

Dear participants

my wife Jeanne and I come from a place close to Zurich. We have 4 children and 6 grandchildren. We both are members of the Reformed Church. For many years, Jeanne was member of the leading committee of the «Landeskirche», the church of the district of Zurich, today she is Swiss president of Bread for all, a organisation of releaf of the reformed church. I myself was member and president of the committee of our local church for many years.

For almost 40 years I worked in our family business, a company which was founded in the 18th century in Zurich and is more than 250 years old now. We sell and distribute products and materials for the building industry in Switzerland. We employ roughly 300 people. Three years ago one of our sons took over.

When I was CEO and owner of the company, the following principles were important by leading my managers:

They should take responsibility in their activities and take decisions on their own. Only in a few cases they had to consult me. I trusted them and encouraged them to act as an entrepreneur. They got yearly goals which we discussed before implementation.

Of course they had to observe all relevant laws and act correctly and consider the interests of the stakeholders like customers, suppliers, business partners, employees, society and nature in general.

I was brought up in christian faith. When I went to collage and to university, reading the bible alone and with others was important to me. I know that God loves me. This makes me grateful. He wants to help me to live meaningfully. I want to serve him and people living with me. Thus the christian spirit influences also my professional life.

I want to give you an example: You certainly know Galatians 5, 22: «The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.» I discovered that it is possible to apply these principles to business. Love e.g. means interest and empathy for the person in front of me; joy means fun at work, enthusiasm, excitement; peace means to enable collaboration, to handle conflicts decently; longsuffering means the ability to manage economic setbacks appropriately and with sense of proportion.

Another saying of Paul can be read in 1 Timothy 6: «We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.» This gives me a certain distance to money. It was helpful when discussing succession in our family company. I could hand over all the shares to our son Matthias without scruples.

In 2014 the International Martin Luther Foundation awarded me the «Luther Rose», a prize for entrepreneurial courage and leadership on the basis of christian values. This is why I represent this foundation on this conference, although I am not member of the Lutheran church. The foundation wants to encourage leaders and executives to manage their organisations diligently and to support public welfare. Their purpose is to discuss the ideas of Martin Luther outside the church, especially his book «Of the freedom of a christian», where Luther wrote: «A christian is a free man and subject to nobody. A christian is a servant and subject to everybody.» Please contact me if you would like to get further informations.