moral separation. Jesus and Paul both encountered publicans, sinners, and demonic individuals; they would not have had such an impact on the gospel if they stayed away from ministering to these outcasts. Today it would be stockbrokers, IRS agents, and sales representatives that they would encounter. Christianity emphasizes justice and there are four key concepts. **Procedural rights, substantive rights, meritorious justice, and contractual justice.** (Prov. 22:29 Amp) Do you see a man diligent and skillful in his business? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men. This scripture is known as “in business be men”. **Procedural rights** focus on fair processes, decision-makers must be impartial, having neither preexisting biases nor any conflict of interests. **Nepotism**- is favoritism in appointment based solely on kinship. Any person, who is a board member and has financial interest in a company and sitting in the negotiations for that company to be chosen, must recuse themselves. Procedural justice also mandates that adequate evidence be given and that each person affected by a decision be afforded the opportunity to tell their side of the story. Auditors must be thorough and able to authenticate findings. Supervisors should hesitate before terminations based on allegations of one person and circumstantial information. Jesus and Stephen were denied these rights (Matt. 26:20; Acts 6:13)

**Substantive rights**- are basic human rights possessed by people in an ordered society to include rights granted by natural law, as Christians we follow these principles as long as they coincide with God’s word. These rights are (life, liberty, happiness); to own property, physical safety, prompt payments for work completed and to be told the truth to name a few. Therefore, employees must steal neither time nor material; this would be a breach in the employers property rights. Failure to respect substantive rights usually ends up having governmental officials remedy the situation (Rom. 13:1-5 Amp) Let every person be loyally subject to the governing (civil) authorities. For there is no authority except from God [by His permission, His sanction], and those that exist do so by God's appointment. {2} Therefore he who resists and sets himself up against the authorities resists what God has appointed and arranged [in divine order]. And those who resist will bring down judgment upon themselves [receiving the penalty due them]. {3} For civil authorities are not a terror to [people of] good conduct, but to [those of] bad behavior. Would you have no dread of him who is in authority? Then do what is right and you will receive his approval and commendation. {4} For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, [you should dread him and] be afraid, for he does not bear and wear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant to execute His wrath (punishment, vengeance) on the wrongdoer. {5} Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath and escape punishment, but also as a matter of principle and for the sake of conscience.

**Meritorious justice** links the concepts of cause and effect. Good choices (for example, working hard or selecting trustworthy business partners) bring success, while bad choices (for example, hiring a mediocre manager or expanding too rapidly) produce failure. Merit earns its own reward, (Prov. 28:19Amp) He who cultivates his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless people and pursuits will have poverty enough. Conversely Jesus states in (Matthew 7:2 Amp) For just as you judge and criticize and condemn others, you will be judged and criticized and condemned, and in accordance with the measure you [use to] deal out to others, it will be dealt out again to you. Paul advises, (Gal. 6:7 Amp) Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows that and that only is what he will reap.

**Contractual justice**- an arrangement or relationship that involves a legal agreement between parties, being conducted in the interest of fairness and due process. Each party’s performance is conditioned on the others performance. Examples are business partners agreeing to divide earnings, or employers bringing disciplinary actions due to poor performance. God covenant with Israel extended extraordinary rights to Abraham’s progeny but also imposed additional responsibilities. (Luke 12:48 Amp) But he who did not know and did things worthy of a beating shall be beaten with few [lashes]. For everyone to whom much is given, of him shall much be required; and of him to whom men entrust much, they will require and demand all the more. The focus here is much is given, then much is required. We see in the history of Israel compliance to God’s commandments produced peace and prosperity; breaches were met with severe consequences (Lev. 26:3-9 Amp) If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and do them, {4} I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase and the trees of the field yield their fruit. {5} And your threshing [time] shall reach to the vintage and the vintage [time] shall reach to the sowing time, and you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. {6} I will give peace in the land; you shall lie down and none shall fill you with dread or make you afraid; and I will clear ferocious (wild) beasts out of the land, and no sword shall go through your land. {7} And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. {8} Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. {9} For I will be leaning toward you with favor and regard for you, rendering you fruitful, multiplying you, and establishing and ratifying My covenant with you. Or (Lev. 26:15-21 Amp) And if you spurn and despise My statutes, and if your soul despises and rejects My ordinances, so that you will not do all My commandments, but break My covenant, {16} I will do this: I will appoint over you [sudden] terror (trembling, trouble), even consumption and fever that consume and waste the eyes and make the [physical] life pine away. You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. {17} I [the Lord] will set My face against you and you shall be defeated and slain before your enemies; they who hate you shall rule over you; you shall flee when no one pursues you. {18} And if in spite of all this you still will not listen and be obedient to Me, then I will chastise and discipline you seven times more for your sins. {19} And I will break and humble your pride in your power, and I will make your heavens as iron [yielding no answer, no blessing, no rain] and your earth [as sterile] as brass. {20} And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. {21} If you walk contrary to Me and will not heed Me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins. Key point to remember as central to the core of Christian ethics justice is, it can’t be separated from holiness and love. Love is the apex of Christian ethics; its emphasis in the holiness-justice-love mix in business is relationships. Imagine an embezzler who now regrets what they did. Holiness causes uncleanness and separation, justice creates a fear of getting caught rather than the actions, but loves produces a since of grief over the harm of what was done. Breaching relationships causes such pain. Commercial ventures depend more upon cooperation than competition. To be successful, partners must get along with each other; leaders must engender loyalty; those assisting must be brought in into a supportive network. God’s love is transparent, forgiving, and reconciliation. **Love’s primary** contribution to the holiness-justice-love mix is its emphasis on relationships. Loveseeks to do no harm and love reconciles. While holiness causes one to be unclean in error, justice creates a fear of getting caught; love produces a sense of grief over the harm caused to others. Love has three primary characteristics: **empathy, mercy, and self- sacrifice**. **Empathy** is the capacity to celebrate others’ joys and shoulder their burdens (Rom. 12:15 Amp) Rejoice with those who rejoice [sharing others' joy], and weep with those who weep [sharing others' grief]. In a capitalistic society empathic love means backs are scratched for mutual gain. Christian empathy encourages leaders to have concern for the less fortunate, and to take personal interest in peoples issues that are perplexing in nature. For example sympathizing with a sales staff that missed quotas due to unexpected personal problems.

 (1Jn. 3:17Amp) But if anyone has this world's goods (resources for sustaining life) and sees his brother and fellow believer in need, yet closes his heart of compassion against him, how can the love of God live and remain in him?

**Mercy**-compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm. Mercy is empathy with legs, Jesus went to the cross for us (2 Cor. 5:21Amp) For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness]. Reconciliation is produced from mercy; it is an act of healing. **Self-sacrifice** means that love willingly allows rights to be withdrawn that justice bestows for the greater good. Example a spouse may consent to not to take a promotion that requires relocation and disruption to the others blossoming career. Sacrificial love frightens us because it appears to be a blank check with no limits, most leaders balk at such extreme vulnerability. But this the love Jesus. In conclusion, a balanced view must be that holiness, justice, and love be respected equally. Without holiness, love degenerates into permissiveness; nearly anything can be justified in the name of love- defamation, price fixing, and industrial espionage. Conversely, holiness without love produces unforgiving perfectionism. Likewise, love without justice lapses into favoritism and short term perspective. The look of partiality by others will arise as one seems to receive unmerited advantage. Justice without love is also unacceptable, think about a supervisor who goes by the book, never considering exceptional personal circumstances. This leaves an environment cold and devoid of compassion.

Combine justice and love to form (tough love) a disciplined balancing of long term interests. Finally, holiness without justice drifts toward withdrawal from the marketplace and a privatized form of religion. Conversely, justice without holiness results in an amoral form of procedural fairness that lacks moral substance. Leaders become locked in with procedural details and fail to focus on the deeper rights and duties involved. Only through holy justice can ethical integrity and procedural justice both be sustained. Practitioners must imitate the character of a holy God. The following word of God speaks to these principles, (Isaiah 1:17-19 Amp) Learn to do right! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, and correct the oppressor. Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. {18} me now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. {19} If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; (Proverbs 22:1 Amp) A GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold. (1 Timothy 5:18 Amp) For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain, and again, The laborer is worthy of his hire. (Proverbs 16:8 Amp) Better is a little with righteousness (uprightness in every area and relation and right standing with God) than great revenues with injustice. (Job 31:13-17 Amp) If I have despised and rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant when they contended or brought a complaint against me, {14} What then shall I do when God rises up [to judge]. When He visits [to inquire of me], what shall I answer Him? {15} Did not He Who made me in the womb make [my servant]? And did not One fashion us both in the womb? {16} If I have withheld from the poor and needy what they desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to look in vain [for relief],

 {17} Or have eaten my morsel alone and have not shared it with the fatherless.(Matthew 21:12 Amp)And Jesus went into the temple (whole temple enclosure) and drove out all who bought and sold in the sacred place, and He turned over the four-footed tables of the money changers and the chairs of those who sold doves.( Deuteronomy 25:13-16 Amp) You shall not have in your bag true and false weights, a large and a small. {14} You shall not have in your house true and false measures, a large and a small. {15} But you shall have a perfect and just weight and a perfect and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. {16} For all who do such things, all who do unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord your God.