

Discipling Entrepreneurs

A CALL TO COLLABORATE

A powerful and influential preacher once said, “I believe one of the next great moves of God will be through Christians in the marketplace.”¹ It’s been over 20 years since Billy Graham anticipated God’s move in the workplace. We haven’t yet seen his prediction come true—what will it take? Of the 582 million entrepreneurs worldwide, there are an estimated 180 million who are Christ-followers. But only 0.3% of them are currently being served by Christian CEO ministries. That means 99.7% of Christ-following entrepreneurs don’t have the community and resources they need to advance God’s Kingdom through their work. They may belong to their church small group, but their church most likely does not disciple them in how to respond to

the specific challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship.

Discipling entrepreneurs to fully integrate their faith is crucial to the future of the church and too often overlooked by Christian givers. Transformed entrepreneurs bear witness to Christ and demonstrate His love to their partners, customers, and employees. They create wealth that can be invested in businesses and ministries near and far, alleviating poverty through job creation and economic development. They influence culture through redemptive business practices and the goods and services they provide. Echoing Billy Graham, John Rinehart from Gospel Patrons writes: “Behind great movements of God are generous business leaders who advance the gospel.”²

99.7%

of Christ-following entrepreneurs don’t have the ongoing community and resources they need to advance God’s Kingdom through their work.



When entrepreneurs build ventures animated by the love of God, revival is imminent.

THE DISCONNECTED ENTREPRENEUR

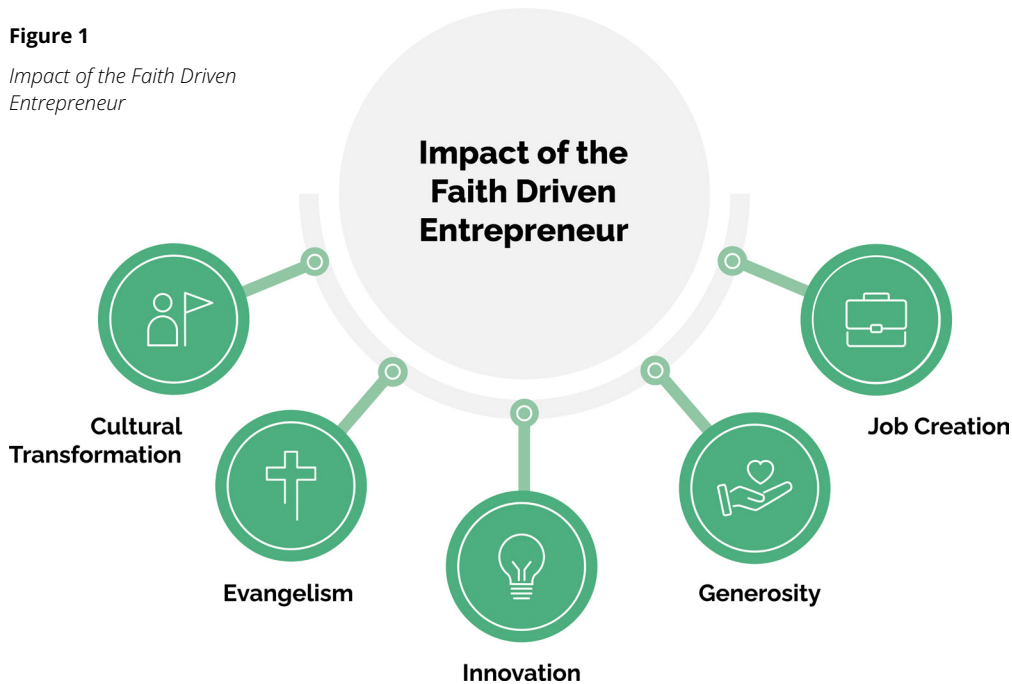
Two kinds of disconnections prevent Christian entrepreneurs from having Kingdom impact. One is internal, and the other external.

Disconnected from Faith - Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, many churches disconnected theology from the marketplace. Tom Nelson from *Made to Flourish* calls this, “the dualistic Sunday-Monday gap”³: a secular-sacred divide which separates business and church as different domains that have no claims

on each other. As a result, entrepreneurs fail to realize that their calling can be missional, and church leaders fail to teach them how to glorify God through their businesses. How many Christian entrepreneurs sit in pews every Sunday but are not living out God’s call to steward their businesses His way?

Disconnected from Community - The majority of business ventures—65% in the United States—fail in the first ten years.⁴ Entrepreneurship is a difficult and lonely journey. As an entrepreneur, it is easy to place your identity in the success of your venture. The resulting isolation and identity crisis leads to higher rates of mental health disorders.



Figure 1*Impact of the Faith Driven Entrepreneur*

Entrepreneurs are two times more likely to suffer from depression and three times more likely to struggle with addiction. They have higher rates of marital breakdown and divorce. In order to truly thrive, entrepreneurs need connections to peers, mentors, investors, talent, and training.

THE FAITH DRIVEN ENTREPRENEUR

As the Gospel message sinks in, as entrepreneurs realize how much they are loved, how in need they are of a Savior, and how valuable the gift of life is (now and eternal), their natural response is to come to the altar with all of their life as worship. It's only then that they are able to work heartily with freedom from anxiety, fear, and pride. They have access

to a nuclear form of energy that the world does not know. Of course, many of us have experienced Christian businesses which aren't as excellent as their secular counterparts. But our experience is that faith driven entrepreneurs who are activated, disciplined, and journeying with a community of peers are well-equipped to build a venture that makes a Kingdom impact. The impact of faith driven entrepreneurs is multifaceted and includes cultural transformation, evangelism, innovation, generosity, and job creation (see Fig. 1).

Cultural Transformation - Entrepreneurs influence our most deeply held cultural values, and faith driven entrepreneurs spread biblical values throughout culture like leaven in bread. Broken marriages, divided society,

addictive technology, economic inequality, and corruption are just a few of the symptoms of the Fall that plague our culture. Rather than conforming to this reality, faith driven entrepreneurs respond through creativity. As one of many examples, a faith driven entrepreneur built KnoGlobal, a company that prevents human trafficking through supply chain transparency.

Evangelism - Most people spend two thirds of their lives in the workplace. Business may be the only place where a non-believer encounters a Christian. This is true from the Silicon Valley tech worker to the data analyst in Jakarta. It's estimated that 25% of Christian entrepreneurs bring someone to faith on a regular basis.⁵ Casey Crawford, the founder of

Movement Mortgage, is an entrepreneur who is passionate about ministry in word. At a recent optional management training in partnership with John Maxwell, 84 of his employees came to faith.

Innovation - Innovation is about solving problems, and faith driven entrepreneurs determine which problems to solve—and how to solve them—through the lens of their faith. Their innovative products and services can impact the lives of hundreds, or hundreds of millions, of customers. For example, Lasting is an app developed by a Christian entrepreneur to help married couples grow in intimacy over the years instead of drifting apart. 94% of their 3 million users report stronger relationships.⁶



Generosity - Successful faith driven businesses are economic engines for Kingdom impact. When Christian entrepreneurs are discipled in the biblical message of generosity, they fuel the growth of ministries and churches around the world. Their giving plants churches, cares for orphans, frees slaves, preaches the gospel, and serves the homeless. They are also generous within their businesses and leverage the resources of their companies for impact. In the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake, Mark Sears mobilized his company CloudFactory to respond to dire needs by completing 1,000 community service projects.

Job Creation - Over 600 million new jobs will need to be created globally by 2030.⁷ The average new business creates at least five jobs in its first year. Businesses comprise more than 90% of formal employment opportunities in a given economy. One of the greatest needs in the world—from the suburbs of Dallas to the slums of Nairobi—is for good jobs. Faith driven entrepreneurs give their employees the dignity of work and the stability of a paycheck.

SCALING THE MOVEMENT

Entrepreneurs are perhaps the most strategic population to bring God's Kingdom here as in heaven. As givers, we have a critical opportunity to collaborate to activate and accelerate faith driven entrepreneurs around the world.

Over 2000 years ago, the Good News was taken all across the known world. The

Gospel message was shared on scrolls, the word was preached by faithful disciples, and communities were formed in every city. It was a radical, decentralized movement of Christ-followers that transformed history. We believe that the time has come to accelerate a decentralized movement of faith driven entrepreneurship around the world. This movement is made up of dozens of ministries and a rapidly growing number of churches. But it shares a common DNA—the Twelve Marks of a Faith Driven Entrepreneur⁸—to keep us united in faith and purpose.

There are three main strategic initiatives to scale the movement to reach the 99.7%.

1. Mainstream the Movement with High Quality Content

Technology platforms like Netflix and Facebook reach hundreds of millions of people on a daily basis. There is an enormous need for high-quality faith content targeted towards entrepreneurs. This content would tell inspirational stories and provide biblical teaching. Christian media organizations like RightNow Media and Alpha Course have shown that it is possible to reach an audience of millions. The expansion of the movement needs to be globally connected but locally relevant, with a common global brand that is contextualized with stories and challenges from different cultures.

2. Democratize Community through the Church

It is not good to be alone. No matter what stage, every entrepreneur should have access to a community of peers. When they gather with others on the same journey, they are encouraged, equipped, and spurred on towards excellence. Para-church ministries like C12 or Europartners offer community for entrepreneurs, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. The most sustainable place for entrepreneurs to find community is in the local church. In the US alone there are 300,000 churches. Church leaders need to be equipped to teach a biblical theology of work

and resourced to support their entrepreneurs. The Church also contains experienced business leaders who can facilitate community and mentor the next generation.

3. Accelerate the Accelerators

Presently, less than 3,500 Christian entrepreneurs worldwide are able to access the advice and resources of accelerators.⁹ Research has shown that accelerators have a significant impact on early-stage businesses, but the majority of faith driven accelerators are small and under-resourced.¹⁰ We need to replicate the best models and enable them to scale using technology. There is also an opportunity to come

Pictured: Sinapis Global Summit in Ain Sokhna, Egypt, March 2022



alongside secular accelerators, like Y Combinator or Endeavor, to provide chaplaincy and faith affinity groups to serve the Christian entrepreneurs in their communities and enable them to be winsome witnesses.

CONCLUSION

Capital is one of the key constraints that prevents this movement from scaling. We believe that relevant discipleship content and peer community should be available for every Christian entrepreneur and that deeper support through accelerators should be affordable. At present, philanthropic giving to this space is minimal. NCF's 2021 Report lists 58 areas that philanthropists are giving to—and discipling entrepreneurs isn't one of them.¹¹ To support the growth of this movement around the world, we estimate that giving will need to increase to at least \$20 million per year.

When entrepreneurs embrace Christ-like generosity, hope, joy, truthfulness, justice, and love, the Kingdom of God comes, in the marketplace as it is in heaven. We are inviting you to join a collaboration of spiritually-aligned and relationally-connected funders who believe that entrepreneurs can have incredible Kingdom impact around the world. Will you join us?

ENDNOTES

- 1 [“Faith at Work”](#) by Russel Shorto in The New York Times Magazine
- 2 See the [Gospel Patrons website](#)
- 3 [The Economics of Neighborly Love](#) by Tom Nelson
- 4 Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics
- 5 Sinapis Impact Data 2019
- 6 See the [Lasting App’s website](#)
- 7 Data from the [World Bank](#)
- 8 [The Twelve Marks of a Faith Driven Entrepreneur](#)
- 9 [Capacity Builder Landscape Report 2020](#), Faith Driven Entrepreneur
- 10 [“Accelerating the Flow of Funds into Early Stage Ventures,”](#) Global Accelerator Learning Initiative, 2018
- 11 See [NCF’s 2021 Giving Report](#)