Fall 2009

Business and the Good Shepherd

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I really appreciated the way Dr. Williams-Morris would give us the facts but always mention her Christian bias.

— Daphne Bastien, sophomore psychology major

Business and the Good Shepherd

By Michael E. Cafferky, School of Business and Management

“K now that the lord Himself is God. It is He who has made us, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture” Psalm 100:3 (NASB).

These words became the basis for a complete overhaul of one of my favorite class periods in one of my favorite courses: Ethical, Social, and Legal Environment of Business, where I teach about the agency theory. After talking briefly about what it means to be someone’s agent, we sit down and have a prayer together. I start a biblical journey, examining the amazing imagery of sheep, owner-shepherds, and hireling-shepherds.

We begin with Jacob and his experience working for Laban and review evidence from ancient Babylonian shepherd agreements. I ask students to tell me where the sheep owners are likely to have difficulties with their hired shepherds. Then we take a whirlwind tour of agents in the Bible, with particular focus on shepherd agents, who care for the wealth-building assets of their owners. As the discussion continues, the imagery takes on a distinct spiritual meaning. We look at the symbolism of people bringing sheep and God being the shepherd before studying hired shepherds who allow the sheep to wander. I ask the students how people, as sheep, can get scattered and what it means to be scattered.

We consider the letters of the prophet Ezekiel over the nation of Israel, where we learn a little more about the work of a shepherd and the plight of scattered sheep who were supposed to be cared for by what turned out to be false shepherds. Here we pick up again the linkage between David and the Messiah before leaping into the Gospel to look at Matthew 2:6. For a few minutes we bring our thinking to John 10, where we learn more about hired shepherds and the Good, Noble Shepherd. Once again the questions of what it means to be scattered come up, creating a natural segue to the call of the Gospel. If you are one of God’s sheep, what is it that has scattered you away from God? I ask if you realize that you have been scattered, who would you rather have responsible for bringing you back: the Shepherd or a hired hand?

Though not every business subject lends itself to such an in-depth Bible study as this one, there are many occasions throughout the year when verses from the Bible add an extra layer of meaning to the principles we’re learning in class.

“Dr. Cafferky is in tune with the lives of the students and their prayer requests and praises and applying practical spirituality. His day-to-day decisions are always made with the Lord’s leading.”

— Joshua Hooker, senior management major

Spiritual Connections in William Morris’ Classes

• Lesson plan preparation includes prayer for specific Bible texts or spiritual principles to be brought to mind.
• Students are reminded that Christians should be the best scholars.
• Class begins with a prayer inviting Jesus to sit in and help with the day’s topic.
• Students’ attempts to find spiritual applications are encouraged and affirmed.
• Unexpected teachable moments are sought, during which spiritual applications are made.

Spiritual Connections in Cafferky’s Classes

• Hymns are sometimes sung at the beginning of class.
• Recorded religious music is played five minutes before class starts.
• Bible verse and devotional thoughts are shared at the start of each class.
• Class begins or ends with prayer, with students invited to share requests.
• Term paper assignments have students comparing claims of the Christian faith with the topic they are studying.
• Full-class period is devoted to discussing faith-sharing in secular workplaces.
• Story is shared about an organization where organizational leaders attempt to integrate faith in their work.
• Students read one or more articles or book chapters where issues of faith and integration are addressed.

Spiritual Connections in Ekkens Classes

• Devotional texts at the beginning of class follow the theme of characteristics that Christians need to exhibit.
• God’s wisdom is discussed as His creations are studied.
• Stories are shared of how graduates have used their education to impact lives for God.