

CHAPTER 1

LEARNING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES IN THE COLLEGE OF HARD KNOCKS (e²)

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2).

GETTING STARTED IN BUSINESS

Starting a new business is challenging even in good economic times, but it was particularly difficult in the Pacific Northwest in the late sixties and early seventies. I went into business with two partners in the late 1960's. Just as we were getting the business on its feet, the area's largest employer, The Boeing Company, implemented a massive staff reduction, which plunged the Seattle area into a major recession. I recall a large billboard on the I-5 corridor just outside of the city which proclaimed, "The last person out of town turn off the lights." Times were tough, and I became consumed with the task of making my company successful. It seemed that I was traveling continually, attempting to obtain the new sales required to expand the company and keep our staff busy. Recently my sister gave me a *Seattle Times* newspaper article concerning my company that she had saved for thirty-seven years. The caption on the article declared "Some Make It Despite the Times." The article, dated November 23, 1971, by *Seattle Times* business columnist Boyd Burchard, reported that despite Seattle's difficult economic times, my company had not only survived, but had increased its sales by some seven hundred percent. Reading that article brought back memories of the difficulties we faced, as well as the long hours and hard work it took to overcome them and make the company successful.

BECOMING SPIRITUALLY MINDED

A little over three years later in the early part of 1975, I met Barbara, a lady who would later become my wife. She had grown up in a Christian family, and several years before we met, rededicated her life to Jesus Christ. When Barbara talked about the Lord, it reminded me of my mother, a born-again Christian who used to take me to church when I was a boy. About a year after we met, Barbara and I were married. When we returned from our honeymoon, I noticed a book entitled *Power and Praise* which had been left on our living room table by my new Methodist mother-in-law. As a result of reading that book for several months, faith developed in my heart, and I asked Jesus Christ to become my Lord and my Savior. I continued to read the book, which discussed the baptism in the Holy Spirit for another seven months. One evening I also asked Jesus to baptize me in the Holy Spirit, an experience which radically changed my life. Several months later at my urging, Barbara also asked for and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. At the time these changes were occurring in our lives, we were attending a mainline denominational church, and while there were no doubt people in that church who were born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit, none of them had ever talked to Barbara and me about either experience. Other than the fellow who wrote the book, we knew of no one else who had received the Baptism in the Spirit.

But several weeks later we heard about the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, a group of successful business men who also believed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. After making several inquiries we found that they met monthly in a prestigious downtown Seattle hotel. We began attending their meetings and found them to be exciting and alive; they were nothing like the typical church services that we were used to. There were no rituals, no religious doctrines—just men sharing their experiences of God. These men were so excited as they shared what God had done in their lives, not five years ago, not ten years ago, but just the previous week. They talked about a living God; some told how He had healed them, and others explained how He had blessed their business. Hearing how God was helping these men in their businesses got my attention; it had never occurred to me that God would help anyone be successful in business. I wanted to hear more; I could hardly wait until the next meeting!

DON'T BE INTIMIDATED

Shortly after we attended our first meeting of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, the chapter President Don Ostrom announced that the chapter was planning a mission's trip (they called them airlifts) to Europe in the fall of the year. He asked those who would like to go on that airlift to raise their hand, and I immediately raised mine. Then he asked those who wanted to go, but didn't have the finances, to stand while he prayed that God would provide the funds they required. Since money was no problem to me, I didn't stand; but inwardly I envied them because they had to exercise their faith to see God's provision. Several months after I made the decision to go on the airlift, several large projects which our firm was working on were delayed, and a month later we lost a large project which I had counted on to keep our people busy. For three months before the airlift, our firm was losing money. Since I usually brought in most of the new sales at that time, I was intimidated by the situation. I felt a lot of pressure to stay home, and try to obtain the necessary sales. But I had promised the Lord that I would go to Europe, and I felt it important that I keep my promise to Him. At the time I left for Europe, we had people sitting around the office on make-work projects; my head was telling me I was crazy to go off to Europe when we needed new sales. But a week later when I called my office from Europe, I discovered that four sizable projects had been funded and our clients wanted us to get started with the design work immediately. I was so encouraged.

Several months after returning from Europe I was invited by a friend to a small Lutheran church near my home; a man from Texas, with a prophetic gift was speaking. Near the end of the meeting he paused and called me to the front of the room. He laid his hand on my head and began to prophesy. This was one of the first times I had experienced anything like this. He said *"My son, My son, you shall walk in the way of the Lord and you shall see things that many have seen, but they have turned aside under their devious ways. They have turned their backs on the ways of faith. They have been intimidated and have been pleasers of men, but you have said in your soul and in your spirit 'I shall walk with the Lord; I shall walk in the ways of my God.' Therefore saith God, I have given you a heart of Timothy, one that shall follow, and be instructed, and in due season shall find great and faithful works before thee."* Then the Lord spoke through this man and named a number of things that He would accomplish in my life because I had refused to be intimidated. Now thirty years later, I realize that nearly all of the things which he prophesized have come to pass in my life. That prophetic word taught me that when you or I step out in faith and do something for God, the devil will often attempt to intimidate us. He will try to make us believe that we don't have enough faith, that God didn't hear our prayer, or that there is no God. He will do everything he can to prevent us from standing in faith on the Word of God. The devil will try to get us to abandon the work of God and take care of our own needs; and if we listen to his intimidating thoughts, he will soundly defeat us.

AS A YOUNG CHRISTIAN I HAD A RATHER UP AND DOWN EXPERIENCE

After I was born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit, it seemed that my spiritual eyes were opened. A few months earlier I wasn't even sure there **was** a God, but now I had an insatiable desire to spend time with Him and to learn more about Him. I still went into my office; I still managed my business, but it was no longer the primary focus of my life. Now I spent my evenings and free time reading the Bible and other spiritual books, and I had a hunger to learn all I could about the Lord and the Christian life. It was so exciting just to know that God was alive and find out that He loved me and wanted to bless me. However, I didn't understand how to receive those blessings, and, consequently, in the first several years as a Christian, I had a rather "up and down" spiritual experience. I didn't understand what faith was; I thought it was a mental activity. I would pray and ask God to help me win a certain project or to increase my company's profits; but when problems developed, and negative, defeating thoughts began to bombard my mind, I reasoned that I must not have faith. I became discouraged—I was fighting the fight of faith in my head, instead of in my heart and my mouth.

THE FIRST MAJOR FINANCIAL CRISIS

It was during a major financial crisis in my business life (over a period of three years my company had lost two thirds of our net worth), that I was forced to exercise the law of faith described in Mark 11:23. As a result of my applying that principle, God turned my business

around and the following year we sold six times the amount of work which we had sold in any previous year. Within eighteen months, we gained back everything we had lost in the three years that we were in the financial test. As a result of that crisis I learned a very valuable spiritual principle, and over the years I have learned a number of other similar principles. The purpose of this book is to share these principles with you and other Christian business people, in hopes that it will prevent them from making the same mistakes I made.

LEARNING TO WALK BY FAITH

In the fall of 1984, some eight years after I first became a Christian, I sensed the Lord ask me to start chapters of the Full Gospel Business Men in the nation of Japan. I was the president of the Greater Seattle Chapter of the FGBM at the time; therefore I asked Paul Crawford, a friend of mine who was going to be in the Orient in March of 1985, to return by way of Japan and make some contacts among Christian businessmen in that nation. Then in June of 1985 Paul and I toured Japan together. Finally in October of the same year, we took a larger group of men and women from America and Canada to Japan, and began to organize Christian businessmen's chapters in that nation. At that time I had never really considered what starting a Christian businessmen's organization in a nation like Japan meant in the economy of God, or the challenge it posed to the demonic rulers that had held sway over that nation for more than five thousand years. I was simply doing what I sensed God had told me to do.

Shortly after going to Japan, my business started experiencing some difficult financial problems. In 1986, we lost forty-five percent of our net worth. I really didn't make a connection between my efforts to establish a fellowship in Japan with my business problems; I just thought that we had a bad year and that it would get better the next year. But in 1987, it didn't get better; it got worse as we lost another twenty percent of our net worth. The next year (1988), my business continued to stagger along; we could barely make our payroll. Then in May of 1988, a man gave me a book entitled *War on the Saints*. As I read that book, I began to understand that my business problems were directly related to my doing God's work in Japan; but I still didn't know how to correct the problem.

IT TAKES MORE THAN PRAYER TO GAIN THE VICTORY

Now don't think I hadn't prayed about the problem; I prayed every day! I would wake up in the middle of the night and pray—in fact, I had been praying and asking God to help me for some two and a half years, **but it takes more than prayer to get the job done. It takes believing prayer. And I, like many of you, didn't know how to pray believing prayer.** But one thing I knew, something had to change or my company was going to go bankrupt. And another thing I knew, I was the one who had to change. Always remember this: God never changes (Malachi 3:6). If prayer isn't working, it's because you're not praying right; and it is you and not God who will have to change.

In the midst of my troubles, I decided to set aside some time to seek God for an answer. In fact, I sought him intensely for several days. Then the Lord began to speak to me about Mark 11:23: "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says." Now I was not ignorant of that scripture. I had heard men teach that what you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth would come to pass in your life, but on the other hand I had heard other men teach against that principle. They said believing that what you confess would come to pass was foolishness. Since I didn't know which group was right, I thought that I would just ignore that scripture. **But you cannot ignore the word of God, particularly Mark 11:23. Like all spiritual laws, it will work in your life, either positively or negatively, whether or not you believe it.** You may have said "I don't believe that God will help me in my business;" then you will have what you say—God will not help you in your business. You may have said "nothing seems to go right in my life." If you believe that in your heart and confess it with your mouth, then nothing will go right in your life. **Mark 11:23 will work for you either positively or negatively whether you agree with it or not; it is a spiritual Law. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18:21).**

BUT I DIDN'T KNOW THAT MARK 11:23 WOULD WORK FOR ME

Please understand that in 1988, when I began to seek God's wisdom concerning my business problems, I didn't know that Mark 11:23 would work for me. I had prayed and asked God to give us favor with our clients. I had asked God to help me in my business, but I had not yet acted on my conviction that God would help me. By this time, I had been a Christian for over ten years but I didn't understand that for God's Word to work, it had to be in my heart and in my mouth. I had experienced financial tests before, but now I was up against a bigger devil. Those principalities and powers that had ruled over the businessmen of Japan decided to teach me a lesson. They didn't like the prospect of Japanese businesspeople finding out about the love of Jesus. And God knew that I needed to grow in the principles of the Kingdom of God if I was to survive this financial attack on my business.

You see, in most instances the only way we can act on our faith is by speaking it. The Apostle Paul says "...take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). The evil day that Paul was talking about is the day that the devil comes to attack your family or your business, and one of those pieces of armor that Paul was talking about is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That's why it is so important that we establish faith in our hearts by meditating upon the "Word of God." Remember, Mark 11:23 tells us, "If he believes that those things that he says will be done, he will have whatever he **says**."

I BEGAN TO SPEAK GOD'S WORD

In June of 1988, I began to act on Mark 11:23. I began to make what God's Word says about me and my business a part of my daily confession—a confession I repeated over and over every time I thought about my business: "*My business is prosperous and successful. I have given and it will be given unto me, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over; men will give unto me*" (based on Luke 6:38). "*I have given cheerfully; therefore God will make all grace abound toward me. The entire corporate power of heaven will be available to make sure that I will always have enough for every good work*" (based on 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). "*Devil you are a liar! The Word of God is truth absolute truth, and it will come to pass in my life.*" That is the way I confessed God's Word concerning my business. Over and over, every time I thought about my business problems, I would confess what God's Word said about those problems. When I would drive by a potential customer, I would say, "*In the name of Jesus, I command you to send prosperous work to the ORB Organization (my company's name).*" And the devil would come and sit on my shoulder and say, "*You are broke, flat out broke. How are you going to make your payroll next week?*" But I would reply, "*Devil, you are a liar! The Word of God is truth, absolute truth, and God will provide the money to pay my employees next week and the week after that and the week after that.*"

THEN SUDDENLY THE ANSWER CAME!!!

You may ask, *How long did you confess the word of God before things changed, Bob?* I confessed the Word of God for nine long, hard months before I saw any change in the physical world. There were times when I wanted to give up; there were times when the devil would come and mock me for believing that confessing the Word of God with my mouth would change things. But I just kept on believing God and confessing His Word over my businesses. Then in February of 1989, our company was awarded the largest contract that we had ever received. And in quick succession, we were awarded a number of other contracts. In fact in 1989, we were awarded six times the amount of work we had been awarded in any previous year. Within eighteen months we had earned back everything that we had lost during the three years we were in the test.

When I first started to confess God's Word over my business, I really didn't believe that Word in my heart, and the adverse circumstances that had been pummeling my mind made it difficult for me to develop faith in my heart. But gradually as I continued to confess God's Word, faith became **established** in my heart, and that faith caused my business to turn around. The battle had been long and hard. I had struggled with the financial problem for two and one half years before I understood Mark 11:23 would work for me, and then I had confessed God's word over the problem for nine long hard months before the victory was won.

To tell you the truth, when the victory came I was emotionally exhausted; I remember praying *"Lord allow me a period of rest before the next big battle."*

After this experience I knew that Mark 11:23 would produce victory, but in my mind I classified the confession of God's Word as something we do when we get into a problem. I did not yet understand that when we meditate on God's Word day and night, we make ourselves successful. Like many of you, when the pressure was off, I neglected the confession of God's word.