

## Chapter 2

### Integrity

*A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,  
and favor is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 14:7*

In Biblical days, most people did not read or write, so business was conducted based on the spoken word. And just as a written document is binding today in a court of law, so was an oral agreement in the early days. (An oral agreement is also binding under present law; however, in the absence of a willing witness, it is difficult to prove.) The way I see it, a businessperson is obligated to be honor-bound to live by the spoken word. To paraphrase an old cliché, a man is only as good as his word. Standing behind your word is every bit as relevant today as when a handshake was all that it took to seal a business deal.

We are told in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 that we are ambassadors for God. As ambassadors of God, we represent Him, each and every day of our lives. In this capacity, each of us has a 24-hour-a-day commitment, on and off the job. Yet, not all businesspeople recognize their ambassadorship. To gain an edge over a competitor, many people are prone to give in to the temptation to engage in unprincipled practices.

“It’s business,” they claim. “It’s a cutthroat, dog-eat-dog world. To get ahead, I have to get the other guy before he gets me!”

They rationalize, “You don’t understand. It’s okay because this is business.”

No matter how fierce the competition, this attitude has no place in the workplace. Personal values should never be put aside—nor should standards be lowered to the level

of the unscrupulous. As a business owner, I have an obligation to lead by example. This position puts me in the limelight: my actions are observed, and people know when I do right by them.

My wife is my partner in life, and she and I believe my company represents who we are. Together, we have prayed and have dedicated our business to God. It is our ministry, and through it, we are doing God's work. It is our temple, and by serving our employees, they, in turn, serve our customers and suppliers. Only with integrity can we successfully serve so many others.

During the early years of my company, we endured many setbacks. When we were hard pressed for money, we could have cut corners in subtle ways, to turn a profit. We all know of business owners who manipulate their books, cut back slightly on the quality of their product or services, and find excuses to avoid properly compensating deserving employees. The temptation to profit at someone else's expense is widespread.

For instance, a short while ago, a customer submitted an overpayment of about one million dollars to our company. We could have easily buried this omission in our books and kept quiet about it. But it was not the right thing to do. Just as we taught our children to pay for an item at a store's checkout counter, even if the sales clerk has overlooked it—we apply the same principle in business. Consequently, we sent a check for the full amount of the overpayment to our customer with a letter of explanation.

In business, there are always temptations in business to do the wrong thing. The Bible addresses temptations [[Luke 4:1-11](#)] describing how Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness during which time the devil tried again and again to tempt him. During this period, Jesus ate nothing and was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of

God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus answered that “One does not live by bread alone.””

Then Jesus was offered the wealth of all the kingdoms of the world, but in exchange, he must worship the devil. Jesus replied that he would worship and serve only God.

Next, the devil challenged Jesus to leap from the pinnacle of the temple, suggesting that if he were the Son of God, the angels would protect him from injury.

Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Following Jesus’ example when he refused to submit to temptation, I don’t believe in compromising values, regardless of how convenient it may seem at the time. It doesn’t matter how many other people do wrong things, each of us must still do what’s right. We must do what we say and live by our word.

A person’s reputation is a most valued asset, and one to be treasured. One’s reputation is based on keeping his or her word. We are taught in *Proverbs 22:1: A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.* It takes a lifetime to build a good reputation, but one can lose it overnight.

And what better heritage can parents pass on to their children than a good name? I believe this applies to a company as well. Senior managers must conduct themselves with integrity, because ultimately that integrity passes on to the next generation of managers. As my company’s CEO, I do not take this responsibility lightly.

While it is true that I prosper from the success of my company, my goal is to build a business to benefit present and future employees—men and women who will work at

this company when I am no longer here. In years to come, the prosperity of those people will rest, in part, on the foundation of integrity we build today.