

STUDY GUIDE

BUSINESS AS MISSION

extending God's kingdom



INTERSERVE VISION & PRACTICE SERIES

Interserve is an interdenominational and truly international community of Christians, bringing God's love to the peoples of Asia and the Arab World through word and action. Wherever we work, we do so in partnership, serving the global church and encouraging newer mission movements. We serve in some of the hardest places in the world in obedience to Jesus' commission to "go and make disciples of all nations".

The purpose of the Vision & Practice Study Guide series is to promote and build a greater understanding of Interserve's ethos and direction through reflection, guided questions, discussion and Bible study.

Vision & Practice Series:
Study Guide for Business as Mission: Extending God's Kingdom
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study guide is to stimulate your thinking about how missions and business might interact within a wholistic ministry setting and to reflect on Interserve's involvement in this ministry area.

Within many mission organisations this connection of business and mission has been described as 'Business as Mission' or BAM. Some of the many other terms used, each with their own nuances, include Missional Business, B4T (Business for Transformation) and Commercial Ministry.

This guide is not intended to explore the various ways of understanding or defining BAM, or of the differences between BAM and tent-making. This has already been explored (from Interserve's perspective) in our Vision and Practice booklet titled 'Business As Mission'¹. It is also not specifically intended for those already active or experienced in the BAM space.

This study guide is actually aimed at those who are seeking to begin an engagement with the concept of business and mission within a biblical framework, and within the context of how Interserve understands and practices Missional Business.

BUSINESS AND MISSION

The relationship between business and mission has been much talked-of in recent years, such that many of us have some existing ideas or assumptions about it. Take a moment to reflect on your own ideas:

- 1] In what circumstances might you see business within the work of a mission organization as a significant and useful practice for responding to God's mission in the world?
- 2] What do you see as potential key challenges and tensions inherent in pursuing mission through business activities?
- 3] What might be some of the pastoral and spiritual struggles facing business practitioners in a missional setting, and those that support them? ☸

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

In the Bible we find several business people who were also active participants or leaders in a response to God's mission in the world.

Consider Abraham in Genesis 12-25. He is primarily remembered as a father of faith, but was also a highly successful entrepreneur with a huge livestock business and other commercial activities.

- 1] How did his flocks and herds (key business activities) enable his missionary activity?
- 2] What tensions can you imagine he felt between the best interests of his business and his call to follow God's mission (for example, reflect on Genesis 13)?

Consider Boaz in Ruth 2, a businessman whose actions powerfully demonstrated God's own love for the outsider.

- 3] How would Boaz's generosity and other characteristics have impacted those 'outside' the business? Particularly the poor? Women? Outsiders?
- 4] How might Boaz's own workers have felt about this man and the God whom he worshipped?


Consider Lydia (Acts 16:12-15,40) or Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18, but also

note Romans 16:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 16:19), who were key figures in the early church but were also active in commerce and industry.

- 5] How did their business interests enable their role in the story of God's mission?
- 6] What further opportunities (not mentioned in scripture) can you imagine that their business activities might have offered?

Consider also the Bible's teaching not so much on money per se (should we all be poor, or indeed all be rich?), but rather how the teaching focuses on the use of money.

- 7] How might the call of God on us to be good stewards of our resources affect how people are involved in Missional Business? How might it impact our view on commercial success and profit? How might BAM practitioners hold business stewardship in tension with the call to generosity?
- 8] How might the biblical theme of taking risks in the following of our call speak to a missional approach to commercial risk-taking? Cross-culturally or even in hostile environments? ❀



“ BUSINESS AS MISSION IS AN
OPPORTUNITY TO ACT IN A WHOLISTIC,
MISSIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL
WAY TO EXTEND THE KINGDOM OF GOD. ”

THE APPROACH OF INTERSERVE

Within Interserve we recognize the role that people in business have played historically within missions. The Nestorians of the 7th Century were missionaries of the Eastern churches.

“Many Nestorians were traders. Others were carpenters, smiths, and weavers. They [shared their faith in] China, where they filled appointments as secretaries, physicians, or stewards in the households of nobles and princes.”³

In the 18th Century after a move of the Holy Spirit among Moravian Christian refugees living in present-day Germany, this small group sent out missionaries to the Virgin Islands, Greenland, North America, Lapland, South America, Tibet and South Africa. Considered some of the first Protestant missionaries, the Moravians covered expenses through various tent-making and business enterprises with the cost of mission station expenses being covered by indigenous resources for over 100 years.

Interserve, as a fellowship, stresses three core attributes of authentic business as mission. These are attributes to which all our colleagues in Interserve are committed, regardless of their professional sphere of involvement.

INTEGRITY: being who we say we are. Our claim to be doing business in a host country is backed up by real, verifiable commercial activity, to an extent that makes credible sense to those observing us and our lives.

1] How can business open doors in otherwise closed countries?

- 2] Business is sometimes used as a 'platform' to gain visas for entry to a country. Are there any circumstances where you could see Missional Business being used primarily as a visa platform? Would it still be Missional Business?
- 3] How do we manage the tension between commercial activity and wider ministry objectives?
- 4] BAM is sometimes promoted as a good platform for workers from less affluent countries or those who struggle to generate their own financial support. What do you think? What might be advantages and/or challenges with such a mindset?
- 5] When is business as mission distinct from business for mission? Are both appropriate and of strategic value within cross-cultural work?

INTEGRATION: work is ministry.

Consistent with our theological understanding of the sacredness of work, we engage in business as a holy calling and as a primary context in which we model and exemplify servant leadership.

- 1] In what ways might people in a Missional Business setting demonstrate the sacredness of work through their 'normal' business activities?
- 2] What are some of the key tensions inherent in work being ministry (in a business context particularly)?
- 3] How might we support business practitioners in managing these tensions, particularly when they live and work in a missions setting?

INTENTIONALITY: being and making followers of Christ. We recognise that this is God's mission and that he invites us to participate in his mission. Our



identity and purpose on earth comes from being his disciples and agents of change and takes us through to the new heaven and earth.

1] How can a BAM practitioner, through consistent demonstration and proclamation, serve the purposes of God's kingdom? What might this proclamation look like in settings hostile to the Gospel, or in situations where it can endanger the existence of an otherwise thriving and beneficial enterprise?

2] How can a Missional Business practitioner, through their business, nurture people and communities in their faith? What might discipleship look like in this context?

3] What relationship could and should a Missional Business enterprise have with the local church? What tensions might arise in this relationship?

4] Could the introduction of Business as Mission concepts help empower local Christians? Could it be a distraction? ❀



CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Interserve understands there are multiple and on-going tensions and challenges in pursuing Business as Mission in the contexts we operate, as indeed there are within any model, such as medical and education, for example.

At the same time, however, Interserve believes that it is one of a number of key strategic models that we can follow in responding to God's call to mission in the world.

- 1] How can you support Missional Business practitioners in their struggle to see communities and individuals transformed through an encounter with Jesus Christ?
- 2] Could God be calling you to participate in Business As Mission?

ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER REFLECTIONS

To explore further what Interserve believes about BAM, you can read the Interserve Vision and Practice Booklet on Business as Mission (2010)⁵, which is available on the Interserve NZ website: www.interserve.org.nz

To read a compilation of articles on the theory and practice of BAM within

Interserve, go to the February 2012 edition of the St. Francis magazine: www.stfrancismagazine.info/ja/images/stories/SFMcompleteFebruary2012.pdf

For a series of case studies of Interserve BAM partners in action, read Interserve NZ's online GO magazine titled 'A Powerful Hope: Business as Mission' (Second Issue 2008).⁶

For a background on the wider perspectives and context for BAM, read the Lausanne statement on BAM (2004): www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP59_IG30.pdf

If you read one book, try "Great Commission Companies" (2011) by Rundle and Steffen:

www.amazon.com/Great-Commission-Companies-Emerging-Business/dp/0830838279/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

And for a wide range of good and up-to-date resources (including many links, case studies and suggested readings), browse the following website:

www.businessasmission.com/resources.html ☼

NOTES

- ¹ Available online at Interserve NZ's website:
<http://www.interserve.org.nz/RESOURCES/INTERSERVE+INTERNATIONAL/VISION++PRACTICE.html>
- ² You may want to consider Genesis 2:15; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Proverbs 3:9-10; 6:6-8; 11:24-25; Ecclesiastes 5:10; Haggai 2:8; Matthew 6:25-34; 25:14-30; Mark 4:19; Luke 12:1-4; 12:16-21; 14:28-30; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10; Philippians 4:11-13; Colossians 3:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Timothy 6:9-11; Hebrews 13:5; James 5:1-5
- ³ Yamamori, Tetsunao. *Kingdom Business: Transforming Missions Through Entrepreneurial Strategies*. Crossway, 2003. Pg. 184
- ⁴ Danker, W. J. (1971). *Profit for the Lord: Economic Activities in Moravian Missions and the Basel Mission Trading Company*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- ⁵ A complete set of Interserve's documents on BAM is available. Check with your local office for more information.
- ⁶ <http://www.interserve.org.nz/RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS/GO+MAGAZINE.html#PowerfulGOTitle>

Business as mission (BAM) is a relatively new strategy that harnesses the potential of business for intentional mission impact. In this study guide we encourage you to think about how missions and business might interact within a wholistic ministry setting, and reflect on Interserve's involvement in this ministry area.

This study guide is suitable for personal use or for a small group setting.

*Lives and communities
transformed through encounter
with Jesus Christ.*