

12-2016

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Recommended Citation

Cafferky, M. E. and Jacobs, D. (2016). Bridging the gap between religion and business: A conversation. *Ministry Magazine* 88(12), 13-16.

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Ministry[®]

DECEMBER 2016

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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PHILADELPHIA

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MICHAEL CAFFERKY AND DOUGLAS JACOBS

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Bridging the gap between religion and business: A conversation

Editor's Note: *Michael Cafferky and Douglas Jacobs dialogue about a perceived gap between pastors and business professionals.*

Douglas Jacobs (DJ): A research survey of workers across the country found that the percentage of workers who observed misconduct at a workplace fell to an all-time low of 41 percent in 2013, down from a high of 55 percent in 2007. While reported ethical misbehavior is down, 60 percent of ethical misconduct involves managers—the very ones we expect to set a positive example for others. As a teacher of business ethics, how do you feel pastors can minister to such professionals?

Michael Cafferky (MC): Doug, ethics must govern Christian business professionals, but clearly there are areas where improvement is still needed. Some pastors might unintentionally ignore the particular needs of business professionals in their ministry. Even our Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental belief no. 22, Christian Behavior, did not refer to Christian behavior in business until its revision at the 2015 General Conference Session. Now that fundamental belief speaks of our behavior in the marketplace.¹

DJ: If I remember correctly, you wrote to the revision committee suggesting that

Christian behavior include business behavior.

MC: Yes. Most people work or volunteer in some way. Whether you have a job or you volunteer, you are involved with business-related activities! Christian behavior includes our health and entertainment, but we also need to address how to live as Christians in the marketplace. In fact, most persons interact with the marketplace, at least as buyers. Isn't that a part of business too?

DJ: Perhaps pastors could help business professionals integrate faith and work. We may have forgotten that several Bible heroes were business leaders. Joseph ran the entire economy of Egypt at a time of record crops and profits (Gen. 41:41–49). Daniel so distinguished himself as the chief financial officer for the kingdom of Medo-Persia that even his enemies couldn't find any corruption or negligence in his work (Dan. 6:1–4).

MC: Yes, the Bible records the exemplary contribution of many business professionals. Of the link between religion and business, Adventist author Ellen White says: "Religion and business

are not two separate things; they are one."² If that is so, what is the nature of the connection between the two?

DJ: Paul and his associates Priscilla and Aquila made tents for a living and to fund their evangelistic work (Acts 18:1–4; 20:34); hence the expression "tentmakers." It refers to business professionals who, while doing their secular jobs, participate in or fund activities to take the gospel to unreached areas or people groups. In Paul's model, the marketplace provides not only the funding for ministry but also the place where the gospel and the world come together. As Adventists, we've seen the biblical connection between the health-care professional and religion, but somehow we've missed the equally strong biblical connection between the business professional and religion. For Paul, tentmaking and evangelism were two sides of the same coin—living the Christian calling.

MC: So if the Bible and Ellen White both connect business and religion, why have pastors too often ignored business professionals in their ministry? Is it because many pastors haven't had

training in business or because they think of business as somehow less spiritual of an occupation than being a pastor, teacher, or health professional?

DJ: Pastors may tend to think that members in business put profits above mission or compromise ethics in search of success. When I was a pastor, I wondered if some Christian business professionals emphasized doing well financially more than doing good through service and ministry. But I discovered it was a grave mistake to think that a successful person in a secular setting must either compromise or minimize principles of Christian living.

MC: I learned at a young age that a calling was something that pastors receive. When I made the transition from pastoral work to health-care management, at first the question of calling bothered me. I thought perhaps I was turning my back on God. Since then, I have discovered that a calling is applicable not only to pastors but also to other professions. The main focus should be: Am I in what I do to fulfill God's will for me and for society at large? I can go one step further: a job is not necessary to feel a sense of calling. Don't retired people or disabled people have a calling, even if they don't have paid employment?

DJ: It seems, then, that our identity, as well as our calling, should be in our relationship with Jesus, not in our specific work skill. In Romans 1:1, Paul describes himself as "a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (NIV). Paul's identity as a servant of Jesus, his calling as an apostle, and his preaching of the gospel were all the same. Whether he was preaching from the Areopagus in Athens, sewing tents in Corinth, or imprisoned in Rome, he was fulfilling God's call. I wish now that, as a pastor, I had conveyed this concept in my preaching so that whether my listeners were business professionals, retirees, or even unemployed, they would have realized that they shared Paul's identity, calling, and mission.

MC: Perhaps this lack of shared identity is why business professionals may find it difficult to talk with the pastor about their struggles in balancing the competing needs of work, family, and church life. They may not want to talk about the complex ethical dilemmas that involve confidential information. Additionally, in some business situations, more than one right thing needs to be done, and more than one potentially bad outcome may need to be avoided.

DJ: Here's another cause for misunderstanding between pastors and business professionals. Friends who operate businesses have told me that some clergy members feel entitled to receive special "deals." The business owner may give the deal but then feel bitter about it and even stop attending the pastor's church.

MC: I have seen this. That can leave a sour taste and damage the pastor's credibility with the very people he or she wants to reach.

DJ: I'm a pastor who wants to have some competence in understanding the business world. What types of business professionals are in a typical congregation?

MC: Supervisors, foremen, managers, owners, entrepreneurs, and executives are all business professionals. People who work in trades or agriculture may not wear a suit to work every day, but they are as much business professionals as the Wall Street executives. Many business professionals serve in staff support roles like accounting, marketing, quality control, human resources management, software development, and so on. Even if they don't manage a team of people, their organization depends on their business expertise.

DJ: That might include the majority of members in many congregations! What are key concerns in business that pastors should understand?

MC: When you consider the wide variety of businesses that are represented

in a congregation, the common key concerns tend to be really big issues. Managing uncertainty and risk would be one. When faced with uncertainty, businesses need to control their key resources that provide value to customers. This includes, among other things, acquiring cash, materials, equipment, land, customers, and employees. In terms of relationships, a key concern is fostering positive relationships with workers and developing leadership abilities in employees.

DJ: Could one gap between pastors and business professionals be the different language we use to describe similar concerns? I talk about interests and evangelism, but my business friend talks about customers and sales. Church officers can be compared to employees, and leadership training seems very similar to discipling. We both deal with cash, materials, equipment, and land, but we approach concerns from different perspectives.

As pastors, we may feel pressure from business professionals who want to see measurable programs, progress, and profits. We may believe that God will take care of risks if we just step out in faith—that the church's profit should be measured not in money in the bank but in baptisms, membership gains, service to the community, and spiritual growth.

MC: But, Doug, is not the efficient use of money and the efficient making of profit one of the ways we legitimately serve God?

DJ: If you are talking about being a good steward of money, of course. We want to use God's money most efficiently, but are you suggesting that the business professionals in my church serve God by making financial profits? Is that one of their responsibilities? Is it immoral to make a profit?

MC: No, it is not immoral to make a profit. Not earning a profit means that the organization's ability to continue contributing to a flourishing life is undermined. Believers do serve God by

spreading the gospel. Serving God is not limited to fostering only the spiritual dimension of life to the exclusion of the physical, social, economic, and international spheres.

Earning a profit becomes important to the ongoing success of a business, but, by itself, it does not adequately express the idea of purpose. Profit, if that alone is the focus, downplays other social goals that are at the root of why we buy and sell with each other in the marketplace.

If the organization has made a commitment to serve the greater good of society, and if that commitment is designed to foster flourishing life in all dimensions, then, all things being equal, it would be immoral not to be faithful to this commitment. Earning profit gives the organization resources needed to fulfill its commitment to service.

DJ: Michael, I hear you saying that the Bible's wholistic theology of human nature serves as an effective foundation for business with a Christian commitment. Where a link exists between biblical anthropology and biblical work ethics, out of that springs forth the biblical view of value. What determines value in the business world?

MC: I would approach your question in two ways. First, value as commonly understood in business is located in resource, its availability, and its demand. The more a resource is scarce but desirable, the higher its value tends to become. When customers have funds available to purchase something they want, this tends to increase the price of a product. Additionally, the availability of substitutes has a large influence on the value of a resource. The more viable the substitutes, the lower the price of that resource. Some business professionals possibly tend to define value too narrowly in terms of the monetary value of a resource; that is, the price. Nevertheless, price is practical, and for this reason it should not be discounted as a useful decision-making tool. The price of products and services helps us balance our desires for other goods.

Price also helps the producers of goods avoid trying to sell goods that are not valued.

A second way of looking at value would be to keep in mind the purpose for which an organization exists. That purpose is normally related to what is going on in the environment outside the organization. From this broader perspective, the purpose of business is to provide what is needed for society in order to help that society to flourish, which in turn would return to society more than the value of the resources consumed in the process of operating the business.

From a biblical point of view, the purpose of business is deeper than can be seen on a balance sheet, in a bank account, or even in projects with humane value. We find the real purpose—within the larger goal of demonstrating the character of God to a watching universe—is to sustain flourishing life and to build value-oriented communities. I'm not sure how many business professionals see their role in this light. But from a biblical perspective, business must contribute to the process of blessing others and building communities that will be permanent channels of love and care. The

Pastors may tend to think that members in business put profits above mission or compromise ethics in search of success.

DJ: That's profit or value—whether in money or in some other measure. Does the way one measures value have an impact on how one defines the purpose of one's business? For example, from a biblical perspective, it is easy to see that God values people more than anything else. Jesus paid for us with His own blood, the ultimate price. His purpose was to save us. How is the purpose of a business determined?

MC: Purpose is absolutely vital in business! But is it to make profit and ensure growth for oneself or one's family and its future? Is it to succeed in the world of similar business and launch an empire of great strength? Or, in addition to the reasons above, is the purpose of a business located on a higher plane? Unless a business returns to society more than it consumes, it is destroying prosperity.

end result will be a valuable setting that will glorify God, uplift His worship, and develop men and women who will reflect God's image. Says Ellen White: "God calls upon men to serve Him in every transaction of life. Business is a snare when the law of God is not made the law of the daily life. He who has anything to do with the Master's work is to maintain unswerving integrity. In all business transactions, as verily as when on bended knees he seeks help from on high, God's will is to be his will. He is to keep the Lord ever before him, constantly studying the subjects about which the Holy Word speaks. Thus, though living amid that which would debase a man of lax principles, the man of piety and stern integrity preserves his Christianity."³ Faithful business professionals thus are coworkers with God just as much as is the pastor, missionary, or evangelist.

DJ: One of the purposes of business, then, includes Jesus' work of teaching, preaching, and healing—essentially building up the kingdom of God. Since we are made in God's image and God's image includes His ability to create, when we create goods and services that provide a meaningful life for others, we are reflecting God's image to others. Products that promote life such as the LifeStraw, a straw-shaped water filter giving anyone access to clean drinking water, are as much a part of the gospel ministry as Jesus' healing miracles. One of the greatest ways business builds up God's kingdom is in providing productive work, living wages, and family support through health care and other benefits.

MC: I agree. The core value offered to customers *should be* related to the theological purpose of business. Business must contribute to the building of the kingdom of God by blessing others, by being a setting where the restoration of the image of God is promoted through the work processes and by the

products and services, themselves, that contribute to flourishing life in all dimensions, not just the economic dimension. This means, as reflected in the biblical point of view on economic prosperity, business is just one of several types of organizations in society that have an opportunity to contribute to or support God's plan of redemption for this earth. This means that business may be closer to the work of the church than is typically conceived.

DJ: We gravely err when we see business and other professionals as less spiritual because they operate in the secular world of production and profits. Instead we, especially pastors, must see business and secular professionals as being valuable contact points with the world and key partners in promoting the kingdom of God on earth. If we define health as wholistic health or as flourishing well-being, then business professionals, along with health-care professionals, can be seen as partners in doing Jesus' work on Earth. Similarly

to other professions: they may not be directly church related, but those involved in such professions can be "tentmakers" and be so respected. The biblical model, as demonstrated in Acts, is for the gospel to be proclaimed by business professionals in their arena, the marketplace, and financed by their profits. Pastors can help business professionals develop better theological foundations for their work, find deeper biblical purposes for their businesses, and make greater professional contributions, with their expertise and skills, to the mission of the church. 🙌

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- 1 The first sentence of fundamental belief no. 22, with the revisions voted at the 2015 San Antonio General Conference Session in italics, reads, "We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with *biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life.*" "Living Christian Behavior," Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed May 3, 2016, www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/living/christian-behavior/.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn. 1941), 349.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 90.

Revival and Reformation While We Wait

God's desire is that "everyone" will "come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NIV). Though we cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to repentance, we are called to reach them with the message of salvation, which, if accepted, will lead to repentance.

We, too, as church members; need to be in an attitude of repentance. Repentance is part of the process of revival and reformation. Revival means to come back to life, to be renewed, and to be restored. Reformation means to be reshaped, reformed—to be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). . . .

The "how should we wait" passages in [Matthew 25:1–13] illustrate conditions and outcomes of revival and reformation. For example, all ten virgins needed to be revived, awakened out of sleep. . . . The foolish virgins needed to increase their capacity for the Holy Spirit in their lives. When we humble ourselves, die to self, unselfishly pray, study God's Word, and lovingly share it with others in word and loving deeds, we increase our capacity for an infilling of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power. However, it is possible to study the Bible for hours and still be a selfish person. We could pray for revival and

the latter rain but selfishly want it only for ourselves. Revival always leads to unselfish concern for others. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will be reformed into passionate, mission- and service-centered disciples.

—Excerpt from Gaspar F. Colón and May-Ellen M. Colón, "The Role of the Church in the Community," Adult Bible Study Guide, third quarter, 2016, 106.

