

# Bringing Christian Values to Our Secular Lives

*Rise & Shine, October 7<sup>th</sup>*

## **Matthew 6:19-21, 24**

*[Jesus said,] "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ... No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (For context, read 6:15-34.)*

**Question:** How can we better live out our Baptismal covenant in our everyday lives as employers, employees, or consumers?

---

*In the News*

## **Billionaire Redesigns Business Model to Conform with His Adopted Christian Faith**

With a combined net worth of nearly \$10 billion, brothers Philip and Robert Ng are among the richest men in the world. Recently, Philip spoke with his nephew Matthew Yao about how his faith in Jesus Christ has transformed his business practices as well as his personal life.

"What I have discovered is that all of us are broken. We all have a missing piece. And for me, I discovered that the missing piece was God in Jesus Christ," Philip said. "I treasure [my faith] more than anything. ... It sure beats a lot of money and material things that you may have."

The two brothers are sons of Ng Teng Fong, whose family emigrated from China to Singapore in 1934 when he was six. Fong built a real estate and investment empire which he passed on to his children.

Philip is the Chief Executive Officer of Far East Organization (FEO) that has holdings in Singapore, Malaysia and Australia, while Robert oversees operations in the sister company Sino Group in China. The conglomerate employs almost 18,000 workers.

In 1999, FEO used the acronym BUILD to articulate the company's values of Business Excellence, Unity, Integrity, Loyalty and Diligence. A year later, Philip

committed his life to Christ through the Alpha Course and was baptized in the Anglican church.

"Some may know me as a property developer, but I am really a servant of the most-high God whom I know through my Lord Jesus Christ," Philip said.

"Property development is for me just a way of making a living."

Philip said, "My father was not a pagan worshiper, but he did not have time for God; he was too busy running his business. [but] ... God gave my father an eleventh-hour opportunity to affirm Jesus Christ [in 2010 before he died]. ... For 60 years my mother was a devotee of the Goddess of Mercy [a Buddhist divinity]. But when my father was hospitalized, she stopped. ... My mother is now baptized and worships at a Methodist church." Robert also became a follower of Jesus at that time.

Over time, Philip began to modify the way FEO did business, to better conform to biblical standards, and particularly to the teachings of Christ. For example, he changed his mind about gambling after a conversation with the Anglican archbishop. While owning and operating a casino might be profitable, even lucrative, Philip decided that he couldn't engage in a business that preyed on the poor and addicted. He couldn't separate the way he worshiped on Sunday from the way he conducted business the rest of the week.

In 2014, Philip redefined the five core values of FEO as "Business with Grace, Unity, Integrity, Love and Diligence."

The reason for the change in the first core value from Business Excellence to Business with Grace was simple: The new value went above and beyond the old value, helping the company build enduring relationships among its workers at all levels, and with business partners and customers.

FEO wants its employees to become "vessels of grace" who understand that they "are both recipients and givers of grace" that "is never earned" but that "springs from love." The company believes that as its employees treat others with grace, grace will be multiplied many times over.

The reason for the change in the fourth value from Loyalty to Love was similar: that the new value was greater than the old. Love, more than loyalty, focused on "securing the well-being and welfare of others. ... others now come before self."

FEO's website and inhouse *Landmark* magazine boldly declare: "Far East Organization is a Christian Enterprise. We seek to be a community of love and

a workplace of grace that welcomes Christians and non-Christians alike to work joyfully together, operating the business on the solid foundation of values and rock of Jesus Christ. ... We want to do good business and to do good in business."

Philip clearly believes that operating according to these core values, which he characterizes as "Christian," will be good for business, but his motivation has changed fundamentally since his conversion to Christianity. Now he views the company as belonging to God, and himself as simply a steward of it. FEO is no longer just a business to him, but a "ministry" in the marketplace: "I started in a way a ministry of sorts. I realized that God has put me here and there is a ministry that is given to me."

---

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**Exodus 20:8-11**

*Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work -- you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. (For context, read 20:1-17.)*

When we hear the word "holy," we often associate it with sacred, pure, pious, or devoted. Holiness also means "to be set apart" for a special purpose. In that sense, the sabbath was designed as a day of rest, different from other days that were full of toil.

**Questions:** How important to you is a weekly sabbath? In what ways do people observe the sabbath today? What happens to people if they never observe a day of rest? What is the value of the sabbath in our time?

### **John 8:7-11**

*When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again." (For context, read 8:1-11.)*

Once religious leaders, wanting to undermine Jesus, made a woman who had been caught in adultery stand before him in public to receive judgment. They stated that Mosaic law required that such a woman should be stoned.

In a speech entitled "A Community of Love, Grace and Forgiveness" given at the FEO 2014 Annual Dinner in Singapore, CEO Philip Ng drew on this text. He introduced the need for grace in the culture of the company: "All of us can and do make mistakes because we are only human. ... Let us not cast stones at one another or even put up barriers that prevent us from extending our hand of friendship to our neighbors, our coworkers, our partners, including our consultants, contractors, suppliers and service providers. It is too easy to find fault and pick on the faults of others. But this does not solve problems nor lead to real sustained advancement.

**Questions:** How hard would it be to practice grace where you live and work now, or in environments where you have lived and worked in the past? What are some of the barriers that work against that attitude and behavior?

How would you go about introducing the concept and practice of grace into a corporate culture unfamiliar with or hostile to it?

### **Prayer for the Right Use of God's Gifts (BCP p.827)**

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.