

A New Signpost of God's Mission: Redemptive Entrepreneurship

Philip Yan believes God is raising up a new kind of business builder—one who sees brokenness and responds with hope, leads with humility, and embraces sacrifice as the price of real change. This kind of builder needs God-centred formation, a like-minded community, and a clear theological vision for business as mission.

What is sacred? What is secular?

Nine years ago, I co-founded my second social enterprise, Red Propeller Inc., an initiative tackling one of the world's most neglected recycling challenges: VHS tapes.¹ This business embodied environmental stewardship and dignified work opportunities for those facing barriers to employment. The mission was to redeem multi-faceted restorative benefits in solving a big, significant environmental problem. I did this while operating my own communications design consultancy.

Having been active in church ministries for decades, I thought my church leaders would understand the meaning of this social enterprise as a kingdom mission. Instead, I experienced the age-old sacred-secular divide in a personal way. Faith is spiritual. Business is worldly. Profit-making is ungodly. What takes place outside of Church is not ministry.

On the other hand, God sent me a pleasant surprise. I received a phone call from a retired pastor whom I didn't know. She had no phone, no vehicle, no computer, and was living in a retirement home. She had somehow

tracked down my office number after reading about our project in a local newspaper. She took a long trip to attend our Red Propeller launch event and prayed with us. She would use the phone in her building's office to call and encourage me, ensuring she would pray for us. "This is God's work," she affirmed to us, "You're restoring what's broken. Keep going. I'm praying for you."

The dichotomy between the sacred and secular in theology has become a widespread barrier to our understanding the redemptive mission of God in the creation mandate and following in the steps of Christ.



The sacred in ordinary life

Caravaggio, The Supper at Emmaus (1601)

National Gallery, London

Photo: Wikimedia



The sacred-secular divide theology limits our doing God's mission with a holistic Christ-centred perspective. Mission can take place in evangelism inside and outside of the church; it can also be incorporated in any business form. We can redeem what's broken or damaged and restore hope by building bridges or solving problems. Tackling a challenging recycling issue and creating employment is a way of our expressing worship and honouring God's heart for His world. We take part in God's redemptive mission.

A new mission frontier in business

The sacred-secular divide posed a deeper question in me:

If Jesus came to redeem all things... what makes us think that brokenness, poverty, damaged environment, injustice, failed systems... are outside the realm of his care?

For many, the "Great Commission" is the ultimate mission: make disciples, preach the gospel, lead people to personal salvation. But the good news doesn't stop at saving souls. God loves the world—the entire world he created. It encompasses the restoration of all things—innovative solutions, a renewed culture, a redeemed world.

What if the creative entrepreneurial economy is the next frontier of mission?

That question stirred something in me. I began imagining what it would take to build the first faith-driven innovation hub in a higher Christian education facility in Canada. A place where entrepreneurs could be spiritually formed, theologically rooted, and vocationally equipped. A place where business would be reframed as God-honouring purpose, shaped by the gospel.

In 2017, Tyndale University in Toronto commissioned me to do a study on innovative entrepreneurship. From a Canada-wide study, I learned that there are an estimated **630,000 Christian entrepreneurs² in Canada, and 74%³** of the young people surveyed indicated a desire to start a business if there was help. Another research revealed a growing gap: 64%⁴ of young people were leaving church. These figures are real people, a massive, mostly untapped ecosystem of kingdom potential. Many of them are navigating entrepreneurship alone. They need community, language, and tools to integrate their faith with building their ventures to drive kingdom impact. As Canada's largest interdenominational seminary, Tyndale University was the fertile ground—committed to faith and cultural engagement, and new forms of mission.

When the timing was ripe, Tyndale University invited me to pioneer this vision. In response to this calling, I launched the Centre for Redemptive Entrepreneurship (CRE) in 2021.⁵

Redemptive entrepreneurship—a radical mission

The term redemptive entrepreneurship is coined by Praxis (New York) (<https://www.praxis.co/redemptive-entrepreneurship>). Praxis is an organisation which creates new ecosystems as it builds new ventures with a redemptive purpose. Redemptive entrepreneurship is about creating ventures that participate in God's renewing work—ventures that reflect Christ's character through sacrifice, creativity, and service.

And sacrifice is key. Redemption always costs something. Just as Jesus laid down his life to bring healing, redemptive entrepreneurs often lay down comfort, full control, or personal gains to pursue something deeper. They choose purpose over profit. Integrity over influence. Justice over fear. Grace over power.

But sacrifice is not always about loss—it's also part of exercising creativity.

In redemptive business, sacrifice is a strategic mindset: "*I lay something down, so we all rise.*" It's the decision to build in a way that blesses others, even when it costs more. Paying a living wage. Sharing power. Consider the colleagues, customers, suppliers. Designing systems where everyone can flourish.

As Praxis frequently affirms, "*The future of the Church and the culture of*

the world will be shaped largely by the ventures we create today.”

The marketplace is a mission field. Redemptive entrepreneurs, being innovative in nature, have ample resources and positive influences in exemplifying the mind of Christ in how they conduct their business and cultivate relationships. As Karl Barth asserted, “*The Church exists to set up in the world a new sign... radically dissimilar to the world’s own manner.*”⁶

The Centre for Redemptive Entrepreneurship (CRE) adopts the same conviction. We help venture builders take their place in God’s renewing mission.

The CRE’s journey: Inspired to inspire

The inception of the CRE was a year-long journey of discovery, an intense period of exploring and observing the landscape of integrated faith and business in Canada, listening from a position of reflecting on the reality, the need, and the potential.

Then we began to build and prototype. We have designed innovatively: the Venture Builder Learning Series, Redemptive Business Lab, Social Sandbox, Redemptive Business Sprint, Redemptive Business Studio, and Advanced Flourishing Pathway Workshop.

Out of a research project in 2023 we started the Redemptive Business CanvasTM—a practical business model

framework with a deep theological foundation, now used in parts of Asia, Africa, South Africa, North America, and recognised by the inaugural L.I.F.E (Leading the Integration of Faith & Entrepreneurship) Teaching Conference, hosted by the John W. Altman Institute for Entrepreneurship at Miami University, as an innovative teaching tool.

This tool is like an engine that we build into all our programmes. It requires the Christian founder to rethink their business strategy, operations, leadership, and impact through a biblical lens. Applied faith is integral to utilising our Redemptive Business CanvasTM with purpose.

All these experiential learnings are designed for mindset change and transformation.

Builders in Action: Stories of Transformation

We are still building. But now we build with a deep conviction and commitment.

Redemptive entrepreneurship is a calling. A movement. A signpost of God’s mission in the marketplace—across Canada and beyond.

Redemptive entrepreneurship meets people at different intersections of life and vocation. For some, it rekindles a dormant identity. For others, it opens a new direction. The stories of Mark DeVos and David Au Yeung capture

both—a rediscovered calling and a redemptive transformation.

Mark DeVos is the lead pastor of The Village Church in Thorold, Ontario, Canada. The Village Church has a mission to see people transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus by prioritising the gospel, community, and culture. In a spontaneous dockside conversation in 2022, Mark shared something about himself: a lifelong instinct to build, innovate, and take redemptive risks—yet he had never quite known how that fit into his ministry.

That conversation led him to join the CRE community, where he discovered a framework that gave language to what he had always sensed. He wasn’t just a pastor—he was a builder. And his entrepreneurial instincts were part of God’s design, not a distraction from it.

Inspired by this reframing, Mark gathered a group of young adults from his church to join the Social Sandbox, one of CRE’s immersive learning communities. Together, they explored how faith and business could grow side-by-side—how redemptive entrepreneurship could become a form of spiritual formation, missional imagination, and community transformation. In Mark’s words, *The impact has been to catalyze redemptive innovation in my own church. As a direct result of the various mentorship sessions, strategic discussions, and a final “pitch day”,*



we ended up hiring two of the Social Sandbox participants to continue their redemptive entrepreneurial work as employees of the Village Church!... All this to say, beyond the impact on my church, the impact of the CRE is extending into the broader community.

For Mark, the outcome wasn't just a new idea. It was renewed identity.

He didn't have to choose between church and commerce—he could faithfully serve both.

Like Mark, David Au Yeung found that redemptive frameworks could realign his work with God's mission.

David is no stranger to entrepreneurship. As co-founder of Flipp, a successful tech platform, and now the founder of Carity.AI, David has walked the path of innovation and growth.

But somewhere along the way, something shifted.

The business felt like it was drifting without a clear purpose. David knew something needed to change.

Through several intentional engagements with the CRE—culminating in the final Redemptive Business Sprint held in January 2025—our Redemptive Business Canvas helped David enter a season of re-evaluation.

Redirection is never easy. He made hard choices—realigning his focus, reshaping his team, and recommitting to a vision rooted in love and justice with a God-honouring attitude.

David didn't just renew his business model with the entire team. For him, redemptive entrepreneurship isn't about adding faith to strategy—it's about surrendering success to significance. David also testified that he was being transformed by adopting a redemptive mindset. This transformation happened gradually, especially as he faced significant challenges in his entrepreneurial journey.

Why God cares about business

Michelle Rabay, founder of After His Heart, reflected on the Canvas's impact, saying, *"The hands-on, practical work was incredible. I'm leaving with a clear tool to run decisions through—simpler, but deeply redemptive."*

Martin Tremblay, entrepreneur and business owner, shared about his mindset change, *"The Redemptive Business Studio changed how I look at my company and how it fits into God's plan—I'm called to serve my employees, not just my customers."*

'Redemptive entrepreneurship fosters community, shares a common language, and empowers courage with clarity'

These are just a sample of testimonials. They reflect a growing reality of the impact of redemptive entrepreneurship in practice. From early-stage builders to

seasoned executives, from portfolio workers to social reformers, we hear similar stories when entrepreneurs encounter a vision bigger than profit.

Redemptive entrepreneurship fosters community, shares a common language, and empowers courage with clarity. It helps people see that business is part of God's mission—it can be a powerful expression of God's heart for the world inside and outside of church.

From Genesis to the book of Revelation, we see a God who creates, cultivates, and redeems. He brings form to chaos, gives purpose to people, and breathes life into broken things. His mission is not just to rescue lost souls—but to renew all things.

In Genesis, God blesses humanity with work before the Fall. Work is not a punishment—it's a calling. Adam is commissioned to tend the garden, name the animals, and steward creation. Work is a form of worship; we work heartily for the Lord (Col. 3:23).

Even after sin enters the world, God doesn't abandon his people or his creation. He continues to build. He gives Noah the blueprint for an ark. He inspires Bezalel and Oholiab with craftsmanship for the tabernacle. He raises up Joseph to lead an economic rescue operation in Egypt. He sends his prophets to confront injustice and comfort those in despair, and his Son Jesus to reconcile all things—on earth and in heaven (Col. 1:20).

"See, I am doing a new thing..." (Isaiah 43:19)

"Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

These aren't just poetic lines. They are God's calling summoning us to focus our gaze on his work.

When we create businesses that exemplify justice, generosity, and grace—we echo God's redemptive work. When we treat workers with dignity, design products that serve, and build systems that sustain employment and regenerate materials, we participate in the restoration of all things.

Redemptive entrepreneurship is more than doing ethical business. It's a way of spiritual formation. We believe business isn't a distraction from discipleship—it can be a direct extension of it⁸. As Praxis reminds us, redemptive entrepreneurship is the posture of "creative restoration through sacrifice."⁹ And because sacrifice is core to redemptive leadership, this journey is never a smooth sailing. That's why at the CRE, we surround founders with community—people of peace.

In some of our programmes, we invite mentors to support each founder; we also develop business coaches who live out and practise redemptive principles themselves. And through our growing network of spiritual directors, we create space for prayerful discernment—because redemptive work begins from the inside out.

Business is one of the most overlooked platforms for spiritual formation and kingdom impact. But this sphere of influence is powerful with ripple effects.

Redemptive action will always require sacrifice—of time, control, convenience, or even profit. Jesus didn't redeem the world from a distance. He stepped into it, suffered within it, and gave his life to transform it. He calls us to follow him.

Whether you're a founder, a coach, a church leader, or a young professional wondering how your work fits into your faith—the answer is not to pull away from business. It's to enter it with anticipation of God's presence and blessing.

A global call to build differently

Young Rhee, one of our participants, reflected at a training where he experienced a quiet but profound reorientation, *"Your business is firstly something unto the Lord."* What had once felt like a job became worship. A task became a trust.

A powerful reminder from Lesslie Newbigin in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*:

*"Live in the kingdom of God in such a way that it provokes questions for which the gospel is the answer."*¹⁰

Redemptive entrepreneurship does exactly that. It stirs questions. It disrupts assumptions. And ultimately, it bears witness to the King—and a Kingdom—that is not of this world but is breaking into it through the faithful work of his people.


What if the future of the Church and the renewal of culture are not only found in pulpits and mission fields—but also in start-ups, factories, creative studios, and boardrooms? What if the call to follow Jesus includes what we build, how we lead, and how we use capital, imagination, and influence for the flourishing of others? Redemptive entrepreneurship is borderless. Across the world, we are witnessing a growing hunger among Christian founders, makers, and leaders—men and women who long to live and build differently.

Some are rethinking long-standing businesses. Others are dreaming up ventures from scratch. Still others are not sure where to start—but they know there must be more than just surviving or succeeding.

To all of them, we say: You are not alone.

We believe God is raising up a new kind of builder—one who sees brokenness and responds with hope, leads with humility, and embraces sacrifice as the price of real change. We believe this kind of builder needs God-centred formation, a like-minded community, and a clear theological vision for business as mission. The world needs more like-minded redemptive entrepreneurs and kingdom-focused communities that enable builders to create not just what is profitable, but what is scalable and faithful. Not to be impressive, but to join God in renewing all things—to be redemptive.

Do you believe redemptive business can bring ten times the gospel impact—if we are doing it together? I do. And I believe now is the time. Whether you're leading a company, mentoring a founder, discipling young adults, or shaping the next generation of faith and leaders—there's a place for you in this God story.

May the ventures we create today stir questions for which only the gospel is the answer. 

1. Over their peak years, an estimated 2.26 billion VHS tapes were purchased in Ontario, each containing multiple types of recyclable plastics, metals, and paper that cannot be dismantled mechanically due to the magnetic tape. In addition, more than 250,000 child safety seats are discarded annually—most ending up in landfills. Since 2017, Red Propeller has been the only licensed operation in Canada to recycle these items, transforming waste into renewed products while creating meaningful jobs for people facing employment barriers.
2. In 2024, Canada was estimated to have approximately 3.5 million entrepreneurs (Start Up Canada). Pew Research (2019): 18% of Canadian adults identified as Protestant Christian; the 2021 Census shows Christianity at 53.3%, with Protestants at 12.3%.
3. RBC Small Business Poll (2017, 2024) – In 2017, RBC reported that 74% of Canadian millennials had considered starting a business. In 2024, 72% of Gen Z and 66% of millennials expressed interest in starting their own business within the next decade (Ipsos poll for RBC).
4. EFC's *Hemorrhaging Faith* (2012): Only one in three (33%) Canadian young adults who attended church weekly as children still attend weekly as adults; half (50%) no longer identify with their Christian tradition. Attendance drops from 78% in childhood to 26% in young adulthood (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)
5. www.tyndale.ca/cre.
6. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, cited in Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 183. This occurs within Barth's discussion of the doctrine of reconciliation, emphasizing the church's role as a countercultural witness.
7. Redemptive Business Canvas™ is © Philip Yan and Hannah Lau, August 2024 (CC BY-ND 4.0).
8. Keller, Timothy. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. Dutton, 2012, p. 19. Keller writes, "Everyone will be forgotten, nothing we do will make any difference, and all good endeavors, even the best, will come to naught... unless there is God. If the God of the Bible exists, and there is a True Reality beneath and behind this one, then this life is not the only life."
9. Praxis Labs, "Redemptive Imagination," <https://www.praxislabs.org/redemptive-imagination>.
10. Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. London: SPCK, 1989.



Philip Yan is the founding director of the Centre for Redemptive Entrepreneurship at Tyndale University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. A designer and serial entrepreneur, he co-founded two social enterprises and leads GenesisXD, a digital consultancy. With deep experience in innovation, ministry, and leadership, Philip equips Christian entrepreneurs to build ventures that exemplify God's redemptive mission in culture and community.