PATHWAY to PURPOSE

Foundations Module 1

Excellence in a World of Mediocrity - Larry Burkett

Larry Burkett 1939-2003, Founder of Christian Financial Concepts, long-term friend and teaching resource for FCCI, author of 70 books, Larry Burkett was a Kingdom leader in a generation of great leaders. His legacy includes significant impact on organizations like Crown Financial Ministries, Campus Crusade and FCCI. His impact on FCCI went back to the founding circle of the Fellowship, nearly four decades ago.

The series you are about to review was taped in Cancun, in 2003. While the video production quality was inhibited by the challenges of lighting the meeting room, the audio is pretty good, and the content is exceptional.

The timelessness of the teaching will be evident. Larry's normal passion was enhanced by the fact that he was fully aware that his days on earth were limited by the cancer that was working its way through his body. Eternity was, at times, close enough for him to touch...

- Series Planner
- Typical Meeting Agenda
- 3 Sessions of Content

Business Leadership Group

Series Planner

Excellence in a World of Mediocrity — Larry Burkett

Session 1	**Distinguished from the World** Video Session 1 of 3 - 20 Minutes
Session 2	**Committed to Excellence** Video Session 2 of 3 - 18 Minutes
Session 3	**Change Your World** Video Session 3 of 3 - 18 Minutes
Session 4	**Group Check-In**
Session 5	**Application and Commitment**

P2P AGENDA:

The following is the typical P2P agenda for a standard 1.5 hour meeting.

Minutes	Typical Agenda for meeting with Video content
5	**Opening Prayer**
20	**Group Check-In** **(each individual limited to a few minutes; should be brief and dependent upon how many members are in the group; most groups can allow 3 - 4 minutes each)**
25	**Video Viewing**
30	**Group Discussion**
10	**Administrative Items & Closing Prayer** **(ask prayer partners to exchange Prayer Cards)**

Minutes	Typical Agenda for meeting with Group Check-In
5	**Opening Prayer**
75	**BLG Check-In Form**
10	**Administrative Items & Closing Prayer** **Ask Prayer Partners to exchange Prayer Cards**

WEEK 22: DISTINGUISHED FROM THE WORLD?
- Video Session 1 of 3 - 19 min

"One cannot do things the same way the world does & call yourself a Christian. God's way is not an alternative way, it is the way."
Larry said the first 32 years of his life; he stayed out of God's way, because God could take care of Himself. Larry said that he was not raised in a Christian home; but that the average school in the day he was growing up was probably just as "Christian" as a Christian school is today.

Consider the Roman Empire at its peak. How could they have been so stupid? They had the:

- Best conomy in the world
- Best legal system in the world
- Best and strongest army in the world
- Best government
- Best roads
- Best ethic

However, within 200 years, Barbarians overran them with primitive tools and methods of war.

In parallel, the US has been blessed with all the above, plus, the foundation that Jesus Christ is Lord! Yet, we are losing it, as a handful of dedicated zealots are taking it away from us. Historically, we have outnumbered them 100:1 or even 1000:1.

Burkett stated that, "The thing that they have [which we lack] is absolute dedication to the cause which they believe in…As Christians, we say that we have dedication to the cause that we believe in; but we don't demonstrate it."

Excellence by God's standards does not necessarily equate to revenue, or profitability. God does not define success by how much money you have, how big a business you have, how much product you have produced or sold.

Larry shared that 7.5 years prior, he discovered that he had cancer—Metastatic Renal Cell Carcinoma - only ½ of 1% lived beyond 2 years. He was speaking to FCCI 8 years afterwards. He said his seeming imminence of death forced him to think every day of what was most important.

"If I could do one thing for the Body of Christ, I would give all a terminal illness and put it on hold; but never let them know when it might be activated."

Key thought:

"There are two common words used in scriptures for 'believe'. Jesus said, "You say that you believe? I tell you the demons believe and they shudder; but it does them no good."

"As business people, the first question that we should ask ourselves is: "Are we willing to commit to excellence in a world of mediocrity?" Not just profitability or a good product; but excellence!

Second question we should ask ourselves is, "Do you [I] really believe?"

All that he did was soon measured by the question: "Is this the best that I could do with the gifts that God has given me for the Body of Christ?"

One use of 'believe' communicated intellectual assent. A second use of believe means assimilate into your personality, into your being…Believe in this context ultimately means: "…you think that eternity is more real than the world you can see."

Do you believe that you are governed by a set of God's rules that are absolutely valid in all conditions?

In today's culture, to some degree, there is no real difference between Christians & non-Christians—based on what they do, not what they say. When Larry was speaking, the Barna Group, The Open Tomb, and the Southern Baptist Association offered the following statistics about the state of Christianity:

- The divorce rate for couples who both professed to be Christians was 1% higher than non-Christians
- the average household income in the US was $44,000/year
- 60% of household incomes went to debt service
- The average household gives 5 times the money to interest, vs. God's work
- 37% of Evangelicals give "0" to a church
- 90% surveyed said they own a Bible; but only 80 % of them believe the Bible is God's Word
- 12% of those surveyed said that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife!
- 71% say they believe they are born again; but 31% say they don't believe the Holy Spirit is a real person
- Only 5-6% of Christians tithe, although 17% say they do.

Larry was convinced that one could consider Christians as a whole in the context of any area of life and find no discernible difference between them and the rest of the world.

Jesus said, "If you are not faithful with the small things, you're not faithful with the large things. For wherever your treasures are, there your heart will be also." Your heart has to follow what you believe.
In the 1990's:

- Giving to Evangelical causes was down 6%, while recreational spending was up 130%
- Credit card debt was up 550%
- Church attendance was down 16%
- the bankruptcy rate increased 100%
- the rate of pastors leaving the pulpit to do other things increased 110%
- #1 reason pastors leave the pulpit—money problems; #2 reason—pornography
- 12% of children said they received any financial teaching, either Biblically, or practically
- 16-18 year-olds held 34% of all credit cards
- Church attendance: 56% are over 40yrs old—32% were under 40—the rest did not give their age
- People over 50 years old give at about 2.5 times the rate of those below 40—with the same income
- Tithers making less than $20,000/year are twice as likely to tithe

What are the temporal symptoms of bondage? Larry strongly believed that finances were a great outside indicator of what is going on in the heart.

Discussion Questions:

1. Larry said that the US culture has shifted so much that public schools during his childhood were more "Christian" than Christian schools are today. Do you agree?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. His reference to Rome having every advantage in its day seems to be a striking parallel to where the US has been for many years. Do you think the US faces the same fate as Rome? Why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. The considerable volume of statistics quoted by Larry paint a bleak picture of the Christian landscape. Biblically speaking, what is the cure?

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Key Takeaways:

1. The concept of eternity should force us to realize how small a blip all of life is…A great question to consider in any activity is: "Is this the most important thing that I could do to use the gifts that God has given me?"
2. If we truly believe what Christ said, then eternity should be increasing in reality to the point that it is surer than what we can see, touch, taste & feel.
3. Eternity's reality should affect all that we do daily. We should be growing in excellence by Biblical standards that also bring more value to our products and services in the marketplace.

WEEK 23: COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE
- Video Session 2 of 3 - 18 min

Colossians 3:23 "What ever you do, do your work heartily, as unto the Lord, rather than to men."
Larry held that when we really understand who God is, that it is much easier to believe and to serve Him.

Larry referred back to his work with NASA on the Mercury, Gemini & Apollo programs. He reviewed the problem that NASA scientists faced in planning for the lunar landing module's footprint requirements. Based on their calculations of dust accumulation rates and their estimated age of the moon: Dust depth=[4.5 Billion years X {annual dust accumulation rate}], the dust accumulation on the moon should have been 16 feet deep. When probes determined that the actual dust depth on the moon was 1/8", the scientists then declared that there was more dust falling now than there used to be. Since they did not like the truth as it related to their theory, they proofed text and completely changed the formula and the theory to fit their assumptions. NASA's flawed reasoning was rooted in the failure to understand or appreciate God's Omnipotence.

When Christians in business do not fully understand or embrace God's Omnipotence, they sometimes miss out on God's best for their lives and often walk in disobedience.
Note: At time marker 25:46 in the original presentation, Burkett played a video clip to the live audience, underscoring the omnipotence and majesty of God, reflected in His creation of the observable universe.

> {a link will be posted on the FCCI.org website, since Moody Science will not release the recording for rebroadcast}
>
> In the live conference presentation, Larry showed a 9 minute video clip, an excerpt from "Journey to the Edge of Eternity." The video clip was an animated representation of a flight at light-speed, from earth to a point where the Milky Way Galaxy is only one small point in a cloud of 100's of Billions of Galaxies, each with more than 200 Billion stars.
>
> For Larry, the amazing pictures of God's creation at the edge of our visible universe underscored even more the unimaginable majesty and omnipotence of God.

Senator Harold Hughes, responding to the question: How do you know you are a Christian? "I once was blind; but now I see"

The same reporter followed up with the question: "What advantage is there in being a Christian?" Senator Hughes replied: "This earth is the only taste of Hell that I will ever experience."

"What is the standard that we should be applying to our businesses? – To do the small things well."

That is God's standard, not the world's standard. In Luke 16:10 the Lord said: "He who is faithful in the very little thing is faithful also in much. He who is unrighteous in a little thing, is also unrighteous in much." In the same passage, the Lord said, "The people of this world are more faithful in their unrighteousness than the people of God are faithful in their righteousness."

> "THE KEY TO LEAVING A WORLD BETTER FOR OUR CHILDREN THAN THE ONE WE WERE GIVEN IS TO MAKE AN ***ABSOLUTE*** COMMITMENT TO STAND ***ABSOLUTELY*** FOR GOD, MAKING NO COMPROMISE."

"Call to me, and I will answer you; I will tell you wonderful and marvelous things that you know nothing about. (Jer 33:3 GNB)

Burkett believed the founding purpose of the USA was to fund the Great Commission. He also believed it was possible to fully fund the Great Commission within the lifetime of the audience.

The way we handle money is never the problem, it is an outside indicator of the problem. Whatever the decision we make is, money is not the factor, as much as the value system we have surrounding money. A Biblical perspective will always lead to handling money as a Steward, rather than an owner of the money.

The rich young ruler was an actual person. Jesus dealt with him on a heart issue surrounding money. Ultimately, Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to pass though the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom." Jesus was speaking of an actual needle—completely impossible, apart from God.

In Matthew 25, all of the people Jesus spoke of thought they were Christians. Many were surprised that the Lord cast them into Judgment. This was a great illustration of the divide between assent and heart commitment. "It is so easy to fake Christianity—that is one of our problems."

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." – (2Ch 16:9a KJV)

"The greatest danger that we face is that when we get to heaven, God will show us all the things that He could have and would have done for us, if we were faithful."

PARALLEL BIBLE REFERENCE:

"Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. When the Judgment Day comes, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God's message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!' Then I will say to them, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!'

– (Matt 7:21-23GNB)

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that disobedience often results from Christian's inadequate view of God's Sovereignty? Do you think this is truly a root cause?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Burkett said, "The key to leaving a world better for our children than the one we were given is to make an ***absolute*** commitment to stand ***absolutely*** for God, making no compromise. " C. H. Spurgeon was supremely inspired by the words of Henry Varley, "The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." Do you think God would use any of us to accomplish great things? What is holding us back?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Key Takeways:

1. Jesus teaching on ***belief*** focuses on the startling thought that "The demons also believe…" God places great importance on belief that is not just knowledge; but transformational in our decisions and conduct. This thought is key to ***understanding and living*** faith in Christ!
2. "Doing the small things well" has an obvious collective, positive impact on adding value to our products and services. In light of Jesus' teachings, it can also bear fruit in eternity.
3. The Bible verses referenced above teach that followers of Christ will always exhibit behavior that distinguishes them from non-followers. Skeptics falsely point to this idea as a performance standard, or even legalism. From the Biblical record, nothing could be further from the truth [Eph 2:8-10]. 'Good works' do not lead to acceptance by the Heavenly Father, 'Good works' always flow from acceptance and adoption by the Heavenly Father.

WEEK 24: CHANGE YOUR WORLD
- Video Session 3 of 3 - 18 min

God's commands are simple; but they are nearly impossible to follow.

First Command: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Deu 5:7 ESV)

Second Commandment: "you shall make for yourself no idols"

Idols—what are they?

How do you define idols? Can family, sport, cars, houses, golf be idols? Is your business an idol?

If not your business, sometimes perks or benefits of business can become idols: attention, being served by others, 'being the boss"…

Jesus said, "Exalt yourself in this life and I will humble you for eternity"

Larry continued to refer to a video clip that he showed live, an excerpt from "Journey to the Edge of Eternity". In the 9 minute clip, the audience saw a flight at light-speed to a point where the Milky Way Galaxy is only one small point in a cloud of 100's of Billions of Galaxies, each with more than 200 Billion stars. The clip clearly established the majesty of God's creation—knowing that He spoke it all into existence certainly inspires awe of Him and humbles us as man.

"Whoever makes himself great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be made great." (Mat 23:12 GNB)

Larry promoted the idea that one's checkbook is one of the best indicators of potential idols. Better to take a hard look now, than be surprised in heaven.

Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Mat 6:21 KJV)

Third Commandment:

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain…" (Exo 20:7a KJV)

Have you ever walked out of a movie where someone took the name of the Lord in vain? Have you ever written a letter or picked up the phone to register a complaint? Have you turned off the TV in a similar situation, or perhaps called or written a sponsor?

Have you ever been referred to a movie where something that was very ungodly offended you; but the person referring the movie did not even consider it?

Larry said "It's never too late to start where you are—start where you can." If Christians stood up at times when people were publicly taking God's name in vain, we could help transform our culture. Where might we start?

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."
– (Mar 10:25 KJV)

Fourth Commandment:

"Remember that the Sabbath Day is Holy"

> It could be said that at Chick-fil-A, money is not their idol, since [some would say] money-wise, it would make more sense to be open on Sundays.
>
> One advantage that Christians have today is that there is not a lot of talent from which God can choose. He is perfectly willing to use anyone who is simply obedient to Him. In light of eternity, simple obedience to God is our biggest asset.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." –(Luke 9:23 KJV)

"In the land of the blind, even a one-eyed man can become king" Burkett

The Christian faith "costs" very little in the US. In cultures where Christians pay a greater price for their faith, there is a much deeper level of commitment. Larry told the story of a friend, a former Chinese dissident, who spent 25 years of his life in prison, 20 years in solitary confinement. For the whole time, he experienced freedom from his cell, only for unmerciful beatings. The pastor led 100's of jailers to the Lord while in prison.

Larry told of the dissident's journey to a saving relationship with Christ. The dissident had previously been a Chinese soldier who led a hit squad, responsible for killing over 10,000 people, including Christians. While a soldier, he observed a Christian pastor that was carrying human excrement in a wheelbarrow to sell it for fertilizer. The soldier assumed that the pastor was anything but a leader. According to the dissident, he challenged the pastor, saying that he could not be a leader and do such menial labor. The pastor explained that in the Christian community, "the leader is the one who serves the most."

On one of his visits to the USA, Larry asked the dissident what impressed him most about the US. "How much you have done without God" was his response. While viewing a trash dump in the US, he said, "If I owned your trash from your city, and could take it back to China, I could be the wealthiest man in my district."

Larry shared again that if he could do one thing for Christianity, it would be to give all a terminal illness, then put it on hold, so that all would realize the brevity of life, the importance of eternity, and the urgency of obedience. Larry was convinced that if all were one step away from eternity, it would change what they do with their companies, their assets, how they spend their time. However, it is not God's design to have us do what we do from fear, but to do so with a free and loving spirit. When we give willingly, joyously, we bring God joy and ourselves reward.

R.G. LeTorneau [founder of Caterpillar] "I give and God gives it back, and God has a bigger shovel than I do. I only give to get, to give some more." That which you hold tells what you do not believe.

One of God's principles for giving is that He does not bless in proportion to the giving, but in proportion to the gift's proportion to one's ability to give.

"Just a little bit more." John D. Rockefeller, responding to a reporter's question: "How much is enough?"

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you agree that the benefits or perks of business ownership or even leadership can be an idol?

   _____

2. Can you share some examples:

   _____

3. A good friend of Larry Burkett, Ron Blue, once wrote a book titled "How Much is Enough?" What do you think might be gained by determining a baseline for your lifestyle, which your giving of time, talent, treasures & influence could benefit the Kingdom?

   _____

Key Takeaways:

1. R.G. LeTorneau [founder of Caterpillar] "I give and God gives it back, and God has a bigger shovel than I do. I only give to get, to give some more."
2. That which you hold tells what you do not believe.
3. "And he [Jesus] said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23 KJV)
4. How much is enough?

APPLICATION & COMMITMENT

JAMES 1:22-25 NIV

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what is says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

Date Series Began: _____

Date Series Ended: _____

Participant's Name: _____

One of the Biblical Truths (Principles) I learned from these lessons was:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I intend to apply this Truth (Principle) in my business by:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I will begin applying this Truth immediately. I ask and expect my group to hold me accountable for this, and to check with me periodically to determine if I am doing so. Please ask me:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

BLG CHECK-IN

Annual Focus Word: _____

Annual Scripture Verse: _____

_____

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Rate Your Last 30 Days: Scale of 1-10 (1 = worst; 10 = best)

Focus	Score 1-10	Notes:
Business		
Family		
Health		
Spiritual		

In the next 30 days, I plan to start: _____

In the next 30 days, I plan to stop:_____

Optional: Recommend a resource (book, tape or other) used in the past 30 days for personal or business enrichment _____

MOST CRITICAL ISSUE YOU FACE IN THE NEXT 30 – 60 DAYS:

_____

_____

_____

DESIRED RESULT [perfect outcome]:

_____

_____

_____

What would you like from the group: Counsel Prayer Referral Resource?

ACTION PLAN (Report your progress to the Group at the next meeting):

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____