

A Personal Adventure of Faith in Business

Andy Sheppard traces the story of his business life, which started with a wish not to be in business at all, and shows how it has informed his spiritual development. He gives examples of answered prayer in business, and looks at some of the more challenging aspects of Christian life such as how to share our faith with colleagues. We see a strong affirmation of the presence of God in our businesses.

1. God Cares About Business

How are we bringing God's salt and light in our current roles?

I actually didn't set out to work in business. After an encounter with God while I was studying engineering at Cambridge, I had resolved to apply my training to overseas development. Nevertheless, I found he was drawing me deeper into seemingly 'less noble' business situations. Initially I thought I was gaining vital experience for overseas development. I ended up discovering what I believe to be God's heart for business.

The benefits of business were never in doubt. A relative (who worked as a nurse) asked me at the time how I could reconcile entering the 'cut-throat corporate world' with my Christian faith. I replied (somewhat

defensively) by explaining the vital benefits of business, such as the creation of valuable products and services, the provision of employment and the generation of wealth. Over twenty years later these benefits resonate with me deeper still, but so does God's care for much more than outcomes.

My particular path took me through varied technical and corporate experience in Shell as a sponsored student, to managing projects as an engineer in Crown Cork, to serving primarily industrial clients as a management consultant for McKinsey & Company. During this journey it became clearer to me that God cares about business not just because of what it contributes, but also because of the *process* of doing business. God has made us in his image, and

through our work in business we can express much of his nature: designing, creating, tending, healing and innovating.

I also began to understand more of what it means to bring God's salt and light into our world. Just as salt brings out good flavour in food, God can extend the good approaches that our businesses need to thrive through us. I continue to specialise in leading industrial change, now as an author and independent advisor. Many leaders I work with recognise the need to change their organisation's culture, in order to achieve the potential they see in redesigning their operations for business advantage. As an example of the light that businesses need, I would describe the cornerstone for their desired culture as... love.



Business's creation of valuable products

Photo: Denby Pottery