

## **HAVING CLEAR VALUES SIMPLIFIES DECISION-MAKING**

**By Robert J. Tamasy**

What influences your decision-making? Is it determining how to maximize gains and minimize losses? Is it expedience, choosing what seems most advantageous for yourself, or for your company or organization? Is it based on appearances – what will present you in the best light to those important to you?

In my years of working with executives and corporate leaders, I found many had at least one document that served as a rudder for guiding their companies. Most had a “mission statement” which articulated what they did – their purpose for existing. Some also had a “vision statement” that expressed where they saw themselves going. Perhaps most revealing of all was a “values statement” that stated underlying principles and values to undergird not only what they did but also how they would do it – and why.

Roy Disney was the brother of the late Walt Disney, the creative genius whose vision ultimately led to the multi-billion-dollar entertainment conglomerate of films, cartoons, TV shows and dazzling theme parks. As co-founder of the Walt Disney Company, Roy Disney stated, “When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.” To put it another way, in making decisions, pre-determined values should not only direct present and future operations but also serve to eliminate options and enticements that do not align with those values.

This sounds good, but how does articulating the values an individual or company embraces affect actions and decision-making in a practical sense? Values may differ from one person to another, or from one business to the next, but for people who seek to integrate their faith with the work they do every day, one trusted guide should be the Bible – the Word of God. For example:

**For establishing priorities.** Jesus Christ was asked, “*What is the greatest commandment...?*” He replied, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” *This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*” (Matthew 22:36-40).

Considering what Jesus declared, how should our business practices reflect these two all-encompassing commands? How should an organization be operated to demonstrate love of God is first and foremost? And how should customers – employees, suppliers, buying customers and clients – be treated to show that we love them as we love ourselves?

**For governing behavior.** The Ten Commandments, stated twice in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21), itemize specific ways for loving and honoring God as well as interacting with other people in a godly manner. They speak of worship, avoiding idolatry, proper speech, avoiding overwork, reverence for parents, and prohibitions against such things as murder, sexual immorality, theft, dishonesty, and jealously desiring what other people have.

**For valuing what God values.** What does a godly business or professional person look like? One answer is to value what the Lord values, as stated in Micah 6:8, “*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*” Doing this may be harder than it sounds, but these summarize what He values.

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

1. As you understand it, what is the difference between a mission statement, a vision statement, and a values statement? Does your company or organization have one or more of these? If so, how are they used – if at all?
2. Have you ever sat down to articulate your personal values, those principles that guide and govern your own actions and decisions? What do you consider to be the values that are honored where you work?
3. Is it reasonable to think the greatest and second greatest commandments can be consistently observed and obeyed in the marketplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Why or why not?
4. How do you think today's workplace would look different if everyone strived to align with the 10 commandments in their daily decisions and operations? What if the command to "act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" were widely applied in work settings?

*NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Hosea 6:6; Zechariah 7:9-10; Proverbs 21:3; Matthew 6:19-21,33-34, 23:23*

### **Challenge for This Week**

Try to take some time this week and think about values – your own and those of the company or organization you lead or work for. Can you clearly state what those values are? If not, try writing them down. Then evaluate how well you and your company are living out those values.

You might find it beneficial to discuss this with key leaders or employees. A mentor or trusted advisor might also prove helpful in clarifying important values and how they can and should be demonstrated through your life and work.