

MARKET SKILL ENGAGEMENT



Integrating Faith and Witness in the Marketplace

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
Matthew 5:14-16

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.” Acts 8:4-6

“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13

QUOTES

“Spontaneous expansion [of the Church] begins with the individual effort of the individual Christian to assist his fellow, when common experience, common difficulties, common toil have first brought the two together. It is the equality and community of experience which makes one deliver his message in terms which the other can understand, and makes the hearer approach the subject with sympathy and confidence.” Roland Allen

“All men naturally tend to leave direct missionary work to a professional class when there exists a professional class whose special duty is to do it.” Roland Allen

“I have told my missionary friends, ‘Noble as you are, you have isolated yourselves from the people you want to serve.’” Mohandas Gandhi

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“It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it.” A.W. Tozer

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of the readings, discussion and activities in this lesson, the candidate should be able to:

- Understand the importance of vocation, income, and the marketplace in society.
- Discern opportunities to bear witness in the marketplace and in the midst of their vocation.
- Identify key issues related to identity, vocation, and ministry in the marketplace.
- Gain a historical understanding of the overall theme of ministry in the workplace in order to proclaim the message of Jesus in such a way that can be replicated by those to whom they come in contact.

INTRODUCTION

As a candidate for cross-cultural witness, you are undoubtedly preparing for a life of service and of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Although you may not yet be aware of where you will live and serve, you probably have to deal with issues such as what your contribution will be and how you will make a Gospel impact. You also likely have to consider issues such as your place or identity in society. Throughout this session we will be dealing with these questions as well as others concerning how you will be perceived by those you come in contact with who are invariably part of the workforce in the culture in which you will be serving.

Regardless of whether you intend to work for income in a “secular” vocation or be financially supported by your church, it is vital that you understand the issues associated with integrating faith and witness in the marketplace. The majority, if not all, of the people you will be coming in contact with will have “secular” vocations. Thus, if you intend to make disciples who have a vibrant and reproducing faith, it must be a faith that finds a home in the reality of the workplace.

Too many Western Christians have drawn a false distinction between sacred and secular vocations – a distinction that others in the world do not and should not share. Our task as cross-cultural witnesses is not to empower those few people who might become fully funded ministers but to empower the vast majority who will continue in their vocation after coming to faith. It is the intention of this session to better equip candidates to minister and bear witness to others in the marketplace and in the midst of those with “secular” vocations.

CASE STUDY

Roger had spent much of his time in college knowing that he was called to serve an unreached people group in North Africa. Immediately upon graduation, he found a position through a

mission sending agency as a two-year missionary to one of the most poverty-stricken countries in the world. His job included living in the capital city of this country and traveling out to remote villages to share the Gospel. For Roger, the idea of living amongst such poverty was not a daunting proposition because he had traveled to many third-world countries during college and had always been extremely aware of his own background because of his experience.

During his time in North Africa, Roger traveled back and forth to the remote villages and made several close friends. One village, in particular, had a place in Roger's heart and he devoted a great deal of his time there. The usual trip out to this village was anywhere between eight to eighteen hours by bus depending on the weather, road conditions and dependability of the bus. For Roger, the journey was not a problem

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because he had a truck that had been provided by the mission agency. For certain, the trip was still rough, but in the truck, it could be made in about four hours. Roger made it often.

Because this is such a devoutly Muslim country, he unsurprisingly had a difficult time making an impact amongst those in the villages he would visit. This, however, did not discourage him because of the small group of indigenous believers in the city he had come to know and disciple. Before coming to Africa, Roger had studied and been trained in missionary methodologies from the past and present. He knew from his training that if people truly come to Christ, it would eventually be because of the work of the indigenous church and not his own efforts. Because of this, Roger often would intentionally bring these local believers as his traveling companions in order to encourage them as well as to build in them the habit of following in his footsteps after he was gone.

Roger learned very quickly about these local believers that their faith was so devout and tested that he needed to be the student in the relationship rather than the teacher. He was so impressed with these believers that he would write home to his family and friends about their devotion to Christ and their desire to share the Truth with their own people. Roger came to trust these believers as brothers and share with them his vision of reaching the people of these remote villages for Christ. They would gather together for prayer and worship in the city, and travel out to the villages to tell the stories of the Bible looking for opportunities to share about Christ.

After spending a year and a half traveling to this remote people to share the Gospel, Roger began thinking about the prospects of returning to the U.S. after the end of his two-year commitment. He found himself caught between two emotions: the excitement of returning home to family and friends and the anxiety of leaving the work to which he had devoted the past two years of his life. With his return date just six months away he started to make plans to ensure that the work he began would continue through the local believers with whom he had been working.

Roger began to encourage them to continue going out to the villages on their own without his assistance. He knew there were challenges that would await his brothers, but he was also confident in their devotion. Much to his surprise, he found that while these local believers were quite zealous about reaching out to the village people, they were less than enthusiastic

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about making the trek out to the villages without him. Something did not add up and Roger did not know what. They were so passionate about reaching their own people and now they kept mentioning how difficult it would be to get away from work for such an extended time, as well as the financial burden that would be involved.

With his departure becoming more and more imminent, several of Roger's friends decided to come visit him before he returned home. Roger was excited to show his friends the city where he had lived, but most important to him was that his friends could see the village that he cared so much about. After spending two days getting the grand tour of the city, they all packed into Roger's truck, along with the local believers Roger had served with and headed for the village. About two hours into the drive, Roger and his friends stopped to rest and get gas at a remote petrol station. While standing outside the truck, Roger's best friend asked how much gas was in comparison to a gallon of gas in the U.S. Because Roger's personality was such that he would frequently work such things out in his head, his friend expected a quick and precise reply. However, much to both of their surprise, Roger did not know the answer. In fact, he did not even know how much he had just paid for gas in local currency. He had always simply been reimbursed by the mission agency. Therefore the price of gas was not a concern to him.

They continued driving and arrived at the village two hours later. They were all tired from the drive because, although it was only four hours long, the bumpy roads made the journey like riding in a washing machine. By the time night came around, Roger and his friends were exhausted, but the believers who had traveled with them were alert and ready for the expected nightly time of storying.

They all stayed several days before returning to the capital city. Roger's friends got to see the village and better understand his stories and his passion. His final six months passed quickly and before he knew it Roger was buying a plane ticket to return home. The local believers he had met with so often were determined to return to the village. However, due to the demands of work and the relatively large expense of travel, they soon began to require funding from the mission agency in order to continue. Roger knew this would only create an unhealthy dependence and that the mission agency would not agree. As his plane left for the U.S., Roger sat wondering how his work could continue and what he might have done differently.

REFLECT #1

1. Besides money, what were some of the major differences between Roger and his believing friends?
2. What circumstances were barriers for Roger in understanding the local believers?
3. How might things have been different if Roger had worked at a "secular" vocation during his time there rather than being fully supported by an American mission agency?
4. At what point were the local believers dependent on Roger's resources?

UNDERSTANDING A WORK-CENTERED WORLD

When Jesus told the parables of the yeast and the mustard seed, He was not stating how the Kingdom starts (small), but how the Kingdom spreads (exponentially). Yeast works its way through a batch of dough by reproducing itself in all directions. Much the same, a mustard plant was notorious in the ancient world for starting small and then taking over an entire cultivated area, becoming a difficult nuisance to uproot (much like a mesquite tree for those of you, like me, from Texas).

PANORAMA

The Kingdom of God spreads not simply from one transformed person telling their friends, but from those people likewise being transformed and seeking to share with those around them. Thus, if we are to be faithful in announcing the Kingdom, we must ask ourselves two questions:

1. Are we connecting with people's fundamental ideologies, placing ourselves in a position where transformational witness is possible?
2. Are we bearing witness in such a way that others can very naturally reproduce the witness?

To answer each of these questions in the affirmative, we must be connecting fundamentally with people in areas of their lives they deem most significant.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MARKETPLACE

Throughout history, the marketplace has been a conduit through which not only goods and services have been exchanged, but also ideas and values. Indeed one of the best ways to understand a society is to understand their marketplace and economy. The very term economy, though typically used to describe a monetary system, comes from the Greek *oikos* (house) and literally means "an orderly management or arrangement of parts, organization, or system as the economy of the human body."

Gurcharan Das, former CEO of Procter & Gamble India, understood the influence of the marketplace and the role it plays in understanding a society. During his time in India, he implemented a mandatory rule for all employees, including senior managers, that they annually visit the local bazaar and bring back a "bazaar report" in order to better understand the customer base for their products.¹

Cultural values, religious values, priorities, and identities are all expressed and developed within the context of the marketplace and the workplace. Furthermore, ideas, values, and even languages spread more rapidly in and through the marketplace than perhaps any other medium.² If we as missionaries want to understand and influence a society, the marketplace provides a good place to start.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOCATION

Vocation plays an essential role in self-understanding and social identity. Many people classify themselves and others simply according to vocation (consider how you introduce a friend to a person they do not know). One might even go so far as to identify entire subcultures based upon vocation (i.e. white collar business people and blue collar workers). Where we live, who we associate with, and even the things that we know and are familiar with, all stem from our vocation. There are many things that the New Testament fails to mention about the disciples: their favorite pastime, their height, the color of their hair, yet we know that Matthew was a tax collector and Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen. In some cultures, a person's vocation is even inherently understood to be associated with a calling from God. Interestingly the English word "vocation" stems from the Latin *vocare*, which means "to call," signifying a calling in a religious context.

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In the first century we find that the Gospel message spread along two primary social lines: heritage (including family and ethnicity) and vocation. Notice that after making his decision to follow Jesus, Matthew, the tax collector, held a banquet and invited “a large crowd of tax collectors.” (Luke 5:29) Slaves (which in antiquity were not necessarily a forced designation), tradesmen and merchants all traveled along the Roman roads because of their vocation and with them they brought the message of the Kingdom.

You may intend to go as a missionary with financial support from churches or friends or use a business or secular vocation as a means to earn a living. To share the message of Christ, it is imperative that you understand the importance of the workplace in the lives of those whom you intend to reach. Unfortunately, many traditionally minded missionaries have either intentionally or unintentionally avoided significant interaction in the workplace and in the marketplace. Much of this is due to the false dichotomy that the West has placed between sacred and secular vocations. The result of this has been that many missionaries not only fail to understand the culture in which they reside or at least a significant aspect therein, but also they fail to provide a reproducible model for indigenous Christians who work a “secular job” within that society.

REFLECT #2

1. Name some ways you classify those whom you are called to serve (such as ethnicity, religion, geography). How do they classify themselves?
2. List some of the major channels through which ideas spread in a given society. What commonalities do you find in each of these?
3. List some of the ways in which you learn new things. How many of these new learnings have to do with your vocation?

IDENTITY CRISIS

There was once a time when “missionary” was a respected title in many places throughout the world. Missionaries could go around the globe calling themselves missionaries, travel under “Missionary Visas”, get special seats on the bus, discounts at stores and even stay for free at the “Mission House” when they came back home. Today things have changed. In a post Imperialism/post-Christendom world, the Church as an institution is becoming less and less attractive in the eyes of the world. In many places, the missionary outreach of the Church is seen as an attack or an intrusion. Many missionaries around the world have ceased to identify themselves as missionaries, not because of security issues per se, but because missionaries have lost credibility. The world has come to question the missionary activity of the Church and thus, missionaries have begun taking on identities other than that of a religious worker.

Because of this, many missionaries have had somewhat of an identity crisis. While they have, like much of the world, always identified themselves according to their vocation, they are now in a position where their vocation is no longer welcome. Some have resorted to creating business or vocational “platforms” in order to allow themselves access to the unreached peoples of the world. However, this also has tended to create a problem because many of these platforms are simply a veneer to disguise their true intent and can be easily uncovered. Furthermore, many find themselves compromising their integrity in order to maintain these “platforms” in the name of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Another problem, like Roger’s in the case study above, is that when a person is paid for sharing the Gospel, they find it hard to identify with the difficulties of those who are not. Roger had a truck that was provided by the mission agency and a ministry budget to pay for the gas to travel. Those he was discipling did not. Roger found himself in a position where he was modeling aspects of faith that could not be fully reproduced after he was gone.

The apostle Paul also dealt with these same issues with regards to his income. For certain, he advocated that a worker is worth his wage, but at the same time, he could not control the perceptions of outsiders who might question a message if the messenger is being paid. Missionary Roland Allen discusses this problem at length in his book, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, when he says, “If he (the missionary) is a paid agent, both speaker and hearer are affected by that fact. The speaker knows, and knows that the other knows, that he is employed by a mission to speak... He is not speaking of Christ because Christ alone compels him.” Allen goes on later in the book to say, “A paid preacher is suspected as a preacher paid to teach what he is told to teach by those who pay him; not the inspired possessor of a divine gift.”³

REFLECT #3

1. One of the results of this identity crisis is that many missionaries have kept a significant aspect of their lives private—namely their purpose. This is certainly a problem if our desire is to intimately connect with others. Is it going to be possible, despite security issues as well as other issues pertaining to identity, for you to be totally transparent with those around you? If not, how do you intend to deal with this?
2. Income can be a significant divider of people. Income is an issue for both fully supported missionaries as well as those who receive their income from a regular job, especially if it is substantially higher than those around you. How do you intend to address this problem?

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Theology of Work

Many define work as a chore at best and some would even go so far as to call it a curse. However, if viewed from a Biblical perspective, work is our opportunity to participate in God’s creative work. The Fourth Commandment makes it very clear that we are to emulate God’s creative work as seen in Genesis by working six days a week and resting on the seventh (Exodus 20:8-11). Furthermore, when God created man He immediately commanded him to multiply throughout the world and manage the created order (“fill the earth and subdue it”) Genesis 1:28.

Labor and work have always been an essential element in the lives of the people of God. Paul commands the Thessalonians to “respect those who work hard among you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) and to “settle down and earn the bread they eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:11-13). Work is a blessing from God as it represents Him giving us responsibility over the created order.

Clergy and Laity / Sacred and Secular

It is essential that we as Christians have a Biblical understanding of these two categories because, like it or not, the world will classify us according to them. By *clergy* we mean paid ministers and missionaries and by *laity* we mean the majority of Christians who work in a “secular” vocation. I have combined these topics as they are so close in meaning.

The word “lay” can be traced back to the Greek word *laikos*, which has the original meaning

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of belonging to the “*laos*,” or chosen people of God. The word itself originally was strictly a religious word but through the years it has taken on secular meaning. Today the word “lay” is simply taken to mean unqualified or inexperienced regardless of the field. The word “clergy” on the other hand comes from the Greek “*kleros*,” which was a term for a magistrate. As the Church grew up in the midst of Greco-Roman society, she adopted a dualistic mindset of Greco-Roman municipal administration. Thus the Church reflected the idea of the “*kleros*” or magistrate as having authority over the “*laos*” or people. By the end of the first century, the Church was beginning to emulate this distinction.⁴

However, it cannot be stressed enough that this distinction is a departure from the Biblical concept of the “*laos*” referring to the whole people of God. In fact, the words “*kleros*” and “*laos*” can both be found in the New Testament, yet in each case they refer to the same people. There was no distinction. In the New Testament, there is not one group that is expected to carry on “sacred” work of the church and another whose task is to support the former. As followers of Christ, we have an inherent call to participate in God’s mission. Whether we are teachers, business people, doctors, lawyers or preachers we are all expected to be servants of God and His creation. There is no distinction, we are all “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9).

Integration

Integration is typically used in the context of becoming a part of something, such as integrating into a society or culture. In fact, the meaning of the term is actually “to make whole,” or “to complete.” I integrate into a society, not simply by becoming like that society, but by adding to and completing some element in that society. True integration involves a contribution in some form or fashion.

We are created to contribute. We have been given gifts and talents and we are responsible for using them to serve God and His creation.⁵ Throughout the centuries Christians have been noted for the contributions that we have made in society. Part of any holistic ministry should include contribution.

REFLECT #4

1. What are some ways that you can make your work sacred?
2. Is there such a thing as a Christian business?
3. What gifts or talents has God equipped you with to contribute to the lives of others?

INCARNATE THE GOSPEL

Identify with their situation

Incarnation is a word that is used to describe the action of God becoming flesh portrayed in John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The word itself literally means God moving into flesh, *in-carnus*.⁶ God made Himself known to us, not simply by sending us a message, but by becoming like us in order that we might understand His love for us.

Our objective in cross-cultural ministry should not simply be to go to a group of people and tell them about the love of God but to live among them and let them see it. In doing this, we must to a certain extent become like them – learning their language and culture and

understanding their struggles. “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22b).

To live and work with those to whom we go, to derive income in the same way therefore living by the same economic standard, to adapt to their culture and learn their language, to work and to strive to produce the same economic and societal results (depending on the profession), these are all ways in which we can connect with people’s fundamental ideology. Thus, we will find ourselves in a position where transformational witness is possible.

Be Purposeful

The concept of being a “tentmaker” is a very well-known concept among most Christians. In fact, it is so familiar to many of us that the term itself, when used in a missionary context, requires almost no explanation. The term is derived from Acts 18:3 which describes Paul as a tentmaker, or leatherworker, by trade.⁷ At first glance, from this passage, it would appear that Paul’s secular position had almost no strategic significance in terms of his ministry. However, when compared to other New Testament passages, this clearly is not the case.

For Paul, having a secular job was more than just a means of support so that he could carry on in his ministry; it was in many cases an integral part of his message. Paul’s job allowed him to be financially independent, which was a method to legitimize the message that he preached to potentially skeptical Gentile listeners. In 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 we see Paul defending the right of those who receive support for their labors, yet he himself, as well as his companions, decline that right. “But did we use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than to hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:12b). Later in verse 16, Paul tells the Corinthians that he is “compelled to preach,” indicating that he is motivated by his devotion to Christ and nothing else. Paul’s financial independence certainly supports his claim of preaching the message with pure motives, therefore giving credibility to the message itself.⁸

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Cause Questions

Perhaps one of the best verses to describe the essence of what it means to bear witness to an unbelieving world is found in 1 Peter 3:15, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Few would disagree that one will have a considerably greater impact by answering a question *after* it has been asked as opposed to *before*. However, all too often in witnessing to others we answer their questions of why we have the hope that we have when they never bothered to ask in the first place. Looking carefully at the sermons and discourses in Acts, the vast majority of people’s transformation comes in response to a question rather than being the product of zealous sermonizers.

The marketplace is an opportunity for conversations among those with whom we interact. In the marketplace, there exists the possibility for a multitude of sins—dishonesty, greed, anger, and cruelty just to name a few. Thus, in the marketplace, we have a perfect opportunity to display kindness, generosity, gentleness, and respect. In an unbelieving world, these attributes cause others to ask why. As an illustration of this, if I were to walk down the street and not rob a bank it is unlikely that anyone would take notice. However, if I were to be given a clear

opportunity to understate company earnings or deceive a customer for monetary gain and yet choose to be honest and ethical, it is quite likely to turn heads, especially in an environment where deceit is the norm.

REFLECT #5

1. When we disciple others according to Scripture, we are dealing with their deeply rooted ideologies. In what contexts are people's deeply rooted ideologies most visible?
2. Think about the people you intend to serve in your ministry. List ways in which you can identify with or become like them.

EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

Christians have borne witness in the marketplace throughout the centuries. Since the beginning of the early Christian movement in the first century, Christians have naturally carried on in their vocations after coming to faith and incorporated their faith therein. As mission historian Stephen Neil writes in his monumental book *A History of Christian Missions*,

The Church of the first Christian generation was a genuinely missionary Church. There were, of course, the whole-time workers, such as Saul and Barnabas, specially set apart with prayer for the prosecution of the missionary endeavor.... Apart, however, from these special workers, the Church could count on the anonymous and unchronicled witness of all the faithful... What is clear is that every Christian was a witness.⁹

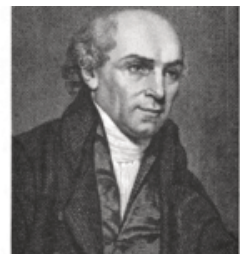
Some were slaves, some were teachers or tradesmen, or simply merchants traveling the Roman roads, all carrying with them this message that captivated their lives. They witnessed in the marketplace like they witnessed in every other place. Without strategy, but with great intentionality, they told their story. Within only a few centuries an entire empire listened.

One of the inherent problems of trying to chronicle the lives of those who have integrated their faith into their work is the fact that few ever stopped to write a book about it. Moreover, history has rarely taken notice of those whose only noteworthy accomplishment was to be a light in the workplace. Yet we can see that the “anonymous and unchronicled witness of the faithful” has had an enormous impact on the world.

Following are some examples of noteworthy Christians who have used and are using their God-given gifts and talents in the workplace to share Christ with the world.

William Carey (1761-1834)

William Carey was born in Northamptonshire, England on August 17, 1761. His father, a weaver, apprenticed him under a local shoemaker and from a young age, Carey learned the trade. At the age of eighteen, after the death of his mentor, Carey took over the business where he would spend most of his time. He would often read and exercise his gift of linguistics, teaching himself Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Dutch, and French—all while working as a shoemaker. Shortly after his baptism at the age of 22, Carey moved to the village of Moulton where he took a job as the local schoolmaster.



A year later he became the pastor of the Baptist church in Moulton, yet he remained the schoolmaster and continued to cobble shoes.

He would often read such writings as the *Last Voyage of Captain Cook* and the biography of David Brainerd. It was during this influential time in his life that Carey began to understand his call to go to India.

Throughout his life Carey was an innovator. Like all innovators, he had to maintain a great deal of determination in order to persist. Before going to India, Carey wrote his famous work, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* – a response to the hyper-Calvinism of the day that was stifling missionary zeal. He also founded the Baptist Missionary Society, which would soon after provide the means by which Carey would go to India. However, Carey was not supported by the Missionary Society for long as he found a job managing an indigo factory shortly after his arrival.

It was never Carey’s intention to remain permanently dependent on the Mission Society. On the contrary, he believed that all missionaries should support themselves through a trade of some sort. “My business” Carey once said, “is to preach the Gospel and win lost souls. I cobble shoes to pay expenses.” For Carey, this was the ideal, yet there were many who did not understand how one could merge running a business and serving others. One of the most difficult aspects of running the indigo factory was that his supporters back home did not understand. They questioned his commitment to sharing the Gospel and accused him of being greedy in his pursuits – despite the fact that he gave one-third of his income back to his mission endeavors.

Carey went on to help found Serampore College, as well as the Agri Horticultural Society of India. By the time he died in 1834, at the age of 73, Carey had played a major role in the Bible being translated and printed into 40 languages.

St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547)

Benedict of Nursia was an Italian saint, born into a Roman noble family around the year 480. He is known primarily for his famous writing *The Rule of St. Benedict* and is often referred to as the Father of Western Monasticism. Very little is known about Benedict as the only ancient account of his life is found in book two of Gregory’s *Dialogues*. We do know that he was well on his way to becoming a Roman noble when he compared the direction of his life to the life espoused in the Gospels, which led him to leave Rome in order to find a new beginning.

Benedict strongly advocated three fundamental Christian precepts: *pax* “peace”, and *ora et labora* “prayer and work.” According to St. Benedict, labor was an essential part of the Christian life that fell under the greater Benedictine mantra U.I.O.G.D – *ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus* — “that in all [things] God may be glorified.”



For Benedict there was no distinction between sacred and secular tasks, all work was sacred if done for the Lord. So strong were his convictions that later Benedictine orders of monks would come to be known for their contributions in economics, education, and government in

the West, as well as their extraordinary acts of manual labor such as clearing rocks out of fields throughout Europe to make them plowable.

BUSINESSES INTENTIONALLY FOCUSED ON KINGDOM IMPACT

Here are two examples of contemporary Kingdom focused businesses along with brief summaries of each.

Pura Vida Coffee

Pura Vida Coffee, LLC was launched in 1998 by two former Harvard MBA students: John Sage and Chris Dearnley. Pura Vida, meaning “pure live,” sells branded, fresh roasted coffee direct to consumers via phone order and the web. They also have an extensive list of strategic partners (retail stores, charitable organizations, churches, schools, etc.) that either sell their product retail or use it in fundraising activities.



The company itself is a subsidiary of Pura Vida Partners, a non-profit company that oversees a host of holistic ministries. According to the bylaws of the company, Pura Vida Coffee donates 100 percent of the profit to Pura Vida Partners making it the “funding engine” behind the organization. Pura Vida focuses on social justice through fair trade, economic impact by donating its profits and direct impact through ministry inroads into local Costa Rican communities. The mission statement for the company is: “To build a profitable company that generates a sustainable source of funding for Christian ministry, provides a meaningful, faith-centered workplace for employees and reflects the character and love of Jesus Christ.” For more information see <http://www.puravidacreategood.com/>. Also, read this article: <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2672.html>

Olive Technology

Olive Technology Limited is a technology-based consulting and outsourcing firm located in Hyderabad, India. Olive was founded in 1996 by CEO Joseph Vijayam, a Christian businessman who clearly has a vision for not only operating a business with Kingdom values, but also mentoring others to do the same. With over 75 software developers as well as an enormous technology infrastructure, Olive services clients all over the world ranging from start-ups to global non-profits.

Like many companies that operate with Kingdom principles in mind, Olive is not a company that is overtly advertising its Christian values. (They cause questions with their lives, rather than an ichthus on their business card). According to their value statement, “The essence of our value is ultimately how we serve our clients. This value is delivered through our value channels that are driven with the intention of providing clients with a competitive edge. At the core of all this is the desire to serve our Creator by providing high-quality service through partnerships that seek the benefit of all those involved.”

Find out more at <http://olivetechnology.com/>

10 KEY PRINCIPLES TO IMPACT THE WORKPLACE

The following summary is a list of principles that we should keep in mind as we seek to establish an effective ministry within the workplace.

We must seek to...

1. Be Legitimate

Question: What do missionaries, terrorists, and international spies have in common?

Answer: They all operate under the guise of illegitimate businesses. If our business is simply a front or platform, we are no different from them.

2. Be Transparent

The purpose of our intentionality to witness in the midst of our business or vocation, should not be to *disguise* a certain aspect of our lives (i.e. our true identity), but rather to *reveal* the purpose of our lives (i.e. the One in Whom we find our identity). The marketplace should naturally reveal our true identity and character by the way we treat others, by our high standards of integrity and our resolve for justice and fairness. In this case, there will be no need for tracts or convincing speech, the spontaneous and natural outpouring of our lives will more than suffice.

3. Be Transformed

The world has no need of a new or better missionary strategy. The original strategy of Christ's infectious transformation will do just fine. It worked for a small group of fishermen and outcasts in the first century. It will work today. Our aim in interacting with others in the marketplace is simply to let our light shine before men. But the light must be real – His light. If we are not transformed ourselves, how can we participate in Christ's work to transform others? Our hope must be in Jesus. If it is, the world will ask us why.

4. Be Creative

In the world of commerce, we have an opportunity to impact the world on a very practical level. Some of the most significant innovations in history have been made by Christians seeking to glorify God and serve His creation. Government, science, economics, the arts and almost any arena of our lives would not be the same had it not been for Christians who intentionally used the gifts God gave them to change the world.

5. Encourage and Empower

The workplace is an excellent context in which to encourage and empower others. A person's vocation is more than just the means by which they derive income. In many cases, it is a significant source of dignity and self-worth. We have an opportunity to encourage others in the workplace, both in regards to their faith and the quality of their work.

6. Value Relationships

This includes everyone involved in our work environment (customers, employees, suppliers, investors, and partners). The workplace is an opportunity to identify with others. We will likely see others at their best and at their worst in the context of the workplace. They will see us in the same way. Strong bonds between people are built on such intimate connections where transformation happens.

7. Be Intentional

Ministry will not occur in the workplace by default; we must be intentional. We have an opportunity to minister to others in a very significant way, but we need to think carefully about the things we say and do. Good intentions to minister in the workplace need to be coupled with critical thought.

8. Be Connected

It will be an easy temptation, especially if we do not receive income from a church or organization, to cut ourselves off from other believers. Reports have shown that tentmakers are more effective and last longer in their context when they have a strong connection with their home church.¹⁰

9. Be Under Authority

Scripture is quite consistent about the spiritual necessity of submitting to authority. One of many examples is Romans chapter 13. We cannot be mavericks simply because we are financially independent. An essential aspect of our being sent out by our church needs to be a clearly defined expectation of submission to authority.

10. Love Well

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8). This, of course, is the most important thing we can do. We will without question make mistakes along the way, but if we love well, our mistakes will be easily overlooked by those around us. We will be remembered and our message will be heard, not because of our great business idea, but because of the way we love others.

BUSINESS AS MISSION PRINCIPLES

The following is a list of principles specifically for those wishing to start a business for the purpose of ministering to others.

1. Understand your Context

Few would disagree that in order to be successful in starting a business you must understand the overall landscape in which your business will reside. However, for those wishing to use their business as a ministry, this goes beyond market research to ascertain the viability and profitability of your business. These are of course important aspects for the success of your business, but there are several additional questions that should be asked if you wish to succeed in ministering to others through the marketplace. Here are some examples:

Is my business contextually appropriate? If you are selling a product or providing a service that is offensive to those around you, then you will have a poor ministry and a short-lived business.

Am I seeking the same results as those whom I am wishing to serve? It is surprisingly easy to want something for someone that they do not want for themselves – especially in a culture different than your own. We might think that others need our money or our modern comforts, but it is quite possible that they like things the way they are. The results from not asking these questions can be disastrous.

Will the success of my business cause an imbalance of some sort in the community in which

I reside? For example: if you are providing micro-financing to women in business in a male-dominated society, then you might at least want to rethink some of the ramifications of the business.

Will I have the chance to interact with others? If you are sitting in an office building creating websites and never interacting with others, then it will be quite difficult to build a significant relationship.

2. Map Out Your Purpose

Most successful business people would agree that the first step to starting a business is to write a business plan. If you are seeking financing for your endeavor this step will almost certainly be required. Either way, it is important to write out your mission and goals and let others critique them (elders in your church, fellow business people, etc.). Do not start a business and hope that honoring God and ministering to others will naturally follow. They will not and perceived necessities such as profit will likely take the helm.

3. Operate with Intentionality

Beyond the way we interact with others in the marketplace, we have a chance to minister to others by the way our business operates. We should first and foremost operate with excellence and integrity. However, there are steps we can take to adapt the business to the needs of the employees or customers that will be in itself a ministry. An example is providing sufficient time in the day for employees to fulfill religious duties (such as Muslims and the call to prayer). If you are running the business, there are many opportunities to minister to the needs of others in the way the business is run.

4. Manage Expectations

This is highly important. Here is a short list that is by no means exhaustive of expectations that should be considered if you are to successfully manage a business and minister to others through that business.

Draw Your Time Boundaries. This is an important step not only with your employees but also your customers and even yourself. Your business is not your life and it should not become so. This is an easy trap to fall into if you consider your business as your mission. At the point where your business becomes your life, the end result will be setting up unrealistic expectations for others involved in your business (employees, partners, customers and even the community). If you live at your work, people will come to expect it. As soon as the realities of your personal life force you away, those who have come to expect you to always be at work will be disappointed.

Draw Your Financial Boundaries. Often the biggest issue with those seeking to use their business as mission is not making too much money, but too little. Most people start a business with the expectation of success leading to profits. However, if you define success in terms of ministry, it will be very easy to overlook your own necessary financial gain. Once again, if you go without money in order to succeed in others ways, then you are setting up an unrealistic expectation for others involved. When the realities of bills come around and you have to financially benefit, those who have come to expect something different will be disappointed.

Make Your Expectations Clear. This is something else that is difficult for someone going into a business with a ministry mindset. The temptation is to be lax in communicating our

expectations to others. This is not doing anybody a service. If you expect work hours to be from nine to five, and customers to be treated a certain way, then make that clear. Do not hope that others catch on in an attempt to show kindness. There is nothing kind about setting up yourself and others for failure.

Follow Through. If you threaten to reprimand an employee or dissolve a business relationship under certain circumstances, then follow through if those expectations are not met. Part of successfully communicating expectations is following through. If you tell an employee that they will be fired if they do not show up for work, then you must follow through. Once again, you are not serving anyone, including the employee in question, if you do not follow through. The end result will be one employee that is getting an unrealistic expectation of what work should be, other employees that are resentful of the one and a business model that is functionally impossible.

5. Evaluate Often

This step is only possible if step two “Map Out Your Purposes” is followed. You must evaluate your business often and open the door for others to do the same. Evaluation is a key in ministry and in business and will almost certainly result in bigger profits, happier employees, more satisfied customers and less confused and frustrated entrepreneurs.

As mentioned above, honoring God and serving others will not be the default when you interact in the marketplace. You must be intentional if you will ever have an impact. The following activities will help you to actively and intentionally prepare to interact with and minister to others in the workplace. As you try these activities, record your difficulties, struggles, and successes in your learning journal. Or if you have already done these either in your home culture or cross-culturally, recall the difficulties, struggles, and successes you encountered.

AS YOU PREPARE TO GO

Imagine

Think about your current job or a job you have had in the past. Was it a good or bad experience? If it was bad, what could someone have done to encourage you? If it was good, why? Was there ever a person who impacted your life in the workplace? How? What are the things we can do to minister to others in their workplace?

Lifestyle

How will you identify with others in the workplace in your new place of service? If you will not be in the workplace and will be fully funded by your church, how will you connect faith and vocation in the mind of those you will disciple? What are some things you can do now to integrate Kingdom principles into your current vocation?

Formation

Rethink your ideas of business, commerce, and vocation. How can you make these sacred activities? How can you claim them as done unto the Lord?

Language and Customs

Go into a marketplace or bazaar (if you are in the U.S., turn on CNBC... that should be bazaar

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enough). Watch the way people interact and the things they find important – they have their own language. How can you learn their language? Think about a cross-cultural situation and imagine how you will identify with others in the marketplace.

Stretch Life on Life

If you are in the workplace now try to integrate principles learned into your current work situation. It will not get easier when you are in a different culture.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *MARKET SKILL ENGAGEMENT*

Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962.

Of all the books on the list, this one is a must.

Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. 2006 revision

Gruder, Darrell. *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

Baer, Michael R. *Business as Mission: The Power of Business in the Kingdom of God*. Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2006.

Lai, Patrick. *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Missions*. Colorado Springs: Authentic Media, 2005.

Rundle, Steve, and Tom Steffen. *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Mission*. Madison: Inter Varsity Press, 2003.

NOTES

¹Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound: The Social and Economic Revolution from Independence to the Global Information Age* (Anchor, 2002)

²A good example is the spread of the English language in the global marketplace. What imperialism attempted for three centuries, the global economy did in about three decades.

³Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1962)

⁴Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 49-51.

⁵The English word “talents” comes from the Parable of the Talents in Matthew (Matt 25:14-30) in which Jesus emphasizes the responsibility of the religious elite to use that which they have been given.

⁶Darrell L. Guder, *The Incarnation and the Church’s Witness* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999), 2.

⁷What is most significant about that passage (Acts 18:3) is not so much that Paul was a tentmaker, but that here were these two fellow Christians (Aquila and Priscilla), who were also tentmakers, that had come from Rome. How there came to be such a vibrant church in Rome at that time we do not know since none of the major characters in the Acts story had yet been there. We can only assume that one of the anonymous masses of Christians traveling the Roman roads for reasons of their work brought with them the message of Christ. Stephen Neil points out that this is the same for all three of the major Christian centers in the second century: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch – none were formed by notable Biblical figures.

⁸Ruth E. Siemens, “The Vital Role of Tentmaking in Paul’s Mission Strategy,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 14/3 (July-Sept. 1997): 123.

⁹Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1986)

¹⁰Don Hamilton, *Tentmakers Speak: Practical Advice from Over 400 Missionary Tentmakers* (Duarte: TMQ Research, 1987).

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