So you want to be an entrepreneur?

If so, you are not alone! A recent Harris Interactive online survey discovered that almost 50% of 18-24 year olds have considered starting their own business. Many factors have contributed to the new popularity of becoming an entrepreneur. These include the downturn in the job market, the popularized success of young entrepreneurs such as Mark Zuckerberg (the founder of Facebook), and growth of new technology which makes it easier to promote products and ideas online. The wide success of the television show *Shark Tank*, where budding entrepreneurs vie for approval and sponsorship from a panel of millionaires, is yet another example of the emerging popularity of self-employment.

The reality of starting your own business can be difficult and demanding, but that does not mean that you should lose heart. The following points can help you decide if you want to embark on the path to entrepreneurship:

- **Know your personality.** Being a successful entrepreneur requires a great deal of drive, motivation, and a tireless work ethic. Do these qualities describe you?
- **Know your lifestyle preferences.** When a new business is starting out, young entrepreneurs often work long hours. Weekends and vacations may become a thing of the past, at least for a little while.
- **Obtain legal counsel.** Navigating the realms of patents, trademarks, self-employment taxes, insurance, etc. can be quite tricky. Seeking advice from a lawyer before you venture on your own can be a very wise thing to do. Click here for more information about this topic.
- **Learn from experienced entrepreneurs.** Networking with successful entrepreneurs can be one of the best ways to gain perspective about being successfully self-employed. Some excellent resources for this include connecting with Messiah alumni via FalconNet or LinkedIn, and joining one or more professional associations. Also consider shadowing successful entrepreneurs in order to see firsthand what a typical day is like for them.
- **Enroll in helpful courses.** Successful entrepreneurs are well-informed about all aspects of their business. Courses in fields such as marketing, finance, accounting, computer programming, and business ethics can provide you with valuable knowledge and expertise.
- **Know your budget.** Starting a business can be an expensive venture. It is wise to consider cost-effective ways of staying within your budget. Examples of this could include: launching a web-based business with little overhead versus obtaining a mortgage for a storefront, joining a warehouse club in order to buy heavily-used supplies in bulk, and/or obtaining a part-time job to fund your entrepreneurial efforts.
- **Become savvy with social media.** Sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. can be excellent low-cost ways to attract customers and build your brand.
- **Stay focused.** Yes, the work can be hard, but the payoff can be great. Many flourishing entrepreneurs had years of challenges before they became prosperous (for inspiration, read the bios of famous entrepreneurs such as Mark Zuckerberg, Mary Kay, Steve Jobs, Oprah Winfrey, and Milton Hershey). Surround yourself with supportive family and friends who can cheer you on as you start on your path to becoming a successful entrepreneur.

Additional resources:
The U.S. Small Business Association
http://www.score.org/index.html