Resolving a Conflict between Believers

Allan Swanson has been an elder at Advent Christian Church for the past twelve years. Advent is situated in a western suburb of Minneapolis, an area known for growth of high-tech start-up companies. Such growth in this previously rural community has created rapid expansion in the town along with a shift in the population toward younger people who are involved in the development of these companies. This shift in population is evident in the makeup of the Advent Christian congregation with an increasing proportion being younger professionals with scientific and engineering backgrounds.

Allan has recognized that his position in the church would likely require that he become more understanding of this segment of the congregation. Also, he may have to provide the necessary guidance on issues that may surface in their lives. He is concerned that his theological training and previous mentoring activity has not adequately prepared him to fully understand the needed perspective to render such assistance.

A relevant issue came to a head for Allan when a member of the congregation saw him at the local coffee shop and said excitedly, “I hear Advanced Technology is on the verge of failure. Les Sims has filed a suit against Jackie Miller for breach of contract. I have no idea what that means, but it is sad that the situation of two of our most active congregation members has gotten so bad. What do you think?”

Allan has been on vacation for the past two weeks and is unaware of the litigation. He replies with, “It is a sad situation. I am going to call them both immediately.”

Les and Jackie had formed Advanced Technology four years earlier. The company was a specialty parts supplier for larger firms in the digital telephone industry. They had known each other in college. Both were electrical engineers and had been involved in an entrepreneurship training program offered through the university’s college of business. Following college, Jackie had worked in the marketing group ultimately as a product marketing manager at Motorola, a large player in the digital telephone industry. She not only developed strong analytical and communication skills, but also gained skills to thrive in a high risk, unstructured environment. Les had become a systems engineer for a regional health care firm. In that position, he focused on the development of project plans and schedules. Five years ago, the two became reacquainted as both of them were taking additional accounting courses at the local university.

Reigniting their interest in entrepreneurship as well as the desire to apply their Christian values in the business world, they ultimately hit on the idea of Advanced Technology. Jackie had seen this market niche several years earlier in her work with Motorola. Both used their academic and
professional backgrounds to first develop a product prototype. With financing from a local venture capital fund, they were able to get Advanced Technology up and running. Both also attended a seminar offered by a professional adviser on how to employ Christian principles in company management. Both fully embraced the concept. The general focus is that company owners need to replace the focus on self with an orientation to doing God’s will for His glory. Both Jackie and Les sincerely felt that God was calling them into developing Advanced Technology as a beacon of scriptural values.

Despite their best intentions, a combination of their respective personalities and business backgrounds soon created an untenable situation. After a year of operations, Jackie was thriving in the unstructured setting of a start-up business. She aggressively sought out clients and committed Advanced Technology to extensive product development to meet those client needs. Les was in charge of daily operations and production. He became increasingly uncomfortable with the production bottlenecks that occurred because of continuous product revisions committed to by Jackie. In spite of their strong belief in applying Christian values, these differences became overwhelming. Allan had become aware of difficulties at Advanced Technology but had not known the magnitude of the problem.

As a leading member of a prominent church in the community and as a friend to both Jackie and Les, Allan feels that he must provide some guidance. However, the relationship between Jackie and Les has become almost irreconcilable. It also appears several in the congregation are likely to take sides in this contentious situation. Beyond mending the fences in this specific situation, Allan wonders what he should say about the successful applicability of Biblical principles generally in a business setting.

**ASSIGNMENT**

How should Allan approach the business relationship between Jackie and Les in a manner that is soundly established in scripture?
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: