

## **THERE IS POWER IN EMPOWERING OTHERS**

**By: Jim Mathis**

My wife, Louise, and I were out of town for a few days. When we returned and I went to work at the coffee shop that I manage, I noticed a bar stool sitting in the back room. It had been placed there because some screws were loose. Since a bar stool sitting idly has little value in a back room, I grabbed a screwdriver, tightened the screws and returned the stool to the counter, making it available again for our customers.

It wasn't until several minutes later that it occurred to me that every one of our 15 employees would have been capable of turning a screwdriver to repair the stool. But rather than waiting for one of them to take the initiative, I had moved into action.

When I recounted this incident some days later to other small business owners I was meeting with, they agreed this problem is common among entrepreneurs. We become so accustomed to resolving problems we inadvertently train our people to wait for us to address their problems, no matter how small.

I realized by not allowing, even insisting, that others solve problems when they occur, I create much more work for myself and stunt the growth of the business and our staff. This is probably why most start-up companies require a new person to take charge if the business is to rise to the next level. The founding entrepreneur is just not willing – or even able – to properly delegate responsibility to others.

I would like to think that I have learned my lesson but the truth is, doing things by myself is part of my makeup. "Empowering" others does not come easily for me.

It seems that in business there are two primary types of people: Corporate types who can easily say, "That's not *MY* job." And the entrepreneurial types like me who think *everything* is their job. In my own experience, it seems very difficult to find a middle ground.

Yet in the Bible we see that empowering others – delegating authority and responsibility to them – is a recurring theme. For instance, in the Old Testament book of Genesis, God directed Noah to build an ark to become a sanctuary for his family and the animals that would be preserved from the flood (Genesis 6:9-22). Earlier in Genesis, we read about God creating the entire world. In comparison, it would have been simple for God to construct an ark Himself. Instead, He assigned that job to Noah.

In freeing the Israelites from Egyptian tyranny, God directed Moses to be His messenger and lead the people to the Promised Land. Then, after permitting Moses to get a glimpse of the Promised Land from Mount Nebo, God passed the responsibility for leading the Israelites into it to Joshua, Moses' protégé (Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Joshua 1-4).

Perhaps the greatest example of a leader delegating authority is found after the resurrection of Jesus and His appearance to His followers. Just before His ascension, Jesus told them, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20).

If the all-powerful God finds it fitting to delegate some of His work to others, shouldn't we do the same?

*Jim Mathis is Executive Director for CBMC in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A., where he oversees Homer's Coffee Shop. He and his wife, Louise, formerly were co-owners of a camera and photo processing shop in Overland Park, Kansas.*

**CBMC INTERNATIONAL:** Robert Milligan, President  
1065 N. 115<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 210 • Omaha, Nebraska 68154 • U.S.A.  
TEL.: (402) 431-0002 • FAX: (402) 431-1749 • E-MAIL: info@cbmcint.org  
Please direct any requests or change of address to: www.cbmcint.org

### ***Reflection/Discussion Questions***

1. Which type of business person are you – the “corporate type” that says, “That’s not my job,” or the entrepreneurial type that is tempted to try and do everyone’s job? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why is it often so difficult to delegate responsibility and authority to others? Can you think of a time when someone seemed reluctant to entrust you with responsibilities that you felt you had earned and deserved? How did that feel?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What do you think of the examples cited from the Bible about when God chose to delegate authority and responsibilities to others? How do you think these compare with everyday circumstances that call for us to manage by delegation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. If you can think of situations when you have failed to empower others to do work they are very capable of doing, what steps can you take to avoid repeating that mistake?

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

*2 Kings 2:1-22; Matthew 10:1-16; Colossians 4:7-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5*