

# Biblical Worldview and the Business Curriculum: *The Scriptural Foundations for Business Series*

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**ABSTRACT:** Business faculty at Christian Colleges take seriously the obligation and privilege of integrating faith and learning in their courses. Providing students with a biblical worldview (BW) of the business disciplines gives them an understanding of how the discipline covered in their courses can be comprehended — and eventually practiced — within the context of biblical truth. To date, faculty have had few resources that integrate a systematic, rigorous presentation of a BW across the curriculum. A new series is now available to help business faculty accomplish that goal.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

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## INTRODUCTION

The portion of the Shema quoted above is a call for God’s people to integrate faith into every aspect of the life of a believer. The biblical imagery of walking is not an accident in this passage. Walking is the ancient Hebrew imagery that encompassed all of life’s activities (including work) in a social context. Just as the religious leaders were given direction to keep the Ten Commandments foremost in their work (Deuteronomy 33:9-10), similar instruction was given to the king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), the prophets (Deuteronomy 18), to the people in general (Deuteronomy 13), and the heads of the primary economic units of society, the families, as shown in this passage in Deuteronomy 6. In particular, this is a call to the economic leaders of the day to continually keep the principles of God’s law before them and their children in all their endeavors. Families were the first schools of business, and they had clear direction from Moses: Teach God’s principles to the next generation of business leaders.

Faculty at Christian colleges and universities accept as both a privilege and responsibility the need to integrate faith into the teaching of their disciplines’ principles, helping students to avoid compartmentalizing their faith. In fact, the explicit and implicit mission of such institutions is to propagate a biblical worldview — which has the dual meaning of a philosophical lens through which to view the world, as well as a view that extends to all reaches of the believers’ world, as does the Shema. Christian business educators spend their careers attempting to do this in myriad ways in their teaching, in their service, and, where possible, in their scholarship. Business faculty face a number of challenges to achieving this goal in their work.

### *Continued Calls for Integrating Faith & Business*

Over the years, many calls have come from within the CBFA encouraging Christian business faculty members to work diligently to integrate faith and learning. Outside the CBFA, authors have addressed the issues of faith integra-

tion across the academy in general (e.g., Cosgrove, 2006; Migliazzo, 2002; Pearcy, 2008) and within the various academic disciplines including business (e.g., Downey, 2009; Dockery, 2012). Articles published in the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, the *Christian Business Academy Review* and the peer-reviewed papers presented at the annual conferences of the CBFA have traditionally been the main continuous settings in which calls for faith integration have occurred. Papers presented at many of the previous CBFA conferences are available through the CBFA website. More recently, new journals have been established. These include the *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics*, *Christian Business Review*, *Journal of Biblical Perspectives on Leadership*, and the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*. In 2013 and 2014 the CBFA introduced regional dialogical conferences designed to help scholars think deeply and theologically about issues across business disciplines. In terms of the Biblical Foundations series introduced here, with some exceptions, these materials are written primarily from the point of view of the instructor (i.e., by instructors to instructors).

Within the CBFA, the most recent specific encouragements toward faith integration come in the review of various approaches to integrate faith and learning provided by Roller (2013). A decade earlier Chewning (2001) encouraged CBFA members with his twelve “styles” of biblical integration.

### ***Paucity of Available Resources for Business Students***

Materials for Christian business school instructors were produced in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the Christians in the Marketplace series (Chewning — for examples see 1989, 1990, 1991). *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* (Chewning, Eby & Roels, 1990) has been used for nearly a quarter century as required supplemental reading in some business schools.

Other materials have been published that can be “consumed” by undergraduate students only when the professor brings the ideas into lectures or classroom discussions. For example, Brad Stamm (2001) offered a few biblical examples of microeconomics. In response to Stamm, Alan Chan (2009) offered a few additional examples of microeconomics in Scripture that professors can use in the principles of economics course. These and other papers, published or presented, have been providing professors with valuable materials and teaching ideas to weave into their classroom experiences.

More recently Cafferky (2012) produced a full-length, peer-reviewed textbook titled *Management: A Faith-based Perspective*. A single textbook cannot cover the wide range of topics included in the core curriculum. Wong and Rae’s

(2011) *Business for the Common Good* is another recent addition to materials available for use by students in Christian business courses. In terms of the product being introduced here, this volume covers a few of the elements of the core business curriculum. What seems to be needed are additional materials written for the undergraduate student reader that cover a wider spectrum of the core business curriculum typical in Christian business schools.

For faculty members at Christian colleges and universities that desire to offer students an organized, systemic (rather than ad hoc) approach to the core curriculum that is shaped by a biblical worldview, there are not a lot of options available. Thus, the issue goes beyond what an individual instructor is willing to do, through study and experimentation in class, to bring a biblical worldview to a particular course. The question becomes: What will the faculty as a whole do to bring a biblical worldview to the core curriculum at the level of the degree program? What resource is available to students across the curriculum to help them understand how Scripture is the foundation for all of business life (and help them avoid compartmentalizing their faith from their work in keeping with the intent of the Shema)? What tangible evidence will school of business faculty provide students and their parents that the degree program they participate in is distinctively different from the degree programs at a secular college? Other than the fact that the student attends a Christian college or university, other than the force of the instructor’s personality or personal passion for a biblical worldview, what will establish legitimacy to bring issues of biblical faith into the classroom? Other than making promises, what will communicate to external accreditation agencies that the mission of the school is being driven throughout the core curriculum? Are we to expect that the religion faculty will provide the scriptural foundation for business in the context of required religion courses?

So, in spite of the years of the CBFA emphasis on integrating faith and learning in the business disciplines, when one surveys the core curriculum of a typical Christian business school, currently there are not many resources written from the perspective of students. This means that in many cases faculty members must develop their own materials that engage students on issues of faith. This task can be daunting for an instructor who has little experience. Having published materials available for students to read and interact with would add legitimacy to the faith and learning processes.

### ***Lack of Formal Training in Biblical Studies***

Few Christian business instructors have formal training at the master’s-degree level or higher in biblical stud-

ies, biblical theology, religion, or theology. It is possible that some Christian business instructors did not attend a Christian college, secondary school, or primary school. Where formal training in Bible study is lacking, determining how to bring issues of biblical faith into the business classroom can be difficult.

### ***Biblical Literacy Low Among College Students***

Even if more business instructors had graduate school training in Bible-related studies, they face the problem of biblical literacy among students. In recent years, more than one author has identified the low level of biblical literacy as a general problem among Christians in North America (Swenson, 2009; Larsen, 2009; Jeynes, 2009). Students enrolled at Christian colleges and universities may also lack a high level of biblical literacy. Many of these students did not have the opportunity to attend Christian secondary or primary school. Business instructors may not see themselves as being well equipped to overcome this gap in literacy, especially as it relates to what the Bible says on business topics and issues. But does this mean that Christian business instructors can abdicate their responsibilities to contribute to improving biblical literacy among college students? We think this responsibility is shared among all the disciplines including business.

### ***High Expectations of Students for Obtaining a Biblical Perspective in Business Disciplines***

Prospective students are much more demanding of evidence that a program touting itself as a “quality Christian business education” is demonstrably good at delivering a quality experience in both the “Christian” and “business education” arenas. Previous to the current environment, a business program that could claim a dedicated Christian faculty at a school with a faith-based mission and a “Christian environment” could attract students willing to accept this as evidence that their need would be satisfied. Now, it could be argued that such anecdotal evidence is insufficient to satisfy a skeptical, cost-conscious target market. What can Christian colleges do to make a case that satisfaction of the need is being met with means that can be used across disciplines, teachers, and time that provides a systematic method for integrating a BW into the business curriculum? While this question might generate several proprietary methods of accomplishing this goal, one means has recently been introduced that is available to all Christian business programs: The Scriptural Foundation for Business Project.

## **THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR BUSINESS PROJECT**

Recognizing the need for a more systematic method of introducing a BW into the education of business students, several business faculty members at Christian colleges have initiated a publication series titled *Scriptural Foundations for Business*. This series is intended to help position Christian schools provide a distinctly different educational experience than can be obtained from other public or private institutions, an important goal in the increasingly competitive higher education marketplace. It is also of value to business programs charged with demonstrating to accrediting agencies that the program assesses its success in achieving its mission of integrating faith and learning.

Published by the Andrews University Press, the first three titles in the series — *Scriptural Foundations for Marketing*, *Scriptural Foundations for Management*, and *Scriptural Foundations for Business Communication* — were introduced in 2013. *Scriptural Foundations for Microeconomics* and *Scriptural Foundations for Accounting* were introduced in 2014 (see Appendix 1 for a description of these monographs). Other titles are planned for subsequent years.

The *Scriptural Foundations for Business* series will ultimately cover the core business courses in most college schools or departments of business, commerce, or economics. Each booklet is written to provide an understanding of how the discipline covered in the course can be comprehended, and eventually practiced, within the context of biblical truth. The intent is to provide the business student a firm grounding in Scripture as an introduction to the course material (see Appendix 2 for the editors’ introduction to the series printed inside each monograph). Each booklet in the series is approximately 20 pages long and includes learning objectives and discussion questions to assist in facilitating learning of the material. A WikiSpaces site has been established for adopters to access teaching resources (PowerPoint slides, teaching notes, classroom devotionals, discussion forums, etc.).

The ultimate objective of the project is to produce a book that will provide Christian business faculty and their students with structured support for integrating a BW into the classroom experiences in their schools. Having a supplemental reading resource such as this will add legitimacy to the process of engaging students in open discussions about faith in the world of business practice. Students learning business concepts in courses that use this book as an introduction to the discipline will have a firm scriptural foundation for those concepts — one absent from any training provided by a secular institution.

### ***The Review Process for the Manuscripts***

Authors of the monographs are instructed to think of their audience as a sophomore business student reading the monograph in the principles course for the business discipline. The series editors edit the work for style, content, and appropriate coverage of the topic. Once it is in a form approved by the editors, it is sent for blind review to multiple Christian college academicians in the monograph's discipline.

Reviewer instructions are as follows:

Please answer these questions when reviewing the manuscript:

1. Purpose: Does the manuscript accomplish the goal of covering the grand themes of Scripture that can be related to the manuscript topic? Are the scriptural foundations for the business discipline introduced in a clear and convincing manner?
2. Audience: Keeping in mind that the intended reader (college sophomore) has no prior understanding of the business topic, does the manuscript introduce the student to the topic at the appropriate level of rigor?
3. Style: Is the discussion appropriately organized? Is it well written for its intended audience? Please note any suggestions for illustrations or other supporting features that would make the work more accessible to students.
4. Revisions: Briefly describe the manuscript's strengths and weaknesses. If applicable, please provide suggestions for major revisions.
5. Marketability: If revised appropriately, would a teacher desiring to introduce students to the scriptural foundations of the business discipline addressed in the manuscript find this monograph attractive?

After the manuscript is revised to the editors' satisfaction based on the reviewer comments, it is sent to a theologian to check for the appropriate use of Scripture. Finally, it is sent to the editor of the Andrews University Press for approval to publish, copyedit, and produce.

### ***Examples of Content from Each Monograph***

The following examples taken from the published works illustrate how a Biblical Worldview is used to integrate faith and learning for each monograph's topic:

#### **Marketing**

John 2:13–16

"When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves and others sitting at tables

exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves, he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'"

When Jesus overturned the tables in the temple courts, He wasn't condemning the marketing of sacrificial animals. Some Jews with sincere hearts had traveled long distances to come to Jerusalem and follow God's command in offering sacrifices for their sins. They needed to purchase an animal for the sacrifice, and those selling the animals were performing a service to meet an important and real need. Jesus' righteous indignation was at *where* and *how* the merchants were performing their service. The manner in which they marketed their product and probably the value at which they offered it were offensive to, rather than honoring, God. Serving needs, as we'll see in Scripture, can be a good and honorable thing to do, but *how* we serve those needs will determine whether the service is honorable or not. Contemporary marketers, likewise, can honor God only when every aspect of a marketing plan is prepared and executed according to Christian principles. How then can marketers today simultaneously and honorably serve their organizations, their customers, and their God?

#### **Management**

Proverbs 18:15

"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out."

Proverbs 23:12

"Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge."

The chief benefit that an experienced manager brings to an organization, and the greatest need for inexperienced managers, is wisdom. It is the biblical concept of wisdom that comprises the biblical principles of management. The Bible considers wisdom for all of life, but especially the wisdom needed for successful managerial work in organizations is a gift from God received by listening to the community being served. It is one of the most highly prized of all virtues because it leads not only to material success but to successful living in all dimensions. The Bible emphasizes the importance of listening to wise counsel as the act of intelligence. The seat of intelligence lies in your ears. Wisdom comes from God's law but also is spoken by God-fearing people who are experienced. However, humans should judge carefully to whom they listen, for



if they listen to the ungodly or even only to themselves, they can easily go astray. The human heart is another vital center for managers and leaders having wisdom. The heart is to be guarded carefully, for it is the foundation for self-awareness, all moral action, and a person's entire relationship with God. Proverbs says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23). The human hand is another basis for what it means to be a manager. When someone in ancient Hebrew times was appointed as a manager, his subordinates were placed under his hand. The word "hand" is often used in the sense of someone's power to achieve, as well as wisdom in workmanship. The hand in Scripture also is used to refer to authority, control, or responsibility.

### **Business Communication**

Proverbs 18:12

"The tongue has the power of life and death."

The story is told in II Kings 5 of a young girl serving as domestic help in a foreign culture. She carries the power of life in her tongue. Moved by compassion for her diseased master, the young maid shares her belief that there is a God of healing. In response, the Assyrian captain journeys to Elisha requesting healing. After dipping in the River Jordan seven times, a healed, exuberant Naaman returns to Elisha to bestow gifts of thanksgiving. Based on the visible cultural context, Elisha should have accepted the gifts. However, viewing it from an inspired, spiritual context, he refuses.

Gehazi, a trusted servant, did not share in Elisha's inspired contextual view. The magnificent story of the foreign dignitary's healing is tainted by a story of greed. Gehazi fraudulently obtains treasures Elisha had refused. Gehazi's tongue holds the power of his own death as he feigns innocence about his short excursion to obtain the coveted gifts refused by Elisha and responds to Gehazi, "'Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever'" (2 Kings 5:27).

The story portrays characters who speak words reflective of their thinking — the maid from a heart of compassion, Gehazi from a heart of greed, and Elisha from a heart of both compassion and spiritual judgment. Throughout Scripture is echoed the words of Luke: "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6: 46). We live in a sinful world where the political, organizational, and cultural contexts are visible to all, and the spiritual context is seen only through eyes of faith. How can the business communicator remain cognizant of the invisible spiritual context and function effectively within the visible contexts?

### **Accounting**

Genesis 39:5

"From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field."

Christian accountants may face undesirable consequences for faithfulness in their work, but like Joseph, who when tempted stood true to God, they will be trustworthy, neither corrupt or negligent and faithful in all of their dealings. Jesus is the ultimate model of faithful representation in that He was the true and faithful representation of God. Even the Pharisees acknowledged that Jesus could not be persuaded to abandon the truth that He knew about God. Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others because you pay no attention to who they are" (Matthew 22:15–16). From both the scriptural and the accounting perspectives, representational faithfulness means that the information is true. If a financial statement reports that there were \$Y of sales during the year, it is a true representation when internal and external records show that bona fide sales of that exact amount actually took place during the year.

### **Microeconomics**

Acts 19: 24-27

"A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought a lot of business for the craftsmen there. He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said, 'You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business....' He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited..."

Business coalition can be observed in Scripture. When Paul began preaching in Ephesus, there was a riot. His ministry challenged the worship of Artemis, but it seems that his economic challenge was as threatening to some as was his theological challenge. The established worship in Ephesus involved the building of silver shrines, which were then sold to those who worshipped Artemis. If Paul were to be successful, he would put a lot of craftsmen out of business. He was a competitor, supplying the "sense" of access to divinity, as they were. But, his was the real thing.

## SUMMARY

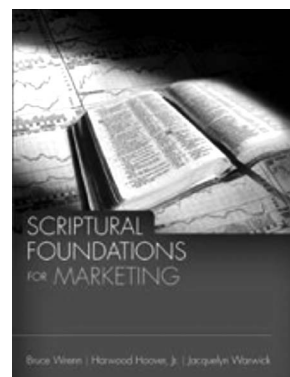
Business programs must be able to demonstrate that we can provide the marketplace with a benefit sought that is systemic to the institution and not entirely dependent upon voluntary choices by autonomous faculty. While devout Christian teachers will always be the cornerstones of the educational experience, we must be able to ensure that the premium price we demand guarantees every student will be provided a scriptural foundation to their business education no matter when they enroll or what their major. This requires an integration of faith and learning across the curriculum that is consistent over time, teacher, and academic discipline. The *Scriptural Foundations for Business* series is one of what could be several ways of putting into practice a systematic means of integrating faith and learning to strategic gain, if there remains a market segment that values this deliverable. The future of Christian higher education will depend on the continued existence of such a segment.

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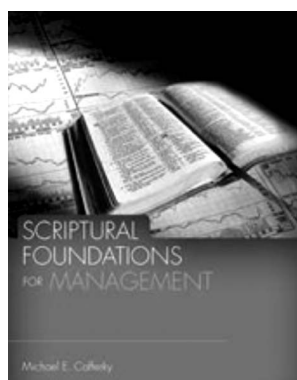
## APPENDIX 1

The following are descriptions and excerpts from each of the monographs produced thus far.



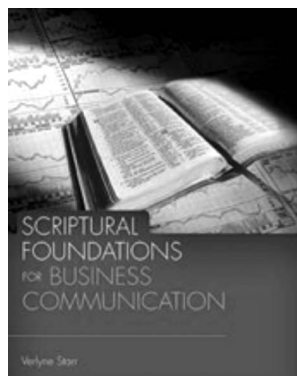
***Scriptural Foundations for Marketing*** was written for use in the principles of marketing course at both undergraduate and graduate levels. It builds a strong biblically based argument that a marketer's concern for the needs of others is an honorable endeavor and worthy of becoming the career choice of a committed Christian business student. Using approximately forty passages of Scripture,

the authors guide the student's understanding of the purpose and function of the marketing process within the context of Christian philosophy. The central theme is that marketers should be transparent in both motives and methods when fostering mutually beneficial exchange relationships. The goal is to inform and inspire the student regarding the best of what marketing can contribute to the organization and society when God's Word guides its practice.



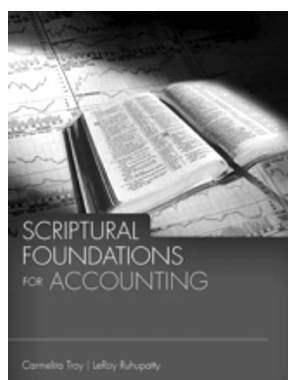
*Scriptural Foundations for Management* introduces the concept of thinking biblically when facing a management issue, challenge, or decision. It sets the framework when considering all the major contemporary issues that managers face when relating to subordinates, superiors, and people outside the organization. Using a series

of metaphors (heart, hand, ears) and concepts such as wisdom and accountability, the Bible has much to say about how managers serve God by serving others. In the Bible, management is more than planning, organizing, leading, or controlling. The manager's work is also worship.



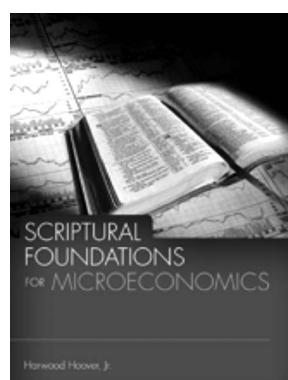
*Scriptural Foundations for Business Communication* seeks to answer the question: What is the Christian's responsibility when communicating through formal and informal channels of communication in today's workplace? Written for use in both undergraduate and graduate business communication courses, the text is rich with

scriptural references that inspire the Christian businessperson to see all communication as having a spiritual context. While all communication is contextual, for the Christian there is the added spiritual context, or set of biblical values, that the Christian communicator can use to leverage the business communication activities. These values form a mental framework through which a Christian views oneself, others, and God. Accepting that the Christian is responsible for loving God, others, and oneself prepares the individual to communicate through a spiritual perception, or within a spiritual context where every word is measured by a biblical standard.



*Scriptural Foundations for Accounting* illustrates how accounting plays an important role in decision-making for businesses and investors. In this monograph, we discuss biblical examples of record keeping and review the biblical guidelines on how to be an honest and faithful accountant. Accountants, who are devoted to following biblical

principles and accepted accounting principles and standards, keep the books so that the financial reports faithfully represent the business activities of the company. Financial reports that are reliable lead to better financial decisions by all interested parties. Being grounded in God's Word provides a shield from the temptation for accountants and managers to look out for their own interests by "cooking the books." Christian accountants may face undesirable consequences for faithfulness in their work, but like Joseph, who when tempted stood true to God, they will be trustworthy, neither corrupt or negligent and faithful in all of their dealings.



*Scriptural Foundations for Microeconomics* is intended to complement the materials found in courses introducing microeconomics. Basic concepts in microeconomics such as supply, demand, profit maximization, and market structure are considered in scriptural context. Scriptural examples are used to illustrate the concepts and to

uncover the human behaviors that underlie these powerful economic abstractions. This allows the reader to focus on the moral choices involved when making business decisions cast in microeconomics terms. Gospel values are then used to guide moral choice. Students are shown applications in contemporary business situations to include positive Christian leadership.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE**  
**SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR BUSINESS SERIES**

Proverbs 13:6

“Righteousness guards the person of integrity.”

This series is about “doing the Right thing,” that is, learning God’s directions from His Word on how to practice each management discipline His way. When you do things His way, you are, as Proverbs 13:6 says, setting up a guard for your life. God’s Word provides direction for how you can become God’s man or woman in the workplace, doing the Right thing as God guides your decisions. It is more than making legally defensible decisions or even highly ethical ones. Rather, it is pursuing righteousness — “God’s way” — in all that you do. When lacking grounding in God’s Word, an understanding of God’s directions for doing the Right thing in practicing our profession, we might find ourselves making a decision as described in Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” It seemed like the right thing to do, the course of action leading to the best outcome for the organization, but because we weren’t grounded in knowing the Right thing to do, the decision leads to “death” — unintended morally disastrous consequences.

This series provides scriptural foundations for the practice of business disciplines. For the Christian, making wise business decisions involves making choices consistent with God’s principles (i.e., the Right thing) and implementing the principles of good business practice (i.e., the right thing). To do the Right thing, we must have a thorough grounding in God’s Word as well as an understanding of modern management tools and theory. But merely knowing the latter without the former will not result in wise decisions. God wants us to have the Right motives for the decisions we make, not pursue gain for an improper motive. Proverbs 21:2 says, “A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart” — that is, the Lord examines your motives. We can’t trust our human nature to guide us into making decisions that are pleasing to God. The only way we can make pleasing decisions is when He is the one doing the guiding, and that will only happen if we are grounded in His Word. Hence the need exists for everyone seeking to do the Right thing to begin the study of a business discipline with an understanding of what Scripture has to say about the practice of that discipline.

The *Scriptural Foundations for Business* series comprises materials for the core business courses in most college schools or departments of business, commerce, or econom-

ics. As such, it provides the grounding needed to prepare one for a career in the world of business, whether in for-profit or not-for-profit enterprises. Each booklet is written to provide an understanding of how the discipline covered in the course can be comprehended — and eventually practiced — within the context of biblical truth. The authors represent a broad spectrum of nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and educational training, but have in common a dedication to the integration of faith and learning in their courses and their lives. May you be both inspired and educated as to how to use these writings to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1) as God’s man or woman in the marketplace.