

The Role of Biblical Theology in Teaching a Christian Worldview on Business

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ABSTRACT: Christian business faculty have the opportunity to point their students to the source of all Truth, Jesus Christ. This paper demonstrates a need for Christian business faculty members to immerse themselves in the Word of God in order to better theologically understand the overarching story of the Gospel and how crucial biblical themes (which help formulate a Christian worldview) directly impact business curriculum, intentional teaching, and actual business students at Christian institutions of higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Every business faculty member is a theologian. That might seem like a bold assertion, but it's true. Whether conscious of the fact or not, every faculty member brings a set of assumptions about this world and God to the table when wrestling with research questions and teaching students. These underlying theological assumptions shape our thinking in subtle ways that oftentimes are hard to detect.

In this paper, we will argue that, as business faculty members that have committed to be followers of Jesus Christ, it is critically important that we take the time to deeply consider the theological assumptions that guide our thinking. We will seek to lay out a process that will assist Christian business faculty members to do something extremely practical, namely, thoroughly ground our students in a Christian worldview of business that is enduring and career defining. If we want our teaching to have a lasting impact on our students, we as Christian business faculty members must first construct a sound theological foundation in our own minds.

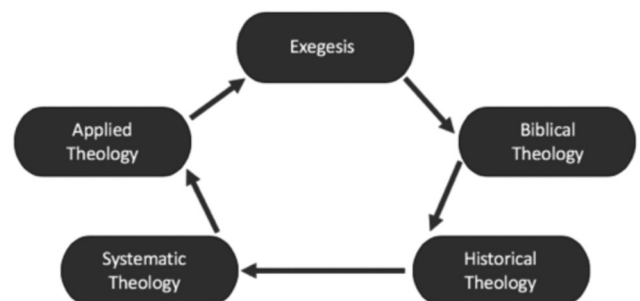
Importance of Biblical Theology

“Sound” theology is faithful, accurate, reliable, and biblical (Dever, 2007). The Apostle Paul repeatedly instructs two of his young charges to “teach what is in

accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Sound theology is rooted in the Word of God being central in all our teaching and thinking. According to Matthew 28:18-20, the primary way we make disciples is by teaching sound theology (Duncan, 2009). In the end, sound theology is “how we move from the text of [S]cripture” to how we should make God-centered business decisions each and every day (Lawrence, 2010).

Sound theology is built on five basic interdependent disciplines: exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and applied theology (Carson, 2015). As Christian business professors, we ultimately seek to answer the question of how business professionals should respond to God's revelation in a business context (applied

Figure 1: Hermeneutical Circle



theology). But we run the significant risk of misinterpretation if we don't first steep our minds in the other four disciplines. Before jumping to application, we should first work our way around the hermeneutical circle presented in Figure 1.

As is highlighted in Table 1, sound doctrine starts with carefully reading the text (exegesis) to determine what it actually says and, most importantly, what the author meant by what is said. It then proceeds through biblical theology to historical theology and then systematic theology. While Table 1 summarizes each interdependent disciple, our paper will focus on biblical theology for three reasons.

First, biblical theology, which is defined by Goldsworthy (1991) as a discipline of theology that emphasizes the progressive nature of biblical revelation, is a "kind of bridge-discipline between exegesis and systematic theology" that "enables them to hear each other" (Carson, 2015). While systematic theology is the "culminating discipline that attempts to form and transform one's worldview," biblical theology is "particularly important today because the [G]ospel is virtually incoherent unless people understand the Bible's storyline" (Caron, 2015). Biblical theology corroborates what systematic theology assumes: "that the Scriptures are not an eclectic, chaotic, and seemingly contradictory collection of religious writing but rather a single story, a unified narrative that conveys a coherent and consistent message" (Lawrence, 2010). As Christian business professors, we can utilize biblical theology to systematically comprehend what the Bible teaches and apply it to professional

settings and to do so within Scripture's own progressively revealed storyline.

Second, biblical readership is at an all-time low. For several decades, the percentage of Americans reading the Bible weekly hovered around 45%. But according to research by Barna, readership has declined consistently over the last decade, especially among the youngest adults. Today, less than 33% of all American adults report reading the Bible once a week or more, and among Millennials it's only 24% (Barna, 2017).

Third, basic biblical literacy among Generation Z, which includes 18- to 22-year-old college students, is surprisingly weak (Wrenn & Cafferky, 2015). George Guthrie (2011), the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible at Union University and author of *Read the Bible for Life*, says that only half of students on his campus, a nationally prominent Christian university, can correctly answer basic biblical questions in multiple choice format like "Which of these books is from the New Testament?" or "Whom did Pontius Pilate release during Jesus' trial?" or "Where would you look in the Bible to find the Sermon on the Mount?" (Guthrie, 2011).

Bible as a Metanarrative

Biblical theology seeks to determine the "metanarrative" of Scripture and does so by tracking the story chronologically—how a particular theme (like creation and new creation or exile and return) develops and unfolds. It watches and examines "the big story and its progressive plotline and pays attention to how each book of the Bible contributes to it" (Hamilton, 2014). It notices themes along the way

Table 1: Five Interdependent Theological Disciplines

Discipline	Questions Answered	Summary
Exegesis	What does this text actually say? What did the author mean by what was said?	Carefully reading the text and asking thoughtful questions that drive the reader to listen attentively to what the Bible says.
Biblical Theology	How has God revealed his word historically and organically?	Biblical theology seeks to understand the theology of individual books or units of Scripture and then trace out themes as they develop across time within the canon.
Historical Theology	How have people in the past understood the Bible? How has Christian doctrine developed over time, especially in response to false teachings?	Historical theology seeks to understand the opinions in periods earlier than our own. "Studying the history of interpretation is one of the greatest helps in freeing us from unwitting slavery to our biases."
Systematic Theology	What does the whole Bible teach about certain topics? What is true about God and the universe?	Systematic theology is concerned with how the entirety of Scripture logically coheres in systems of thought and includes headings such as ecclesiology, Christology, eschatology, etc.
Applied Theology	How should humans respond to God's revelation?	Applied theology practically applies the other four disciplines and addresses domains such as culture, ethics, marriage, family, money, politics, etc.

that are picked up by later authors (like the Garden of Eden or the beast). It notices “developing concepts, patterns of thought, and symbols or imagery that begin perhaps with some suggestive significance but are later filled with deeper significance” (Hamilton, 2014).

Biblical theology assists the reader in seeing how the death and resurrection of Christ is the fulfillment of the covenant that God made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and makes sense of Jesus’ announcement that, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Importantly from the standpoint of this paper, biblical theology helps us understand how our salvation in Christ should impact our daily lives here and now. As N. T. Wright (2008) said in *Surprised by Hope*, “In so far as the event is interpreted, Easter has a very this-worldly, present-age meaning. Jesus is raised so he is the Messiah, and he is therefore the world’s true Lord. Jesus is raised so God’s new creation has begun and *we, his followers, have a job to do*. Jesus is raised so we must act as his heralds announcing his Lordship to the entire world, making his kingdom come on earth as in heaven.”

THREADS TO BE FOLLOWED

Biblical theology seeks to study core biblical themes across all or part of the biblical corpora. Scholars have identified roughly 20 themes that run from Genesis to Revelation and serve to tie the entire Bible together. Some of these include the glory of God, covenant, law, temple, exile, Kingdom of God, and the city of God. In the next section of the paper, we will provide a brief overview of a few of these core threads and then, in the following section of the paper, provide examples of how these themes inform our teaching of a Christian worldview of business.

The Story of Creation

The biblical storyline of the Bible, starting in Genesis, demonstrates that God has uniquely made humans to play a part in “God renewing all things unto himself” (Colossians 3:10). When you look at the Old Testament as a whole, it reflects on the traditional Jewish idea that God envisioned for his human image bearers, which is for them to rule over a unified heaven and earth (Genesis 1:26-28). In a very real sense, human beings were created to be “middle managers,” working with and for God in the spread and development of the Garden of Eden throughout the world. Jesus and the apostles drew heavily on the ideal purpose for humanity that is presented in the Old Testament as they laid out the role of “new humanity” for the future.

According to Mackie and Collins (2019), Genesis 1 was an idea that was never realized. Importantly, Genesis 1 and 2 are not about a state of static perfection. In Jewish tradition, the garden narrative presents a scenario that God and humans were working towards. It was the path that Adam and Eve were called to pursue that was never realized. It was to be accomplished in a certain way—by letting God define good and evil, which is based on selfless love (represented in the story by eating from the tree of life) rather than humans defining good and evil based on their inner selfish drive (represented in the story by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). The remainder of the biblical storyline, starting in Genesis 12 with the Abrahamic covenant, lays out God’s plan to restore this original plan (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21). It is presented in seed form in Genesis 3:15 and then grows as the story unfolds.

According to Mackie and Collins (2019), Genesis 1 gives a portrait of what is supposed to happen, the ultimate idea of what God intended—“an ordered heaven and earth with humans as divine image rulers in a perpetual Sabbath ruling with God. Then Genesis 2 presents where it actually went and instead of perpetual Sabbath we see perpetual exile.” The perpetual exile continues all throughout the Old Testament as the Hebrew people prove over and over again that they don’t have the ability to be God’s agents of reconciliation in this world. The authors of the Old Testament, under the inspiration of God, thoroughly document how all humans continually, as Augustine writes in *Confessions*, pervert their own will by bending away from God. Only when Christ comes on the stage do we finally see a human being who is able to accomplish what God had intended for Adam and Eve and then Israel. And now, we as followers of Christ, with our renewed hearts of love, have the ability to more fully accomplish this original purpose.

Tree of Life vs. Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:8-9).

According to John Sailhamer (1992), the tree of life represented life as God intended, with the tree demonstrating access to a perfect, right relationship with God in which human beings chose to live lovingly and blamelessly in his presence (Revelation 22:14, 19). On the contrary, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as God created the tree to be, represented the choice that humans have to define good

and bad based on their own terms. In essence, in Genesis 1 and 2, God creates the world, creates man in his image, and then creates these two trees representative of two paths of living and two directional choices either towards God or away from him.

The understanding of what God desired for human beings (co-laborers in the world who chose to allow God to define good and bad and then rule by his wisdom) in terms of life and harmony is sharply contrasted with what Adam and Eve chose (living by their own wisdom in which they redefine good and bad based on their own selfish desires) in Genesis 3 when they disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This important backdrop is at the core of the Gospel story because it displays humankind's rebellion against God and the need for an external, eternal rescue. It also provides the answer to why the world is filled with evil and death. If there had not been disobedience, sin, and death through Adam and Eve, then Jesus and his perfect life, death, and resurrection would not have been required to bring men and women back into a right relationship with God (Ephesians 2:13-22).

Christian business professors must first understand how God intended things to be upon creation (revealed through his Word) and then how Adam and Eve (through their own disobedience) threw all of creation and order into a sinful state of death and separation from God (Genesis 3:24) in order to be able to present to students the beauty and wonder of Jesus and the rescue mission he undertook on behalf of creation (Revelation 21:5). When Christian business professors have the theological understanding and biblical backstory to the need of Jesus Christ and his rescue, then they themselves are well equipped to prepare business students and their Christian faith for a 21st-century marketplace that is longing for, but inherently blind to, the good news that Jesus came to save and reconcile sinners to himself because of what humankind had done against God (Babyak, 2018; Brown, 2015).

The Kingdom of God

Once Christian business professors better understand how God created the world and humankind and what God had originally desired for his children, then this initial understanding serves as a helpful backdrop for understanding God's Kingdom as a whole and how men and women fit into God's larger plan. First, Christian business faculty (and every man and woman) need to understand that there is a larger story being told by God and weaved together, and this larger story is something that humankind cannot fully see, comprehend, or fathom. The Apostle Paul, writing to his

faithful friend Timothy, illustrates this well when he wrote in 1 Timothy 6:13-16:

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time- he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

The Apostle Paul, through revelations from Jesus himself (Acts 9:3-6; 2 Corinthians 12:1-6), wrote faithfully in the Bible of the Lordship of Jesus Christ; the reasons why Jesus came to live, die, and rise again from the dead on behalf of sinners; and the restoration that only Jesus provides through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, through confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and a belief that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9), any man or woman can become a part of God's family and Kingdom and live out their true role as not only image bearers but co-heirs in God's larger story. The Apostle Paul continues to illustrate this idea when he wrote in Romans 14:17, "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Christian business faculty have the incredible privilege, ability, and calling to proclaim these truths about the Kingdom of God where they live, work, and play (Pope, 2017). Specifically, for Christian business faculty at Christian institutions of higher education, they can have the direct privilege of grounding all their content, assignments, discussions, and teaching in God's Word while pointing students back to the beauty of God's Kingdom and what it is and how Jesus provides access to this eternal, joyful Kingdom through his life, death, and resurrection. In addition, when men and women put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, they also are changed by the blood of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to desire more of what God's Kingdom stands for and represents instead of what Satan or the world believes and values (1 Peter 1:2). This understanding of God's Kingdom provides a framework for Christian business students who are training to enter the workplace and represent Jesus Christ in all they do, and specifically it helps these students see their important roles and place in God's larger story as they are used by God to love and serve others and build the very kingdom they are a part of (Babyak, 2017; Grimes & Bennett, 2017; Windes, White, Harkema, Hamilton, & Samudio, 2017).

The Son of Man

In the Bible, Jesus refers to himself most frequently as the “Son of Man,” a reference to the Old Testament prophecy in the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:13) and a title embraced by Jesus as the perfect human substitute who will occupy the empty throne of heaven, sit at the right hand of God, and come again to gather his people (Christians) for eternal life and joy everlasting (Matthew 16:27-28) (Collins & Mackie, 2019). The theological understanding of Jesus as the “Son of Man” directly connects to God’s story of creation, mankind’s rebellion of God, yet God’s Kingdom continuing to move forward in that the only chance of rescue for mankind and creation is the Son of God, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus takes the place of mankind in that he takes all the sin and punishment of men and women throughout time upon himself, dies the death mankind deserved, then proves his power as the Son of God by conquering death and rising from the grave to give Christians new life (1 Corinthians 15:55-56). Consequently, Jesus as the “Son of Man” is the new and perfect Adam, changing the course of human history, restoring relationship between believing men and women and God, and taking on the role of human substitute in God’s presence so that when God sees Christians’ lives and hearts, He sees Jesus’s righteousness and spotless record (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christian business faculty, especially those at Christian institutions of higher education who can speak freely and boldly about the Gospel, must point students to Jesus Christ not only as Savior from sin and death (which he absolutely is) but also as perfect substitute, mediator, and Lord (Hebrews 12:2).

Put another way, so often evangelicals in general believe that Jesus Christ is primarily a person to try to emulate or be like or to just become more similar to so that everything in their lives can be better. This is not the primary essence of the Gospel. Yes, Jesus Christ is absolutely the heart and focus of all the Scriptures, and yes, Jesus Christ absolutely teaches and provides wise paths of obedience for Christians to follow. But, Jesus Christ is not primarily an exemplar or measuring stick for Christians. Jesus Christ is first and foremost Christians’ substitute, only hope, Savior, Lord, and mediator to a holy and righteous God (Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, and 12:24). This is good news, and these truths about the “Son of Man” are what the Gospel of Jesus Christ truly is about.

In light of these wonderful, joyous truths about the “Son of Man,” Jesus Christ, Christian business faculty have the opportunity to teach their students (with the focus on spiritual and academic growth) that all of their lives fall under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and are sacred to God

as part of his larger story because of what Jesus has done for them (Black, Smith, & Keels, 2014; McMahon, 2014). These same students can hear from Christian business faculty who have been theologically informed that because of the “Son of Man,” Jesus Christ, they have the opportunity to be at peace with their creator God, and represent Jesus Christ in the business world and throughout their lives (through a biblical worldview and lens) as salt and light for God’s Kingdom (Cassell & Merkel, 2018; Liang, 2018). When students hear these Gospel truths as the Holy Spirit works in their hearts, classroom environments morph from just content delivery stations to worshipful, biblical destinations where students see, hear, and taste the integration of the good news of Jesus Christ with their occupational pursuits, career paths, and deep desires, both personally and professionally (Dulaney, Bates, Berg, Forbes, Gunn, Koontz, & Thomas, 2015; Esqueda, 2014; Herrity, 2015, Tibbetts & Leeper, 2016).

Restoration and Glorification

As God graciously works in the hearts of Christian business faculty to theologically understand the biblical history of creation and the fall (Genesis 1-3), the Kingdom of God as the larger story pointing to Jesus’ rescue, and the work of Jesus as the substitutionary “Son of Man,” then these same faculty will in turn be better prepared to teach and proclaim the wonder of the restoration and glorification to come in Jesus Christ for Christian believers (Acts 7:56; Revelation 14:14). This specific, Gospel-centered wonder is rooted first in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross when he atoned for the sins of mankind and took mankind’s punishment before a holy and righteous God upon himself (Hebrews 12:2). When Jesus uttered the words “It is Finished” on the cross (John 19:30), he accomplished atonement of sins for all mankind and at that moment in human history, brought upon restoration for all sinners who put their hope and trust in him as their Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9).

Jesus restored relationship between believing Christians and their heavenly Father, and this restoration accomplished by Jesus’ righteous life and substitutionary death meant that now mankind could once again be co-heirs of God’s Kingdom and serve as ambassadors for God and his Son, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 2:16). Business faculty who are Christians are redeemed, restored men and women who have been changed by the gracious work of Jesus Christ, and these same men and women have the opportunity to talk with their students intentionally about the restoration that Jesus has brought about in their lives. This intentional conversation with students is not only transformational for students in terms of their hearts,

lives, and eternal standing with God, but the proclamation of Jesus' restoration also inherently changes desires, motives, and students' perspectives of their freedom in Christ, career paths, and ultimate life goals (Giglio, 2017; Sauerwein, 2013).

The biblical theme of restoration does not only stop at the cross and at Jesus' crucifixion; it leads to resurrection Sunday when Jesus, after defeating sin, conquered death and the grave to prove his power as the Son of God and secure eternal life for all men and women who believe in him as Lord and Savior (Romans 1:4, 6:5; 1 Peter 1:3). This additional, beautifully powerful and important part of God's restoration plan has grand implications for Christians who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:13), and Christian business faculty can point students to the resurrection as their source of true, eternal, and overarching hope in the midst of this present, broken world. Students (and men and women in general) are longing for good news, hope, purpose, and joy, and Christian business faculty hold the true and eternal source of hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This entire restoration story of Jesus Christ's perfect and righteous life, death, and resurrection must be shared, modeled, lived out, and emphasized in students' lives so that they also can be exposed to the heart and life-changing truths, and so the Gospel's power can be unleashed in these students' lives, stories, and occupational careers (Romans 1:16) (Keller, 2010). The Apostle Paul illustrates the importance of intentional, bold sharing of the good news of the Gospel when he wrote in Romans 10:14-17,

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

Thus, Christian business faculty, through their bold and intentional sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his restoration work can not only honor God through their work as ambassadors for him (a wonderful responsibility) but can be courageous and bold for Jesus knowing one's time is short and the need for Jesus is vast (Matthew 9:37; Luke 10:2; James 4:14) (Wick, 2018; Wrenn & Cafferky, 2015).

The last thread to follow for all Christians, including Christian business faculty, is the hope, beauty, and future assurance of glory. In fact, as all of Scripture points to Jesus and all that he has done for sinners, the ultimate ending

to this beautiful story of restoration is glory (Pope, 2017). Glorification is the ultimate hope of the Gospel in that Jesus will come again, in a time determined by God (Mark 13:32) to gather all his children (Christian men and women) to his side for eternal, perfect, and loving life and relationship with God himself (John 14:3). This new life for all Christians will be one in which there is no pain, suffering, death, tragedy, hardship, or sinful struggle, and this new life for all Christians will be on a new earth fully redeemed, restored, and reconciled the way God originally created the earth to be. The Apostle John described this eternal glory with beautiful and hopeful words when he wrote in Revelation 22:1-5,

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

The theological reality for Christians of future glory and perfect, right relationship with God forever in the ways God originally intended is the largest, most blessed and eternal hope, and students are desperate for this glorious news. Christian business faculty, as they better learn and understand the threads of the Gospel story, can lead and even take risks for the Kingdom of God by pointing students to Jesus and this future glory—all because this glorious news is the only thing that truly and eternally matters (Wick, 2018). As pastor, author, and theologian Scott Sauls writes (2017) writes, "Only Jesus, whose rule and whose peace shall never cease to increase (Isaiah 9:7), can sustain us. Only Jesus, whose resurrection assures us that he is—and forever will be—making all things new, can fulfill our deepest desires and give us a happily-ever-after conclusion" (p.44). These truths and Gospel-centered realities cause Christians to be focused on God's Kingdom and the glory to come. In turn, Christian business faculty have the wonderful opportunity to help students continually get their eyes off of the here and now and see their work, business careers, relationships, and lives as conduits of Grace that can continually point others to this future hope and glory in Jesus Christ and his eternal Kingdom (McMahon, Locke, & Roller, 2015).

PUTTING IT TOGETHER IN THE CLASSROOM

Next, we seek to demonstrate how the Christian faculty member can utilize biblical theology in the practical, day-to-day teaching of business students.

Starting with a Biblical Worldview of Life

As the Bible lays out very clearly in Genesis 1 and 2, all human beings, starting with Adam and Eve, were born in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7, 22). This significant, powerful, and life-changing reality means that all human beings (Christian and non-Christian) possess gifts, talents, passions, attributes, and characteristics of God himself. God in his creativity, power, and graciousness created male and female perfectly in his image in order that men and women might know him personally, walk with him as co-rulers in his creation, and cultivate the areas of the world that God provided as co-laborers in God's perfect creation. However, after Adam and Eve gave into temptation, sinned, and disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6-7), this rebellion against God's commands, design, and plan caused an utter fracture in man's relationship with the almighty God. This fracture would impact everything in the world in terms of sin completely pervading relationships, work, life, and every man and woman's heart (Psalm 143:20; Romans 3:10), and specifically sin would be the ultimate separator between God and man. This is where the "Good News" of the Gospel comes crashing in, and this is where Christian business faculty can step up and share lovingly and boldly about the person and work of Jesus Christ and what he has done for sinful men and women (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

All men and women were born as image bearers of God, yet born into sin and fall short of God's glory (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23). Business students must first understand the bad news that men and women (as image bearers of God) gave up their honored place as God's creation, co-laborers, and co-heirs to rebel against God and in essence try and become their own God in their lives. The "Good News" of the Gospel will only be wonderful, heart-changing news for business students once they first understand they were hopeless and lost in their sin, but God... (Ephesians 2:4). God sent Jesus to live among men and women and obey all of God's commands perfectly. God sent Jesus to die for the sins of every image-bearing, yet rebelling, man and woman on the earth so that all had the opportunity for forgiveness and new life (Hebrews 12:2). God sent Jesus to rise from the dead so that all who believe in his name might rise eternally to new life in Christ and, most importantly, new and perfect relationship with their Heavenly Father (the God and creator of the universe) (Galatians 4:4-7).

This is Good News; more tangibly, this is the only good news men and women truly can possess and cling to. Business students need to see (as God opens the eyes of their hearts and minds) that the Bible is one beautiful story of redemption, forgiveness, grace, and resurrection that can change their hearts and lives because it all points to Jesus himself. Jesus is the hero of the story, and it is only through a personal, heart-changing relationship with Jesus Christ that any image-bearing man or woman can be saved and adopted into the family of God (Romans 10:9). Thus, all men and women are image bearers and have inherent and deep value as God's creation, but not all image bearers are God's children. Christian business faculty have the blessed and wonderful opportunity in the classroom to be loving yet bold in this distinction in order for students to see that being born in God's image, although wonderful and powerful, will not save them eternally. Rather, business students need to hear in the classroom, offices, and on campus that they are inherently valuable to God, but they will only be graciously saved and adopted by God through personal faith in his Son and creation's Savior, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2: 1-10).

Image Bearers of God the Creator

As mentioned previously, all men and women who walk this earth are image bearers of God (Genesis 1:27). In business, and in all of life, this means that all men and women have gifts, talents, abilities, passions, and attributes of God himself. This is why Christians and non-Christians can create and grow thriving businesses, produce reliable and unique products, provide meaningful and rich services and experiences, etc. All of these things are possible because all men and women, and any person in business, has been uniquely and creatively made by God and given divine tools to bring flourishing and life to all parts of his earth (Psalm 139:14) (Keller, 2012). This wonderful and gracious reality given by God out of his mercy to all men and women as image bearers means the earth benefits from the creativity, wisdom, and skill of God.

This biblical reality does not mean, however, that all image bearers are Christians and credit God for the gifts, talents, abilities, and passions they possess. Instead, the Bible lays out quite the opposite scenario. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul says in verse 21, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." In essence, men and women throughout human history have had the innate sense that they were created by God and given everything by him, but they have suppressed these truths, choosing to live their own lives and instead taking the credit for what only God

can claim ownership over. Every man and woman who has walked this earth has been born into sin and has naturally (because of the fall in Genesis 3) taken this path, and only through the mercy and grace of God has any man or woman been saved out of this sinful, selfish, and darkened heart and mindset and been redeemed as children of God (John 1:12; Romans 8:16-21).

Christian business faculty, specifically through their teaching and training in the classroom, have the great privilege and opportunity to help students understand and see (through God changing hearts and minds) that every part of their intellect, abilities, and talents comes from God, and God deserves the gratitude and thankfulness for being the image of all these things. In addition, Christian business faculty can boldly yet lovingly share with their students that their own accomplishments, successes, academic and professional achievements, and all their wisdom and knowledge comes from God, are gracious gifts from God, and are born out the image of God and who he is (Romans 11:29; James 1:17). This is one of the best ways that Christian business faculty can help explain in the classroom and through their teaching the image of God to students and the gifts, blessings, talents, and abilities that only come from God to men and women as image bearers and his creation. Christian business faculty can teach, speak, and model a Gospel-centered humility that not only is attractive and winsome to students and others but a humility that does not take credit for accomplishments or professional standing but instead directs the credit back to God and his gracious and creative wisdom (Proverbs 15:33; Colossians 3:12).

If Christian business faculty start to share more with students where the credit goes for their careers, accomplishments, successes, and achievements, it not only points students in the classroom, office, seminar room, and on campus back to God and his perfect image; it also motivates (as God works in hearts) students to start thinking about their own successes and accomplishments and how these things came about. This type of greater, Gospel-centered praise, adoration, and sharing by Christian business faculty allow the classroom to serve as an environment for greater student reflection not only on the image they have been created in but also whether they truly know this creative, gracious, giving God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3, 2:1). Thus, teaching, sharing, and reflecting on the image of God by Christian business faculty can lead to a greater humility in the classroom as faculty give credit back to God for all that is present in their lives, and this directional praise towards God can lead students in turn to evaluate how they are living and where the credit in

their own image-bearing lives goes to (1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 9:15).

Christians as Sinner-Saints (Simul-Justus-et-Peccator)

As Christian business faculty start to unpack the threads of the Gospel story in their classrooms and with their students, and as these same faculty use a biblical worldview to help students understand their image-bearer status as creation of the living God, students must also understand their innate sin nature and desperation for Jesus (Romans 3:23). In this desperation, though, Christian business faculty can articulate theological truth and practical hope for Christians who have placed their faith, hope, and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ; that is that Christians, while still fully sinful on this side of heaven, are also at the same time fully forgiven, loved, redeemed, and restored through the righteous and perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). The father of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, called this simultaneous positional stance of Christians “*Simul Justus et Peccator*,” which is Latin for “simultaneously righteous, yet sinner.”

It is from Martin Luther’s Latin phrase “*Simul Justus et Peccator*” that the Evangelical church got the idea and term for the phrase “sinner-saint,” meaning that Christians on this side of heaven, unto themselves, are fully sinful. However, because of their faith in Jesus Christ, they are at the same time righteous before God because of Jesus’ imputed record given to all who believe in him (Bingham, 2018). This wondrous and eternally life-changing transaction between Jesus and his followers embodies the very heart of the Gospel in that the “good news” for sinners is that Jesus came into the world to redeem the world, to save all who believed in his name, and to make all of creation new (John 1:12, Revelation 21:5). There are many practical applications of understanding what “*Simul Justus et Peccator*” means in the life of a Christian, but there are two very helpful ways Christian business faculty can use the classroom and their teaching to helpfully unpack this for their students.

First, Christian business faculty can help students see that if they know Jesus, they are forgiven, cleansed, saved eternally, and loved forever. This is positionally true for the heart and life of the Christian who knows, loves, and follows Jesus. However, this does not make Christian students better than anybody else, particularly non-believers, since they are still sinful on this side of heaven, they still are the same at the point of need for Jesus as the next person, and they did not even save themselves. The Apostle Paul echoes this point about salvation being entirely a gift of Grace from God when he wrote in Galatians 2:4-5, “But God,

being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved.” In other words, the Apostle Paul is telling all Christians that even their salvation, belief in Jesus Christ, and desire to follow him is not of their own doing; it is all a gift of Grace. Christians, unto themselves, would never have chosen naturally to be Christians because as Galatians 2:1 reminds all men and women, mankind was dead in their trespasses and sin before God intervened. Thus, Christian business faculty can teach their students through lectures, discussions, assignments, guest speakers, projects, and, most importantly, biblical reflection, that all Christians (including any saved students) should understand that even though they are saved (by God’s Grace), they are still sinful and no better than anyone else. Christians’ salvation is a miraculous, gracious gift of God crashing into their hearts and lives and lovingly changing them, and a true understanding of this great exchange (Jesus’ imputed righteousness to sinners) produces humility, gratitude, and a love for God and others (Galatians 5:1, 5:13-14).

Second, Christian business faculty can teach their students in the classroom, through discussions and God-honoring relational interactions, that “sinner-saints” who have a deep humility for the love of God towards them in turn love freely and deeply. This second and hugely important theological reality related to Christians’ positional stance before God because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ changes everything in terms of how children of God (and Christian students) see their freedom in Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13-14, “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Paul is simply telling Christians (sinner-saints) that they are now free men and women who are loved, forgiven, righteous, and spotless in Jesus Christ, and they can now use this freedom to love and serve others around them instead of having to take from others or consume others. This biblical reality has profound application in the business world in that the general business marketplace often preaches of rising to the top, squashing the “little guy,” making the most you can at your competition’s expense, and other selfish or me-focused mantras. Christian business faculty have the privilege and calling to teach students within their classrooms in a different manner—the Gospel manner.

Christian business faculty can still teach sound, logical, practical, and even competitively strategic business principles about financial management, sales, maximiza-

tion of efficiency, marketing strategy, revenue generation, well-rounded accounting efforts, and a host of other sound business areas. But Christian business faculty can teach these concepts, principles, and strategies from a biblical standpoint where love, honesty, integrity, servanthood, and sacrifice win the day compared to money, success, job title, approval, career trajectory, or competitive edges. In addition, Christian business faculty can teach their students in the classroom clearly that because of Jesus’ victory on behalf of sinners, Christians (sinner-saints) are actually free to “lose” on this side of heaven because Jesus has already won for them. Christian business men and women, by God’s grace, can sometimes not have to make the most money possible out of a deal so that the other side can feel loved and valued as well. Christian business men and women, by God’s grace, can sometimes take a loss personally or professionally so another party can benefit. Christian business men and women, by God’s grace, can choose to not gossip, slander, or speak poorly of another person, their character, or reputation even if someone else is speaking poorly of them. Because of the freedom sinner-saints have in the arms of Jesus Christ, Christian business men and women can look up to God’s Kingdom work and advancement instead of simply out in front of them or on the horizon for what the world in general, and marketplace in particular, values or says is important (John 8:12, 16:33; 1 Corinthians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Philippians 2:15; Titus 2:12). This is true Gospel freedom, and Christian business faculty can love and serve their students well in classrooms and on campuses by pointing them to their sinful desperation for Jesus. Yet their forgiven, loved positional reality in Jesus and the business implications of this sinner-saint worldview can lead to for God’s Kingdom advancement (Luke 14:11; James 4:6).

Living for Jesus in the Business World

As students in Christian business programs and classes start to understand their image-bearer status as it relates to God, and specifically as Christian students understand more their sinner-saint standing before the Father because of Jesus, all of this deeper (and joyous) theological understanding leads believers towards a life of devotion to Jesus. This devoted life not only embodies surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9) but also includes a deeper understanding that God uses Christians right here on earth in the “here and now” to build his Kingdom as part of his larger story. Christian business faculty can use these Gospel-centered building blocks to help believing students better understand that they are now free in Jesus Christ (Galatians 5:1) to live boldly for his glory and proclamation, and they are free to be skilled, talented, hard-working, loving businessmen and businesswomen for Jesus Christ.

In other words, Christian business students upon entering the workforce represent Jesus Christ through the quality of their work, their daily work habits, their attitudes, and their technical skills and competencies. All of these important components of a talented and productive worker actually serve as witnessing tools to unbelievers and Gospel encouragement to fellow believers. As Tim Keller (2012) put it, Christians in their vocations are actually the “fingers of God,” and everything they touch, create, produce, impact, affect, etc. is used by God to bring himself glory and to grow his Kingdom.

Christian business students must hear this hopeful, deeply impactful truth related to how they can live for Jesus in the business world. Keller (2013) articulated this well when he wrote, “In the Gospel, now we can serve God not for what he brings us, for we already have everything guaranteed, but for who he is and what he has done for us” (p.138). This freedom, joy, and sense of purpose found in Jesus Christ means everything one does represents Jesus Christ and what he has done for sinners, and all work, when done unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23) shines light onto Jesus and serves him and his Kingdom instead of the world or one’s kingdom of self. Thus, Christian business students possess the abilities, in Jesus Christ, to use the gifts, talents, passions, and abilities given them to be outstanding employees and workers, but also through their hard work and skill, they can love and serve others and point the watching world back to Jesus as the giver of all good things (James 1:17).

Lastly, Christian business students can serve as a bright light and witness for Jesus Christ in the business world by directing credit (of any kind) back to God and his grace, mercy, and goodness. Christian business faculty can help their students see this wonderful and power-witnessing attitude by first modeling this posture of humility to their students by crediting God with all the blessings, accomplishments, and successes in their lives. In addition, Christian business faculty can talk with their students transparently and biblically (as discussions and content are grounded in God’s Word—Matthew 4:4) about how once a Christian is secure in Jesus’ righteousness, forgiveness, and love, he or she becomes more content with lifting Jesus up continually higher and giving him all the credit that he is due (Ephesians 1:6). In other words, Christian business students can learn from their faculty how to be okay with not claiming praise, credit, or accolades as if they only accomplished any occupational success. Rather, Christian business students can learn on campus and once they are employed in the working world that one powerful and noticeable way to witness for Jesus Christ is to simply and honestly direct credit, praise, acclaim, and authority back to him since he is the one who has provided everything—breath, life, abilities, gifts, situations, relationships, money, jobs, salvation, eternal life, etc. (Ephesians 1:3). As pastor, writer, and theologian Scott

Sauls (2015) writes, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less” (p. 183). When Christians, by grace, are humbly thinking of themselves less, they in turn are thinking more about loving Jesus and loving their neighbor (Luke 10:27).

In turn, Christian business students can also look to Jesus and acknowledge his sovereign, loving kindness and faithfulness when failures hit, knowing that their ultimate identity is rooted in him and what he has done for sinners, not their circumstances (Romans 8: 9-11, 16-17). Once Christian business students see they can live and witness for Jesus in the business world through both the quality of their work and humility in and through their work (because of the finished work of Jesus Christ), these students (through the Holy Spirit’s work—Romans 8:14-15) will continue to live and work freely, boldly, and joyfully serving as the aroma of Jesus Christ in whatever business role they are called to (2 Corinthians 2:15).

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages, we have sought to demonstrate how biblical theology can assist Christian business faculty in the presentation of a Christian worldview of business. Grounding our students in the theological threads that run throughout Scripture allows them to better understand their calling of helping usher in the kingdom of God here and now. Biblical theology, in a sense, is intellectually satisfying and effective at building categories in our student’s minds for understanding their role as agents of reconciliation in the workplace. Indeed, Christian business students are not only witnesses for Jesus Christ through the quality of their work and their posture of humility and praise, but they are also called to be agents of reconciliation in a workplace that is built on the “tree-of-knowledge-of-good-and-evil” paradigm of division, greed, and self-interest (Psalm 53:1-3).

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