

# Doing God's Business

**For a growing number of businesspeople, the marketplace is a platform for ministry**

When Debra Coover first visited Dr. Pete Sulack's office in October 2007, she had been suffering steadily worsening bouts of pain and imbalance for four years. Plagued by muscle spasms and insomnia, she says her feet hurt so badly she often felt as if she were walking on glass.

Defeated and tired of going to doctors, she tried Exodus Chiropractic clinic in Knoxville, Tennessee, as a last resort. The peaceful atmosphere, Scriptures on the walls and offers of prayer that greeted her were a pleasant surprise. Still, when Sulack assured her she could be healed, she struggled to believe him.

"I was pretty skeptical, but it happened," says the homemaker and mother of four. "My pain decreased gradually. I lost my balance problem. I still have a little bit of pain, but I no longer use a cane. It's getting better all the time."

Righ O'Leary is another believer in miracles after taking his 8-year-old son, Keenan, to Sulack in January 2008. Diagnosed with asthma and esophageal reflux disease at age 4-1/2, Keenan was put on seven daily medications, including an inhaled steroid. His breathing grew progressively worse. Two years later, the once-energetic boy couldn't participate in any physical activities.

Yet within a week of seeing Sulack, the boy had stopped using his inhaler. Two months later he stopped his other medications. "This time last year [Keenan] wouldn't even leave the house," says O'Leary, a medical sales representative. "Now he doesn't even have asthma. It's incredible."

Those are just two of dozens of stories from Sulack's clinic.

The doctor says they have also seen cancers healed, a diabetic whose blood sugar dropped 120 points and those with high blood pressure who now are out of danger.

Sulack's story is fascinating enough: an evangelical raised by a father who once preached against spiritual gifts gets filled with the Spirit and senses God calling him to minister to patients—and, eventually, to preach to crowds in India. Yet the stirring narrative of a doctor who founded Matthew 10 Ministries is being repeated in countless other places. Sulack is only one of many businesspersons ministering in the marketplace.

"There's thousands," says Bruce Cook, president of VentureAdvisers in Austin, Texas, and a member of C. Peter Wagner's International Coalition of Apostles (ICA). "Dr. Sulack is the tip of the iceberg. Business is simply a platform for ministry."

Their numbers are growing, agrees Rich Marshall, a charismatic pastor who left his pulpit a decade ago and now runs a corporate training and consulting firm in Denver. "There were a handful; now there's hundreds," says Marshall, president of ROI Equipping. "They are people who see their business as ministry, who won't leave business because ministry is there."

Cook, an elder at Glory House Christian Center in Austin, says 1,000 people attended his first business-oriented Kingdom Economic Yearly Summit last fall, and he's expecting twice as many at the next event April 22-25 in Austin. "I think it's a restoration," Cook says of the marketplace ministry movement. "What we're seeing in the marketplace is the church waking up to it. It doesn't have to be one or the other. It can be both."

Chuck Ripka—president of Rivers International bank in Elk River, Minnesota, and Ripka Enterprises, an import-export business—says fusing business with ministry was always part of

his vision. Before he founded the bank in 2003, Ripka says God told him: "Chuck, I want you to pastor the bank, and I'm going to use you as a model of what I can do. If you do all the things I've called you to do, I promise you I'll take care of the bottom line."

In Ripka's three years there, the bank exceeded financial expectations by reaching \$132 million in net worth. But Ripka became better known for praying with customers and others, including a New York Times writer who accepted Christ after interviewing him. The author of *God Out of the Box*, Ripka says dozens of people have been saved and healed at the bank, where tellers not only service accounts but also pray with customers.

"My goal isn't becoming rich," Ripka says. "It's sharing the riches of Christ with others in the marketplace."

That's a message Denver businessman Jim Barthel has been sharing with marketplace ministers through his Kingdom Business Alliance, which has exceeded 100 attendees at the last two meetings in Denver. An annual summit is planned for this fall.

He says Christian businesses have an opportunity to participate in God's kingdom economy. "God's highest priority is the restoration of the kingdom of heaven, here on earth," Barthel says. "We need to have a passion for the kingdom."

Sulack's passion for the kingdom has taken him around the world. Despite a lack of theological training, the 33-year-old takes two or three trips to India annually and preaches to huge crowds there. Sulack estimates that 100,000 people accepted Christ during crusades in 2007. In the last three years he says hundreds of thousands have been healed of such conditions as cancer, blindness, deafness and paralysis.

Sulack says the call to ministry emerged after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Raised in a Christian home, Sulack was

taught that the gifts of the Spirit, including tongues, had ceased. But his theology began to shake in 2002 when a friend called to congratulate him on opening a new office and ended his voice mail by speaking in an unknown language.

That led him on a two-year journey to understand tongues and other spiritual gifts. His quest ultimately ended when he called a friend in South Bend, Indiana, who had been mentored by the late Lester Sumrall. "I want all that God has for me," Sulack told him. "If this is of God, then I want it. I don't want Him to hold anything back."

Not only did he receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit during that call, but within two months Sulack was on his first mission trip to Africa, a prelude to the overseas ministry God would call him to in 2006.

Despite having a successful chiropractic practice that included two clinics and a financial interest in a third, Sulack later sensed God telling him to spread the gospel. "If you ask for 100 million souls, I will give them to you in person," Sulack recalls God saying. "I want you to become sensitive to My voice and learn how to respond."

Sulack—who has helped plant 38 churches in India and is building a children's home and school there—says he wants Christians to know that ministry isn't restricted to a church building. That's why he remains in the marketplace instead of relying on full-time evangelism.

"God can use you right where you're at," says Sulack, who this spring plans to debut a talk show, *God Can Use You*, on Sky Angel and other media outlets. "I see 1,000-plus people a week. People that come into my office will never step foot in a church. I've actually started a church plant in my office. I have a youth service on Wednesday night that has 60-plus kids, all getting baptized in the Holy Spirit."

## Seeing God at Work

David Turner says he made a conscious decision to make his businesses his mission field. His career started in 1985 with Southwest Commodities, a suburban Phoenix importer of nuts and dried fruits. Then in 1997 he formed Suntree, a California-based plant that packages peanuts, trail mix and other products.

But today the Arizona businessman preaches worldwide through his David Turner International Ministries. In India, he says he has seen thousands of salvations, healings and miracles.

A one-time traditional church member who decided to follow Christ in his mid-20s, in the early 2000s Turner was praying the prayer of Jabez after reading the best-selling book. Suddenly God told him: "You have land you haven't harvested. Why don't you start taking care of your land instead of looking for new territory?"

"I took that to heart and started making my companies my mission field and praying for people in faith and sharing about Jesus," Turner says.

A few years later when a charismatic pastor prayed for him, the businessman felt like he had been hooked up to an electric current. When the pastor asked what he thought about healing, Turner said he doubted that it still happens. "You won't see it—you'll do it," the pastor replied.

Soon after, a compressed disc cost Turner the use of his left arm. After a month of frustration, he cried out to Christ and was instantly healed. Then he received another miraculous healing of torn knee ligaments.

That touched off an effort to pray for others. Turner says that dozens have been healed of cancer and other illnesses.

"After a time, Jesus showed me His heart," says Turner, who

attends Scottsdale First Assembly of God. "He wants to heal people's mind, body, soul and spirit because He loves His people. [Healing is] used to get their attention and show them His glory and power."

Turner later met Indian pastor Harry Gomes, and the relationship led to his partnering with Gomes to lead crusades and establish an orphanage in India.

Despite the recession, Turner expects his businesses to gross \$150 million in sales this year, but he says those dollars don't produce the thrills he feels when he sees God at work. "When you see Jesus open the eyes of a blind person or someone who's barren get pregnant with a child, how do you get excited about doing a Wal-Mart deal?" Turner says.

But that doesn't mean Turner is turning his back on business. Though he devotes a healthy portion of his time to ministry, his income frees him from needing honorariums or expense allowances. "If a church invites me to speak, I buy my own ticket, pay my hotel bill and pay my expenses to go there," Turner says. "I go to the poor and spend money to do ministry."

Canada-based pastor Pat Francis takes a similar view. A doctor-turned-pastor, Francis launched Elomax Enterprises—short for Elohim Maximize—to fund her ministry work. The business grew from real estate and mortgage brokering to include commodities and jet fuel today.

In addition to supporting the work of her 3,000-member church, Kingdom Covenant Ministries in Mississauga, Ontario, Francis says Elomax has helped fund medical centers in the Caribbean and Philippines, build an orphanage in South Africa, and support programs to reach troubled youth in the Toronto area.

A member of ICA, Francis leads the Kingdom Leadership Network and speaks frequently about marketplace ministry at churches and conferences. She says the business world represents the

kingdom of mammon, and she believes more Christians need to engage in “kingdom enterprise.”

“You cannot influence a kingdom outside of a kingdom,” says Francis, who in January 2008 was appointed a United Nations representative to address humanitarian issues and systemic poverty in partnership with world leaders.

“For example, the church would say, ‘I’m going up to the high places to tear the devil’s kingdom down.’ You cannot tear down the [immorality] in the entertainment world if you’re not in Hollywood.

“If you really want to influence these kingdoms, you have to penetrate them. To influence mammon, you have to penetrate it. And you have to do spiritual warfare there. You cannot win or lose a game if you’re not in the game.”

She says her DNA is “charity and enterprise,” and she believes that God is raising up more and more people with a similar sense of mission. “I think God is going to, more and more, raise up people with a charity and enterprise DNA and motivation,” she says. “Because the solutions we [Christians] need require money.”

Cook of VentureAdvisers agrees. He believes the marketplace ministry movement will continue to grow as more Christians expand their focus beyond personal revival and exercise their callings in business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, religion and the family.

“What God is looking for is sustainable transformation that not only gets people saved but affects the seven mountains of culture,” Cook says. “Sometimes revival can be shortsighted. The gospel of the kingdom is transformation of the whole culture.”

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### **WATCH THESE VIDEOS**

View Pete Sulack's talk show, *God Can Use You*, and watch videos of David Turner's services [here](#).

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### **FREE BOOK ONLINE**

If you're interested in reading more about how to serve God in the marketplace, download three free chapters of Chuck Ripka's book *God Out of the Box* [here](#).