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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

What is the case for entrepreneurship in God's economy? Many innovative believers who feel liberated by the thought of going into business by themselves are often held back not only because of the risk and uncertainty, but also because they are unsure of how the venture fits into God's plan for an abundant life. In *Faith Driven Entrepreneur* Henry Kaestner and his co-authors lay out the ingredients of empowered entrepreneurship for the faith-driven Christ follower. Speaking from deep insights gained from the author's experience as a successful entrepreneur and faith movement founder, Kaestner in this opening chapter of the book offers great encouragement to all those who want to follow in his footsteps. These words comprise a perfect preface to the current issue of the *Christian Business Review*, in which we examine the multifaceted challenges facing faith-driven entrepreneurs from a biblical worldview.

Blank stares. That's what we saw in meeting after meeting, conference room after conference room. As we made the rounds up and down Sand Hill Road, we walked in and out of venture capitalists' offices, trying to figure out what had gone wrong. There were meetings where the disconnect was obvious. Many investors failed to resonate with different aspects of our business. But even for those who were interested in what we were doing, the mood changed when we talked about our faith. When we introduced that topic, there seems to be a tension and unease that hadn't been there before.

I don't think this is a rarity for Faith Driven Entrepreneurs – the men and women who are starting companies and building businesses with a belief in Jesus Christ and an understanding of themselves as beloved children of God as their core identity. In fact, I think many Christian entrepreneurs have received this response, either in a pitch meeting or even in their church.

*Taken from *Faith Driven Entrepreneur: What It Takes to Step Into Your Purpose and Pursue Your God-Given Call to Create* by Henry Kaestner, J.D. Greear, and Chip Ingram (Tyndale Momentum, August 2021), Introduction and Chapter 1. Copyright © 2021. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers. All rights reserved. <https://www.tyndale.com/p/faith-driven-entrepreneur/9781496457233>.

Just as many venture capitalists are confused by how faith can be integrated into entrepreneurship, so too are many pastors and churchgoers. Many of us have misunderstood how entrepreneurs are core to the work God is doing on earth. Entrepreneurs aren't God's plan B. Rather, they are the men and women God has called and equipped to see his will done on earth as it is in heaven.

As an entrepreneur, you – yes, you – are a part of God's plan A. God has a purpose and a plan for the entrepreneurial ventures his people are starting and growing all around the world. The work you do today – the company you've built, the employees you work with, the customers you serve, the shareholders you report to, all of it – can serve as an active part of what God is doing on earth...

There are 582 million entrepreneurs in the world – that includes every tech entrepreneur, salon owner, and independent insurance representative from New York to Nairobi. Approximately 180 million of them are Christ followers. That's 180 million men and women who are creating and shaping culture; 180 million men and women who already know that their work is an opportunity to transform and innovate, to help and serve, to launch and learn; 180 million men and women who are just like you – who are building businesses on behalf of the God who made them.

The word *calling* has dominated Christian circles in recent years, and it has taken on a mysterious power that no one seems to have nailed down. Does God call people into certain jobs and professions? Is calling a special spiritual experience? Are some people called and other people not? Questions abound, and we can debate all we want about what calling means and how we can discern our own, but the real harm in our conversations around calling is found in the spiritual caste system it has created between secular and sacred callings.

If you grew up in a Christian home in the last thirty to forty years, maybe you've noticed that being "called" into ministry seems like a special, more elite, and more personal path than having a career in other professions. Christians often consider those called to vocational ministry a Special Ops group

that only certain people are qualified for. We often believe that there are regular believers on one side and preachers, teachers, and missionaries on the other. And while we can't all be missionaries and preachers, it's easy to feel like those people have received something special from God that we haven't.

Or, if you're new to faith, you may be wondering if what you do in your professional life is illegitimate or a waste of time. If God has put us on this earth to love him and love others, and if our daily work isn't evangelistic in nature, do

we need a new model? Reading about a lemonade-stand kid turned tech giant doesn't exactly scream "holy calling" to us.

But why not? Why can't an entrepreneurial venture, lived and pursued faithfully, be

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God's desire for your life?

I think it can be.

Entrepreneurs have a unique opportunity to step into a purpose that is aligned with who God is and how God has made them. Just as pastors are taking the gifts God has given them and giving those gifts back to others, entrepreneurs can take the creative problem-solving energy within them and pour that back out into society in a way that is beneficial to those who receive it and glorifying to the God who instilled it in them in the first place.

As an entrepreneur, you've felt the life-giving energy that comes through serving your customers, vendors, and investors. You get fired up when you find solutions to problems. You can't wait to see the fruit of the work of your hands. Why? Because you're created in the image of a creative, entrepreneurial God.

If you've ever felt less-than in the church because of your business, or if you've ever wondered whether your life is truly leaning into the purpose God has for you, look back at the Garden of Eden. God created humans in his image. And in his image, we can see a God who worked six days and created something out of nothing. That's who we are. That's what an entrepreneur does!

This is how it works. When you solve problems from scratch, that's an opportunity to commune with the living God who has helped people solve problems from the beginning of time.

When you provide a new idea, a new resource, or a new product, that's a chance to bear witness to a God who is the ultimate provider.

When you pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," God is answering that prayer with a resounding yes, and he's running toward you, eagerly inviting you to come under his power and his protection to join him in doing the work to make that happen.

Leave your feelings of inadequacy at the door. You were made for this. God has something incredible in store for the Faith Driven Entrepreneur.

A lot of images come to mind with the word *entrepreneur*. There's a Silicon Valley stereotype that includes a button-down shirt with a Patagonia vest. A lot of people will think of someone young, someone working in technology. Few people would think of a gardener.

But think about it. A gardener is nothing if not an entrepreneur. A gardener has the raw materials of soil and seeds and water, which they combine and tend in an effort to create something where, only days and weeks before, nothing existed. Beauty replaces nothingness; lush plants replace dry ground. What was once just a plot of land, a gardener turns around through the work of their hands and makes something useful – either for its aesthetic or for its function, and sometimes both.

And if we want to learn what it means to be a Faith Driven Entrepreneur, the first place we can look to is a garden. Because you, entrepreneur – whether you're calling yourself that yet or not – are a gardener. But you're not the first.

God is the original entrepreneur. If anyone knows what it's like to create and build something completely new, it's him. And we can see that from the very beginning he has created us to share in his entrepreneurial process: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15).

God invited Adam into the work of caring for and cultivating the Garden right away. He didn't just set Adam down

in Eden and tell him to enjoy himself. Adam had roles and responsibilities. You think your day is busy today? Imagine having to name every single animal in existence!

So often, we think of work as a curse – as something God made us do after we got kicked out of the Garden. But what if work is actually a part of bearing his image? What if work is an invitation to create and build alongside the ultimate entrepreneur? What if work is something God gave us as a vehicle through which we can enjoy his presence?

What made the Garden of Eden so special wasn't the absence of work. It was the presence of the perfect coworker. God and Adam worked together. The Garden of Eden and all the plants and animals in it were shared between God and man. That's the perfect vision of entrepreneurship – that we can be united in purpose, passion, and pursuit with God.

God wants to work with us. He wants to create with us. He wants to start, share, and complete new projects and ideas with us. He didn't leave Adam alone to tend to the Garden of Eden, and he doesn't ask us to work in isolation.

God uses us to bring about his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Our creations can bring order out of chaos, solve problems, rally against injustice, and create dignity and opportunity for those who interact with our creations.

This truth should empower us. It should give us the ability to move forward confidently as we create and lead our businesses, as we propose solutions to societal problems, and as we step out in

faith into the entrepreneurial venture God has drawn us to.

I discovered my first love when I went to college, and it was that I could buy a T-shirt for five dollars and sell it for ten dollars. As I did that, as I took risks and interacted with customers and thought about the next deal and saw the fruits of my labor as I hired other college students, I felt fully alive.

The creative process pumped blood into my veins. I came up with designs, made sales, and received affirmation from vendors and customers that I was doing a good thing. The feeling of validation that comes after creating something the market wants – even when that something was just a

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T-shirt – was unbeatable. I was hooked. From my campus at the University of Delaware, we ended up selling on forty-nine other campuses up and down the East Coast.

Still, I put that aside as a collegiate venture. When I graduated, I thought I needed to get a real job. I moved to New York City and worked on Wall Street for six years. Now, you’d think that making a lot of money and living in New York City would be the dream. You’d think that would be better than selling T-shirts. But it wasn’t. During that time, I longed for the entrepreneurial venture. I missed it. I wanted to feel fully alive again.

So I packed up and moved to North Carolina to start my own company. At the time, I had no perception of calling; I had no concept of what God wanted me to do with my life. I didn’t think about things in a framework of faith at all. I was just chasing a bug to create and innovate.

And my bet is that if you’re reading this book, you have that bug too. You want to break out of whatever societal box makes you feel trapped, and you want to move and shake and do and work and make something. That’s the entrepre-

neurial dream. And since you’re reading a book about being a Faith Driven Entrepreneur, my guess is you’re serious about your Christian faith as well.

For far too long, Christian culture has ignored and dismissed this type of desire. I’ve met too many faithful people who ask me hesitantly, “Is it okay if I say no to working for a church or missions agency and start a business instead?”

They’re cautious, uncertain, scared, and wondering if the entrepreneurial journey aligns with God’s call for believers.

I’m here to tell you, yes. It absolutely does. Entrepreneurship provides a place where you get to commune with

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God through the creative process. It provides a way through which you can love God and love others. And so my hope is that as you read through the rest of [this book’s] chapters – these marks of a Faith Driven Entrepreneur – you will feel empowered to do what you’re doing and to do it well.

Entrepreneurship is a legitimate pursuit that, when done well, brings honor and glory to our entrepreneurial God. You can speak confidently about what you do, because God is in you and with you.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



HENRY KAESTNER is co-founder of the Faith Driven Entrepreneur and Faith Driven Investor ministries, and has been a catalyst behind both movements. He and his team seek to serve faith driven entrepreneurs, investors, funds, partners, and advisors through content, community, and connections. Henry is also a Co-Founder and Partner at Sovereign’s Capital, a private equity and venture capital management company that invests in faith driven entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia and the U.S. from its offices in Silicon Valley, Durham, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Jakarta, Indonesia. Prior to co-founding Sovereign’s Capital, Henry was Co-founder and previous CEO, and then Chairman, of Bandwidth (NASDAQ:BAND) and its sister company, Republic Wireless (which spun out of Bandwidth in 2016). Together the companies have grown from \$0 to more than \$600 million in revenue. The founding values of Bandwidth are: Faith, Family, Work and Fitness (in that order). Prior to co-founding Bandwidth.com with David Morken, Henry founded Chapel Hill Brokers (a predecessor to ICAP Energy), an institutional energy derivatives broker that became the top ranked electricity broker in the country. Henry has been involved in a number of other ministries and philanthropic activities, including as co-founder of DurhamCares, a Board Member of Praxis, and on the board of Valley Christian Schools, among others. Henry attends Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, CA and serves as an elder in the Presbyterian Church of America. Henry lives in Los Gatos with his wife Kimberley and their three sons.