



**ROUND  
TABLE**

A Life and Business Changing Experience

Curriculum:

# Servanthood vs Stewardship

CASE STUDY: A TOUGH PERSONNEL DECISION



# Servanthood vs Stewardship

## Case Study: A Tough Personnel Decision

The Truth At Work Round Table segment on *Making Biblically Based Decisions* discusses balancing the concept of Servanthood and Stewardship.

In that curriculum, the following definitions were offered as it relates to business:

**Servanthood:** *placing the needs and desires of another individual above your own or that of your company.*

**Stewardship:** *being faithful to maintain good overall performance (financial, strategic, efficiencies, etc.) on behalf of your organization. Sometimes this means you must make a difficult decision that has negative consequences for an individual or small group, in order to maximize what is best for a larger group (company) as a whole.*

As a Christian business owner, we must always consider these two components (Servanthood and Stewardship) when faced with a difficult decision. Particularly when one of the options has an apparent negative impact on an individual or group of people.

The larger your organization becomes, the more often you will need to lean toward the side of stewardship. As the organization grows, policies and procedures must be put in place to govern the behavior of your personnel, whereas when you are a smaller organization, things can be decided on a case by case basis.

In light of this summary of Servanthood vs. Stewardship, review the following case study.

***As you read it, continually ask yourself "Is this how I would handle this situation?"***

Take time to read and reflect on the questions at the end of this case study, and read the Bible verses that are referenced. Write down some additional Bible verses you feel apply to this situation, and be prepared for discussion in your next Round Table meeting.

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## Case Study

You have been in business for 7 years.

Your company, Genesis Group, offers business coaching and strategic planning services for small to medium sized companies.

You have a reputation of being a company that operates on biblical principles. You are grateful that every one of your seven employees are born-again followers of Jesus Christ.

Your office environment is one that is fast-paced and ever-changing. It is the type of environment where it is critical that each person makes a significant contribution to help the company hit its objectives. Due to the entrepreneurial nature of your business, it is critical that every employee find new business and effectively service it.

One of your employees, Willie B. Aroundlong, has been with your company for nearly two years.

Prior to joining your team, Willie had been in business for himself as an independent consultant. He had one major client that he serviced for four years. When you hired him, you were pleased with the fact that because of the revenue from this one client, Willie was not going to cost you anything in terms of his salary, expenses, insurance, etc. You felt your risk was low in bringing him on staff.

Your hope was that with other members of the team surrounding Willie, and with the nature of your organization, Willie would not only continue to serve his one major client, but he would also add several new clients to help grow your company.



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When you hired Willie, you explained to him that one of the unique aspects of your company was that every person on your team operated as if they themselves owned the business. They each take personal responsibility for bringing new business to the company, and it would be critical for him to not only service his current client, but add new business as well.

Willie was excited about joining your team. He indicated that having other teammates around would help motivate him to new levels of success and accountability. From an administrative standpoint, he was excited to join a larger firm, because he could enjoy an enhanced health and medical benefits program for him and his family.

From the beginning of his employment with you, Willie has struggled to find his stride within your organization.

Everyone on your team likes him personally, but on a professional level, Willie has not been able to make a significant contribution to company growth and development targets. He has been able to maintain the client that he always had, but has not been able to add new business.

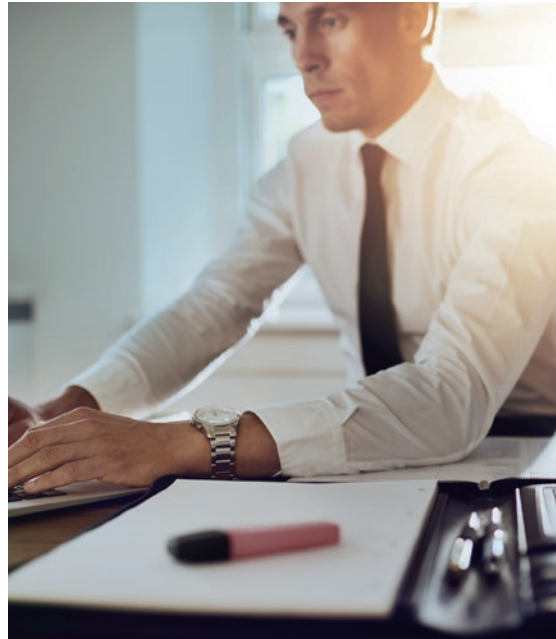
Within six months of Willie joining your team, you were convinced that he was not going to be successful at bringing new clients to your firm, and servicing them.

Because of your admiration for Willie, and perhaps against your better judgment, you began searching for other ways he could bring value to your organization.

### You met with him on several occasions to seek out alternative projects and initiatives for him,

hoping that you and Willie could together find something that was a fit, and that would help your company grow.

At the end of each of these meetings with Willie, he would assure you that the new opportunity you were presenting him was a good fit, and now he would really get things going and make a strong contribution to the team. Each time, while you really hoped it was true, something deep inside you told you that nothing would change.



You would tell yourself that since Willie was not really “costing anything,” you could afford to give him another chance to find his place in your company.

After several failed attempts of creating opportunities for Willie, you came to the conclusion that you could not find a fit for him in your company. While it is true that his client continued to cover the cost of having Willie on your staff, he was not helping your organization grow.

Two months ago, the two of you sat down for a “heart to heart” talk. The meeting went very well. By the end of the meeting both you and Willie came to the conclusion that it was best for both he and the company that he leave your firm and go back out on his own. You both agreed he would take his one client with him.

Because you really wanted to make this a favorable transition and treat Willie in a Christ-like way, you and Willie determined that the termination of employment would take effect 30 days after the meeting. It was determined that this would give Willie the time he needed to find office space and establish his own medical benefits program.

With the outline of the plan set, the two of you feel you are on common ground. The last piece of the puzzle is for Willie to meet with the company that provides your HR services to work through his transition plan, including establishing his own benefits package, etc.



You leave it in his hands to make his transition effective at the end of 30 days.

However, due to a vacation and a couple of business trips, at the end of the 30 day period Willie has not established an office and his benefits package. In order to help Willie, you give him a little more time, and extend the termination plan another 30 days. You notify Willie to that effect.

In your mind, the deal is done. In about three weeks, Willie will be out on his own, and you are set to move forward. You notify your HR person to terminate Willie's employment with you at the end of the month.

## This is the point where things get interesting.

Willie comes to you with some bad news. He tells you that a few weeks ago he learned from his doctor that he needs surgery. It will cost nearly \$15,000 to correct his problem. Willie asks you to make a change in the transition plan. He asks you to keep him on your payroll a couple more months because he needs to be covered under your insurance plan. If he is forced to go out on his own, he will have to purchase a new health benefits package and he will only be able to afford a high-deductible medical insurance plan. If he has a brand new policy it means he will be starting over with a new deductible, and he indicates he cannot afford several thousand dollars in medical bills right now.

He asks you as a Christian brother to have compassion in this situation. He expresses how grateful he would be if you could leave him on your payroll until he has recovered from surgery. You tell him you need a few days to contemplate the situation, to pray and seek counsel on what to do.

Over the next couple of days, one of the conversations you have is with your insurance provider. She indicates that one of the complications of the situation is that if you allow Willie to stay on the insurance plan, the \$15,000 claim will go against your company, and long after Willie is gone from your staff, your company will be paying for the claim in subsequent years in increased insurance premiums.

As a Christian you want to help Willie, a brother you genuinely like and care for.

Yet, you must do what is right and best for your company.

*What should you do?*



# Discussion Questions



Have you ever had an employee you needed to terminate, but extenuating circumstances made the decision difficult?



In the case of hiring Willie and having him on your staff, where were the mistakes made?



In this case study, was Willie in fact “not costing you anything?”



At what point should Willie have been terminated?



Are there any circumstances that could cause you to keep someone as an employee even if they are not contributing to your company’s goals?



As a Christian, what should you do now that Willie has come to you with his medical situation and pending expenses?

Verses for consideration:

*Proverbs 26:11; Matthew 5:40; 1 Corinthians 4:2-5, 7*



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