

BOOK REVIEW

Christianity in Business: Applying Biblical Values in the Marketplace

Liang, E. (Ed.) (2018). *Christianity in business: Applying biblical values in the marketplace*. High Bridge. 205 pages.

It might seem unusual to review a book that is several years old. But neither the passage of time nor post-pandemic culture shifts have diminished the relevance of *Christianity in Business: Applying Biblical Values in the Marketplace*, edited by Dr. Ernest Liang. Christian educators can derive course plans, curriculum outlines, and future research priorities from its contents.

The first essay presents the First Commandment as a template for leadership in Christian business. This construct places God as the foundation for mission and purpose in all human enterprises. Further, it suggests training business students that God is always God — especially in business. The second essay underscores spiritual formation by way of three spiritual disciplines. These include practicing accountability of the heart, via the Holy Scriptures, in the community of Christian believers. These disciplines provide a template for undergraduate and graduate curriculum development.

A third essay defines Christ-centered business as making disciples in an environment that creates value, generates profit, and abides by the law. Some of the essay's advice about the law seems out of step with the current cultural environment. There are new and unique challenges of Christ-centered business in a world where companies face lawsuits and cancellations for this approach. Transforming this essay into a curriculum would require contemporary examples of Christ-centered companies that have survived and thrived in modern conditions.

The fourth essay argues that business practice that follows the word of God is a kind of worship. The author describes three business scenarios that required a choice. One is an organization in trouble that could falsify sales to avoid loan default. Another is a landowner with an unreported environmental hazard. And third is a company helping its customer avoid a state tax. These situations are enduring reminders of the everyday choices that reflect on Christian character. In each case, sharing Christian faith and prayer for God's guidance enabled obedience to God's word — the ultimate act of worship. Faculty could build from these

examples to illustrate the principles of facing business challenges with genuine faith rather than falsified records.

The fifth essay asserts that Christian redemption is more extensive than salvation from sin because it represents God's character throughout the earth. Business prepares people to practice and perceive God's nature in all aspects of life. This perspective would be constructive in today's environment, which reflects decades of careful attempts to keep God out of everyday living — including schools, the public square, and even business. Christian faculty teaching an active faith that seeks to manifest God's character could trigger a revival in cultures and societies.

Essay six supports the notion that Christian stewardship goes beyond giving money. It outlines three principles for biblical stewardship from the book of Nehemiah, including expectations, empowerment, and encouragement. These principles ring true to the present day as outstanding examples for teaching and replication.

Essay seven tackles the nature of humanity as the cause of repeated worldwide financial meltdowns. Economic theory explains these meltdowns as occasional departures from rational decision-making. Governments respond by creating laws to save people from themselves. But governments need saving since they also are led by people. The recommended remedy is placing confidence in God rather than volatile human mindsets. Christian economists could explore a more sophisticated paradigm for economic behavior. Market and consumer behaviors predictably lead to fear, volatility, and crisis when they do not focus on honoring God.

Essay eight addresses how the fruit of the Holy Spirit appears in performance appraisals. They reject the premise that such interaction would apply only to Christians or Christian workplaces. Instead, they agree with Paul's proclamation in Galatians 5:23 (NLT): "There is no law against these things!" Christian faculty have a unique opportunity to apply, evaluate, and extend this framework for the benefit of performance reviews in all sectors.

Essay nine delves into change. Given the breakneck pace of change in the information age, people's insecurity grows. This growth leads to an insanity that rejects the

foundational principles of society and results in the instability of that very society. These insights ring especially true in the post-COVID environment. Counteracting this dynamic requires a complete understanding of time. It includes a linear component typical of Western cultures and a cyclical element commonly emphasized in Eastern thought. Educators would be wise to highlight this model of time, as it is implicit in the combination of weekly class meetings that lead to a final project, exam, or presentation. Essay ten and its coverage of communication technologies is particularly poignant. Technology impacts interaction, closeness, attention, and understanding in human relationships, enhancing some while undermining others. These four aspects appear ripe for research and further development in the era after COVID-19.

Essay eleven seeks to apply biblical views of peace in the development and implementation of technology. It provides a framework and high-level example of bringing the concept of moral imagination into practice. Given the subjective nature of this framework, educators need qualitative research to transform the author's thoughts into a more solid theory for application.

The final essay attacks the notion of consumerism as a kind of stewardship. The author contrasts consumer debt with personal savings. He gives a four-item test for borrowing that transparently suggests Christians should avoid it. He continues with five points extolling savings as a basis for investment in ministry. These thoughts appear tone-deaf in the current environment, where savings interest rates are well below inflation, and banks have failed despite securing their assets with US Treasuries. Still, Christian educators could use aspects of this essay as groundwork for research into current attitudes about borrowing and saving.

With few exceptions, *Christianity in Business* provides training, research, and lifestyle principles that honor God in business. This book's emphasis on the spiritual, moral, and economic imperatives for Godly commerce in an ungodly world remains timeless.

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