

THE BIBLE & BUSINESS

Studies on Grand Biblical Themes & Their Implications for Business

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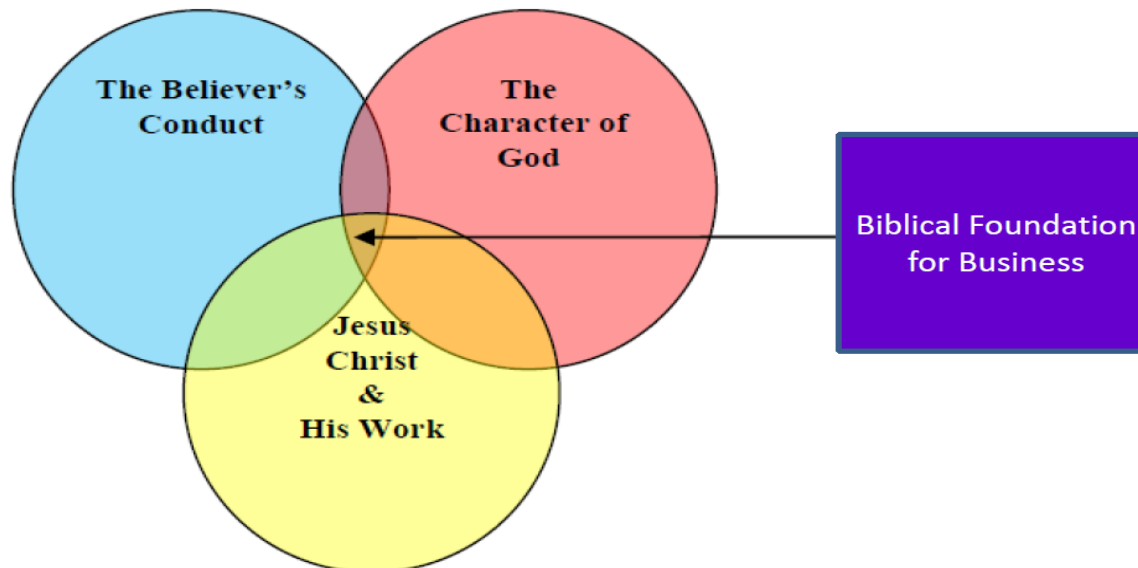
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This is a sample of a series of Bible studies centered on the “grand themes” of the Bible and their implications for business practice. “The subjects treated upon in the word of God, the dignified simplicity of its utterance, the noble themes which it presents to the mind, develop faculties in man which cannot otherwise be developed. In the Bible, a boundless field is opened for the imagination. The student will come from a contemplation of its grand themes, from association of its lofty imagery, more pure and elevated in thought and feeling... These truths will do a mighty work.” (Ellen G. White, *Christian Education*, p. 189) There is no substitute for the Bible study required to become fully steeped in the thinking represented by these and other grand biblical themes. These biblical themes, elements of God’s character, when saturated in the heart and emulated in action, contribute to the great object of life: The restoration of the image of God. (*Education*, pp. 15-16) Yes, business practitioners have a role to play in encouraging this restoration. “Religion and business are not two separate things; they are one. Bible religion is to be interwoven with all we do or say.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 349-350) Paul the Apostle says, “...**be imitators of God**, as beloved children.” **Ephesians 5:1**



These studies were developed based on the research for the books *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective: A Comprehensive Introduction* (InterVarsity Press, 2015) and *Management: A Faith-based Perspective* (Pearson Education, Inc., 2012)

The Cosmic Conflict & Business

By Michael E. Cafferky

Introduction

What are the guidelines for business that emerge from the Bible story about the cosmic conflict (a.k.a. great controversy)?

Jesus Christ: The central figure

- When Jesus appeared, he made a striking, radical claim that his presence and his work was bringing about the end of Satan the champion of wrong doing. (**Matthew 28:18; John 12:31-32**)
- The first leaders of the Christian movement interpreted the work of Jesus in terms of a cosmic setting. (**Acts 10:38**)
- Jesus Christ's mission is described explicitly in terms of the cosmic conflict: To give abundant life while rendering powerless the one who championed death and misery. (**John 10:10; John 16:8-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8**)
- Instead of using coercion, Jesus Christ chose to win hearts by demonstrating loyalty to the principles embedded in the character of God. (**John 12:31-32**)
- Jesus extended his own work by delegating authority to his first followers to confront the powers of evil. (**Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14-15**)

How is God's management style contrasted in the conflict?

- God promised to be actively involved in the struggle between right and wrong. (**Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:7**)
- Two of the greatest leaders in ancient times described the chief characteristics of God's government. These include faithfulness, righteousness, justice and loyalty. (**Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 45:6; Psalm 89:14; Psalm 97:2; Psalm 99:4; Psalm 145:17**) John, the disciple closest to Jesus Christ described God's governance the same way. (**Revelation 16:7; Revelation 19:11**)
- The chief opponent to God's program of flourishing life uses coercion and deception. (**Revelation 13:14-17**)
- The Bible story reveals the difference between God's character and Satan's character. (**Exodus 34:6-7; Acts 13:10; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8-9**)

How can we fulfill our role in this cosmic conflict?

- By being whole-hearted in our commitment to Christ. (**2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 John 3:10-14; Revelation 14:12**)
- By participating! Paul, the entrepreneur, said that believers are on stage in this contest. (**1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Timothy 6:12**)
- By imitating the "Manager of the Universe." (**Ephesians 5:1; 3 John 1:11**)
- By *servicing* others rather than *coercing* them, but also by setting boundaries. (**Matthew 20:25-26**)
- By developing core competencies in using the key resource that provides a competitive advantage in this conflict. (**2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 6:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8**)

- By being faithful to the principles of right doing in the marketplace. Paul, the tent maker, and James gave encouragement to be faithful to the ancient principles of right. (**Ephesians 4:27; James 4:7**) The context includes the marketplace.
- By choosing carefully when we should put our careers on the line to speak up for right, come what may. (**Proverbs 9:7-8; Amos 5:10**) Not everyone is called to be a prophetic voice in the marketplace every day, for every issue.

What are the implications for business?

Here are just a few examples:

- Prevent fraud, theft, cheating from destroying an organization by supporting the use of generally accepted accounting principles.
- Encourage people inside and outside the organization to act with integrity and avoid wrong doing that could harm others.
- Promote freedom to choose, but set limits on freedom so as to prevent anarchy; avoid using coercion and manipulation. Put limits on destructive employee behaviors.
- Prevent bullying, open expressions of anger or coercion.
- Use managerial control and feedback reporting systems as positive influences on ethical behavior (openness, transparency).
- Set the atmosphere in the company that encourages positive welfare producing behaviors of employees, customers and suppliers and that discourages behaviors that are destructive of the organization or the larger community.
- Foster a balance of power between those who are in higher authority and those in lower authority.
- Think carefully regarding which issues for which you are willing to put your career on the line.

Points to Ponder

- On which side of the contest are you?
- What are you doing to champion right in the part of the marketplace where you work?
- When was the last time you encouraged those around you to follow integrity and justice?
- Is it possible to win the battle between right and wrong in the marketplace all by yourself?
- How is God at work in your work as you fulfill your responsibilities in the marketplace?

Consider this: The cosmic conflict described in the Bible reveals how God manages the universe when some stakeholders openly rebel against his plan for flourishing life. In our work in the marketplace, when we honor the Manager of the Universe and His character, when we advocate on behalf of the fundamental principles revealed in the conflict, when we integrate these management principles into our business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

Creation's Message for Business Professionals

by Michael E. Cafferky

Introduction

What are the guidelines for business that are either stated or implied in the famous Creation Story (**Genesis 1-3**)?

Jesus Christ: The Original Entrepreneur- Investor

Jesus Christ is the originator of the value chain which is integral to business activities. (**Isaiah 44:24; John 1:3, 10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:13-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; Revelation 4:11**)

- Jesus Christ is the owner of all things. This ownership leads him to respect and care for what he owns. (Yet, he has entrusted to us the use of his property as a distribution system for his blessings (**Psalm 24:1; 104:24**))
- Everything that humans do in commerce involves something that came directly from the hand of Christ, the Creator.
- Our daily worship is directed toward the One who made everything the marketplace depends upon. (**Revelation 14:7**)

When God created this earth, he took a risk allowing freedom of choice. His action to create this earth and establish day-to-day operations of flourishing life were entrepreneurial. It involved creativity, innovation, division of labor, coordination of labor and supply chain management. It had a goal larger than economic well-being. The bigger goal was for flourishing life and happiness for all involved.

What is the larger purpose that Jesus Christ has for us in our work in business?

- Creation is where we first see God coming to this earth to bless, to make a place for flourishing life to give abundant life. Creation is the story that God came with the gift of life. God is a goal-oriented worker who followed a design to serve and bless others. He created us in his own image to participate in this work of blessing by acting on his behalf. (**Genesis 1:26-28; Acts 17:24-26; Ephesians 2:10**) Accordingly, business provides the setting in which humans can share in the joy of providing flourishing life.
- Dominion over the earth (**Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:15; Psalm 8:3-6**) involves not only mastery and control over nature to build the carrying capacity of the earth to support increased population, it involves a more fundamental purpose, namely to care for and bless others with flourishing life. It also involves caring for the needs of the earth as a worker cares for the needs of his employer and the employer's organization. (**Genesis 2:15**)
- Our work is not independent from God. We work for him and with him. (**1 Corinthians 3:9; Colossians 3:23**)
- The wise, power employed at creation is the same power at work as we are *recreated* in us His image. Humans have a part to play in this recreation, too. (**2 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10; Col 3:10; 2 Pet 1:4**)

What are the implications for business from the Creation story (Genesis 1-3)?

- God created a variety of different elements in the earth that, collectively, are designed to support flourishing life. From an organizational point of view, we see a high degree of specialization and a coordination of goal-oriented effort where humans share in the leadership for flourishing.
- A structural division in time was set aside for the purpose of rest (**Genesis 2:1-3**). We need time away from work, too.
- Creation shows the interdependence we have with each other and with the earth itself (**Genesis 1-2**). Fostering flourishing life means fostering interdependencies. Create mechanisms for workers to support each other in their work; Remove barriers that limit interdependence (structural barriers in how workers are organized – division of work, coordination of work; Establish parameters for sharing or accessing shared resources like inventory, commonly shared equipment)
- Moral authority is found in God, not humans. (**Genesis 3**) In business, act as a community agent for preserving and protecting God's moral authority.
- Humans are given a wide latitude of freedom, but within boundaries. Freedom should not lead to anarchy.
- There are consequences to our actions.
- Earth's resources and the people on earth are not merely resources to be exploited. The earth is holy. (**Leviticus 27:30**)
- Be mindful that business is one setting for the restoration of the image of God.
- Invest time and resources to produce that which promotes flourishing life.
- Avoid making and selling products that harm living things. As risk of harm increases for a particular product, work diligently to minimize these risks; educate stakeholders regarding the risks of harm; make improvements with continued learning about the risks; recall damaged products. Plan for a career in an industry or business that supports long-term flourishing life or one that counteracts the forces which undermine flourishing.
- Respect the earth and all that it contains; minimize harm to the earth and its resources; clean up after business activities.
- Improve the physical work spaces and working conditions of workers: Clean air and water, placement of materials, machines, work surfaces, posture (ergonomics), improve physical comfort in highly demanding tasks and provide rest and recovery.

Consider this: Creation reveals the character of God. In our work in the marketplace, when we honor creation and the elements of God's character that it stands for, when we advocate on behalf of the fundamental principles revealed in the Creation story, when we integrate these principles into our own habits in business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

How is God at work in your work as you fulfill your responsibilities in the marketplace?

Radical Commitment To God's Plan & Business

Michael E. Cafferky

Introduction

What can we learn for business from the Bible idea of *holiness*?

What does the idea of *holiness* mean in Scripture?

The idea of holiness has many facets making it a deep, rich theme of Scripture:

- Human holiness is not on par with God's holiness. We must humbly acknowledge that our holiness does not equal his. **1 Samuel 2:2; Revelation 15:4**
- God's holiness energizes him to come to us with redemption. His holiness is the reason we can rejoice in his faithfulness to his promises of redemption. **Exodus 15:13; 1 Chronicles 16:35; Psalm 33:21; 68:4-6; 105:3; Isaiah 25:9; 48:17; 54:5**
- God's holiness separates him from us. Holiness involves a whole hearted commitment to the process of separating ourselves from things and actions which undermine God's plan for flourishing. **2 Chronicles 29:5; Psalm 24:3-4; Romans 11:16; 1 Corinthians 7:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:27; Colossians 1:22; 3:12; 1 Peter 3:11; 2:21-22; 1 John 3:3**
- The call to holiness is part of God's eternal plan for us. **Ephesians 1:4**
- God's call to us is, among other things, a call imitate his holiness in our actions. **Leviticus 11:44-45; Leviticus 19:2; Leviticus 20:7; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:21-22; 2 Peter 3:11**
- Being consecrated or sacred means engaging in a radical commitment to be set apart for service as a co-worker with God in the fulfillment of God's promises. **Exodus 29:37; 30:29; Leviticus 10:3; 11:44-45; 20:26**
- Holiness is intertwined with faithfulness (truth) and righteousness. **Psalm 15:1-5; Psalm 71:22; Isaiah 5:16**
- Holiness is not just individual but also something for social groups to emulate. **Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 28:9; Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:11**

What are the implications for business from the Bible theme of holiness?

- One of the portions of the Bible that is sometimes called the "**Holiness Code**" is found in the book of Leviticus and supported in Deuteronomy. This book has several things to say that are directly relevant to business.
- Treat everyone fairly and avoid improving your own financial position by hurting another party. **Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14**
- Be generous with those who are at the margins of economic productivity. Pull those at the margins into the core of productivity who have a difficult time getting access to the marketplace. **Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19**
- Have compassion. Do not take an injurious or insulting action toward other people who cannot act to prevent the injury or the insult. Do not secretly harm others for your own advantage who cannot defend themselves or make choices because they lack key information. **Leviticus 19:14, 32; Deuteronomy 27:18**

- Act with integrity. Be impartial in how you treat people regardless of their social-economic position. **Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 16:18-20**
- Protect the safety of another person including their reputation. Do not slander. Share the responsibility for being prudent by taking precautions to prevent physical injury to others. **Leviticus 19:16; Deuteronomy 22:8**
- Ecology and fairness: Develop natural resources sustainably. Don't waste a key resource for a something other than its designated purpose if doing so will prevent the community from enjoying its full, intended value. **Leviticus 19:23; Deuteronomy 20:19-20**
- Equality. Treat strangers as equals by not oppressing them or doing them harm. Do not exact a promise from someone who is known to have a difficult time repaying. **Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 24:17**
- Honesty in trade. Do not use unjust business systems to deceive. **Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13ff**

Points to Ponder

- The commitment to emulate God's holiness places on us a responsibility to make changes in our moral actions in a social environment. The faithful follower will not be content to sit idly by when there is an opportunity to improve moral action.
- Be faithful in paying what you promise to vendors. Don't try to manipulate vendors with your words in order to avoid paying on time.
- Make the commitment never to engage in corrupt practices.
- Protect another person's reputation by not slandering. At the same time, help others in the community avoid injury from persons who are destructive: Give warnings.
- Don't use what you know, that the other party does not know, to take advantage of other parties.

Consider this: Holiness in all dimensions of life is a central element of the character of God. In our work in the marketplace, when we imitate God by staying far away from actions that undermine God's plan for flourishing life, when we advocate on behalf of wholehearted commitment to principles that foster flourishing, when we integrate holiness thinking and action into our own habits in business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

For examples of how holiness relates to business, contact Michael E. Cafferky.

Shalom & Business

By Michael E. Cafferky

Introduction

What can we learn for business from the Bible idea of *shalom* (peace)?

What is shalom?

Shalom means flourishing, well-being and happiness in all dimensions of life: spiritual well-being, physical health, social harmony, justice, international peace and economic well-being. (**Psalm 23; Psalm 72; Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 59:8**)

- God's plan for humans is to experience all the blessings of *shalom* (peace) that he had promised in the covenant. We have a role to play in experiencing shalom. (**Numbers 6:24; Deuteronomy 4:1-8; 6:18, 24; Psalm 34:14; Zechariah 8:16-19**)
- The hope and promise of a full life of well-being is the essence of *Shalom* (**Leviticus 25:18; Deuteronomy 4:1-8**)
- God's law is the prescription for a life of peace and prosperity (**Leviticus 25:18; Deuteronomy 30:16; Psalm 78:10; Psalm 119:144, 165**).
- The Bible contrasts shalom with misery. (**Genesis 2:9; Genesis 41:30; Psalm 37:27; Psalm 41:1; Isaiah 45:7; Jeremiah 29:11; Jeremiah 39:16**)
- The economic dimension of shalom is the only one with constraints placed upon it. The constraint on economic well-being is brought up three times in the Decalogue. (**Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 20:15; Exodus 20:17**)
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of shalom. (**John 10:10; Ephesians 2:14**)

What does the Bible say about prosperity?

- Ultimately, prosperity comes from God. (**Deuteronomy 8:11-18; Proverbs 10:22; Ecclesiastes 5:19**)
- Prosperity is *multidimensional*. At the root is the idea of shalom.
- Prosperity is *multigenerational*. (**Genesis 45:10; Deuteronomy 4:40; 6:4-7; 7:9; Psalm 128:6; Proverbs 13:22**)
- Prosperity is *communal* and *individual*. The dominant emphasis is on community prosperity.
 - Community emphasis: (**Deuteronomy 4:40; 8:18; Jeremiah 29:4-7; Ezekiel 37:26; Zechariah 1:17; Malachi 3:9-12**)
 - Individual emphasis: (**Leviticus 18:5; Joshua 1:7-8; 1 Samuel 18:14-15; 1 Chronicles 4:10; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 23:1; 92:12**)
- True prosperity is something we should pursue and pray for. (**Psalm 122:6; Jeremiah 29:7**)
- Some things more important than money include: Truth (**Proverbs 23:23**); reputation (**Proverbs 22:1**); wisdom. (**Proverbs 3:14; Proverbs 8:11, 19; 16:16**); knowledge. (**Proverbs 8:10; Proverbs 20:15**); diligence (**Proverbs 12:27**); covenant (**Psalm 119:14, 72, 127, 162**); The fear of the Lord (**Proverbs 15:16**); Righteousness (**Psalm 37:16; 1 Timothy 6:11**).

What are the implications for business from shalom?

- Work to remove injustice / unfairness in the work place and market.
- Keep economic goals centered on a wide definition of "prosperity" in all its dimensions for the wider community.
- When financial goal becomes super-important, manage the impact of this goal on the other goals of shalom.
 - Monitor the social relationships and contribute to the sense of community and mutual benefit. Show that you are happy to see your workers, encourage storytelling, get deeper than small talk, give credit to others often, contribute to others feeling confident, challenge workers to push themselves, connect people together in work groups, informal groups and honor workers' desires to worship God.
 - Find ways to support each other in the work to lessen the toilsome burden elements of work.
 - Find out what in your business causes the most misery for workers, customers and the larger community. Work together to reduce or eliminate this.
- Invest time and resources to make products that promote positive, flourishing life or that counteract the effects of other products which detract from flourishing life.
- Avoid making and selling products that harm living things. As risk of harm increases for a particular product, work diligently to minimize these risks; educate stakeholders regarding the risks of harm; make improvements with continued learning about the risks; recall damaged products.
- Plan for a career in an industry or business that supports long-term flourishing life or one that counteracts the forces of evil which undermine flourishing life.
- Respect the earth and all that it contains; Avoid pollution; clean up after polluting.
- Foster interdependence: Create mechanisms for workers to support each other in their work; Remove barriers that limit interdependence (structural barriers in how workers are organized – division of work, coordination of work).
- Improve the physical work spaces and working conditions of workers: Clean air and water, placement of materials, machines, work surfaces, posture (ergonomics), improve physical comfort in highly demanding tasks, and provide rest and recovery.

Consider this: Fostering abundant life in all dimensions is a central element of the character of God. In our work in the marketplace, when we imitate God by upholding principles that lead to well-being in all dimensions, when we advocate on behalf of flourishing life, when we integrate shalom thinking and action into our own habits in business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

For more information on the biblical idea of *prosperity*, contact Michael E. Cafferky.

Loving Kindness & Business

Michael E. Cafferky

Introduction

What are the guidelines for business that come from the Bible concept of *loving kindness*?

The Bible Idea of Loving Kindness

- The core ideas of the term loving kindness (from the Hebrew language) include deep, abiding loyalty and compassion. (**Exodus 34:6; Psalm 33:5**)
- The principles of covenant relationships that foster flourishing life are summed up in the idea of loyalty and compassion. (**1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:14**)
- God's approach to management of the universe is founded on loyalty and compassion. (**Psalm 86:15; Psalm 89:14; Psalm 117:2**)
- Loyalty is seen in action when promises are fulfilled and when we chose not to take vengeance. (**Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 7:9**)

Jesus Christ: The Reality and Greatness of God's loyalty and compassion

- God's loyalty to us is shown in action when he sent his only Son to be with us. (**John 1:14; John 3:16; Romans 8:39; 1 John 4:8-10**)
- The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ shows what is the greatest type of loyalty. (**John 15:13; Ephesians 5:2**)
- The greatness of God's love is embodied in Jesus Christ. (**Romans 8:39**)

What instruction does the Bible have for us in terms of loyalty and compassion?

- Be responsible for other people's assets. (**Exodus 23:4-5; Deuteronomy 22:1**) Loyalty is directed toward the larger community.
- Don't take vengeance on others. (**Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31-33; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8**)
- Test your loyalty to God by this simple principle: How loyal are you to other people? (**1 John 3:10-14; 1 John 4:8**)
- We imitate God's great love in our social actions by being loyal. (**Micah 6:8; Ephesians 5:2**)
- Loyalty and compassion results in unity among believers. (**Colossians 3:14**)
- When it is in our power to do good, we should do it. (**Proverbs 3:27**)

What are the implications of loyalty and compassion for business?

- Businesses can support interpersonal loyalty by how they structure deals with customers and how they go about attracting customers. Offering deals to customers that tempt them to undermine their relationship with their family undermines loving kindness.
- Loyalty can be fostered in the employer-employee relationship, too. Companies that are loyal to workers even when the economy tanks, foster shalom in the community.
- Unselfish and giving when someone is in need... Even to an enemy at work.

- Do not take vengeance on the people you work with, your customers or your suppliers.
- The **purpose** of business: to be one of the places in society where people foster loyalty in relationships the community.
- **Show employees compassion** when they make mistakes. They are most likely embarrassed and chagrined. Help them feel at ease. Show appreciation when they make commitments to improvement.
- **Demonstrate loyalty** to your subordinates by being faithful to them.
 - Take a turn helping during a difficult task or when trying to meet an important deadline.
 - Work side-by-side with subordinates to demonstrate your commitment to the tasks and to your relationship with them as employees.
- Be **faithful to your spouse**. Working relationships can become close and intense. You may spend more time with persons at work than you do with your spouse and children. You may find yourself attracted to someone at work other than your spouse. Getting involved in a relationship with someone at work often complicates the working relationships. It can cause problems at home and at work. Take your spouse to work with you sometime and introduce him/her to people you work with including the persons at work that you feel some attraction toward. This will help prevent unfaithfulness.
- When a supplier, customer or outside stakeholder complains about a fellow worker, be careful not to be unfaithful to your colleague by automatically siding with the outside stakeholder without checking into the "rest of the story."
- When one employee comes to complain about one of your subordinates or a close friend who works in another department, assume that there may be another side to the story. Covenant relationships are important! The relationship itself must be respected. You show disrespect to the relationship when you automatically and uncritically take information that you have been given and assume that the information needs no further explanation or consideration.

Consider this: Loving kindness (loyalty, compassion) is a central element of the character of God. In our work in the marketplace, when we imitate God by upholding deep, abiding loyalty, when we advocate on behalf of loyalty and compassion, when we integrate biblical loyalty and compassion into our own habits in business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

For more information on how the theme of loving kindness relates to the grand biblical theme of **covenant**, contact Michael E. Cafferky.

Truth & Business

By Michael E. Cafferky

Introduction

What are the guidelines for business that emerge from the Bible concept of *truth*?

The Bible Idea of Truth

The Bible concept of truth has two main meanings:

- Truth is what is factual, genuine, real and believable as contrasted with falsehood and lies. (**Proverbs 12:17; Jeremiah 9:3-5; Matthew 22:16; John 16:7; John 18:38; Romans 1:25; Ephesians 4:25**)
- Truth is action-oriented faithfulness and reliability when tested by time and circumstance. (**Exodus 18:21; Exodus 34:6; Joshua 24:14; 1 Kings 2:4; Psalm 25:5, 10; Psalm 51:6; Psalm 89:14; Proverbs 3:3; Proverbs 23:23; John 1:14**)

The ultimate welfare of the earth depends upon the faithfulness of the Creator and Redeemer. In the Bible the idea of faithfulness is often referred to by using the English word “truth.”

Jesus Christ: The Reality of God’s Faithfulness

- A top-level leader in the Bible story described God as being loyal (loving kindness) and faithful. (**Psalm 86:15**)
- God’s way of managing the Universe, his character shown in action, a famous king described as faithfulness. (**Psalm 89:14; Psalm 119:142**)
- God’s word is faithful. (**Psalm 119:160; John 17:17**)
- God’s faithfulness in his word is known by the actions which he takes to fulfill his promises. (**Psalm 111:7-8**)
- Part of God’s wealth (abundance) is the fact that he is faithful in action. (**Psalm 86:15**)
- Jesus Christ is the supreme example of how God is faithful to us. (**John 14:6**)
- Jesus Christ is the reality of walking in the way that leads to life. (**John 1:14, 17; Ephesians 4:21; 1 John 5:20**)

What instruction does the Bible have for us in terms of truth?

- Truth (faithfulness) is one of the most valuable things to keep. (**Proverbs 3:3; Proverbs 20:28**) Faithfulness is known only AFTER the impact of actions is seen.
- The only “commodity” in the Bible that we are encouraged to develop as a monopoly is faithfulness. (**Proverbs 23:23**) It is only by becoming more and more faithful in our relationships can we expect to experience a flourishing life together.
- Our actions in a social context are often spoken of in the Bible as *walking*. This walk is to be marked by faithfulness. (**Exodus 18:20; Deuteronomy 6:7; Deuteronomy 30:16; 1 Kings 2:4; Psalm 25:10**)
- We are called to promote consistency between what we say and what we do. (**1 John 1:6; 1 John 2:4**)
- By human power alone it is not possible to be faithful in keeping all our promises. Faithfulness requires the power of God to change the source of

faithful actions, our hearts. (**Psalm 40:8; Psalm 51:6; Jeremiah 31:33; Galatians 5:22**) Faithfulness also requires shared responsibility. (**Jeremiah 32:10; John 8:17**)

Points to Ponder

- What do you do at work to encourage others to be faithful to their commitments?
- The **purpose of business** is to be one of the structures of society which encourages faithfulness in and around the community which the business serves.
- When we commit to being faithful in all our social relationships, we show that God’s faithfulness toward us actually works as the best principle for working in the marketplace. We show the plausibility that God’s plan for a flourishing life actually works in practice!
- What might happen in the marketplace if followers of God develop a reputation for being the most faithful people to deal with?

What are the implications for business?

- The Bible concept of truth is the foundation for all quality improvement efforts. Only by getting to the truth about fact-based reality of an organization’s performance and revealing this to the key stakeholders can decision makers make informed decisions which create lasting validity.
- Taking corrective actions based on the truth of a situation ensures that faithfulness will advance the overall purpose of the organization in serving others.
- Faithfulness requires us to manage our biases. Seek disconfirming information related to your most important decisions: Information that counteracts your personal biases.
- Establish a relationship with a confidant whom you trust to give you the brutal truth of your impact on others in the organization.
- Establish an internal system to gather information anonymously and confidentially from employees regarding the truth of what is really going on in the organization.
- During performance reviews and progressive discipline conversations focus on actual, observable behaviors (factual reality) rather than “attitudes.”
- Make faithfulness and fulfilling commitments a regular part of employee performance evaluations.
- Spend more energy keeping promises than in making them.
- Be careful not to promise more than can be delivered. If there are elements of a promise (or a contract) that are outside of your control, include these as contingencies in the commitments that you make.

Consider this: Faithfulness is a central element of the character of God. In our work in the marketplace, when we imitate God by upholding faithfulness, when we advocate on behalf of faithfulness, when we integrate faithfulness into our own habits in business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

Introduction

What are the guidelines for business that emerge from the Bible concept of *wisdom*?

The Bible Idea of Wisdom

- Wisdom is not mere street smarts or knowledge of how to make money. The biblical idea of wisdom is first of all a *moral* issue. It is about learning the moral principles of flourishing relationships. (**Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:127**)
- The Bible describes wisdom as something that grows and develops in the person's heart which is the seat of moral judgment and decision making. (**Psalm 51:6; Psalm 90:12; Proverbs 2:2, 10; Proverbs 14:33**)
- Wisdom is an instrument of blessing. (**Proverbs 3:13**)
- Wisdom is interwoven with faithfulness, justice and other dimensions of moral uprightness. (**Proverbs 23:23**)
- The source of wisdom is God. (**1 Kings 3:28; Psalm 104:24; Daniel 1:17; James 1:5**)
- Greater than wisdom is knowing God and his character. (**Jeremiah 9:23-24**)

Jesus Christ: The Reality of God's Wisdom

- Jesus Christ is the reality of true wisdom. (**1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; Ephesians 1:7-11; Ephesians 3:8-11; Colossians 2:3**) What was the smartest thing God ever did? It was in giving his Son for redemption that God's wisdom is shown in action on behalf of others, for the blessing of the entire universe.

What instruction does the Bible have for us in terms of wisdom?

- Using your own knowledge to judge your wisdom is foolish. (**Proverbs 3:7; Proverbs 26:12; Isaiah 5:21; Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 3:8**)
- Seek wisdom! (**Proverbs 4:7; Proverbs 23:23; Colossians 1:9; Colossians 3:16**)
- God stores up wisdom to give to those who follow the principles of flourishing life (the Ten Commandments). (**Proverbs 2:6-9**)
- A community's reputation is built primarily on the moral wisdom that it displays in action. (**Deuteronomy 4:5-6**)
- Get counsel from others in the faith community. (**Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 12:15**)
- Be a constant listener and learner. (**Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 18:15**) In terms of ancient Hebrew thinking, a person was considered smart when they used their ears to listen to knowledge that others in the community can provide. Effectiveness involves continual learning.
- When we know that we are in danger, we have a responsibility to avoid it. (**Proverbs 14:8, 15-16; Proverbs 22:3**)

What are the implications for business?

- Make the cornerstone of all improvement moral principles.

- Offer training to employees to improve their skills, the training can range beyond just the technical dimensions to include other things represented by the biblical themes.
- Be careful! There are foolish people in the marketplace that will try to take advantage of you. Minimize the chances of this improve your knowledge of products, prices, services, processes, relationships.
- Improve your legal and ethical understanding of key business situations. Wise people are morally smart.
- Improve your own capabilities and skills regardless of what position you have. God made us with a variety of abilities. The more we develop these, the more useful we can be in service to others.
- Help subordinates to progress from uselessness to usefulness.
- Get counsel on the more complicated problems you encounter. Be available to others who seek your counsel.

Points to Ponder

- Wisdom is more than mere street smarts. It means being *morally* smart about right and wrong in terms of relationships.
- God is the source of wisdom, but we should listen for counsel from other people. This means that the community around us plays an important role in gaining wisdom.
- We help ourselves and the community around us when we prevent others from harming us.
- If you are successful in making money but in the process your relationship with those around you suffers, have you truly been smart?
- What understanding about the marketplace are you sharing with others to help them be successful?
- Where do you lack discretion right in your marketplace activities?
- Who in your community can you turn to for counsel regarding right and wrong in business activities?
- How grounded are you in living life in faithfulness to the principles of covenant relationships in the business of living life celebrating all the good that God has given for our life?

Consider this: Wisdom is a central element of the character of God. In our work in the marketplace, when we imitate God by upholding moral wisdom rooted in covenant relationships, when we advocate on behalf of this type of wisdom, when we integrate moral wisdom into our own habits in business, we are telling about Jesus Christ just as surely as when we mention him by name.

For more information about what the Bible says about business practice including other grand themes, contact:

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