

February 27, 2017

By Jim Mathis

THE INTEGRITY OF PAYING BILLS ON TIME

Years ago, when my wife and I were in the photofinishing business, I received a letter from a high-ranking official at Eastman Kodak. I was a little nervous that Kodak might cancel our account, since we were very small for such a large company. Even though we bought a couple thousand dollars in film, chemicals and paper each month, that was still a very meager amount by Fortune 500 standards.

I was surprised when I opened the letter because it was the opposite of what I expected. It was a letter of commendation, thanking us for paying our bills on time. In the 15-20 years we had been doing business with The Eastman Kodak Company, we had never missed a discount or were even one day late in paying our bill. That level of integrity deserved a personal letter from a vice president of the company. I was pleased with myself, but even more impressed that someone at Kodak would recognize our financial reliability and take the time to write a letter.

This came to mind recently as my wife and I were leading a "Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University" class in our home. I have not always been as faithful in paying my bills on time as I was years ago, but in recent months have made a renewed commitment to paying our bills before their due dates.

All business is built on relationships. People like to do business with people they like, including those who are prompt in meeting their obligations. Having to send "Past Due" notices can quickly sour relationships, and people who are slow to pay soon run out of suppliers. For those wanting to serve as "marketplace ambassadors" for Jesus Christ, as described in 2 Corinthians

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Room 905, Nathan Center, 580G-K, Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

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5:20, such diligences provides an unspoken witness to the character of the God we follow by faith.

Here are some related principles the Bible gives to us:

Faithfulness in obligations, even small ones, qualifies for greater responsibilities. We often must demonstrate we can be relied upon in small matters before we can be entrusted with greater things. *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"* (Luke 16:10-12).

Paying bills on time provides financial freedom. Prompt payment of obligations minimizes the accumulation of interest, and can pave the way to gain the trust of our suppliers as our companies grow and our need for resources increases. *"The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender"* (Proverbs 22:7)

Prompt payment will enable us to stand out in the crowd. In an environment when it is so common for businesses to wait until the last possible moment to pay bills, a commitment to pay promptly speaks a lot to the integrity of the organization and its people, whether owners, top executives or employees. *"Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear-- not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple 'Yes' or 'No.' Otherwise you will be condemned"* (James 5:12).

Jim Mathis is the owner of a photography studio in Overland Park, Kansas, specializing in executive, commercial and theatrical portraits, and operates a school of photography. He formerly was a coffee shop manager and executive director of CBMC in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri.

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CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Jim Firnstahl, President
 2850 N. Swan Road, Suite 160 ▪ Tucson, Arizona 85712 ▪ U.S.A.
 TEL.: 520-334-1114 ▪ E-MAIL: mmanna@cbmcint.org
 Web site: www.cbmcint.org Please direct any requests or change of
 address to: jmarple@cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. In your experience, how prompt in paying bills are the people and companies that deal with your organization?
2. What is your typical practice in paying your obligations – do you pay them quickly, or do you tend to wait until the absolute due date?
3. Do you agree that the way we pay bills makes a statement about our integrity and dependability? Or do you think other areas are more vital in terms of integrity? Explain your answer.
4. Give an example of a time when you – or someone you know – demonstrated faithfulness in carrying out even menial tasks that over time resulted in being given greater responsibilities and authority.

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

Proverbs 10:9, 11:1,3, 20:7,14, 21:5; Colossians 3:17; James 2:14-17

Proverbs 13:10, 16:5,18, 25:27; Luke 9:23; Philippians 2:3-4

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