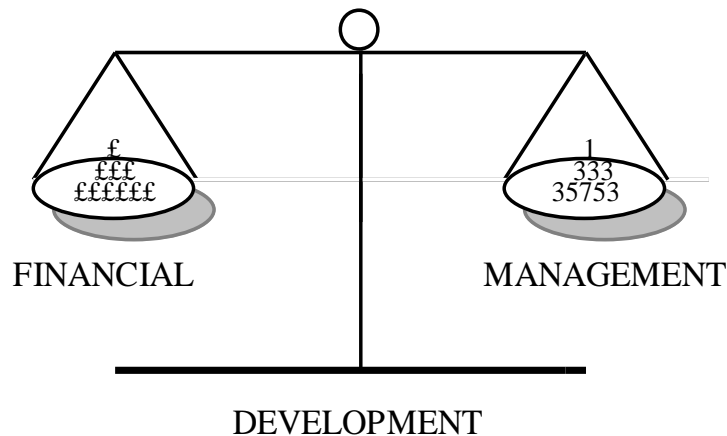


FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

CHRISTIAN MANAGEMENT

NO 902

GOD AT WORK BRINGING CHRIST INTO THE WORKPLACE



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GOD AT WORK

BRINGING CHRIST INTO THE WORKPLACE

God is at work in the world - through us

God loves work and wants to involve us in it. See Genesis 1. This short paper contains some reflections on the way Christianity can be brought into the workplace; to sanctify the world of work. It is not a blueprint for action, more a few suggestions for you to consider within your own sphere of activities. Firstly it is worth noting that work is intrinsically good:

“Work is one of the characteristics which distinguishes human beings from other creatures”
John Paul II Human Work 1981

“Work honours the Creator’s gifts and the talents received from him” Catechism of the Catholic Church 2427

1. *“Labore est Orare – to Work is to Pray”*

Jesus was the complete Human Being – Born, Grew up worked, prayed, preached, healed, taught and died. We are called to be like him; to be “Christ” to others.

“If you cannot be a Christian where you are, you certainly can’t be a Christian somewhere else”.

“We do well always and everywhere to give thanks and praise to God” so it is right to pray whilst working.

As individuals we know when we have done something well – fit for purpose, to the best of our ability. Our lives are an offering to God. “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Our “bodies” includes our work – and we should offer it unblemished. We join with the Priest at Mass when we say Amen to “This is my Body..... This is my blood.....” by offering ourselves our lives and our sorrows to God.

2. **Be Seen to Be Good (Outward Signs of Inward Grace)**

We are called to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13 – 16) not hidden in salt cellars or under a tub. “Your light must shine in people’s sight, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in Heaven”.

“It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith” (James 2:18) It is up to us to show:
Integrity – Openness – Fairness

“Religion is always personal, but never just a private affair”. Cardinal Hume in The Common Good. We are called to do it publicly.

There are two ways we can bring our Christianity into work with us:

Do things Different

Is it right to.....?
Wouldn't that be unfair?
How can we help.....?

Follow Luke 3: 10 – 14 John the Baptist “Share..... No Extortion.....Be Content”.

Do Different things

Grace before meals
Pray before Meetings (for yourself and others)
Time to Go to Mass
Talk about our faith and how it helps us Church
Read the Bible openly and be prepared to share it with others

Not like the Pharisees condemned in Matthew 23 as wanting to attract attention but “lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom” Cardinal Newman.

3. To be Good is to be like God

God is Holy, Loving and Pure (Just) and We, i.e. you and I and everyone we deal with, are made in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26)

Therefore we should try to

Be Holy, Loving and Pure
Do Holy, Loving and Pure Deeds
Surround myself with Holy, Loving and Pure Things

Avoid Sin and Temptation

Rid yourselves of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander (1 Peter 2:1)
Don't lead others astray (Matthew 18:5-10)
Don't be led into Temptation (Matthew 6:13)
Don't associate with those.....(2 Thessalonians 3:14)
Pray at all times (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners, sight to the blind, to release the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour”. (Luke 4:18-19)

Talk about your Faith	encourage Hope
Help those in need	show Charity and Love
Let people off	show Mercy
Tell them the Truth	demonstrate Honesty

4. Be Good at Your Job

“Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater”. (Matthew 25:21) We are called to do our work to the best of our ability, not because we will be rewarded, but because that is what God wants. There are lots of examples in the Bible.

Old Testament:

Abel – kept fat lambs

Joseph – governed Egypt

Bezalel – designed and made the Ark of the Covenant

Solomon – ruled wisely

New Testament:

Go the extra mile (Matthew 5:41)

Help those who ask (Matthew 5:42)

Allow corn picking on the Sabbath (Matthew 12: 1-8)

Paul worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while he preached the Gospel of God (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

Avoid idleness “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

“Never tire of doing what is right” (2 Thessalonians 3:13)

5. Not just Good Works but Good Work

In Thought, Word and Deed

All work, even difficult work can be “For the greater Glory of God”.

“By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemption work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish” (CCC 2427 quoting John Paul II Human Work)

You have been chosen by Christ Jesus, before he formed you in the womb to be you and to do what you do. Only you can do what you do. Only you can be you to the people who you work with. He has no hands but our hands....

It is an awesome responsibility...which is why we must ask for help from the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Counsellor to strengthen and confirm us in our work.

Don't lose yourself in work, find yourself.

6. Opposition

Don't be surprised if the world hates you (1 John 3:13)

Persevere in your faith : Luke 8:15,1
 Romans 5:3
 Hebrews 12:1
 James 1:12

Walk away (shake the dust from your feet – Matthew 10:14)

Let them go (Rich Young Man – Matthew 19:16)

Bless them; never curse them..... Never pay back evil for evil....master evil with good
 (Romans 12:14-21)

The Catechism 2426 –2436 looks at rights and duties. It considers issues such as discrimination, payment of just wages, taxation and unemployment. We live in an imperfect world... We have to make the best of it.

Do not judge (Matthew 7:1)

In John 8 Jesus was tested by the Scribes and the Pharisees – those who taught the law over the woman caught in adultery. We do not know what he wrote on the ground but his words “Let the one among you who is guiltless cast the first stone” were enough to make the accusers leave out of shame. The woman herself acknowledges she has not been condemned but Jesus asks her to sin no more. Her sin nearly caused others to commit murder.

We may be falsely accused or be the accusers ourselves. We need to ask for God's help to forgive, forget and pray for those who accuse and for ourselves.

7. Practicalities

It is not easy being a Christian at work. It never was, but at least the chances of being burnt at the stake or crucified are reduced in most Christian countries now. However no one can be attracted to God and His Church by coercion, we must be practical. There are two extremes to be avoided: Insensitivity and Fear.

Insensitivity

Some people carry The End is Near placards, or stand shouting on street corners. Some knock on doors to tell others about Christ. These methods can further God's Kingdom but not all are called to do it. We must be sensitive to where other people are. Meet them where they are at, Inculturation, as the General Directory of Catechesis calls it.

1 Peter 3 states “if there are some husbands who do not believe the Word, they may find themselves won over, without a word spoken, by the way their wives behave”. The same is true at work. Be sensitive to people's needs – learn when to talk about Christ and when to pray silently.

Fear

“Every knee shall bow before the name of Jesus” (Philippians 2:10). We have nothing to fear but fear itself. We may suffer – laughter, insults etc. but we are unlikely to be beaten, imprisoned or crucified as our predecessors were. We need to remember that God is not only on our side, but by our side.

We must be prepared to speak out – be prophetic. If we know something is wrong we must say so – lovingly but firmly.

Remember: Prayer is the first resort – not the last resort.
You are never alone
I am with you always, until the end of time (Matthew 28:20)

Try reflecting on the passage below and relating it to your workplace practices today. Perhaps put it on the wall at work.

MATTHEW 20: 1-16

Parable of the labourers in the vineyard

‘Now the kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, “You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage”. So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing around, and he said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?” “Because no one has hired us,” they answered. He said to them, “You go into my vineyard too.” In the evening the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first.” So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it but grumbled at the landowner saying “The men who came last have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day’s work in all the heat.” He answered one of them and said, “My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the lastcomer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why should you be envious because I am generous?” Thus the last will be first and the first, last.’

New Jerusalem Bible

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David is an experienced financial professional who has devoted his skills to management training in practical understanding and utilisation of financial information. A Graduate, Chartered Accountant, and Associate of the Institute of Taxation, he is also a Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and has been an Ordained as a Deacon in the Catholic Church.

He has worked as a Financial Controller and Company Secretary in the Finance industry and as a Director of Finance and Administration in the Computer Services industry. Since 1990 he has conducted management development programmes for over forty major organisations including Arla Foods, Blue Circle, BP, CSC Computer Sciences, Conoco, Ernst & Young, Lloyds Bowmaker, Royal Mail, Unilever and Zeneca. He also runs programmes for the Leadership Foundation and the management teams at a number of Universities. International training experience includes work in Belgium and Holland for CSC, in Denmark, Kenya and the Czech Republic for Unilever, in Holland and the US for Zeneca, in Dubai for Al Atheer, in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia for Cable & Wireless.

He specialises in programmes in financial management for both tactical and strategic decision making. In addition he has run courses in acquisition evaluation (The Economist, Eversheds, Blue Circle and Hays Chemicals) and in post-acquisition management (Unilever). All training is specifically tailored to the needs of the organisation with the emphasis on practical applications to enhance profitability and cashflow. He has developed material for delivery by in-house personnel (Royal Mail, Lloyds Bowmaker and Conoco), computer based training packages (The Post Office, Unilever and BP), and post course reinforcement self-study workbooks (CSC and Zeneca). He has also produced a training video on Cashflow Management.

He is a prolific writer of case studies, role plays and course material. He has also published articles on the financial justification of training, financial evaluation of IT investment proposals, the use of Activity Based Costing and Customer Profitability statements, commercial considerations for consultants, the need for taxation awareness training for general managers, evangelisation and Christian business ethics.

Many of his generic documents are freely available on his website:

FinancialManagementDevelopment.com including papers on Charity Management.

In addition to his Diaconal work in the Church, he has held a number of voluntary positions including University, College and School Governor, Hospice Treasurer and Trustee of various charitable institutions. He continues to provide ad hoc commercial advice to several other charitable organisations. He has been married for over 35 years and has one daughter and three granddaughters.

This series of papers is designed to help managers by providing a basic understanding of key financial concepts to assist them in their work. It is provided at no cost since this knowledge is a Gift from God and thus to be shared (Matthew 10:8).