

*"... unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." (Daniel 6:5)*

I work in an accounting business. Our clients are primarily micro to small businesses – which includes start-up and owner-run businesses. We consult and assist businesses with mandatory and regulatory processes such as those relating to company taxes and VAT. We are privy to, and work with, the finances of a business – its very engine – which is understandably a very sensitive area. Finance is a high-pressured environment due to the level of accuracy that it necessitates, the sensitive nature of the information that it utilizes and the roller coaster of emotions that can accompany it. We are often the 'mediators' between the client and other entities such as SARS – having to break the news as to how much tax the business owes!

Sadly, when tensions are high (as they often are around the topic of finance) it can be difficult to differentiate those who follow Jesus from those who do not. Please understand that I am not suggesting that we can't have a bad day at work. We all fall short, but I am talking about the way that people consistently behave and treat others in the world of work. If you are unhappy with a quote or an invoice from a supplier, how do you deal with it? If you disagree with something somebody has said or an argument ensues, how do you respond? If you are unhappy with the quality of service that you have received, how do you deal with the situation?

God called Israel to be 'set apart' from other nations, just as we have been called in the new covenant to be "set apart as holy to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 14:2). I have always been personally challenged by the story of Daniel. In Daniel 6, at the beginning of the famous 'Daniel in the lion den' story, we learn that Daniel's 'colleagues' are jealous of him and they are trying to find something in his life that they can use against him - to get him into trouble with the king. In verse 5 we read, 'Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."' Daniel was truly SET APART. Even his 'enemies' knew him as a God-honouring man. Daniel's Christ-like character would not have been communicated only in word but in his actions EVERY DAY in the workplace.

I really want to challenge each one of us to look in the mirror. How do we treat people during business hours? Do we treat our suppliers with respect OR are we demanding and entitled, always haggling for a better price or some add-ins? Are we kind and understanding when they fall short of our expectations? OR do we judge them without giving them a chance to redeem themselves... exercising our RIGHT to use social media to complain? Do we ever stop to think that maybe we could share truth in love instead? How often do we as disgruntled clients just take our business elsewhere instead of reaching out and POLITELY sharing our disappointments? If someone is rude to us or an argument arises, do we respond in the same spirit – or do we show God's mercy and compassion? We are called to be SET APART. We are not to mirror 'the nations'. Let us be a people SET APART and where there is no ground for complaint to be found against us, EXCEPT in connection with our God!