

Making God

the Hero-King of the Great Commission Company

by Tom Steffen

A lady had begged for 25 years in a city in one of the biggest countries in the world. She was demon possessed, but eventually delivered from the spirit through the efforts of followers of Christ associated with a Great Commission company (GCC) in the area. As she slowly pulled her life back together the entrepreneurial lady was eventually able to begin her own business. In time, the former beggar made good money, making it possible to reunite her family. Eventually she built a house for her newly reunited family, dedicating to God the bottom floor used for business.

Her resourcefulness and questionable activities did not go unnoticed by the local police. One day they took her to the police station for interrogation. As she looked around the station she told them how glad she was to see all these rich people and things. When the police asked if she teaches about Jesus Christ in her business she presented the gospel to them before they could stop her. When the officer in charge threatened her she said, "Why should I fear you, I don't fear the demons." They let her go.

In *Great Commission Companies* (2003), Steve Rundle and I defined a Great Commission company as,

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a socially responsible, income-producing business, managed by Kingdom Professionals, created for the specific purpose of glorifying God and promoting the growth and multiplication of local churches in the least developed and least-evangelized parts of the world (Rundle and Steffen, 2003:41).

We also called for these GCCs to develop not only a business plan, but also a ministry plan for the facilitation of a church planting movement. These plans that drive the company were not to stand separately, but to be tightly integrated.

Keeping this integrated plan, walking together in a culturally effective way that maintains high ethics, making a profit, serving the needy within and without the company, and expanding God's kingdom is no small challenge. Humanly, much depends on the CEO and those who surround him or her. How well do they understand starting, maintaining, and multiplying a business? Serving the poor? Starting a church planting movement? More importantly, how well do they understand these activities from a cross-cultural perspective? Most importantly, how well do they maintain their walk with God?

Guidelines for GCCs

Just as God is the Hero-King of the stories of Bible characters such as Adam, Noah, Rahab, Moses, David, Mary, and Paul, so GCCs that attempt to multiply wealth, create economic lift, promote hope, and challenge a culture of greed, will strive to make him the Hero-King of their companies. As co-laborers commissioned to reach all peoples, they have unparalleled opportunity to reveal the gospel through word and deed to co-workers, suppliers, government officials, credi-

tors, and customers. To accomplish this they will “constantly return to, and discover anew” (Polhill, 1992:122) the ideal of first-century Christianity: God’s righteous rule that produced responsible relationships with God, others, the material world, and provided refreshing rest for people and the environment. Tables 1 and 2 provide GCCs tools to evaluate God’s rule in relation to relationships and rest.

Righteous rule calls for GCCs to institute integrative organizational systems, symbols, stories, and rituals that promote relationships of integrity and rest even though this may be far from the norm of the host country (Prov 10:9). GCCs must constantly remind themselves, as Israel was commanded, to remember what it was like to be a “stranger” in a foreign country, and treat people how they would like to be treated.

When New Testament communities of faith provided for the needs of the poor and oppressed it did not go unnoticed by the larger community. The same will be true of GCCs who hire and care for the disabled and disfigured, especially in countries where such people are despised. When servanthood, stewardship, and justice dominate the way GCCs are run, e.g., challenging turf wars, layoffs, theft, terminations, ecological ineptitude, and so forth, God’s macro rule over the universe is modeled, providing a venue for proclamation, repentance, and new communities of faith living in a rejuvenated environment.

Responsible relationships call for GCCs to conduct business honestly in a cutthroat environment, allowing the Holy Spirit to control the competitive spirit so that human relationships

are not harmed nor natural resources abused. Employers will challenge personal and collective pride when the business becomes successful. Workers should receive just wages and conduct, and a health-friendly working environment. Sup-

pliers would receive payments in a timely manner. Customers would receive honest advertisement and quality products in a timely manner at fair prices. Competitors would receive just treatment. The poor that surround GCCs would receive

responsible social action; the rich would not be cheated. Boards, banks, and shareholders would receive accurate reports. When possible, each party would receive prayer, the good news of Jesus Christ, consistent follow-up, and financial resources so that new holistic communities of faith and businesses can multiply.

GCCs would refuse to rape the environment (which ultimately impacts everyone’s children and grandchildren) for short-term gain. When conflict

emerges within or without the company, GCC management would make a genuine effort to resolve it. Striving for responsible relationships on all levels will eventually

provide GCCs opportunities, secretly or openly, inside and/or outside the company, to convey the message that will restore broken relationships with the King. In relation to involvement in responsible relationships Matthew’s warning is apropos: “...be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (10:16, NIV).

Refreshing rest calls for GCCs to take seriously the number of hours they work and demand of their employees. No family should suffer because of perpetual stress, burn-out, or outright neglect.

Table 1. Evaluating God’s Rule in Relationships

	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Employers					
Employees					
Creditors					
Suppliers					
Customers					
Locals					

Table 2. Evaluating God’s Rule in Relation to Rest

	Not Appropriated	Seldom Appropriated	Consistently Appropriated
Employers			
Employees			
Environment			

Reasonable work hours with appropriate breaks, sabbaticals, vacations, and expectations reflect God's rest. The Psalmist warns: "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint" (Prov 23:4, NIV). Finding that oft elusive balance between profit and people will remain a constant challenge for GCCs.

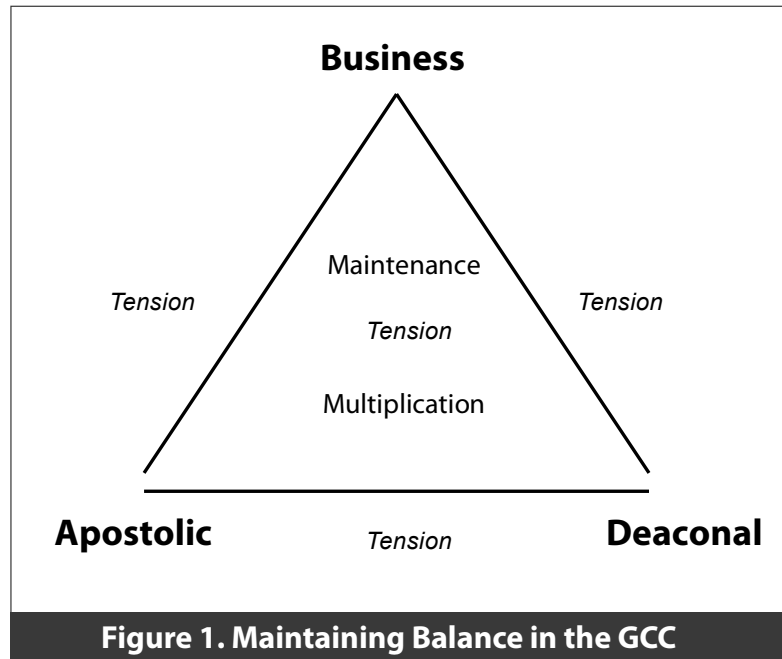


Figure 1. Maintaining Balance in the GCC

Handling new wealth must also be addressed so that John Wesley's fear will not become a reality for the new followers of Christ.

I fear that wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore, I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must of necessity produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches (in Danker 1971:30).

When giving is taught immediately, and implemented, Wesley's concern is addressed. People who love to share what they have with others will find it much more difficult for riches to rule their lives. They will find one model in the CEOs.

GCCs attempt to keep three priorities balanced: (1) the business end (profit), (2) the apostolic activities (multiplying new communities of faith), and (3) deaconal services (social needs) (see Figure 1). They recognize that tensions always exist between the three with one that demands superiority. They also recognize that tension exists between maintaining the GCC and multiplying it so that others can experience opportunity for present and future hope. Such tensions drive managers of GCCs to rely constantly on the Holy Spirit in their day-to-day activities.

While no GCC will reach total perfection in the demonstration of the King's rightful rule (human

to spiritual, human to human, human to material), God will use his co-laborers' imperfect attempts to exemplify biblical values and verbalize the story of redemption, just as he did for the lady beggar and the police. A comprehensive view of God's story of rule that restores broken relationships, and

provides comforting rest demands a comprehensive, responsible approach to business. This approach will include the Great Commission, the Great Commandment, and the interrelated creation mandate, all reflecting the holistic nature of the first-century Temple. Such a perspective will impact both the higher and lower creation. When this happens, God's story will intersect with the stories of all peoples of the world, producing shalom, just as it did for the beggar lady and her reunited family. 🌍

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