

## God Wants Each of Us to Be Obsessively Preoccupied with the Needs and Desires of His Other Children

**A**s long as we all grow our own wheat and corn, and stitch our own clothes, and churn our own butter, and make our own shoes, we need nobody else. We aren't even thinking of anyone else. We're only thinking of how to find enough time in the day to grow vegetables, feed the goats, shear the sheep, and shoe the horses. This is no way to live if you don't have to, and in the modern world, we do not have to.

By contrast, when Frederick, Gerald, Harry, and friends all specialize, they are able to focus on how to better serve one another, and in doing so, they will gain more in return. The good Lord incentivizes us to increase our dependency upon each other by offering the blessing of financial abundance for those of us who comply. In other words, we each win more of a living with less effort when we specialize and trade. This process is called business.

I've already told you what business is, but not what the definition of *a business* is. This need not be made more complicated than it is. Some define a business as any organization or individual engaged in commercial, industrial, or professional activities. Others define a business as any organization involved in the trade of goods or services to consumers. While these definitions are not wrong, they are overly precise. The truth is simply that a business is any person or group of people who have customers. If you have someone willing to pay you voluntarily for the work you do, products you produce, or service you provide, then you're in business.

Everyone who works for compensation can be considered "in business." If City Transit pays you for driving a bus, you're not an employee—you're in business. Admittedly you're in business with only one customer—City Transit—but you're in business nonetheless. If you knit scarves for fun and agree to make a few for your friends in exchange for a few dollars for your time, guess what, you are in the fashion/clothing business.

The difference between the bus driver and the person who knits scarves in this example is that the bus driver makes more, in part because they have specialized. If the person who knits scarves quits her part-time retail and food service jobs to focus on growing her business, she too might make more money by specializing. By specializing in a trade, rather than doing a little of everything, she can enjoy better efficiency and more disposable income, rather than spreading herself thin. If she goes into her own business, she will find that her customers become valuable human beings to her and she will desire to please them.

Are you beginning to see why specialization and exchange are the foundations for God's plan for human economic interaction? If you care about your customers as people—if you like, appreciate, and desire to serve them—you will be rewarded. However, if you prefer to spurn others in favor of making yourself utterly independent of all other humans, your life will be considerably less pleasant. There's a reason almost no one still homesteads in the developed world. Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century British political philosopher and author of *Leviathan*, who was almost certainly a Bible-believing

Puritan, once wrote that when we are alone, “the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

We all sometimes think we just want to get away from everyone else. We may daydream about some calamity sweeping away everyone in the world except ourselves. We think, finally, we will be able to get a parking space downtown. There will be no traffic on the freeway. At last you'll be able to watch television without fighting with your family over who gets the remote.

This is silly daydreaming, though. Imagine if it actually happened! What if everyone did disappear? Who would be operating the television station? That remote won't do you much good if there is nothing to broadcast, no news anchors, no TV actors. What good is that parking space downtown if there is nowhere to work? And with nobody operating gas stations or oil refineries, parking will be the least of your problems! Good luck trying to capture a wild horse or donkey once you have used up all the gas in your tank! Time for dinner? Feel like a restaurant meal? Out of luck—no cooks, no wait staff. In the grocery stores, food is rotting on the shelves. At home, your heat and electricity have gone out because no one is running the utility company.

The truth is that without other people, your life becomes even worse than that of the most impoverished third-world subsistence-level peasants—at least they have one another to depend on!

The Jewish people have always known the power of specialization. But where did they learn it? From the Bible, of course! Jews have always understood specialization, as it is described in both Genesis and Deuteronomy. In chapter 49 of Genesis, verses 1 to 28, the elderly Jacob blesses his 12 sons. He could simply have gathered them and said these few words: “I am about to be gathered to my people, I bless you all with everything good. May God take care of you always, and please bury me in the Cave of Machpelah, which my grandfather Abraham prepared. Good-bye.” But that's not what happened. Instead, there are 28 verses to record the distinct and separate blessings that he gave to each son.

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 33, before ascending the mountain to be shown the Land of Israel before his death, Moses spent 29 verses blessing the individual tribes. Again, he could easily have issued one

comprehensive blessing to the entire children of Israel and promptly taken his leave.

The idea behind both Jacob's blessing and that of Moses was unity with diversity. Each tribe was to have its own unique niche in the rich tapestry of a durable nation. Each tribe was to have its own specialty and to become dependent upon their brethren for everything else. If one thinks about it, isn't this what all parents would like to ensure for their children? Some way of guaranteeing that they would all have remained united, each as concerned with the welfare of his siblings as with his own? The same is true for our Father in Heaven. In desiring to unify His children, He created a world that rewarded those who specialized in some area of creative work and then traded their efforts for everything else.

Compare the outlook of the solitary survivalist with that of the business professional. The former views other people as competitors and threats. By contrast, the business professional's life is intricately linked to many other people. He has to be concerned with providing goods or services at sufficient quality and at an attractive price in order to attract and serve his customers. He has to be concerned with his employees and associates because only if they are happy and fulfilled will his enterprise prosper. Finally, he needs to be concerned with his vendors who supply him with the raw material of his production, because without them he is incapable of operating. Now whom do you think God prefers: the lonesome isolationist whose slogan is "I need nobody," or the business professional active within a complex matrix of connectivity in which he is preoccupied with making life better for so many of God's other children?