



Insights  
FROM THE  
GARDEN

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP



*Doing*  
**cacanando**

DO BUSINESS LIKE A FARMER | DO FARMING AS A BUSINESS

# PINAPAYAMAN MO, OR TINUTURUAN KA?

Nalulungkot ako when I hear millennials leaving their jobs kasi raw pinapayaman lang nila ang boss nila.

There was a boy who asked if it was time for him to start his own business because he has made a lot of money for his boss. He is in marketing, and many of the programs he created did very well and brought a lot of money for the company. Sabi ko sa kanya, “Pero marketing lang ang alam mo. Business involves managing production, sales, people, finances, and many more. May experience ka na ba sa mga ito?” Wala pa raw!

Mayroon akong kilala na nung nakatapos ng MBA, sabi niya the company she was working for is not good enough for her anymore. So, she wants to either look for a job with higher pay or start a business of her own. Sabi ko, “Nagka-diploma ka lang feeling mo ready ka na. Do you have the experience to show that you have successfully applied what you have learned in school?” Wala pa raw!

First Corinthians 8:1 is right. Knowledge makes a person arrogant.

I understand how these two people feel because I felt the same way when I was younger, and even when I was working for HP. But I am glad I stayed long enough to become assistant country manager kasi I got to learn the different functions needed to successfully manage a business. Though I thought I was well-prepared to have a business of my own but when I became an entrepreneur in Bukidnon, I struggled for many long years before I made our farm profitable.

I realized that there are aspects of entrepreneurship that you can never learn in school and that there are traits of an entrepreneur that can only be developed over time, especially the humility to recognize that we need the grace of God and the favor of men to succeed.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS NOT GLAMOROUS

My daughter Denise has been bombarding me with questions about entrepreneurship these past few months. But whenever I answer her, she would often tell me that my answers are different from the things she reads on the internet and the ideas she hears from the millennial entrepreneurs she follows on YouTube. Pero sabi niya, my answers are more practical (bias, anak ko kasi).

She has been telling me also to put my ideas about entrepreneurship in a book so that they may help other millennials like her. I decided to watch some vlogs by millennial entrepreneurs to understand their perspectives so that when I do write the book it will be relevant to them.

To my surprise, there are now young entrepreneurs who are starting to understand what entrepreneurship is really about. They are finding that it is not as glamorous as most people think and that the road to success requires hard work and a lot of sacrifices.

One particular video caught my attention, and I am attaching the link at the end of this message with the hope that it will help those who are about to venture into this very challenging yet rewarding endeavor. I decided not to summarize the content of the video here because I believe it is best that you listen to it directly.

What they don't tell you about entrepreneurship | Mark Leruste | TEDxCardiff  
(<http://youtu.be/f6nxcfbDfZo>)

# WE HAVE BEEN LIED TO!

When I sent the link to the video “Entrepreneurship is a LIE!”, I did not mean to discourage people from becoming entrepreneurs. On the contrary, I want everyone to become an entrepreneur because I want every Filipino to experience what we went through, kaya nga I have been writing books and sharing my insights freely.

However, many people think becoming an entrepreneur is about freedom from authority, and freedom to do what you want, when you want to and how you want. When you become an entrepreneur, you do not own your time because your business does. If you want to succeed you need to be ready to work 24/7 so that you can do everything necessary to make your business thrive. While an entrepreneur can go on vacation anytime he wants, that “anytime” will come only when the company is already healthy, but it will take a while before that happens.

When you are an employee, your stress will come from the need to satisfy your boss. When you are an entrepreneur, the pressure will come from the need to pay your suppliers and the salaries of your employees—on time! While the benefits of entrepreneurship will be better than employment, you will have to pay your dues before you can enjoy them.

Kaya nga I am bothered when I see striving entrepreneurs who are always on Facebook and Instagram showing off how they party and the places they go to while their business is still young. I often ask myself, “Do they know something that I do not know?” Pero these things just tell me that they are not spending enough time and energy to make their businesses survive. Sana lang they will not lose too much money and time along the way.

Entrepreneurship is a LIE - Eye Opening Speech, (<https://youtu.be/0xDHIR65INs>)

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# **BUSINESS FALLACY # 1: MONEY BEGETS MONEY**

In 2015, Boni de Jesus asked me about the worst business advice I've ever received. I told him that it was "money begets money!"

When I was a young sales engineer, my boss told me to work hard so that I can accumulate money kasi madali raw gumawa ng pera kung may pera ka na. Many people share this belief, kaya nga when you ask them what is preventing them from having a business of their own, most would say, "Pera!" or "Puhunan." Most business professors would also teach that a person's ability to access more capital increases his chances of becoming successful faster. That is why they would tell their students to leverage by using other people's money.

In my case, this principle became the source of my woes in my first four years as a farmer and an entrepreneur. Whenever I had extra cash, I would pump this into my vegetable projects because they would grow faster, and the supposed returns were more significant. But while I had a few jackpots, I practically lost most of what I invested in the end. This was when I learned that money does not beget money.

You see, money is an inanimate object, meaning it does not have a life of its own. If you put a P1000 bill in a vault, it will still be a P1000 bill ten years after, but it would have deteriorated. If you put your money in a bank, even with interest, it will decrease in value after ten years because of inflation. If you invest it in someone else's business, there might be a chance of getting a fair return, but there is also a risk of losing your money if the owner fails to manage it properly.

Money will grow only in the hands of a prudent person—someone who has the right abilities and the proper attitude toward business. In the hands of a fool, money will disappear. Therefore, if you want your money to grow, strive to become a prudent person by increasing your abilities and developing the proper attitude toward business.

# **BUSINESS FALLACY # 2: YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW**

While I agree with this principle, people in business have wrongly interpreted it. Because they believe that if you sow money, you will reap money, many fall victims to get-rich-quick scams. Parati kasi silang naghahanap ng paraan na lumaki ang pera nila nang mabilis. So, people often ask me, “Anong magandang negosyong pasukin, ‘yung sigurado ang kita?” I always tell them that there is no such thing.

Ang ibig sabihin ng “you reap what you sow” is, if you sow a banana, you will reap a banana. If you sow kindness, you will reap kindness. Hindi ibig sabihin nito pag nagtanim ka ng pera aani ka ng maraming pera. Let me explain how money grows.

You use money to buy a banana seed and the inputs you will need. You will then have to add hard work to grow the seed into a healthy tree so that it will produce a good harvest. When this happens, you can sell the fruits in order to grow the money you invested. But if you do not invest in a banana seed, you will not have the means to grow your money. On the other hand, even if you buy a banana seed but are not willing to work to grow it into a healthy tree, you will not have anything to sell in the end. This is true in business as well.

Matthew 7:20 (NCV) says, “A good tree cannot produce bad fruits, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruits.” If you want to have a lot of good fruits, you should be willing to first work to grow a good tree. Do not look for a good tree to buy because the person who owns it will not sell it to you. Para lang ‘yan sa negosyo, nobody will sell you a good business. The businesses you can buy are often those that are struggling or needs rehabilitating.

You will reap what you sow! This will only come true if you are willing to put in the work necessary to grow a good tree or a healthy business. Remember, money is just a tool for growing a business and a reward when you have done well.

# **BUSINESS FALLACY # 3: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

Ernie Baron made this expression famous in the 1990s. But it was first quoted by Imam Ali, a Muslim, in 600 A.D. I believe this is what drives many parents to think that education is the greatest treasure they can leave to their children. They believe that the knowledge their children will gain in school will give them the power to succeed in the future. I think this is also the reason why people invest in books because books help them acquire more knowledge. Fortunately, or unfortunately, today the internet has given people access to more knowledge at the click of the mouse.

Does knowledge give us power? Ako, I say NO! I believe knowledge is useless unless you know how to use it. This is why not everyone who graduates from college succeeds and not everyone who is well-informed prospers.

But why does this happen? I believe it is because people are happy and contented with the idea of knowing. For example, some people define wisdom as knowing right from wrong. But I do not agree with this. Kasi, true wisdom is about DOING what is right, not what is wrong. What is the use of knowing something if you do not act on it? Because of this, I have learned that real power comes when you learn how to properly apply the knowledge you possess.

Please do not get me wrong! I believe education and books are important because knowledge is an essential component of success. But it is just one component of what you need to prosper. After acquiring knowledge, you must strive to develop the ABILITY to apply it; otherwise, your knowledge will lose its power. First Corinthians 8:1 says that knowledge will make a person arrogant, but if he couples it with love, he will build himself up, including the people around him. I believe the idea of “love” means to use your knowledge for the good of all.

# **BUSINESS FALLACY # 4: LACK OF FINANCIAL CAPITAL IS THE MAIN REASON WHY BUSINESSES FAIL**

If this is true, then I should have failed in farming when we moved to Bukidnon in 1998, because we did not have enough capital. Though we were able to borrow money from Peachy's family to start our piggery, that money was not enough to complete the farm. We had to make do with what we had because we could not borrow from the bank back then. This was because we had no collateral to offer, and we had no relatives or friends to guarantee a loan. And yet, we were able to grow our farm and make it relatively profitable.

In farming, I learned that you need to have eight forms of capital to succeed. These are (1) Raw Materials, (2) Financial, (3) Intellectual or Knowledge, (4) Experiential, (5) Natural, (6) Spiritual or Values, (7) Social Network, and (8) Cultural. I believe this idea is applicable in business also.

If you look at the eight capitals carefully, you will find financial is just a small component of what you need in business. And while you can use money to buy raw materials and acquire knowledge, you cannot use it to buy the rest. Natural capital like carbon dioxide, oxygen, water, nitrogen, etc. are free, and we need this to live and work. On the other hand, experience, values, and social network are capitals you need to develop over time. So, time becomes an essential component of business success as well. It is the ninth capital.

Unfortunately, most people in business feel that time is their enemy. Many would say, "Bilisan mo, sayang ang panahon!" While I agree that we should not waste time, there are many things in life that you cannot rush. But to circumvent time, some entrepreneurs would use money to solve the problems they encounter. I believe this is why they say lack of financial capital is their main problem. But remember, no amount of money can buy experience, values, and friends.

So if you want to succeed in business, make sure you have the eight forms of capital in your hands. If you do not have them yet, then spend time developing them.



# WORK IS A BLESSING FROM THE LORD

Why does the world demonize the idea of “work”? There is an internet article today that says people should only work 3 days a week when they reach the age of 40. This is according to a study made by experts, but I ask, “Who are these experts? And what are they experts of?” Over twenty years ago, most countries in Europe implemented a 4-day work week to give people more time for themselves. Then there are Christians who believe that work is part of the curse God gave man after Adam sinned. So, when I wrote about the connection of work and savings to our faith, someone on Facebook objected and said that I am ignorant of the Bible and should try reading it. Sabi niya kasi when we were saved by grace, work is no longer required.

Why is it hard for people to accept that work is part of the blessing of the Lord? While we are saved by grace because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, He required us to “do business” in Luke 19:12-13, which means we need to work. In addition, the parable of the talent tells us that God expects us to be faithful with the things He entrusts to us; otherwise, He will take them away and call us wicked and lazy. To be wicked means to have a twisted mind, ibig sabihin, may sira ang bait mo!

May sira ang bait ng taong ayaw magtrabaho kasi they do not accept that work is the channel by which God will provide for them and give them abundance. When they work, they will earn so that they can eat. When they work and save, they will have excess so that they will never beg or borrow. In addition, when they work well, they will grow their abilities. Matthew 25:29 says, "For to everyone who has (abilities), *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have (abilities), even what he does have shall be taken away" (insertion mine).

I may not be an expert on anything, but from experience, I have learned that if I do not work, my family will go hungry. If I work only three days and spend the rest of the week for recreation, my family will become poor. And as I read the Bible year after year, I know that I am saved by grace, and because of that I need to be humble[A1]. And the humble are those who recognize that we are mere stewards of the Lord's possessions, and as such, we need to be faithful and grow them so that we can be a blessing to the world. The apostle Paul, who taught about salvation by grace, said this in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8, “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you.”

I believe one of the reasons why most countries in Europe are now bankrupt is that they only worked for 4 days to provide for their 7-day needs. All I can say is, when you stop working, you start spending!” So, the more you work, the less time you have to spend; but the more you rest, the more you spend the little that you earned.

# WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE AGE 30?

A few weeks ago, I was seated with the owner of the company where I spoke and got a chance to talk to his 23-year-old daughter. She was very nice, and she reminded me of my own daughter Denise. She just graduated from college the previous year, so I asked her about her plans. She then started enumerating all the things she wants to do and the interests she would like to pursue. I told her, "Wow, napagod naman ako for you." She then said, "Sayang kasi ang oras; I need to accomplish enough by the age of 30 so that I can call myself successful." So, I asked her why, and her response reminded me of Denise.

You see a few months back; I had the same conversation with Denise. She was then sharing with me all the things she wants to accomplish and the places she wants to go to before she turns 30. It seems that millennials are targeting to be successful by the age of 30. So, I asked Denise, "Why? Why do you want to accomplish so much in such a short time? Why do you pressure yourself about all these goals? Why don't you just enjoy life as a journey? You will get there naman eventually."

I asked both girls what is so special about wanting to be successful at the age of 30, and they said they want to be like Mark Zuckerberg who became a billionaire before he turned 30. So, I asked them, "How many millennials do you know have become successful and rich by the age of 30?" They said not too many. So, I told them that they were actually putting unnecessary pressure on themselves because of a standard the world has imposed on them. I believe this is why many young adults experience depression and even commit suicide.

I told them that they should learn to enjoy life as a journey because like plants, each of us have our own season. If success is measured by what you accomplished at a certain age, then I should see myself a failure as compared to people like Marvin Germa and Jayson Lo who both became successful at their craft at an early age. But I have a different season, and God in due time gave me success as well. Besides, even our Bible heroes had their own seasons. Joseph was 30 when he became prime minister while Moses was 80 before the Lord called him; nonetheless, God gave them the same level of success.

God made everyone special, and He wants to use each one to be a blessing to others. So, enjoy your walk with the Lord and do not try to be like someone else. If He makes you successful and rich by the age of 30, then good for you. But if He does not, remain faithful because Psalm 1:3 says you will produce fruits in the proper season. Life is good if you walk with the Lord. Just make sure you walk with Him and not run ahead of Him. If you do this, you will enjoy life in all its fullness.

# MAKE IT YOUR LIFE GOAL TO EXCEL STILL MORE

If becoming successfully rich by the age of 30 should not be your ambition, what then should be your goal? Is there a proper one, which will still assure you of financial success? I found mine in 1 Thessalonians 4:10-11 where Paul said, "...But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands..."

People should understand that success and riches cannot be set as goals or ambitions, because success is just a result of implementing your plans well while riches is a reward for the success you gained. Many people make the same mistake as most farmers do. Many of them think that the goal of farming is to produce a lot of fruits, not realizing that fruits are just natural by-products of exceptionally healthy plants. Therefore, our life goal should be to become excellent in everything we do because success will naturally follow, and riches will come as a reward.

Next to pleasing God, my second ambition in life is to live a quiet life by excelling still more! I like this idea because it means that I do not have to be intelligent in order to succeed. When I was young my mother told me, "Anak, hindi ka matalino, diligent ka lang." Do you know how that hurts? Hindi man lang siya nagsinungaling, katulad ng ginagawa ng ibang nanay. What was worse was she did not even tell me what 'diligent' meant! So I grew up feeling bad about myself. This was until I saw Proverbs 12:24, which says, "The hand of the diligent will RULE, but the slack *hand* will be put to forced labor" (emphasis mine). And to excel still more is a trait of the diligent!

As Paul said, make it your ambition to lead a quiet life by minding your own business and working with your hands so that you can excel still more. Do not look for a business that will make you successfully rich because all businesses have the potential to make you one. In farming, it is not the plant that will make the farm rich, but the farmer who fills his garden with healthy plants. In the same way in life, success does not depend on the business you find, but on how you continually strive to excel in what you already have.

If you follow the advice of Paul, you will become successful and rich in the proper season. But can it come sooner? Yes, but it depends on how good you take care of the garden God entrusted to you.

# FIND YOUR SIGNIFICANCE INSIDE YOU

Recently I was told that experts in the US have found a way to manage the millennials and get the most from this talented generation. Because the millennials are always looking for purpose and always want to know the long-term impact of what they do, managers were advised to meet with them regularly to listen to their sentiments and explain the long-term significance of what they do for their future. According to the one who was explaining this idea to our group, this approach is necessary so that these millennials would not leave and look for their significance elsewhere.

As I listened, in my mind I was asking, *Teka, teka, sino ba ang nag apply ng trabaho? Did the millennials apply for work in order to help the company achieve their goals? Or did the company seek them out and beg them to be part of what they do?* Parang nabaliktad na yata ang situation, 'no?

Do I agree with the experts? The traditionalist in me does not, but I also understand that we need to help the millennials understand how they should respond to life properly.

I wish I can tell them that purpose is not defined by the opportunities around you, but by the good inside you. Sana, I can help them understand that the greatest impact you can have is not to take a good business and make it better, but to take whatever God has given you and produce something good from it. I hope I can make them realize that the great men they want to follow did not start with great opportunities, but instead they made the most from what life gave them. Look at Jack Ma for example. Because KFC did not hire him and Harvard rejected him, he ended up being an English teacher. He was then hired by Apple as an interpreter and there he got exposed to the internet world. Today, he owns one of the biggest and most successful companies in the world, Alibaba. How did he do it? By making the most of what life gave him and letting his personal purpose influence the world around him.

Do you want to make sure that you will impact the world for good in the future? Galatians 6:9 (NIV) says "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." What good should the millennials do then? They should seek the welfare of the company they work for, support the plans of their bosses, submit to their authorities, and excel in everything they do. If they do these, the Bible assures them that they will reap a good harvest in the proper time.

# **MONEY WILL NOT GROW ON ITS OWN!**

The Bible says you reap what you sow. But do you know that this principle became the source of my woes during the first four years of my life in Bukidnon? It was not because there was something wrong with the principle. It was because back then, I did not understand how it was applied in business.

To many of us, money is the seed we sow while the business is the soil we sow it in. In farming, I learned that the condition of the soil decides how fruitful the seed will eventually become. Unfortunately, most of the soils in the country have been over-farmed, resulting in their nutrients being depleted. Thus, a farmer must work hard to improve the soil if he wants to have a good harvest. From this, I have come to realize that the reason I failed before was that I was so focused on reaping the fruit rather than improving the soil that grows the plant. Money does not grow on its own, it needs a healthy business to grow in. Making the soil good for the seed requires a lot of work. Likewise, building a healthy business to grow your money requires the same effort.

Do you wonder why you do not immediately reap the “good” you sow in the lives of others? Have you ever wondered why the money you invest does not always return when you want it to? This was a major woe I struggled with back in those days. And then I discovered that each type of seed bears fruits in its proper season, and the proper season is decided not by the farmer who sowed the seed but by the plant itself. If you force a plant to bear fruits before its season, you will kill it prematurely because its internal structure will be destroyed in the process. I realized that I need to study how my plants behave, so that I can plan around it and not work against it. This is true in business as well. A business will eventually profit in the proper season. When I forced my business to profit early, I ended up with very little to reap. But when I spent more time working around and respecting its nature, I had less stress and had better returns.

I hope this post will help those who may be struggling in reaping what they have already sown.

# A FLAWED BUSINESS IDEA

Here is another business idea that I think is flawed: Pursue a business that supports your passion. Over time I have seen that passion can change. Who among you are doing today what you were passionate about 10 to 20 years ago? Very few. Often passion is overridden by need. When your passion cannot feed you, you change your passion to what will provide for you.

Business should be about your purpose and to me, your purpose is defined by what God has given you—the things that you already have.

Because people choose to pursue their passion, they often waste the many things they already possess. It is cheaper to do business with what you already have than with what you want. All you have to do is to want what you have.

Therefore, business is not about your passion, it is about your purpose! And our purpose should be defined by the talents and possessions God has entrusted to us.

“For *it is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey” (Matthew 25:14–15).

# PROFIT IS A BY-PRODUCT OF DOING THINGS RIGHT

Matthew 7:18 says that only a good tree can produce good fruits. So, if you want a tree to become fruitful, you must focus your energy on growing a healthy plant. It is the same in business. If you want a business to become profitable, do not focus on the profit. Instead, focus your energy on building a healthy organization.

People tend to focus too much on the end results—to be profitable, to meet quota, to become rich, etc. While there is no sin in these, we need to realize that all of these are just natural by-products of something we do correctly. Just like the fruit is the natural outcome of taking good care of a tree.

My good friend Arnold Jumalon does this very thing well. Every time his board sets their company's target, he would put this at the back of his mind and then start focusing on delighting his customers. When he is with his customers, I seldom hear him sell. But he is very sensitive to their problems and would always find ways to help. He often tells me, "If they are happy, I am happy. If they are successful, I will be successful." So, year in and year out, he would always bust his quota without much effort. This is because he focuses his energy on taking good care of the tree that produces the fruits he wants.

Today, I would set profit targets because it is a proper thing to do. But after setting them I put those numbers at the back of my mind and ask myself, *What should I do with what I have today in order to meet the targets I desire?* I follow what Matthew says: "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself" (Matthew 6:34). What is important is that I do my best to maximize the returns of the limited resources I have because what I do today will determine my tomorrow.

I hope this helps you in your journey to fruitfulness.

\*Arnold Jumalon is the CEO and President of Boeing Materials Handling Corporations, which sells heavy equipment and storage systems for industrial use. He is also one of the founders of Semilya Sa Kinabuhi Foundation.

# CONFLICTS ARE NATURAL AND NEUTRAL

Conflicts hinder the growth of any organization because they often lead to division. Everybody hopes for a conflict-free business, but this is not possible, and I will show you why later. I would like to share a page from our lesson on “Building A Healthy Organization”, baka lang may matulungan sa inyo.

First Corinthians 12 tells us that God brings people of varying backgrounds with different gifts in order to form a body, or an organization. Each gift is necessary because it serves a function the body requires. But because people do not have the same gifts, each one sees things differently. An accountant will always look at problems differently from those in sales and engineering, and vice versa. Therefore, conflicts are NATURAL! They will always be present in any organization.

But conflicts are also NEUTRAL, meaning they are neither good nor bad; they can either grow the body or destroy an organization. If individuals insist that others should see things the way they see them, conflicts will destroy the body. However, they can be used to make a body stronger. This happens when people decide to respect each other's gifts and strive to complement one another, rather than compete with each other.

For me, the best advice in managing conflict and avoiding division is found in Philippians 2:2-4. In order to have the same mind, people must always consider others as more important than themselves and aim to serve other people's interests before their own. But then some of you may ask, “If I serve the interests of others first, who will then look out for my interest?” Interestingly, you will find that as you serve others, they will serve you in return. If you make them feel important, they will make you feel important as well. This is one of the most powerful business principles I have learned. Serve, and you will be served!



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Someone recently asked me how he can start a business of his own. He said he used to be an OFW but now he and his wife work for major corporations in the country. They related how they tried to go into business last year by investing in a poultry farm. The owner would assign a chicken house in his farm to different investors, but would continue to operate the farm himself, then would split the profit with the investors 50/50. The chicken house assigned to them did well for two cycles but after that, the whole farm got infested by a virus. When they finally cashed in their investments, they said they barely broke even.

So, I asked them, "What did you learn about growing chicken and what abilities did you develop from that experience?" Practically nothing, they admitted, because it was the owner who managed and ran the operations. So, I told them that business is not just about making money. More importantly, it is about growing your abilities so that God can give you the opportunity you need. You begin by first getting involved in a small business so that you can learn the ropes slowly.

However, both of them said they cannot afford to leave their jobs to start a business. It is too risky! I agreed. So, I told them that the best way to prepare for a business is to study everything they can learn from their present employment. They should not be content with just doing a good job. They must learn everything they can about it—from sales to accounting, to logistics, etc. They must also treat the company as their own and strive to make it succeed because this is the measure that they are ready for a business of their own. In Luke 16:12 Jesus said, "And if you have not been faithful *in the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

Most people believe that business is about growing money because they believe that money begets money! This is not true. Without proper abilities, money will not grow, and you may, in fact, even lose it.

# PROBLEMS ARE GOOD!

One day a friend called me to rant about the many problems in her business, especially with her people. "I hate problems! Ang gusto ko sa negosyo ko walang problema," she said. So, I said, "Kung ayaw mo ng problema, dapat 'wag ka magnegosyo. Kasi walang negosyo na walang problema."

People react to problems in different ways. Some would ram through them, leaving a lot of casualties along the way. Others would sweep them under the rug hoping that they would go away, only to face a monster in the future. There is nothing we can do to eliminate problems. They will always be present in every business. The only thing we can do is change our attitude toward them and recognize that problems can actually bring blessings.

Over time I learned these about problems: (1) Problems are external manifestations of something internally wrong; (2) Problems are warning signs of an impending trouble in the future; and (3) Problems are opportunities for growth because when we remove the root cause, our business and people can work better.

When problems come, we should not look for someone to blame because even if we find one, our problems will not go away. Instead, we should work to uncover what is internally wrong and correct it because by doing so, our business will become healthier. So problems are not necessarily bad! In my next post I will share with you how to embrace your problems and benefit from them.

# LEARN TO WANT WHAT YOU HAVE

I believe that business should start with what you have, not with what you want. While there is no sin in pursuing your passion, disregarding what you have is wasteful and it is a form of rejecting what God entrusted to you. To do this, you must learn to “want” what you “have”.

The next thing a business should do is to “take root”. The roots anchor the plant and give it the ability to absorb the nutrients around it. It is the roots that decide how big a plant will grow and how fruitful it will become. In business, building a strong infrastructure should take priority for it will decide how big it will grow and how profitable it will become. Infrastructure is not about machines and buildings. It is about culture, financial values, the ability to maximize the returns of its resources, etc.

Unfortunately, most people do not give enough importance to this part of business. Instead, they are focused on looking for ways to get rich or to profit quickly. Many would jump from one business to another hoping that they will hit the jackpot in one of them. Sadly, I see this happening to the millennials. Many of them jump from one job to another, hoping to hit the jackpot, meaning they hope to find that job that will make them get rich quickly. They do not give themselves enough time to take root.

I know of a girl who studied to be a chef in a prestigious culinary school. After she graduated, she worked as a junior chef in a well-known restaurant. But she found the work difficult and often humiliating. She wondered if all her sacrifices were worth it. Eventually, she quit to become a financial planner. She did not realize that chefs become successful because they spend a lot of time in the kitchen. In a sense, they grow and take root in the kitchen. Likewise, the best financial advisors today did not become successful overnight. They spent years growing their roots. With her move, she threw away the time and money she spent on becoming a chef and will have to pay the same amount of time and money to become a good financial advisor.

First Corinthians 6:12 says that everything is permissible but not everything is profitable. Shifting from one profession or business to another is not a sin, but it is wasteful and may not necessarily be profitable. Of course, there will always be exemptions. But I hope those who may be struggling in their business, and profession will find this helpful.

# WHICH IS BETTER: DYNAMIC GROWTH OR RESILIENCE?

If you were given a choice, which would you prefer? A fast-growing, dynamic company? Or a steady, resilient business? Eighteen years ago, I would have chosen the former without thinking twice. But after many years of painful experience and pondering, I now prefer the latter. My outlook changed when I understood what Solomon meant in Ecclesiastes 11:2: “Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.”

When I was in HP, people would laugh if you project a growth that was less than 50% per year. So, when we made plans, we would make them as if there was no end to our growth. This was until the Asian economy collapsed in 1997.

I have learned that everything in life goes through a cycle of good and bad, of abundance and famine, or boom and bust. I realized that calamities come not as punishment for our sins. Instead, they are integral to our lives. In fact, most of the great men in the Bible went through famine of varying degrees.

We know that El Niño comes in a cycle, usually every 5 to 10 years. Thus, it is a natural phenomenon we need to prepare for. But most farmers still choose to ignore this. Also, I have learned that all markets go up and down within the year, so it is foolish to expect a leveled revenue. Unfortunately, most people do not consider this. This is the reason why some businesses fold up when the market goes on a downward trend.

Learning from this, we always take calamities into consideration whenever we now make plans. We conscientiously save when business is good so that we may survive when things turn bad. We strive to build a healthy organization, one that learns from all the problems we experience so that we may be ready for any misfortunes. With this mindset, how then can we grow? When calamities come, those who are fast and dynamic will crumble when they are not prepared. But the one who is resilient will not only survive but will also take advantage of the opportunities the market offers. When the calamity is over, the steady and resilient will be in a greater position for growth.

Only a wise and discerning man knows that abundance does not last forever because calamities are sure to happen, so it is best to prepare for it. Such was the wisdom of Joseph. God gave him the wisdom to prepare for the forthcoming seven-year famine. As a result, Egypt became even richer when the famine came. Calamities offer opportunities that only the resilient can take advantage of. I pray that all of us may learn to think and plan like Joseph so that we will all be fruitful.

# ELIMINATE WASTE BY CREATING VALUE

How does a business become profitable? I believe you will not gain profit unless you develop the habit of eliminating waste by creating value.

I have learned that increasing sales will have little benefit if you are not able to control your expenses. When I say control your expenses, I do not mean buying the cheapest raw materials and paying the lowest labor cost, because these may be detrimental to your business. Instead, I mean eliminating the wastes that add cost to your expenses.

Wastes are not only the unwanted by-product of the things you do. Waste is anything that does not add value to your business and instead, make your money leak. There are many major sources of wastes in a business, but they are too many for me to explain in this post. On the other hand, there are subtle sources of wastes that people often brush aside because they feel they are too insignificant to worry about. Yet, they actually impact expenses in a major way.

For example, conflict is a source of waste. When team members do not work in harmony, expenses will go up because they would take a longer time to finish their task. There will also be a lot of reworks along the way because they will not do their best for each other. Also, keeping things in storage, like defective equipment and unused materials, is a source of waste. They take up valuable space and can be the cause of accidents. When you allow these things, your expenses will go up, your productivity will go down, and your profit will suffer.

I am an entrepreneur who started with very little, so I cannot afford to waste my resources. Because of this, our farm is very conscious about eliminating waste so that we can preserve our profit. However, eliminating waste is not our end goal. Instead, it is to find ways to convert waste to something of value. This is why we have a vegetable business. Since I believe that God owns our farm, I considered holy the manure which our hogs produce. So, I refused to throw them away. Because of this, I processed them and used them as fertilizer in our vegetable operations.

Do you know that Jesus taught about this concept too? After feeding the 5,000 Jesus told His disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted" (John 6:12 NLT). If you want to understand the different sources of waste in business and how you can eliminate them, join us in the Semilya training called "The Essentials of Business." Sana we can help some of you make your business profitable and your life fruitful.

# IT IS ESSENTIAL TO “EXCEL STILL MORE”

When people visit our farm, many would ask permission to take pictures including our competitors and I would always oblige. Then one day, a friend asked me, “Why do you allow this?” I told him I didn't mind since we also had just copied the technology we use from books, sometimes from YouTube, and from other farms we have visited. So bakit ko naman ito ipagdadamot sa kanila? But then I added, “Besides, next year baka iba na ang magiging itsura ng farm namin, because by then we would have improved on whatever we are doing this year.”

As the year comes to an end, most of you will reflect on the things you have learned this year. Many of you will thank God for the blessings you have received; however, in our farm, we do things a bit differently. We would instead ask, “What should we be improving for the coming year?” We would then assess ourselves and look for ways to make the farm better. We would look for wastes to eliminate, processes to simplify, attitudes to correct, etc. We do this in response to 1 Thessalonians 4:10-11 (NASB) which says, “...we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands...”

To “excel still more” means, if you are good today, you should strive to be better tomorrow and then be even better the day after. It is similar to the concept of *kaizen*, the Japanese term for continuous improvement. I used to think it was the Japanese who invented the concept until I realized it is actually a biblical idea.

While it is good to ponder on the things we have learned, I believe it is more important to improve on what we are already doing. We should continue to look internally and strive to be a little better each year and I believe this is what it means to “mind your own business.” The book *How Toyota Became #1* explains how Toyota followed this principle to become one of the biggest car companies in the world. Toyota did not look at their competitors to benchmark their capabilities. Instead, they would continually look internally to improve on what they are already doing. By doing this, they became much better than all the rest.

The coming year is just around the corner. If you want to excel still more, you may want to identify the areas where you want to improve. Perhaps you'd like to be a more loving husband or be a more submissive wife. Maybe you'd like to be a more obedient child. When it comes to work, would you like to be a more compassionate boss, or be more excellent at work? Even if you are already good at these things, there will always be room for improvement. But above all these, may we all be continually pleasing to the Lord by becoming more and more faithful to Him.

# THE MOST IMPORTANT TRAIT OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

What's the most important trait of an entrepreneur?

One businessman said discipline and persistence. Another said self-mastery and a steward's mindset. Still another said trust and dependence on God. While there are really no right or wrong answers since we all have different experiences and perspectives, para sa akin humility is the most important trait an entrepreneur should develop.

I remember when my boss for the distributor of HP in the Philippines retired. She told me, "You know Dong, every time we promoted you, we were so afraid that your promotion would destroy you because you were very arrogant." You see as a young man, I was taught to speak out my mind, to fight for my rights, and to take control of my destiny. I thought then that this mindset would do me well. But looking back I realized now that I had missed out and wasted so many opportunities because I was then so proud.

In Bukidnon, I learned that humility is the absence of arrogance, and it comes when we realize that everything we have and everything we are comes from the Lord. Because of this, I have no right to be proud of anything.

In my journey, God stripped me of everything I was proud of and humbled me through many painful experiences. And then He showed me that He will bless me when I acknowledge Him as the Owner of everything I have and the Lord over all the things I do. I learned too, that the people I encountered, even those I do not like, and the problems I experienced, especially those that brought great pain, are all from the Lord. That He did not send them to hurt me but to grow me and to teach me that His ways will always be better than mine. Deuteronomy 8:2 says, "You shall remember all the ways which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."

Do you like working with arrogant people? None of us do! But why is humility the most important trait an entrepreneur should develop? It is because everything else mentioned above—consistency, discipline, self-mastery, and dependence upon God will just follow naturally if you are humble. Humility also brings a very important element that we need in order to succeed. First Peter 5:5 says, "...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Because business is extremely difficult to do, we would need the favor of men and the grace of God in order to prosper. And only humility can invite both of these into our lives. How I wish someone taught me this when I was younger!

# TIME IS NOT YOUR ENEMY, AND MONEY IS NOT ALWAYS A FRIEND

Since I started working decades ago, I would often hear people say, “Bilisan mo, sayang ang panahon.” Or “Seize every opportunity to make the most of your time.” They also say, “Aim to dominate the market quickly, otherwise someone else will!”

I used to have this mindset when I was younger and working for HP in Manila. While it was supposed to bring me riches, it also became the source of great stress. I have also seen this mindset consume other people and lead them to depression. Pero ang tanong ko, why would something that is supposed to give us success, bring pain and heartaches instead?

Sabi ng Proverbs 10:22, when God makes us rich, He adds no sorrow to it. Could it be because we have been contradicting God’s design for us with this approach? I believe that the reason many people get depressed is that they think money can buy the things they need to succeed in life. They were made to believe money can hasten their success.

I only understood things better when God made me an entrepreneur with very little resources to start with. As an entrepreneur, I discovered that the important things a business needs to succeed cannot be bought. Instead, they have to be developed over time. You can buy knowledge but not wisdom. You can buy machines but not abilities. You can find strong workers but not those with good character. I learned that wisdom, abilities, and character are things you need to nurture and grow over time.

Do you know that you should give a plant time to grow strong roots so that it can produce a lot of fruit? And you should give a butterfly time to come out of its cocoon on its own so that it can develop strong and beautiful wings? If you interfere with these processes, you will kill these creatures. The great breakthroughs in nature happen over time, not overnight!

Did Steve Jobs build Apple in over a year? No! He needed time to mature before he was able to build the most valuable company on earth. Did Warren Buffet become rich over a decade? No! He needed time to grow in wisdom before he became one of the richest people in the world. Even the greatest breakthroughs in business happened over time, not overnight. And in order to follow their footsteps, you should learn that time is not your enemy, and money is not always your friend.



# CALAMITIES WILL COME!

One of the most important lessons I learned as an entrepreneur is that the market will go through cycles of boom and bust, and that there is no such thing as consistent growth because calamities will surely come. Calamities occur naturally but they can also come because of the foolishness of man.

Typhoons come to ravage our land almost 20 times in a year while the El Niño phenomenon usually occur every three to five years. So bakit tayo nagugulat when these things happen? Di ba we should learn from the past so that we may be better prepared for the future?

In the same way, financial crisis comes every so often, but not just to this country but to all other nations in the world. Like natural calamities, they come in cycles. We experienced one in 1998 when the Asian economy collapsed. Then another one came in 2008 when the global recession happened. So why are we surprised that we experienced another one 10 years later, in 2018? Di ba we should have learned from the past so that we can be better prepared when it happens again? But why is it that some people feel that we're doomed, na para bang wala nang pag-asa ang bansa natin? Mabuti na lang andiyan si Dr. Alvin Ang (my favorite economist), to put things in the proper perspective.

As an entrepreneur I have learned to protect myself from calamities by saving a lot when times are good so that I can still invest when times turn bad.

Am I concerned about the inflation and the drop in the stock market? A little, but not really. Why? Because I have seen these happen in the past and I believe in the resilience of the Filipinos. Though it is possible that the crisis is man-made, meaning some people in government and/or in business have made some wrong decisions, I believe that they are not stupid. So I trust that they will make the necessary adjustments to improve our situation.

But more than this, I believe that my God is in control and that He can cause all things to work together for good if we respond properly. Exodus 19:5 (ESV) says, "Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine." He said if the Israelites would obey His voice and keep His covenant, they will be God's possession. If God treats us as His possession, it means hindi Niya tayo pababayaan.

Unfortunately, many Filipinos have been very disobedient, kaya feeling ko we have caused this crisis upon ourselves. People do not show respect to one another, they pray that the president will get sick, they encourage strife and division, and some do not even know how to obey simple rules on parking.

While I cannot influence everyone in the country, I hope I can influence you. I hope I can encourage you to be obedient to the Lord to the point of submitting to the authorities that He has established whether we like them or not. Why?

Because He said so in Romans 13:1-7! Only God can provide the grace that we need. He is willing to bless our country; let us also be willing to obey Him.

# THE GOOD BUSINESSMAN

A good businessman is not someone who found a good business to run, but someone who is able to produce something good from the things in his hands.

Lately, I've been asked more frequently, "What is a good business to go into?" I believe what they are really asking is, "Is there a business that is easy, one that can guarantee a profit?"

This is why I believe franchising is flourishing, because people think that if they can just find a good franchise to buy, their profit is assured. But this is not completely true because even if you find one, you still have to make it work efficiently before the profit could come. The truth is a franchise will not give you big profit because you only get a small portion of the gross income of the business. But if you are the franchiser, then that is another story. Kasi the franchiser is the one who produced something good from the things in his hand.

Today, when people ask me what a good business is to start, my answer is, "What do you have already?" I believe what you have is a clue to what God wants you to do.

Also, I realized that it is cheaper to start with what you have than with what you want. But you may say, "But I do not know what to do with what I have." Pero teka, di ba when you get into a franchise or invest in a new business, hindi mo rin naman alam agad kung ano ang gagawin? Whether you start with what you have or with what you want, you still have to study the business and develop new skills.

Did Henry Sy or Jack Ma find a good business to run? No! They created something good from what was in their hands. Please do not get me wrong. Getting a franchise or investing in another person's business is not wrong. Kaya nga lang, the returns are not as big compared to when you grow a business of your own. The other disadvantage of investing in someone else's business is, since that person is in charge, you won't be able to learn the intricacies of that business.

Because of these, I believe you should not ask, "What is a good business to go into?" Instead, ask, "What should I do with the things in my hands?" This is a more practical question to ask because it will prevent you from wasting the things God has entrusted to you. If you are able to produce something good from what you have, you will become a good businessman and will gain higher profit.

# THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is defined today as the willingness to set up a business, while taking on great financial risks in order to become rich.

Do you know that the term *entrepreneur* was taken from the old French word *entreprendre*? It means to undertake a task, especially a theatrical production. Apparently, the original meaning did not carry the idea of taking great financial risk. At the very least, it means to make the most of what you have and to bring out the best from a group of people with different gifts and temperament, by helping them complement each other.

In its original meaning, entrepreneurship means to be a good steward of what you have with regards to both people and resources.

Like in Abraham's case, in order to create a breakthrough, he had to make do with the land that his nephew Lot rejected. Yet in spite of this, he was able to build a business with an army of 318 men that defeated the kings who looted the kingdoms of Sodom and Gomorrah. So too, in the case of Joseph, who excelled in all the responsibilities he was given as a slave and later a prisoner. His attitude and these experiences gave him the ability to save Egypt from seven years of famine as its prime minister. I believe what Abraham and Joseph accomplished were no lesser feats than what Henry Sy and Steve Jobs had achieved today.

Like Abraham and Joseph, I am learning that the great entrepreneurs of today started only with very limited resources and education. Most of them were not able to borrow money from the bank or attract investors because they had no collateral to offer nor a track record to show. But I believe it was their difficult circumstances that forced their creativity to flourish, their characters to mature, and their abilities to increase. These are things you do not learn in school nor acquire with money. It is possible that the bank and investors eventually came to offer them help so that they were able to take their business to the next level. But the financial help did not come in the beginning but only later when their abilities had matured.

Recently, I discovered something very, very interesting. Because people have the power to influence Wikipedia, their new definition of entrepreneurship has changed. It is now defined as the process of designing, launching and running a new business, which is often initially a small business. By nature, everything that becomes big and fruitful starts from something small, like a seed. My prayer then is that you all ultimately experience greatness as you take good care of the limited resources entrusted to you today.

# OUR MODERN-DAY HEROES

Entrepreneurs are said to be the new heroes of today. This is because the world has shifted focus from technology to business and from manufacturing to investing. So, if you ask young people today who they want to be, many will say they want to be the next Steve Jobs or Jack Ma, Henry Sy or John Gokongwei, etc. These people are considered to be of a special breed because of their supposed willingness to take great financial risks.

I have been studying the lives of these men because I am often asked how it is to be an entrepreneur. Initially, I felt uncomfortable to be called one because I was unwilling to take financial risks when we started. The reason is in the beginning, we really had nothing to risk because when I resigned from HP, I forfeited my retirement benefits. All I hoped to do then was to provide for my family and survive!

When our operations were still small, I would be accused of not being enterprising enough because I refused to borrow money to fund our growth. Sabi sa akin ng mga business school professors na kilala ko, I will not succeed unless I take on the daring ways of the great entrepreneurs of these days.

But do you know what I discovered about the great men I mentioned above? I learned that most of them did not also take great financial risks when they began. In fact, most of them just wanted to survive and make a living. Henry Sy worked in a grocery store after his father went back to China when their sari-sari store burned down during the war. Yet until his death in 2019, he owned the biggest sari-sari store in the Philippines called SM. Steve Jobs started Apple in his parents' garage. Nobody wanted to fund him and his partner Steve Wozniak so he had to sell his Volkswagen so that the other Steve could finish their electronic project. People then did not understand his vision.

I often wonder why our business schools focus their study on the lives of these men when they are already successful, when we can learn greater things examining what they did when they were still small and struggling.

I have been studying entrepreneurship from the perspective of the Bible because the great men of faith were actually businessmen. But nowhere in the Bible did it say that they took great financial risks. Why? Because during their days, they really had no finances to risk. Most of them were just sojourners, yet they became richer than the people living in the land they chose to settle in. I am talking about Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, etc. What kind of businessmen were they and what can we learn from them so that we can become great entrepreneurs as well? In the next posts, I will be sharing what I am discovering about this subject.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS NOT ABOUT TAKING RISKS

Would you like to be an entrepreneur? Would you like to have a business of your own? I'm sure many of you would but are just afraid to take that step because the idea connotes the willingness to take great financial risks.

Taking GREAT financial risks is synonymous to entrepreneurship because studies show there are more business ventures that failed compared to those that succeeded. In fact, starting one's own business is considered a big gamble. That is why many prefer to just become or remain employees.

Do you know that the idea of entrepreneurship originated from the French word *entreprendre*, which means to undertake? It also refers to a musical director. I do not know if the original idea included the concept of taking financial risk, but I am sure it means taking care of whatever is before you.

For years, I have been looking for a biblical definition of entrepreneurship but have not found one that supports our present-day definition. But if I take the original meaning “to undertake”, then Ecclesiastes 5:19 (ESV) gives an excellent explanation: “Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.”

As I transitioned from being a corporate man to becoming an entrepreneur, I have learned that entrepreneurship is not about taking risks. When I had that mindset in the beginning, I lost part of the money we had then. But when I changed by taking on the mindset of a steward for the Lord, things turned around and God allowed us to enjoy the fruits of our labor. Instead of taking risks, I focused on taking good care of what we have, working to grow our abilities, and maximizing the returns of our limited resources.

It amazes me to learn that Solomon knew about this concept even thousands of years ago. If his definition is right, then we can all be entrepreneurs! You can take out the financial risk if you focus on taking good care of what you have. You can also remove the risk of failing if you content yourselves with your lot (or portion) and are willing to toil hard to create wealth, so that someday you will experience the fruitful life God desires for you.

# THE TRUE INFRASTRUCTURE OF BUSINESS

When people discuss infrastructure, they often talk about equipment, buildings, and the road network within their facility. But I am learning that these things are useless if you do not have the right people to operate them.

One day, a friend who attended our farm training told me that he has an extra 5 hectares that he can convert into a vegetable farm. He told me he plans to buy a tractor so that he can plow and prepare his field faster. But I asked him, "Supposing you finish plowing the land in a month, do you have the people to plant the whole field and take care of your vegetables?" Sabi niya, "Wala pa, magha-hire pa." So sabi ko, sayang ang bilis ng tractor niya if he does not have abled people to match its capability.

I have seen many friends expand their business to their hurt. Having excess money, they opened more stores and bought better machines only to lose money because they did not prepare the people who will support the growth they wanted.

In our Essentials of Business training, we would say, "Infrastructure is the most important and expensive part of business! But it cannot be bought, it must be developed over time." We say this because the part of the infrastructure that truly builds a healthy business are people. But it takes time to build their skills, develop their values, and create a strong company culture. Are you planning to expand your business?

Consider this: Business does not grow because of money, but because of abilities! And abilities refer to the people who will be working on the business, so invest in them first.

# GODLINESS WILL MAKE YOU PROFITABLE

1 Timothy 4:8 (NASB) says that “godliness is profitable for all things.”

As a businessman, I have learned that when you pursue something that does not bring profit you will waste two important yet limited resources—time and money. So, I have been disciplining myself to only pursue projects that are profitable. How do I know if they will be profitable? I actually try them out in a small but scalable manner. If they do not work on a preset period in spite of all my efforts, I kill the project. This way, I limit my losses. On the other hand, if the project goes well, then I scale up on my efforts and investment.

If godliness will bring profit into our lives, we should understand what it means so that we can pursue it properly. However, I have found that being godly is often interchanged with the idea of being religious. Are they the same or different? In order to answer this, I studied the original Greek words for both of them. To be godly (*eusebeia*) means to devoutly do what is appropriate for God. On the other hand, to be religious (*deisidaimonia*) is to conduct yourself according to the god you believe in or the religious order you belong to.

To be godly is to know God and to do what He wants. On the other hand, to be religious is knowing what your religion teaches and to live out these principles. I think you can conduct your business in a godly manner but not necessarily in a religious way. Why? Because the leaders in your company may not be part of your religious order, and the people in your business may be part of another religion.

We do not have to be in the same religion in order to be godly as long as we agree to do what God—the One who created the world and the One who owns it—wants us to do.

First Corinthians 6:12 (AMP) says, “Everything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial...” So do not do anything that will waste your time and money. Spend time knowing God because He alone has the power to bless you. Decide to conduct your business and live according to His ways, and you will profit in all things!



# THE DILIGENT WILL BECOME RICH

Is one business better than another? Can a certain profession assure you of success? Are all doctors rich? Are all farmers poor? You know what? I have learned that all businesses can give you an equal opportunity to prosper.

I have a friend who operates a junkyard, and he buys a new car every year. I have another friend who is a vendor in a public market, and he earns two times more than most corporate executives I know. But not all junk yard operators are successful and not all public market vendors earn as much. So, what determines the success of a business? People today would say that it is about finding your strengths. I do not completely agree. I believe it is about developing diligence in the business you choose to pursue.

Proverbs 10:4 says, "Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." What is diligence? In Hebrew it is *charuwts*, a picture word of a man panning for gold. A diligent person commits himself to the work before him until he succeeds in his task. He will turn his weaknesses into strengths, not because he wants to but because he has to. He will persevere until he finds gold where there seems to be none.

Farming is not my strength, but I had to study it because we wanted a simple life in Bukidnon. I do not have a green thumb, so I need to work with people who have it. I believe my strength is to create systems and also to teach, but these did not feed my family in the beginning, so I had to learn the intricacies of farming, often by trial and error. One of my weaknesses is reading financial statements, but in order to find "gold" I had to address this concern, not because I want to but because I have to. If ever we have gained relative success in a business that does not often profit, it is only because we stayed put, persevered, and developed diligence in the business God entrusted to us.

Are you struggling with the business or job God has given you today? Are you frustrated with the many challenges you need to overcome? If you stay put and decide to be diligent, I believe you can succeed in whatever you have to do.

# THE RIGHT QUESTION TO ASK WHEN STARTING A BUSINESS

People always ask me, “What is a good business to get into?” And with regards to farming, “What is a good crop to grow?” It seems people are always looking for a business with a sure market and assured profit. Actually, I used to think this way, until I learned the ways of the plant and the ways of the Lord.

I have since realized that a plant starts life with what it has, and its seed determines the kind of plant it will become. You cannot grow apple trees from mango seeds, and mango trees can only grow in tropical places. Thus, in deciding what business to pursue, I believe the question we should first ask is, “What do I have and where am I now?”

In many instances in the Bible, God shows us how He would do great things when people decided to use what was in their hands. He used the staff of Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt in a spectacular way. In 2 Kings 4:1-7, He made the widow’s oil flow continuously so she could sell and pay her creditors. When Jesus had to feed the 5,000 men who followed Him, He took and multiplied the two fish and five loaves of bread that were available to them that day.

From these I learned that what we have is a clue to what God wants us to do, or the business He wants us to pursue. According to Matthew 25:14-15, He has entrusted us with talents which He expects us to use and grow by using our abilities. Genesis 1:28 tells us that God has blessed man even before He told him to become fruitful. In other words, God wants us to produce an abundance by using the resources He has given us.

So, if you are asking, “What is a good business to get into? Or what is a good crop to grow?” maybe you will find your answer when you ask instead, “What do I have today and where am I now?” Remember, it is always cheaper to start with what you have, and God will always reward those who faithfully use what He has entrusted to them.

# KNOW YOUR PURPOSE, THEN PURSUE WITH PASSION

As I listened to the speech of Renato "Ato" Vergel de Dios, President of BDO Life, during their sales convention last week, I realized something crucial in our continuous dilemma as to what we should really pursue in life. Should we pursue our passion or our purpose? It dawned on me that you cannot choose one and neglect the other.

Passion without purpose is dangerous because if you choose the wrong one, you may end up disheartened—having wasted so much time, energy, and money. On the other hand, purpose without passion is of little value because you will never get to achieve anything significant. I realized that it is best to first determine your purpose and then pursue this with passion.

But how do we get to know our purpose? Genesis 1:28 tells us that God created man to become fruitful. And before He even gave this command, the verse says that God first blessed him. With what? Genesis 1:29 tells us that God has given him every seed-bearing plant. In the parable of the talent, we can find another insight. It says that God has entrusted us with His possessions according to our abilities. Because of these, I believe that what we have is a clue to what God wants us to do. This defines our purpose! Unfortunately, many people have lost their way having pursued a passion that disregarded the resources in their hands.

When my son was young, his dream was to pursue multimedia arts. So, one day, we had a talk, and I told him, "Daniel, if you do not want the farm, I will sell it or give it to your sister, should she marry someone who wants it. But most people dream of owning a farm when they retire. Pero ikaw, you already have one and your father is taking care of it for you. All you have to do is to want it." I told him too, that I believe life is not about pursuing what you want but about being a good steward of the things God has given you. Being obedient, he agreed to take up engineering in Iloilo in preparation to taking over the farm someday.

Daniel's purpose is not to become a farmer. His purpose is to steward the possession God has entrusted to our family. He needs to prepare himself to take good care of the farm with passion so that someday he can become what God wants him to be—to be fruitful and be a blessing to the world!

# WHAT IS IN YOUR HANDS?

I said on the previous post that an entrepreneur is someone who creates opportunities from the things in his hand. To succeed in business, we must always be aware of what we have.

Someone asked me, “Does this mean you do not agree with Steven Covey when he said that we should always begin with the end in mind?” I do not necessarily disagree with Mr. Covey, but I feel that his principle is incomplete. While it is important to set goals when you are in business, the end that you want to achieve should always be based on what you have and where you are.

If you just begin with the end in mind without a reference, or without considering what you have, you will become wasteful. When you do not consider what you have, you may end up having a rough start because you will have to start from scratch.

What is in your hands? This is a question God often asked when He is about to do something significant. When Moses told God that he has no credibility to go to Pharaoh to tell him to let His people go, God asked him, “What is in your hands?” Moses said, “A staff!” When the widow of a prophet asked Elisha for help because the debtors were coming to take her two sons as payment for her husband’s debt, Elisha asked, “What do you have in your house?” When Jesus needed to feed 5,000 men, He took what was available to them then—the two fish and the five loaves.

God could have talked to Pharaoh directly, but He decided to use the staff of Moses to shame the gods of Egypt. God could have sent money to pay the widow’s debt, but instead asked her to do business with oil inside their house. Jesus could have let bread and meat rain down from heaven, as His Father did for Israel in the desert, but He decided to multiply the food available to them then.

What you have is a clue to what God wants you to do!

Where did this principle come from? In Genesis 1:28, God said He has blessed man with what he needs to be fruitful. In the parable of the talent, Jesus said God has entrusted us with His possession according to our abilities. But in order to produce fruits and profit from the things He has given us, we must cultivate and keep them.

I believe all of us have the potential to become successful entrepreneurs. Because I believe entrepreneurs are made, not born. I was not born with a knack for business, but I believe I am relatively successful. When I followed the ways of the Lord, I was able to convert our barren land into a fruitful garden. You can do the same! But first, you must see the things you have in your hands as a blessing from the Lord.

# IS GOING TO SCHOOL TO GET A JOB A TERRIBLE IDEA?

When our parents told us to go to school to get a job, do well, and get promoted, was that a terrible idea? When they told us to work hard so that we can pay our bills and save for retirement, did they doom us to a life of slavery?

Should we now tell our children to skip school so that they can start to do business early and give them the capital they need? Will this give them a better chance to prosper, or will it doom them to a life of depression?

I did not send my daughter to college because I felt that it would be difficult to find good employment in Bukidnon. I trained her to be an entrepreneur so she can create opportunities wherever she may decide to stay in the future. Do you know how I trained her? I sent her to work as a waitress and as a clerk under two of the best entrepreneurs I know. I asked them to put her in the lowest position possible so that she will learn the essence of business and develop the character she would need to succeed.

On the other hand, I sent my son to college and asked him to take up engineering because I like the engineering mindset. But will I ask him to come home to manage our farm after he passes the board? No! I told him to work for someone else first because Luke 16:12 says, “And if you have not been faithful *in the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?”

Why did I do these? I believe employment is the best way to learn how to do business because you get the chance to apply the things you learned in school while using someone else's money. When you commit a mistake, hindi ikaw ang nawawalan ng pera kung hindi 'yung may-ari ng kompanya. And yet, you still get paid for doing your job. I believe going to business school is not enough to learn how to do business because most of your teachers do not have the experience of running a successful business. If they did, they would not be teaching in school.

But is employment a form of slavery? You only become a slave to your employer if you work just for the money you get. Kasi pag naubos na ang pera mo, you will have to go back and do whatever they ask you to do, so you can just get paid again. But if you work to grow your skills and develop your character, then employment becomes a stepping stone to freedom when you become your own boss in the future.

Do you know that most of the great entrepreneurs today went to school, got a job, learned from their bosses, and used their salaries to prepare for their own ventures? Though the money they saved may not have been enough in the beginning, the abilities they gained while working for someone else prepared them to be excellent entrepreneurs later on. Sana ikaw din, maging katulad nila.

# A FAST WAY TO BECOME RICH

When you talk to business traditionalists, they will tell you that there is no shortcut to becoming rich. There is a process that you need to follow and important abilities that you need to develop. I believe in this because I am a traditionalist.

After explaining this to a group of millennials, one of the participants asked, “Is there no way to speed up the process?” He was shocked when I said, “Yes, there is a way!”

I told the group that if you want to get rich faster, there are two things you need to do. First, you should execute each step in the process excellently. Hindi pwede ang pwede na! Second, you should not rush. Ang labo ng sagot ko, ‘no?

In the first paragraph, I said na there is no shortcut to becoming rich, because there is a process that you need to respect and follow. The process slows down when you do each step with an attitude that says, “Pwede na ‘yan!” meaning you did not do it the best way you can. Alam mo ba kung ano ang problema sa “Pwede na ‘yan! attitude?” Konti na lang maganda na ‘yan! And because pwede lang ‘yan, you will have to do it again. So, you wasted time and resources. Kaya tatagal.

The second thing that will help you become rich is by not rushing. This may be one of the most confusing pieces of advice you have received. But to explain this, let me ask you a question. Have you ever committed a wrong decision? I am sure you have! What was your predicament when that happened? Di ba you were rushing? We often make wrong decisions when we are rushing kaya if you want to become rich faster, do not rush.

The Western mind will say, “Make decisions quickly because time is of the essence!” As they rush into a decision, they have to spend time to resolve conflicts that they did not consider when they were rushing. On the other hand, the Japanese will say, “Make decisions carefully, implement quickly.” The Japanese take a longer time to make decisions. They carefully analyze their situation and spend time getting the consensus of those involved. Because of this, they are able to implement faster because they have resolved their conflicts before the decision is made. Thus, they save time and are able to move forward faster.

Rushing through the process will not make you rich faster. Respecting it and doing each step to the best of your ability will!

# WHICH IS BETTER—TO BE AN EMPLOYEE OR AN ENTREPRENEUR?

One time I was asked by the head engineer of a construction firm who felt that it was high time for him to have a business of his own. He asked me, “Which is better? To be an employee or to be an entrepreneur?” I said that when you choose an opportunity to pursue, you should choose the one with the highest rate of return, meaning the money that you’ll get back from the investment you make. I asked him, “As an employee, how much money did you invest in the company?” He said, “Nothing. Only my time and energy.” I asked him further, “How about the owner, how much did he invest?” He answered, “A lot! Plus, his time and energy.” So, I explained that whatever you get from your zero investment is an “infinite” rate of return! So I asked him, between the employee and the entrepreneur, who had the higher rate of return? I told him that an employee has the opportunity to become rich if he only knows how to manage the salary and bonus he gets. I told him this is why I wrote the book *Creating Wealth and Managing Resources*, to show people like him how to maximize the return of their time, energy, and salary. After this, his eyes brightened, and he smiled.

Some employees will eventually become entrepreneurs, while some will be groomed to become executives of the companies they serve. Which is better? I believe both options are good and profitable. When you decide to remain an executive in the company, you have the privilege to run a business without investing anything. Your profit comes in the form of the huge salary you get. When you decide to become an entrepreneur, you have to invest money in the business. You get to profit only when you have paid all your expenses, including the salaries of your employees. However, an entrepreneur gets to decide how big his income will be from his business.

Why do you want to be an entrepreneur?

When I ask people why they want to become entrepreneurs, most will say it is because being an entrepreneur is the ultimate expression of freedom. They say entrepreneurs own their time and are therefore free to do whatever they want to and whenever they want to do it. They also say that entrepreneurs are their own bosses, so they are free from any authority. Boy are they so wrong! Entrepreneurship is not freedom because you become a slave to your business. While you may not have a boss to serve, you will be continually worried about your ability to pay the salaries of your people. You need to prioritize them because if you do not, they might leave, and you will have to start all over again, this is why I get so disturbed when I see millennials who travel and party a lot while they are starting a business of their own. There is a big chance that their business will fail because they are not giving it the proper care it needs to stabilize and grow.

The last time I checked, the majority of the successful business people I know, even the so-called experts, started as employees. While they may not realize this, the experience they gained as an employee became the foundation of the businesses they have today. Ako, I am grateful for my employment experience because many of the principles I use today are things I learned from working as an employee.



# PREPARING TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR

There are people who seem to be born with a knack for business, they can spot opportunities easily and seem to be able to sell anything. They are often extroverts and have a pleasant way with people.

But are these gifts an assurance that they will be good entrepreneurs and be successful in business? Not necessarily! Do you know that studies show that introverts are better salespeople and business leaders? This is because they are attentive to details, they are more intentional, and they value character. When one of my friends learned this, he came to me and said, “Dong, today I have decided that I am an introvert!” I laughed hard because he is the very opposite, he lightens up when he is with people and just loves to serve others. I envy him and I often wish I could have a little of his spirit so that I can enjoy people more. Because believe it or not, I am happiest when I am alone.

People with an inherent gift for business must realize that business is not just about spotting opportunities and selling products. An entrepreneur must develop the skill to manage people, he must have a good grip of his finances, a good command of his operation, and many more. But when I explained this to a friend, he asked, “Pero, Dong, shouldn’t we focus on our strength and hire an expert to manage our weaknesses, especially in the area of finance?” I told him that while I am not suggesting that you master every area of your business, you cannot afford not to understand each part of it. Passing the responsibility to someone you hire is very dangerous because when that person leaves, he or she will bring with him or her the abilities she has gained while working for you. Besides, I also told him that I believe nobody could love and protect your money better than you can. I do not micromanage my business, but I make it a point to have a good understanding of every component so that I can help my person succeed in their jobs. I believe that when they succeed, they will make me succeed in return.

Because of the many things an entrepreneur needs to learn, it is important for an entrepreneur to approach his business like a marathon runner. As I said earlier, a marathoner prepares for a 42-km run by first participating in a 3-km run, then 5-km, then 10-km, and finally a 21-km run. He then needs to participate in the 21-km run for a number of times in order to prepare his mind, body, and spirit for an ultramarathon. An entrepreneur must do the same! He must start a small business so that he can master one skill at a time. As he grows stronger and wiser, he must scale up his operations accordingly. But whenever he scales up, he will find that there will be new skills to learn and new characters to develop. If he wants to go to business school this would be the best time to do so because he will be able to relate the things he will learn in school to the issues he has to deal with in his business.

Unfortunately, most people want to start their business in a big way, by borrowing the most that they can, because they believe that this would give their business a better chance of succeeding. The problem with this approach

is that every time you make a mistake, you lose money or waste limited resources. I call these losses your tuition fee—payment for the valuable learnings that come from the mistakes you commit.

I got this idea of starting small and continually scaling up from the ways of the plant. After germination, a plant will make food, through photosynthesis, so that it can make more food so that it can grow strong roots. By approaching business this way, you will be able to grow your abilities properly and avoid wasting money on tuition fees. But the other way to prepare for business is to recognize the importance of being employed.

# TRUST THE PROCESS

We often hear “trust the process” in the context of business and in sports, as people try to achieve their goal and become successful entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, this does not sit well with the ambitious because they feel that following the process will slow them down. So, they would spend their days looking for “new and better” ways of doing things so that they can reach their goals faster than those who have gone before them. Unfortunately, more often than not they end up frustrated and depressed when their “new and better” way do not work.

Today, more people are depressed, and the incident of suicide continues to increase. These are highest in the age range of 15 to 35 years old, so you see that those affected are getting younger as well. There is also a study that says that the millennials are not real entrepreneurs and that they will not be more successful than the generation before them. Yet, this is the generation that has been looking for “new” ways to get richer and more successful faster.

Whenever we encountered a major challenge during my HP days, I always tell my team to go back to basics. But there were many who would tell me that since the challenge was much bigger than before, we needed to find a better way of facing the problem. So we would hire consultants to help us find that better way, but we often ended up doing more for less returns. Ako, I would argue that it was the basics that brought us where we were, so why can't the basics help us to move forward? Whatever problem we may have, was just a bigger application of the basics.

So, someone asked me, “Is there no way to move faster? Do we always have to just trust the process?” I said, “There is a faster way to do things! And it is to execute every step of the process in an excellent manner.” One of the reasons why things slow down is that you have to redo the step because you did not do it well enough. Another reason is that you will have to do the whole thing when the shortcut does not work. When things do not move as fast as you want them to, it is because you did not trust the process enough.

In Jeremiah 6:16 the Lord said, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ANCIENT paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls” (emphasis mine). The word “ancient” does not mean old or primitive. Instead, the Hebrew word *olam* means eternal. It means that the ways of the Lord are true yesterday, today, and tomorrow. If you follow them and trust the process, you will find rest for your soul.

# WORK THE “LOT” GOD GAVE YOU

Some people feel that life has not given them a fair chance to succeed. They complain—if only they were born to better parents, they went to better schools, they had better jobs, they inherited a better property, and so on and so forth.

But do you know that many of our Bible heroes had disadvantaged beginnings? Abraham had to make do with the land Lot rejected. Isaac stayed in a land of famine while everyone had left for Egypt. Joseph went from being a privileged son to become a slave and then a prisoner. Yet, all of them prospered in spite of their predicaments.

The story of Isaac in Genesis 26 reveals the secret to these men's success. It shows that (1) We should stay where God puts us and work our land no matter what its condition may be, and (2) We should work according to His instructions (law or Torah) and obey Him in every way. If we do these, Joshua 1:8 says we will make our ways prosperous.

This is the testament of our farm. People would often ask us why we did not choose a better land. They say the farm is just too far, too rough, and too difficult to manage. I would tell them, "Ito lang ang binigay ni God sa amin, so ang pwede lang naming gawin ay pagyamanin ito." Since we did not have access to extra funds, we set ourselves to WORK and make do with what we had. And after 18 years, we have converted this barren land into a fruitful garden.

Whatever your lot in life may be, if you work on it according to the ways of the Lord you will experience the breakthroughs Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph experienced. I believe God established our farm so that it can show the world what He can do with barren land. Our farm is called Moriah Farms. Recently, I discovered that in Hebrew *Mori-yah* means "Where God teaches." *Yah* is short for Yahweh and *mori* means to teach. In 2005, He also built Semilya Sa Kinabuhi through a series of miracles, which paved the way for us to be able to teach people His ways.

We hope someday you can join any of our training programs so that we can help you experience your own breakthroughs.

# **GOD IS THE OWNER, YOU ARE THE STEWARD**

## **(Copied From Faith e-Book)**

There are two important things I learned when I jumped from the corporate world to an entrepreneurial venture.

The first thing I learned is, contrary to what most people say, entrepreneurship is not about taking risks. Instead, it is about finding prudent ways to maximize the returns of a person's limited resources, thus creating breakthroughs. Because an entrepreneur does not have the backing and resources of a large corporation, he must use what is in his hands to move from a position of need to a position of relative abundance. He will need creativity, diligence, perseverance and humility in order to do this. Unfortunately, these are traits that cannot be taught in school nor can be obtained through corporate experience. They are developed over time and are by-products of the many trials his business encounters.

An excellent example is Nehemiah. Though he was just a cupbearer for the king of Persia, he approached the rebuilding of the 2.5-kilometer wall of Jerusalem with an entrepreneurial spirit. When he arrived, he had to work with meager resources and manage people he did not know. He rebuilt the wall by using only the materials available to him and made the people who were discouraged and divided to work together as one. He even took advantage of the threat of his enemies to encourage the Jews to move faster while maintaining the quality of their work. Because of these, he was able to finish the task in 52 short days. Nehemiah is someone all business people should learn from.

The second thing I learned about business is more important than the first because things took a dramatic turn when I understood it, and it is this: God is the Owner, and I am His steward.

When I was in HP, I would make plans and present them to my boss for approval so that I can get the resources I needed. So naturally, I brought this approach to the business. I would make my plans and present them to God for His approval so that I can get His blessings. While I knew that He did not approve of some of these plans because He did not provide for the resources I asked for, I would still proceed with them hoping that He would change His mind. This foolishness led to many failures.

Then one day I realized that God is not just Master, but the Owner of my business too. I learned that as Owner, He has His own plans for the venture. My role as steward is to understand His plans so that I can implement them. I changed my approach by asking Him every day, "What are your plans, Lord? How do you want me to act on them?" I learned this approach from Jesus. In

John 5:19 (NLT) He said, "The Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing." I believe this does not mean He has no power to do what He wants, but He just chooses not to make any plans for Himself because He only wants to carry out the plans of His Father. I guess this was why He died for us, because it was part of what His Father wants Him to do. When I adopted this approach, amazing things happened in our business. This idea has also drastically changed my approach to life as a whole.

It is important for Christians to acknowledge God as the Owner of their business. As stewards, our role is to faithfully grow the things He has entrusted us. So that, like a plant, we may become fruitful and be a blessing to the people around us. These are some of the principles we teach in the business training of Semilya Sa Kinabuhi. We wish we could share these lessons to as many people as possible so that as we experience breakthroughs upon breakthroughs, we may make this world a better place to live in.