

Today, let's talk about sustained *marketing*...and its most necessary ingredient: *alignment*. For example, Walmart is strongly aligned with its customers who want low prices on a host of goods that provide solid, reliable value. Then there's Amazon, a company that's strongly aligned with its customers, people who often want several features at the same time: a mix of deep inventory selection, strong pricing, amazing delivery, and smooth return policies. But, as part of that alignment strategy, Amazon is also strongly aligned with countless third-party sellers who are excited to have a supply-chain partner in Amazon who excels at solving their thorny issues like inventory display, storage, and delivery.

Yeah, the key word here is *alignment*! The idea and the clear necessity of alignment is very simple: it's making every participating party a winner in each transaction! But although the idea is simple, producing successful and exceptionally sustained alignment requires deep insight and persevering diligence. Here's one key truth about alignment: a robust, competitive, consumer-friendly, long-thriving economy like America's is definitely dependent on supply chain participants who devote a tremendous amount of relentless effort in gaining and then sustaining a marketplace lead over their competitors as to alignment.

So, whenever someone talks about sustaining success for any organization, they need to foundationally handle the practical realities of the necessary *alignments*—with that word *alignments* being plural here.

First, that means there must be what marketers astutely label a *value proposition* that's offered by the owners of the enterprise that deeply resonates with potential consumers of that proposed offering.

And second, the alignment process almost always includes several types of supply chain participants: typically including the manufacturer or producer...then marketing folks...then the actual connectors to consumers, store clerks and salespeople, and ultimately, the consumers of the offering themselves! This integrated execution is essential in order for great organizations to become great and stay great!

So, today, we're going to dive into the case of the greatest alignments ever—looking into who is involved and what they do in their respective roles in the full cycle of transactions. And—this is certain—if we're going to talk about the greatest super-integrated alignments, we have to go to the Kingdom of God!

First, of course, is the initial strategy of alignments itself by Father, Son, and Spirit—yeah, the alignment at the foundation of the world! That's it: the Father, Son, and Spirit perfectly aligned about the business of the shed-blood offering—yes the offering by the slain Lamb of God for the sins of all who would call upon the name of the Lord for forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life! (Revelation 13:8) *Amazing*...

So, here's our quick takeaway #1 to start the whole shebang: the founders and owners of any enterprise should work to be in complete *strategic* alignment with each other about the future alignments they are pursuing through the offering of their goods and services.

Second, the Kingdom enterprise included creating humans with the free will that allows their lapses and poor choices—yes, even their rebellion, their separation from God, their sin. But the Godhead's strategy was to redeem all who would choose to repent from that separation—that's right, every person who would change their mind when they learned of the magnificent offering made by the Lamb of God on their behalf. That is exactly God's desired alignment of countless humans who choose to respond "yes" to God's offer. Yeah, God "desires all people to be saved." (1 Timothy 2:4)

So, here's our quick takeaway #2 to ponder and process: many people have gloriously said "yes" to Christ. But a lot of folks have declined or will decline the best offer ever made—eternal fellowship with the Father through Christ. So, if God doesn't expect everyone to respond to the best offer ever, neither should we expect 100% embracing of offerings in our enterprises either—including if our local enterprise is in the business of evangelizing and discipling for Christ!

Third, God foreknew that Adam and Eve would move out of His designed alignment by eating of the fruit of the tree. And God foreknew the massive cascade of failures that followed—yes, of humanity in general

and of Israel specifically. But, as the Word of God tells us, Jesus came in the “fullness of time” to save all who would call upon His name!

That’s because, apart from Christ, every person then and now is not in alignment with God and His righteousness. Every Jew who’s apart from Christ...then and now...is not in alignment with God and His righteousness. Every non-Jew who’s apart from Christ...then and now...is not in alignment with God and His righteousness. Every person who’s apart from Christ...no matter their religion, philosophy, creed, confession, ethnicity, or nationality...is not in alignment with God and His righteousness. Now, this next point is really critical for even lifelong Christians to fully grasp: every person who’s apart from Christ is not in alignment with God and His righteousness...even if they are vigorously pursuing following the Ten Commandments, pursuing holiness, fasting, doing good works, or any other way that’s used as a substitute for authentic relationship to Christ!

Yes, make no mistake, *the only alignment to the Father is through His Son!* That’s right: alignment to the Father is only through Christ and Him crucified—not even through knowing Bible verses or even serving as a pastor. You see, that *fullness of time* allowed people...then and now...to realize that everything had been tried to no avail, even the giving of the Law and God assisting Israel over and over again. God’s only alignment is through Christ. So, Christ and the Cross is the only path to alignment—now and for eternity. Here’s Romans 10:11-13: “For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

But *how* does that salvation come about in the real world? Well, here’s a third crucial alignment in God’s economy: *our marketing!* Yes, Jesus’s sacrifice embodies the offer of eternal life to a lost person from God. But God then uses believers who choose to be obediently aligned with His purposes to point unbelievers to Christ! Now let’s repeat the last few words of Romans just quoted, then add the sentences that follow in Romans 10:14-15. “...‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”

Hey, that’s the aligned marketing of the Gospel by those believers aligned to God’s purposes. Look, here believers are aligning responders to God by their “calling on the name of the Lord to be saved.” Not alignment through Mosaic Law or by personal holiness. Not alignment through culture or politics.

God’s strategy and process was and still is for all three of these alignments to be a part of His economy! And all three of these alignments bring unparalleled rewards—as revealed in Scripture. Let’s look at that...

You remember the Son was aligned with the Father from the beginning...yes, with the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world all the way to His sacrifice on the Cross? Well, He now sits in the uniquely exalted place at the right hand of the Father, forever! The book of Revelation is not focused on the Father but on the Son, His unique actions, and His exaltation. *Hey, those are rewards for amazing alignment!*

You know that countless millions of people have aligned themselves with God through faith in Christ for two millennia? And the rewards to each are flabbergasting: forgiveness...peace...everyday blessings ...eternal life...fellowship with God forever!

Then some disciples who take God’s instructions on aligning others with Him very seriously...you know, the marketing alignment of proclaiming the Gospel, fulfilling the Great Commission. And you know something? Many Christians think Christ’s judgement for believers will be a really negative happening. But 1 Corinthians 3:9-16 reveals He dispenses rewards for aligning with Him by building on His foundation!

These are clearly the three greatest alignments ever...the Son aligning with the Father...believers aligning with the Father through faith in Christ and Him crucified....and a select group of believers who align with God’s purposes of proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples. Three alignments. Stunning.

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. God provided atonement for all who would avail themselves of it. And God commanded our being the linking connection between the Ultimate Provider of grace and all those who would dramatically benefit from His grace. Were you personally startled and perhaps even offended that God's alignments would be actually called out as "marketing?" Why or why not? Discuss.
2. What about each believer's opportunity and rewards for choosing aligned obedience to Jesus's command to go forth and make disciples? What do you personally think? Do you personally align with Jesus's command? ...Or not? Discuss.
3. Are you currently embracing a theology or denomination or church that clearly affirms and acts upon the Great Commission? ...Or not? Is your local church growing with new believers in the sense of the early church when three thousand were added after one sermon? Or should we conclude that is "unrealistic" nowadays? Discuss.