

NOT JUST KEEPING THE LAW, BUT EXCEEDING IT

By Rick Boxx

When I began consulting with business and professional leaders, seeking to bring truths from the Bible into every scenario, it seemed like a good idea to take an honest look at myself first. I examined my life for any past issues, asking if there were any unresolved areas where I had failed to uphold the biblical principles that now served as my guides.

I reasoned if I was not willing to live up to the standards God had established – even if only through the 20/20 vision of hindsight – how could I justify counseling with business and professional leaders to heed the same standards?

As I undertook this personal inventory, an issue I felt convicted about was a small corporate debt that remained unpaid from a company I had owned previously.

Even though this debt was a corporate obligation, for which I had no legal responsibility personally, God was making it clear to me He wanted all of my business dealings to be pure and above reproach – including this one from the past.

It took some time and effort, but I succeeded in tracking down the business that was owed money and sent them a check for the full amount. The owners of the business were amazed, and called to tell me so. They also informed me that since the debt had been written off some years before, they were donating the payment I had just sent to a local church.

Even though the financial obligation had been absolved and forgotten, I knew that did not release me from my responsibility before God. Integrity is not something you can turn on and turn off, whenever it suits your purposes. To be known as persons of integrity, we must strive to uphold that standard 100 percent of the time. This situation seemed like a test in which God was asking me to demonstrate I trusted Him enough to do the right thing – even if it affected my checkbook.

Ephesians 5:3 teaches, *"But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints."* It is easy to profess certain beliefs and values, but living them out – especially if there is a personal cost involved – is much more difficult. Yet that is part of our calling as followers of Jesus Christ in the workplace. "Actions speak louder than words," the adage tells us, and if we hope to have any impact for eternity among the men and women we interact with every day, our behavior must be consistent with our professed beliefs.

God's standards often exceed the existing laws, and as God's ambassadors it is always best for us to go beyond what is required. The Bible offers this word of caution: *"The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity"* (Proverbs 11:3).

By properly resolving the issue of the unpaid debt, there was no fear of it ever arising again and casting doubt on my integrity as a businessperson and consultant. And since the payment I made was passed on to a local church, who knows? It might have been an answer to prayer for a special need within that congregation. Nothing like killing two birds with one stone, as they say!

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How difficult do you think it would be, as Mr. Boxx did, to take an honest look to determine whether there are any past business or workplace issues that still needed to resolve?
2. Even though he had no legal personal liability for the outstanding corporate debt, do you agree with his decision to make restitution as he did? What do you think you would have done?
3. Do you agree with the statement, "Actions speak louder than words"? How well do you think your own actions align with your words, along with the values and beliefs you profess?
4. Why do you think a reputation for integrity is so difficult to earn – but so easy to lose?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:9, 11:1, 12:19,22, 20:17, 21:6; Colossians 3:17,23; 2 Timothy 3:16-17