

## **Introduction**

When I founded World Wide Technology, Inc. in 1990, I wanted to run a company based on the teachings of the Bible. Starting on a shoestring and personally signing to borrow the much-needed capital made this a high-risk venture, and I was well aware of the high failure rate of highly leveraged startup companies. Even after nearly 10 years of working in sales for three established Fortune 500 companies, as an entrepreneur I was a novice and as green as they come. Despite that, I was certain I would ultimately succeed. My confidence wasn't based on a wealth of business acumen or a string of successes under my belt. I felt this way due to my unshakable faith in God. Having this faith, I believed with all my heart and soul that He would see me through.

At the time, many people thought that as an African-American, I didn't belong in the world of high technology. They resented my ambition and said I was in way over my head. This attitude wasn't limited to the white community; some of my most outspoken critics were in the African-American community.

I grew up in Clinton, Missouri, a small town about 250 miles southwest of St. Louis. As a teenager, I lived through the turbulent sixties, riddled with racial tension. Looking back to my boyhood, I vividly remember segregation—separate schools, sitting in the balcony at the movie theater, being barred from public swimming pool, the for-whites-only Wiley's Restaurant, and so on. The degradation African-Americans endured in those days seemed like a different lifetime compared to three decades later when I launched my company. Nonetheless, there were still people who didn't relish an African-American stepping on their turf. Still, so many positive things had happened regarding

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race in America since my youth, and there was no way I was going to harbor negative feelings toward my detractors. When I was a small boy, my mother warned me against becoming bitter and resentful. “David, those feelings are self-destructive and a waste of time,” she cautioned me, always citing scripture to support her comment.

I have been blessed to have a wonderful family—nurturing parents and grandparents who enriched my life with wholesome values. These hard-working, churchgoing folks showered me with love and fostered me to the Word of God. Although they had few material possessions, they diligently taught me what was really important—by example. Consequently, I feel as if I inherited considerable wealth from them. What’s more, God blessed me with an exceptional life partner, my wife Thelma. Thelma has been enormously supportive, and her unyielding commitment to stand by me through thick and thin has been a true inspiration. Her faith in the vision God has given me is a great source of motivation. Thelma demonstrates her faith in God by believing in me. Bear in mind, she has no role in my business but she knows it will succeed. I have an undying need to make a difference in other people’s lives—and knowing Thelma recognizes this inspires me to succeed because I don’t want to disappoint her, our children David and Kim, or my extended family—the men and women who work at World Wide Technology.

Looking back to 1990 at the many obstacles we had to overcome, some people say we succeeded against all odds. “It was nothing short of a miracle,” I’ve been told. I concur, but then when God is on your side, miracles happen. And what happened to us can happen to you. On what grounds do I make this statement? Because the Word tells us so. Countless citations in the Bible tell us we will be rewarded for adhering to the

Word of God. Throughout this book, I refer to scripture to illustrate how this works. If you believe in the Bible as I do, you will share my belief that good things happen to those who have faith. In Deuteronomy 7:12-13, it is written: *If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; he will love you, bless you, and multiply you.*

The Bible tells us it takes faith coupled with hard work to succeed. It also imparts many valuable lessons I have found applicable to working with employees, vendors and customers in ways that assure prosperity. For instance, Jesus expounded that we are here to serve others. His teaching that we are put on this earth to love and serve others are not idle words. They are not meant to be spoken only in church on Sunday but not practiced in the workplace. There is no imaginary line that separates my behavior in business from my private life. Personally, I don't adhere to the belief that "business is different," and therefore a different code of ethics can be applied.

On a lighter note, I'm reminded about the story of a man who arrived at the Gate of Heaven, and an angel asked him to state his occupation. "I've been a minister for 45 years," he answers. The angel welcomed him into heaven and led him to a modest house where he would be quartered for eternity.

A second man approached the Gate of Heaven, stating he has driven a taxi in New York City for the past 42 years. An accompanying angel takes him to a stately mansion to be his home for eternity.

The minister is upset to see the taxi driver receive such a fine home while he did not. "I was a minister and served the Lord for 45 years," he exclaims to the angel. "And he was a taxi cab driver. There must be a mistake!"

“No,” replies the angel. “Around here, we go by results. When you gave your sermons, people slept. When he drove a taxi, people prayed.”

I also go by results, and I can attest that when you do business by the Good Book, you get results. It works like this: adhering to the principle of loving and caring for others, my company focuses on providing the best value and service we possibly can. Companies that do this are generally successful. Likewise, we’re interested in attracting and retaining the right people. Once they come aboard, our objective is to provide them with opportunities to succeed. This is what gives me the most satisfaction. Nothing is more rewarding to me than to know that our people are prospering and able to provide their families with such things as fine educations and new homes—all of which result from the leap of faith we took at the onset of this company.

My company is also my ministry. It provides not only an opportunity for me to conform to the lessons from the Bible, but also a platform on which to serve God by being His ambassador in the business world. As 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, *So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Our pastor at Union Memorial United Methodist Church, Dr. Lynn Mims, has visited our company on several occasions and knows this successful enterprise is built on biblical teachings. In 1999, Dr. Mims called me at my office and asked if we could get Thelma at home to join us in a conference call. When she joined us, Dr. Mims talked about a vision God had given him. He said: “I want you to take the principles you practice at your company, and use them to conduct a Sunday school class for

businesspeople. When you do, others who follow your lead can also prosper by doing good.”

Having been active church members for more than 20 years, we wanted to support Dr. Mims and our church. But due to our busy schedules, we were concerned about making such a time-consuming, long-term commitment. Our skepticism was merited—we were already finding it difficult to get to church on time, let alone to be there promptly and prepared to diligently teach a class every Sunday. “We’ll have to pray on it,” we told him.

That night, Thelma reminded me of what Jesus said in Luke 12:48: “*From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.*” We prayed and God showed us that this is what He wanted us to do. In the morning, we called Dr. Mims to tell him we were ready to start the Sunday school class immediately.

Today, our class, “Business by the Book,” has been well received and attendance keeps climbing. Forty-plus people come each Sunday, including a wide range of businesspeople—some just starting new companies, others successful business leaders. The past and current governors of Missouri have attended; other dignitaries include U.S. Senators, U.S. Congressmen, members of city and county councils, and clergymen from other denominations. We encourage class participation, and attendees frequently give testimonies. In this open forum, attendees receive counsel on how to apply business lessons from the Bible, and in turn, prosper. Most importantly, they understand the importance of learning the Word of God and their responsibility to be an ambassador of

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God. Thelma and I have totally submitted ourselves to God, and class members know that if they follow God's Word, He will energize them too and they will prosper.

The results of these classes have been so well received, we want to impart these lessons to everyone. I am reminded of what Thelma recently advised a young woman: "Give your full tithe to God because it's not really yours. All of it belongs to Him anyway." She then added, "Besides, he's only asking for 10 percent of it."

My wife and I feel we've been blessed so we can become a blessing. The lessons we continue to learn from the Bible make us prosper, and it's our responsibility to share that blessing with others. It isn't something we keep for ourselves. It didn't belong to us. It was given to us. For this reason, we share it freely with others.

Our popular "Business by the Book" class is the catalyst for writing this book. I want to share what we have learned so you too may be blessed. And when you are, it will be your turn to share your blessings with others.