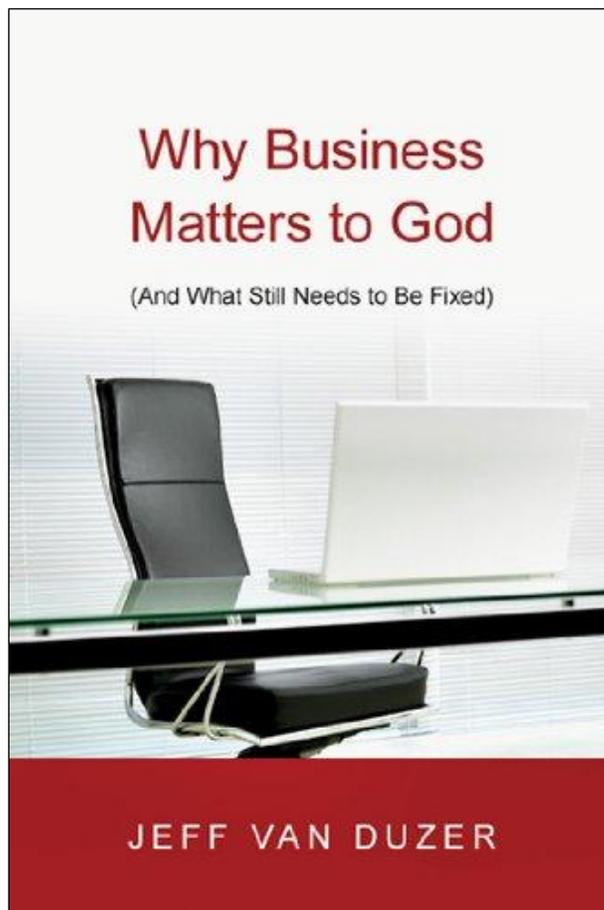


Why Business Matters to God

STUDY GUIDE

JEFF VAN DUZER, JOHN TERRILL, DONOVAN RICHARDS

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Chapter 1 *In the Beginning*

Related biblical texts

Genesis 1-2; Psalm 24:1-2; Psalm 104

“There is no fun like work.”
— Dr. Charles Mayo
(founder of the Mayo clinic)

“Work is not the curse, but drudgery is.”
— Henry Ward Beecher



Figure 1

Discussion questions

1. Which of the following statements is closest to your own? Why? What has formed your views?
 - God doesn't care about the material world (and the material needs of those in the world). He cares only about their souls. Only souls are saved.
 - Christians need to care for the material needs of others in the world because until certain basic needs are met, it is unlikely that others will be prepared to receive the gospel. To be specific, providing for material needs is important but only as a means for meeting a higher need - the need to accept Christ and be saved.
 - God cares about the material needs of people all over the world. God also wants everyone to have an opportunity to learn about Jesus and to come into a saving relationship with him. A calling to either ministry is valid.
2. How do you view your work? Is it something that you look forward to? Do you see it as a way of expressing the unique person that God made you to be? Or do you mostly dread work and wish you didn't have to do it. In either case, what practical changes would you suggest (if applicable, to your boss) to give you more opportunities to engage in meaningful and creative work on the job?
 - All other things being equal, however, God is more interested in evangelism.
 - Christians need to care for the material needs of others in the world because God cares for those needs. It is enough, for example, to provide food to the hungry without trying to lead them to Christ. Indeed, providing food to the hungry is as important to God as evangelizing those who have never heard the Gospel.

3. Have you ever thought about your work in the role of trustee for God? If so, in what contexts have you considered this idea? If not, how might this new sense of trusteeship enhance your work?
4. If you work for a company or organization, do you know and agree with its mission and goals? From your vantage point, if your company or organization were to achieve those goals would it enable your community to flourish? Do you see a direct connection between the daily work you do and your organization's goals? Does the prospect of achieving those goals excite you?
5. Nursing, social work and education (among others) are sometimes referred to as "helping professions"? How would you argue that a calling to business should likewise be considered a calling into a helping profession?
6. Do you agree with the notion that profit should *not* be a first order purpose of business? If you don't agree, why not? Can you state a biblical basis for your position?
7. If you are in business, can you identify any differences in the ways that you would do your work if you were to adopt Jeff Van Duzer's Genesis-based "service model" as the best expression of what your business is supposed to be about? What practically would change, if anything?
8. Which goods and services might God want to make available to the world at this time?
9. What other questions did the discussion of the Genesis creation story raise for you?

Additional teaching tools

Quotes

Created in God's image, we were given the mandate to transform the earth. By their work people share in God's creating activity....Awareness that our work is a sharing in God's work ought to permeate even the most ordinary daily activities.

By our labor we are unfolding the Creator's work and contributing to the realization of God's plan on earth. The Christian message does not stop us from building the world or make us neglect our fellow human beings. On the contrary it binds us more firmly to do just that. #25

— Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* - On Human Work
(These quotations are from the translation by Joseph Donders in the book entitled *John Paul's Encyclicals in Everyday Language*.)

“One of the things that I am absolutely convinced of is that we have to work as a centerpiece of any social policy. . . . Not only because ultimately people who work are going to get more income, but the intrinsic dignity of work, the sense of purpose.

— Barack Obama at Saddleback Presidential Forum, August 2008

Images

The central image on the Sistine Chapel ceiling painted by Michelangelo.



Figure 2

Clips

Apollo 8 “Genesis Broadcast,” 1968

The crew of Apollo 8 reads the Creation narrative from Genesis as they orbit the moon <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-Ipb8-CLDM>

Other further reading

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Chapter 2 Broken

Related biblical texts Genesis 3; Genesis 11:1-9;
Romans 1:8-2:16, 3:9-23, 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9



Figure 3

“The life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

— Hobbes, T. (2009). *Leviathan* (J.C.A. Gaskin, Ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA.

When the *London Times* asked a number of writers for essays on the topic, “What’s wrong with the world?” [G.K.] Chesterton sent in the reply shortest and most to the point:

Dear Sirs:

I am.

Sincerely yours,
G.K. Chesterton

[As told in Yancey, P. (2003). *Soul Survivor: How thirteen unlikely mentors helped my faith survive the church*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press.]

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

Discussion questions

1. This chapter began with a long list of harmful actions that businesses have caused. Obviously, this is only a small sample from a much bigger pool. What do you think explains this track record? Bad apples? Systemic failures? Both? What causes seemingly good people to sometimes make such bad decisions?
2. Do you believe that because our world is broken and fallen, from time to time you are confronted with decisions where there is no “sinless” option, only a choice between two evils? Can you think of an example?
3. In general, as a Christian, how do you think about the market? Do you think that the market is a natural force – like gravity – that may do harm or good but has no inherent morality (or immorality)? Do you think it is a good gift that God has given his people? Do you think it is a reflection of God’s perfect will for his people? Or do you think that the market is evil, simply the cumulative expression of individual selfishness and greed? Or something else?
4. Do you sometimes experience a tension between what will make you successful in your work and what you believe God is calling you to? For example, if you work in business do you sometimes experience a tension between market forces and the call of discipleship? How have you resolved these tensions? Can you identify a specific example of a time when you faced such a tension? If you don’t experience such tensions, why do you think that is?
5. What would it look like for you to do your work in a way that was totally sustainable, i.e. did no harm to anyone or anything impacted by your efforts? Can you identify one specific step you could take to make your work more “sustainable”?
6. Sometimes certain words or phrases seem to trigger powerful reactions. Often one such phrase among business persons is “living wage.” Do you think God wants all owners and managers of businesses to pay a living wage to adult workers? Why or why not? If your business does not now do so, why doesn’t it? Do you have a particularly strong reaction to the concept of a “livable wage”? If so, why do you think that is so?
7. How do you feel about the growing disparity in wages between the rich and the poor both around the world and in the United States? Is this a bad thing or just a natural function of the market without moral content? From God’s perspective does this matter? Specifically, does God care about relative equality, the overall well-being of the poorest members of society, fairness or some combination of all three?
8. What other questions did this chapter on the Fall raise for you?

Additional teaching tools

Quotes

“We believed that downturns had been rendered obsolete by the ingenious technology of the new economy. We thought ourselves immune from things like plant closings in Iowa and Nebraska, where remote Americans struggled against falling-in roofs and credit card debt. We watched these blue-collar workers being interviewed on TV. For the length of the segment, it was impossible not to feel the sadness and anxiety they must have felt for themselves and their families. But soon we moved on to weather and sports and by the time we thought about them again, it was a different plant in a different city, and the state was offering dislocated worker programs, readjustment and retraining services, and skills workshops. They'd be fine. Thank god we didn't have to worry about a misfortune like that. We were corporate citizens, buttressed by advanced degrees and padded by corporate fat. We were above the fickle market forces of overproduction and mismanaged inventory.

What we didn't consider was that in a downturn, we were the mismanaged inventory, and we were about to be dumped like a glut of imported circuit boards. On the drive home we puzzled over who was next. Scott McMichaels was next. His wife had just had a baby. Sharon Turner was next. She and her husband had just purchased a house. Names — just names to anyone else, but to us they were the individuals who generated our greatest sympathy. The ones who put their things in a box, shook a few hands, and left without complaint. They had no choice in the matter, and they possessed a quiet resignation to their ill-timed fates. As they departed, it almost felt to us like self-sacrifice. They left, so that we might stay. And stay we did, though our hearts went out to them. Then there was Tom Mota, who wanted to throw his computer against the window.”

Excerpt about getting fired from Ferris, J. (2007). *Then we came to the end: A novel*. New York, NY: Little, Brown, and Company.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12207706>

"If the dominant institution of our time [the corporation] has been created in the image of a psychopath, who bears the moral responsibility for its actions?"

— Achbar, M. & Abbott, J. (Directors).
The Corporation [Motion picture].
Canada: Big Picture Media Corp.

“Purpose belongs to persons, function belongs to things.”

— Harry Blamires

“I think things are going wrong not because of ‘market failures.’ The problem is much deeper than that. Mainstream free-market theory suffers from a ‘conceptualization failure,’ a failure to capture the essence of what it is to be human.

In the conventional theory of business, we've created a one-dimensional human being to play the role of business leader, the so-called entrepreneur. We've insulated him from the rest of life, the religious, emotional, political and social. He is dedicated to one mission only - maximize profit. ...

Yet the reality is very different from the theory. People are not one-dimensional entities; they are excitingly multidimensional.”

Yanus, M. (2009). *Creating a world without poverty: Social business and the future of capitalism*. Cambridge, MA: PublicAffairs.

Images

The typical conception of the Taj Mahal is a beautifully-groomed structure. Yet, around the corner lies a polluted river.



Figure 4

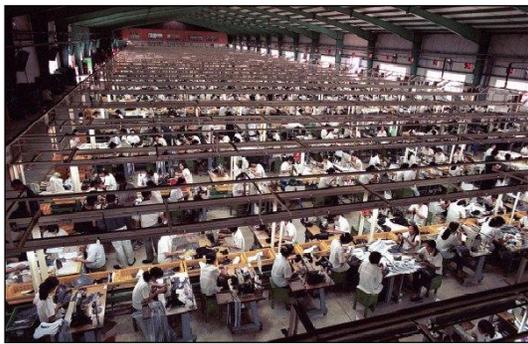


Figure 5

A modern sweatshop.

The building at 1400 Smith St. in Houston formerly housed Enron.



Figure 6



Child Labor

A Camel Cigarettes advertisement featuring Joe Camel.

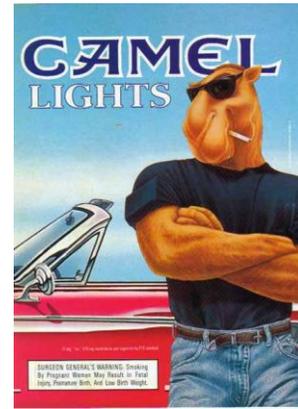


Figure 8

Figure 7

Clips

Video of Ford Pinto crashes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcNeorjXMrE>

Jars of Clay. (1995). *Worlds apart*. On *Jars of clay* [CD]. Franklin, TN: Essential Records.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCezEbaMHdA>

Living wage calculator

<http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/counties/53033>

Junk Food ads directed toward children

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Jlv1c-3JeM>

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLrVCI4N67M>

Other further reading

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Chapter 3 *In the End*

Related biblical texts

Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21 & 22

“Creation itself is on tiptoe with expectation, eagerly awaiting the moment when God’s children will be revealed”

— N.T. Wright

“...How we understand the future of the world, the final destiny of the Christian life, and how that future impacts our life now, has profound implications for how we invest our time in the world.”

— Don Flow, Flow Automotive



Figure 9



Figure 10

Discussion questions

1. Does the end of the biblical story make much difference to how you live your life here and now? Why or why not? Do you think God would want it to make a bigger difference to you now?
2. Do you think about the New Creation very much? Do you think of yourself as a new creation? If so, how might that picture of yourself shape how you live?
3. Which perspectives are closest to your own: the views of the annihilists, the views of the adopters or the views of the agnostics? Why?
4. Can you identify any practical differences that Revelation 21 and 22 might make as to how you do your work today?
5. Use your imagination. Take some deep breaths and clear your mind of clutter (as much as possible). Now try to imagine what the fully consummated new creation will look and feel like. Remember that in Revelation the New Jerusalem comes to earth – it is not in some far-away heaven.
 - Can you imagine yourself strolling through the streets of the city? Eating fruit from the tree of life? Dipping your feet in the river that runs through the middle of town?
 - What work will you do? What will it feel like to do that work?

- When you see God face to face, what will that feel like? What do you think God will look like?
 - What will be familiar to you? Will you see your home? Will you see anything that you have made? Think of one of the things that you are most proud of. Imagine that it is with you in the New Creation in a redeemed and purified form. What would it look like or be like there?
 - Can you imagine what it will be like to be with someone in the New Creation who right now “drives you up the wall”? What would your relationship look like if they no longer were so annoying?
 - Be quiet for a few minutes and see what images God might bring to mind about his New Creation.
6. What other questions did this discussion of the New Creation raise for you?

Additional teaching tools

Quotes

"I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee!, Further up, come further in!"

— C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle, Further Up, Further In (The Unicorn)*

"Why!" exclaimed Peter. "It's England. And that's the house itself - Professor Kirk's old home in the country where all our adventures began!"

"I thought the house had been destroyed," said Edmund.

"So it was," said the Faun. "But you are now looking at the England within England, the real England just as this is the real Narnia. And in that inner England no good thing is destroyed."

— C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle, Farewell to Shadowlands*

"Jesus not only *paid* it all; Jesus also made it all. Thus we celebrate the glory of God revealed in the creation, as broken as it may be; and we look forward not to disembodied existence in an invisible realm, but to bodily resurrection in the New Heavens and New Earth. Don't settle for half a hope and half a harp: embrace the radical transformation of all things that God holds out for us in His word.

— Sean McDonough, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Clips

Hymn: "When the Toils of Life Are Over"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-EBGTDZRPk>

Other further reading

- Wright, N.T. (2008). [*Surprised by hope: Rethinking heaven, the resurrection, and the mission of the church*](#). New York, NY: HarperOne.
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Chapter 4 Putting it Back Together

Related biblical texts Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-2;
Luke 4:14-20; Luke 20:9-19; Romans 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 15



Figure 11

"I once heard an economist offer the following universal policy advice: *there are no solutions; there are only trade-offs.*"

— Harold Winter

Trade-offs; An Introduction to Economic Reasoning and Social Issues

"Teach me my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee...

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told"

— George Herbert, "The Elixir" in part

Discussion questions

1. One way to describe the difference between creative and redemptive work is to think of the simpler terms of "building" and fixing." Do you tend to be more interested in building or more interested in fixing? Are these inclinations natural to each of us, that is, are we hardwired to prefer one over the other? Or are these learned inclinations?
2. Given the line of work that you are in, what would "redemptive work activities" look like?
3. Jesus seems more inclined to think of his ministry in terms of a doctor healing the sick rather than as a judge condemning the criminal. How about you? When something seems wrong, is your first instinct to look for opportunities to contribute to healing? Or to pronounce judgment?
4. What difference does it make to you that Jesus was completely human and fully identified with the human experience? When you are facing difficult business decisions are you regularly conscious of Christ's presence with you?

5. Do you regularly pray for guidance when facing "purely" business decisions? Why or why not?
6. Can you think of examples from your own business experience in which "good ethics" proved to be "good business"? What about opposite experiences? That is, have you made godly business decisions that have ended up having a negative impact on your business?
7. Do you believe that Christians in business have a moral imperative to keep their business going? Always? That is, is the survival of the business the highest value that a Christian in business will pursue or, at times, might a Christian be called to take choices that will end up destroying the business?
8. What other questions were raised for you from the chapter on redemption?

Additional teaching tools

Quotes

"As an association of Christians, faithful in daily work and committed to sharing abilities and resources, MEDA creates business solutions to poverty.

...that all people may experience God's love and unleash their potential to earn a livelihood, provide for families and enrich their communities."

— Mission and Vision of Mennonite Economic Development Associates

Images



Figure 12

The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes

Deaf Man Hears

The Leper Healed



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

Healing Hands



Restorative Work

Figure 16

Clips

Hymn: "Seeking the Lost"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVRPfnDAhog>

The Drifters, "Save the Last Dance for Me"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpCr4JTDiOs>

Other further reading

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Chapter 5 Postures of Engagement

Related biblical texts

John 17; Romans 12 & 13; 2 Corinthians 10:1-6;
1 Peter 2:11-17; 1 John 4:4-6



Figure 17

“The disorder of secularism is perhaps nowhere more apparent in our contemporary Church than in the extent to which we have permitted the order of the world to creep into the order of the Church... That it should carry out its mission to the men in the middle classes of capitalist society is doubtless a part of the Church's order; but that the mission should result in the formation of a middle-class church which defends the secular outlook and interests of that class are an evident corruption.”

—H. Richard Niebuhr

Discussion questions

Revisit the hypothetical on pages 125-129. Before reading each of the responses, check out <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFHQ8dhAJWU>. Then carefully reread each of the responses from the members of your study group and answer the following questions.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Will _____ | |
| Emily _____ | 1. Please identify and prioritize the three viewpoints closest to your own. For the view that most closely aligns with your own, please put a “1” opposite the name of the person expressing this view. For the perspective that is next most aligned with yours, please put a “2” next to the name of the proponent of that view. |
| Jamal _____ | |
| Ethan _____ | |
| Anna _____ | |
-
- Can you summarize in a phrase how each of the members of this Bible study group would characterize the relationship between your call as a Christian and the opportunity presented by this promotion?
 - What about your first choice is most compelling?
 - Which viewpoint is least compelling to you? Why?
 - What life experiences have you had that might have influenced your reactions to each of these views?
 - In general are you more comfortable with your biblical worldview or your business worldview? In other words, for you, is it more likely that your understanding of business will shape how you think theologically or the other way around?
 - What other questions were raised for you from this chapter on postures of engagement?

Additional teaching tools

Clips

Andy Crouch at Jubilee Conference

<http://vimeo.com/8558599>

Other further reading

- Niebuhr, H.R. (1956). *Christ & culture*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
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Chapter 6 *A Thought About Institutions*

Related biblical texts

Ephesians 3:7-13, 6:12; Colossians 1:16, 2:15



Figure 18

“The cure for economic problems is freedom from government interference and management in the marketplace. Get government out of the way. The free market will find its way to profit and prosperity if government will simply get out of the way.”

— Henry Lamb, WorldNetDaily commentary, July 3, 2010

“The purpose of companies is to play the economic game as aggressively as possible. The challenge for us as citizens is to stop them from setting the rules. Keeping supercapitalism from spilling over into democracy is the only real constructive agenda for change.

— Reich, R. (2008). [*Supercapitalism: The transformation of business, democracy, and everyday life*](#). New York, NY: Vintage. pg. 14.

Discussion questions

1. Are you basically distrustful of institutions? If so, why do you think you are distrustful? Can you imagine a situation where different institutions operate together for the common good? What might that look like in one particular area?
2. Pick one area of current conflict between government and business. With respect to that conflict, is the government or business (or both) behaving inappropriately? In other words, is government "invading" the territory of business or vice versa? Think how it is that you are arriving at your answer to this question. Do you instinctively have a well developed sense of appropriate limits on government actions? Could you articulate a comparable set of limits for business?
3. Do you think that it makes sense to talk about the "powers" that are referenced in Scripture as institutions, ways of thinking, dominant political or economic forces? If so, do you believe that there are actual sentient "beings" that animate these institutions and worldviews? In other words, is capitalism itself a "power"? Or is there some angelic/demonic force that operates through capitalism that is the "power." And does this matter?
4. What other questions were raised for you from this chapter on institutions?

Additional teaching tools

Quotes

“We are disposed to distrust institutions. That is the basic fact of life we share as modern people.”

— Heclo, H. (2008). [*On thinking institutionally*](#), Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. p. 11

“We will not and cannot go back to a simpler time when deference to institutional authority was usually taken for granted. And in our worldly savvy we see no way of going forward to a brighter, saner world of trust. We are like the inhabitants of Limbo in Dante’s *Inferno*. Of them it has been said, ‘Their failure lay in not imagining better.’ But what would it mean to ‘imagine better’ when it comes to our view of institutions?”

— Heclo, H. (2008). [*On thinking institutionally*](#), Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. p. 43.

“But the Powers that Be are more than just the people who run things. They are the systems themselves, the institutions and structures that weave society into an intricate fabric of power and relationships. These Powers surround us on every side. They are necessary. They are useful. We could do nothing without them. Who wants to do without timely mail delivery of well-maintained roads? But the Powers are also the source of unmitigated evils.”

— Wink, W. (1999) [*The powers that be: Theology for a new millennium*](#), New York, NY: Three Rivers Press. pg. 1.

“In short, individuals and institutions are inseparable. Institutions cannot exist without the individuals who make them work, but individuals cannot be understood outside of the institutions that form them and frame all of their activity. That said, in the formation of culture, one should not be under the illusion that the dialectic is evenly balanced. While individuals are not powerless by any stretch of the imagination, institutions have much greater power.”

— Hunter, J.D. (2010). [*To change the world: The irony, tragedy, and possibility of Christianity in the late modern world*](#). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA.

Clips

Michael Moore and Sean Hannity discussing institutions

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0EKWDisi7Y&NR=1>

Moore, M. (Director). (2009). *Capitalism: A love story* [Motion picture]. United States:

Starz. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeROnVUADj0&feature=related>

Bill Gates: How to Fix Capitalism

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zA1ioym5OYA>

Other further reading

- Yoder, J.H. (1994). *The politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company.
- Berkhof, H. (1977). *Christ and the powers*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Heclo, H. (2008). *On thinking institutionally*. , Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
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- Caird, G.B. (2003). *Principalities and powers: A study in Pauline theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers
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- Korten, D.C. (2002, October 1). David C. Korten: A perspective from outside the corporation. *Ethix*. Retrieved from <http://ethix.org/2002/10/01/a-perspective-from-outside-the-corporation>

Chapter 7 *How Then Should We Do Business?*



Figure 19

Related biblical texts Isaiah 11:9

“My company provides all kinds of equipment for the distribution of electricity. We provide base infrastructure electrical items to utilities. Then, ranging from there to the light switches, light fixtures and light bulbs in your home...

Electricity benefits our lives by enhancing our productivity, health, comfort, safety and the economy. Electricity makes our lives convenient and fast...

God has given me the ability to provide light to my neighborhood, city and region...”
— Mike Smay, Stoneway Electric Supply Company (Seattle, WA)

Note: Mike goes on to root his sense of calling in the Bible. He quotes an author who states, “The creation of light by God was so obviously significant. No wonder James 1:17 describes God as “the Father of Lights.”

“The purpose of the corporation must be redefined as creating shared value, not just profit per se. This will drive the next wave of innovation and productivity growth in the global economy. It will also reshape capitalism and its relationship to society. Perhaps most important of all, learning how to create shared value is our best chance to legitimize business again.”

— Porter, M.E. and Kramer, M.R. (2011). Creating shared value: How to reinvent capitalism – and unleash a wave of innovation and growth. *Harvard Business Review*. 2-17.

Discussion questions

1. This chapter summarizes the business implications that have been developed earlier in the book. Now that you see them all in one place, what do you think? Do you agree with them? If you disagree, where has the book gone wrong?
2. If you think the book is right, can you imagine making business decisions based upon the question identified on page 152? Do you already do this? If not, can you think of a decision that you have recently made that might have ended up differently if you had asked this alternate question?

3. In analyzing a business, how can one tell if the business is really operating under the alternate, stewardship model advocated by the book? As the book notes, some business leaders talk about caring for their employees or their community but really focus on these as strategies that will advance their ultimate objective, a bigger bottom line. Others really focus on the care of the employee or the community as their ultimate purpose. Of course, sometimes these leaders also enjoy significant economic growth. In a sense, it seems like the difference turns on internal motivation. Do you think a different internal motivation will, over time, show up in different choices? If not, does interior motivation really matter?
4. One of the strengths of business in a free market system is its willingness to engage in "creative destruction." For example, a company may abandon a moderately profitable product line in order to redeploy the capital for higher and better uses. Any such redeployment typically comes with a human cost. How does the notion of creative destruction fit with the notions of sustainability advanced in the book?
5. If a company has the opportunity to outsource/off-shore some of the work that it has been doing and reduce its expenses to some extent, does the notion of sustainability argued for in the book preclude such outsourcing?
6. It is natural and necessary for business leaders to pay close attention to the profitability of their organizations. Given that this is such a dominant focus, however, it may be easy for a business to lose sight of its ultimate mission. What practical steps could be taken to ensure that a company's focus on mission remain an integral part of its business operations?
7. Should Christians support legislation that would set the national minimum wage for adult workers at a level approximating a "livable wage"? If so, what negative consequences might follow from this and how should a Christian respond to these consequences? If not, why not?
8. What other questions were raised for you from this summary chapter?

Chapter 8 Making it Real

Related biblical texts

Mark 4:1-9; Luke 10:30-37; Hebrews 5:11-14; John 3:8; Romans 12:2; Isaiah 11:6; Luke 10:2



Figure 20

Discussion questions

1. Do you agree that profit making should not be a first order purpose of business? If not, can you justify your conclusion biblically?
2. Do you think Christian employees working for Christian managers or within explicitly Christian companies have a greater tendency toward mediocrity than they might have working for a different boss or in a different organization? If so, why do you think that might be?
3. Do you think modern-day shareholders whose investments are typically handled by brokers and managed through a variety of funds look more like "speculators" than "owners"? What are the fundamental attributes of ownership? Do most shareholders exhibit these attributes?
4. Suppose that someone understood football so well that he could regularly "beat the line" when betting on NFL games. In fact, he's so good that he can "earn" a healthy livelihood just by placing bets. Imagine now that he offers to place bets for others using their capital and retaining a modest commission for his work. From God's perspective, would this be an appropriate "calling"? Who, if anyone, is benefiting from this economic activity? In what ways does this example correlate with the work done by professionals operating in the field of finance and in what ways is finance different? Specifically, how would you recast the work of individuals working in finance in terms of the service elements identified in the book as legitimate purposes of business?
5. Consider the following spiritual disciplines. Which of them do you currently practice on a regular basis? Which ones might be helpful for you begin? Can you identify one or two specific steps you could take to begin to practice one or more new spiritual disciplines?
 - Sabbath keeping
 - Daily Scripture study
 - Daily Scripture meditation
 - Regular confession of sin to another
 - A daily prayer of Examen
 - Fasting
 - Regular participation with a small bible study or other community group

- Regular times of corporate worship
 - Regular service to the poor, e.g. volunteering in a soup kitchen
 - Meeting with a spiritual director
6. Where have you experienced the messy-middle in your business dealings? Specifically, can you identify instances where you believed that God ideally would have wanted you to take certain actions that you concluded were not possible given existing competition and market forces? How did you respond in this situation? If you have never encountered such a tension, why do you think that is?
 7. What role does a faith community play in your day-to-day business practices?
 8. Does the company that you are now working for envision its purpose in terms of "service"? Even if this is part of its mission statement does it actually live this out? If not, what small practical steps might you take to help reorient the company's focus? If you think that is not possible, is God calling you to leave this company? If not, what is God calling you to do while you are there?
 9. In the end, the book identifies two reasons why a richer understanding of God's purpose and practice for business will make a difference in the world. For one, it will allow those of us operating in business to have a greater sense of meaning and to understand our work as potentially contributing to God's kingdom. For another, business as a service may end up focusing on some of the world's largest problems and may make a meaningful contribution to their solution. Business may be at least part of the answer to global poverty, hunger, shortage of water, pollution, AIDS, etc. Which of these two reasons is intrinsically more important to you? That is, do you get more motivated by the sense that your work has great meaning and can be lived as an integrated part of all of your life? Or does the prospect of making significant changes in the lives of those who are least fortunate energize you more?
 10. What other questions were raised for you from this look at a few last questions?

Additional teaching tools

Clips

Business as Service: The History of TOMS

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTQsQUu1Ho8>

Krochet Kids

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GezoYbujCo>

Other further reading

- Gunther, M. (2004). [*Faith and fortune: The quiet revolution to reform American business*](#). New York, NY: Crown Business.
- Burlingham, B. (2007). [*Small giants: Companies that choose to be great instead of big*](#). New York, NY: Portfolio Trade.
- Yankelovich, D. (2007). [*Profit with honor: The new stage of market capitalism*](#). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Pollard, C.W. (2010). [*The soul of the firm*](#). Chapel Hill, NC: DeltaOne Leadership Center
- Wells, S. (2004). [*Improvisation: The drama of Christian ethics*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
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Source of Figures

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- 2 <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mbell1975/2370055374/sizes/z/>
- 3 <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dheuts/3804259707/sizes/m/>
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Authors

Jeff Van Duzer, J.D.
Dean, Professor of Business Ethics
School of Business and Economics
Seattle Pacific University

John Terrill
Director
Center for Integrity in Business
School of Business and Economics
Seattle Pacific University

Donovan Richards
Graduate Assistant
Center for Integrity in Business

www.spu.edu/sbe

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