

# Opportunities to Affect: In Reading Groups

By: Jo Ann Sharkey

## Loving Monday: Succeeding in Business Without Selling Your Soul

By John D. Beckett

In his book, *Loving Monday*, John D. Beckett tells the story of how he inherited a small, family business and grew it into one of the largest companies in his area of industry. He does not tell his story to brag about his corporate success or offer secrets to financial security. Instead, Beckett states that “a major purpose of this book is to present the relevance of a biblical approach to business. It is to affirm that we can find practical insights, answers and direction through knowing and applying the inexhaustible treasures found in the Bible” (page 163).

Beckett does not promise some kind of prosperity gospel if one reads and follows the outline for business he offers in his book. He acknowledges that troubles often arise in business, and he has experienced his own share of tragedy and loss. Yet by placing his trust in the Lord and by building a company whose foundation relies on Biblical values, Beckett believes that he, his company, and others who honor Christ in their work will persevere.

Many companies recognize the value that spiritual nourishment, guidance, encouragement, and accountability in the workplace can bring. Some companies even utilize chaplains in what are traditionally recognized as “secular” businesses, while other businesses are finding opportunities to bring ministry personnel to the communities where they are most needed. Alan Tyson who worked with Tyson Foods and Dale Cross who works with FCS Urban Ministries are examples of people doing this type of ministry. You can read about their work in this month’s *Affect*.

### For Group Reflection and Discussion:

- In Chapter 1, “Peter Jennings’s Magnifying Glass,” Beckett explains how and why his business was chosen to be featured in a television program about faith in the workplace. Although he was fearful of being mocked or misrepresented by the media, he decided to allow the program to be filmed. Reflect on the impact of this decision to bring national media attention to his company.
- Beckett does not offer a simple formula for success, nor does he claim that if one finds his or her business in Christian values, he or she will be exempt from struggles. In the Chapter 4, “Trial by Fire,” Beckett shares many of the struggles his family and business suffered. What were the results of those struggles and how were Beckett’s faith and business impacted?
- In the Chapter 10, “A Different Window,” Beckett compares the difference between Greek worldview and a biblical worldview. In the Greek worldview known as dualism, there is a strict separation between the sacred and the secular realms. In the biblical worldview, there is no clear delineation between the sacred and secular, for Christians understand that all things that are in “harmony with God’s design” are good and all things that “conflict with God’s design” are bad (page 73). Reflect on how the dualistic Greek worldview is largely held today by many Christians.

- Does this worldview keep people from celebrating their work, especially those who do not work in a ministry-related profession, from seeing their work as sacred?
- What are some ways that Beckett proposes to change this perspective and encourage his readers to see all professions as a calling?
- Beckett recognizes that each individual holds “infinite worth” (Chapter 12). This is a biblical truth that he tries to incorporate into professional practices. How does he do so?
- During a time of high unemployment in his community, Beckett joined with others to form Advent Industries, a group committed to training those who were previously thought of as “unemployable” for the workplace. Driven by compassion for the disenfranchised and recognition for the value of each individual, Advent Industries gained success. How do you think a concept that acknowledges similar values could be incorporated in your community?
- Beckett, as the owner of a private company, may have more leniency and freedom than many other business professionals to incorporate biblical values into his company’s mission statement and goals. If you work in a profession where religious freedoms are not easily expressed, how do you think the core values that Beckett has expressed in his book, including value of the individual, a commitment to service, and prioritizing the other before oneself, can be incorporated into your workplace?

## Relating to our Mission:

- Beckett calls for accountability and a commitment to values, not only from those serving in a Christian workplace, but from all Christians serving in any profession. How can this commitment increase the work of the church both locally and abroad?
- Reflect on the eight Millennium Development Goals that CBF is committed to completing by 2015 (see [www.thefellowship.info/mdgs](http://www.thefellowship.info/mdgs)). As you read *Loving Monday* and reflected on your own work experience, do you feel that there are ways you can direct your work toward one of the millennium goals?

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## next month:

David Aikman’s *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Regnery Publishing, 2006) explores the influence of Christianity in China. Aikman encourages readers to consider how Christianity has been both received and challenged in China.