

*The Christ-Centered Company:  
37 Biblical Business Habits to Build a Thriving Company  
That Honors God and Blesses the World*

By Darren Shearer, High Bridge Books, 2023, 255 pages. \$16.99

REVIEWED BY CHRIS LANGFORD  
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Most working-aged individuals (85%) are employed in for-profit companies. Unfortunately, many Christian business people are tempted to embrace business practices that fail to glorify God. In *The Christ Centered Company*, Darren Shearer seeks to help Christian business people develop mature companies centered on Christ and His Word. According to Shearer, Christ-centered companies are “value-making, profit-producing, and law-abiding” organizations that spread God’s glory through the practice of 37 Christ-centered business habits (p. 3). The author devotes a chapter to examining each habit. They are categorized according to seven major topics: corporate purpose and culture, marketing and customer care, accounting and accountability, people management, business law and conflict, risk management, and philanthropy.

The author relies on the premise that Christian business people work *for* Jesus and work *with* their colleagues. This way of viewing work serves as the foundational habit that influences the development and cultivation of the other habits featured in the book. Viewing Jesus as our supervisor helps us to avoid ethical shortcuts and exert extra effort in our work responsibilities. Our coworkers become partners to sacrificially love and serve. While this view of work may be straightforward (albeit counterculture), it may not be salient for Christians, often preoccupied by pressing work and life demands. The author notes business people must continually strengthen their relationships with God through daily prayer and Bible reading. Being grounded in the Word can help Christians renew their minds while avoiding conformity with worldly norms (Romans 12:2).

Shearer emphasizes the need for faith-based companies to establish organizational cultures based on Christian

principles. This includes developing Christ-centered purpose statements, core values, and clear priorities with measurable goals. He notes companies’ mission statements need not explicitly mention God, but “what’s most important is that you and the other Christ-followers who influence your company understand the biblical, Christ-centered basis for whatever your statement of core purpose happens to be” (p. 29). Several illustrative stories are shared of companies reinforcing their sets of core values through creative practices, such as wall displays and company recognition events. These activities can facilitate a shared appreciation for the organization’s purpose and its Christ-centered vision.

Several important aspects of faith-informed marketing practices are discussed, including careful consideration of the target customer, advertising tactics, customer communication, and after-sales service. It is important to have a clear understanding of the target customer and their needs. Many companies try to reach a wide audience of people with their products and services—and ironically fail to attract or retain many of them. Shearer indicates companies must guard against making false or misleading claims they cannot support with evidence. He suggests product pricing should be transparent and consistent across customer groups. Faith-based companies are also encouraged to develop the habit of going the extra mile with customers. He provides several examples of faith-based companies that have differentiated themselves from competitors through the regular provision of exceptional, extra-mile customer service.

Important HR functions are considered, including employee recruitment, retention, and compensation. Shearer emphasizes important personal attributes (e.g.,

integrity) companies should look for in candidates when making hiring decisions while also identifying subsequent opportunities for employee discipleship. Issues related to employee communication are discussed and the need for companies to clearly articulate fireable offenses and clear work standards. He discusses the responsibility faith-based companies have for paying their employees livable wages and building organizational cultures promoting trust and empowerment. Several thorny legal issues in business and risk management are considered. Shearer suggests Christian business people embrace a culture of forgiveness when possible and utilize a biblical legal process involving mediators and arbitrators to settle unresolved disputes. Christians should diligently consider the various risks associated with their business operations and ensure they have purchased the appropriate types of insurance to protect their companies and stakeholders.

Shearer challenges Christian leaders to practice several countercultural habits, such as developing Christ-centered purpose statements, embracing forgiveness, giving to others in secret, and employing at-risk individuals. Each of these habits can involve considerable vulnerability and go against conventional business wisdom. Many business consultants are likely to advise professionals to develop inclusive mission statements containing neutral language that few may find offensive. On the surface, establishing a culture of forgiveness may appear to accept the mistreatment of individuals. Giving in secret seems like a missed opportunity to generate community goodwill, and employing formerly incarcerated individuals carries inherent risks with uncertain organizational benefits. Conventional business thinking would likely advise against such practices. However, recalling that we work for Jesus and with others can help us reorient our thinking about business priorities and how we proceed with glorifying God through the practicing of these habits that demonstrate our love for God and others in counter cultural ways.

The book also features several sacrificial habits. Some examples include avoiding ethically questionable (yet lucrative) opportunities, paying employees livable wages, providing time off for employees, going the extra mile with customers and compensating them when wronged, and engaging in generous philanthropic practices. While each of these habits are well-supported by Scripture, Christian executives are likely to face significant pressure from non-Christian (and perhaps fellow Christian) stockholders to limit the practice of such habits. Each of these habits carries significant potential costs that

can reduce the organization's short-term profitability. Christian executives seeking to practice these habits may find themselves in the untenable situation of having to choose between serving two masters (i.e., God and mammon, Matthew 6:24). Such business people would be wise to ensure they are not unequally yoked with stakeholders having alternative priorities.

The author lists four primary objectives individuals may have related to creating Christ-centered companies. These objections include (1) offending employees that are not Christians, (2) having business partners that are not Christians, (3) feeling unable to enact change due to the position occupied in the organization, and (4) working for smaller companies that may have less perceived ability to practice all 37 habits. Shearer offers several lines of rebuttal to these objections. He suggests leaders commence with implementing these habits without overtly communicating their biblical origin. While he admits there may be instances where business partners may be unequally yoked and need to part ways, Shearer suggests Christians practice these habits with the belief business partners will come to support such practices. In his view, all workers have spheres of influence within the company where they can positively influence others through practicing the various habits themselves. Shearer indicates that the development of all 37 habits can be a lengthy process but has been realized by companies of various sizes and resources.

Notwithstanding the author's rebuttal to these anticipated objections, employees' ability to practice certain habits featured in this book may be restricted due to common authority and power dynamics in organizations. (To his credit, Shearer partially acknowledges such reservations.) For example, the crafting of mission statements usually falls under the exclusive purview of the owners or senior management of a company. The same can be stated for building organizational cultures and organizational support for the sacrificial habits featured in the book (e.g., compensation policy, company work hours, etc.). Senior leadership is likely to engage strongly with the book's content. Other employees in the organization, such as mid-level managers and front-line workers, may fail to see how much of the book's content relates to their specific work roles. The author seems to have business owners in mind when writing the book and misses opportunities to engage a larger work audience when discussing these habits. For example, the topic of organizational communication narrowly focuses on customer contracts. Other organizational communication

issues, such as office gossip or mentoring co-workers, are largely ignored.

This book is a particularly valuable resource for owners and senior organizational leaders. Most chapters are brief (often less than seven pages) and focus on establishing a single habit. The discussion questions featured at the end of each chapter provide opportunities to critically reflect over the material and apply it to particular organizational practices. Instructors teaching entrepreneurship and leadership courses within Christian higher education may find this book useful for stimulating in-class discussions or reflection assignments. Two or three habits could be analyzed each week in a typical 15 week course. Students will likely enjoy the short chapters and the straightforward writing style of the author. The inclusion of Scripture in each chapter provides opportunities for students to better understand biblical application and develop a deeper faith-informed view of business.

Scripture warns us often of our own deceit (e.g., 1 John 1:8). As businesspeople, we tend to view success in numerical terms. Yet Shearer reminds us, “When you stand before God one day, he’s likely not going to ask you, ‘How many employees did you have?’ or ‘What was your gross (or net) revenue?’ However, among many other things, he will likely ask something more like this: ‘By the standard of my Word, how mature was the company I entrusted to you?’” (p. 9). Mature companies reflect the practices of mature Christians. Shearer’s work enhances our understanding of the biblical habits that help us in our journey towards maturity.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Dr. Chris Langford** is an associate professor of management at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He teaches undergraduate and graduate management courses and serves as an assistant editor for the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* (JBIB). His research

interests include examining the interface of work and faith in addition to the exploration of diversity issues in organizational behavior and human resource management. Dr. Langford received his Ph.D. in organization and management studies from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He earned his M.B.A. at the University of Central Florida and his B.S.B.A. at the University of South Carolina. He is an active member of the Christian Business Faculty Association, Academy of Management, and Society for Human Resource Management.