

Principles from Proverbs: Career Success

Savvy and Scriptural Business Principles

Introduction: As a young man matures, he must decide upon an occupation. True success in any business endeavor requires a good foundation. Ethical principles comprise the best foundation for success. The principles of business ethics presented in the Proverbs, when consistently applied, will bless and prosper any occupation.

I. Always deal righteously in matters of business.

A. Maintain high standards of personal integrity.

The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. (Proverbs 11:3)

1. Integrity may be defined as the conviction of character to do right. Integrity always involves honesty and truthfulness. Integrity easily resists the temptation to wrong others, because integrity is a habit of inner character.
2. Scripturally educated integrity becomes a faithful guide in the daily conducting of business. Integrity answers many questions before they even become questions!
3. Real integrity never even gets close to the line of questionable activity. Integrity is more interested in personal character than financial profit.
4. Ultimately, those who practice perverseness (literally, “crookedness”) bring destruction upon themselves.

B. Always be completely honest in business dealings.

A just weight and balance are the Lord's: all the weights of the bag are his work. (Proverbs 16:11)

A false balance is abomination to the lord: but a just weight is his delight. (Proverbs 11:1 c/f 20:10, 23)

1. God recognizes standard weights and measurements. Our honesty and integrity are judged against these standards in industries employing such measurements. To rig a weight or fix a meter violates the standard by which God will ultimately judge.
2. In a more general sense, God will judge the quality of our labor and the integrity of our product by the customary standards of our day. Christians should endeavor to excel the most stringent standards. It is dishonest to sell a shoddy product!

3. Leviticus 18 catalogues a list of sexual “abominations” including adultery, sodomy, and bestiality. Similarly, God states three times that dishonesty in business is an “abomination.”
- C. Deal respectfully with people—employees and customers alike.
Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. (Proverbs 3:31)
1. The “oppressor” is the boss with the “tough guy” attitude. If you are in a management role, do not oppress your employees verbally, emotionally, or financially.
 2. Though the “slave driver” appears to get quickly ahead, Scriptural businessmen will “choose none of his ways.” An oppressive manager should not be mimicked, even in seemingly innocuous matters.
- D. Do not associate with dishonest people.

Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth [tells] it not. (Proverbs 29:24)

1. There is no honor among thieves, and anyone who partners with a dishonest individual will eventually get burned.
 2. The second half of the verse refers to dishonesty under oath. Even when placed under oath (“heareth cursing”), the thief refuses full disclosure. If you partner with a dishonest man, you will have no avenue of legitimate recourse.
- E. Refuse to accept reward for or profit from questionable practices.

A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment. (Proverbs 17:23)

1. Specifically, the Proverbs here condemns taking bribes, kick-backs, premiums or other fringe benefits offered as a reward for perverting judgment—overlooking the standard, bending the rules.
2. Giving rewards and gifts is not wicked in and of itself (Proverbs 18:16), however the motive of the gift determines the morality of the gift. It is not “bribery” to give candy to bus kids for coming to church. It would be bribery to give candy to bus kids to entice them to do wrong.
3. Note that the “wicked man” in 17:23 is the one *taking* the gift. While offering a bribe is certainly wrong, the man who accepts the bribe is characterized as wicked because his principles and character are for sale.