

## OF JOURNEYS, JUNGLES, AND JOURNALS

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*The editor of the new Journal of Biblical Integration in Business discusses his own journey through the integration process and suggests reasons why conceptualizing as well as practicing integration is difficult. He challenges JBIB readers to be open to the authors' ideas and invites response.*

### THE JOURNEY

Biblical integration in business is an attempt to capture in spoken and written words the results of a Spirit-directed life journey. It is both a professional pursuit and a personal passion. We want to communicate *ideas* effectively as professionals, but we desire also to communicate the *intimacy* we have in our growing relationship with Christ and with His Word. Biblical integration seeks to create common ground where reason and revelation meet, where we connect business principles and biblical precepts.

This first issue of the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* is a forum for displaying the results of some journeys. The authors bring to their work a desire to encourage, exhort, and enrich our understanding of both business and biblical perspectives. Each work is different because each journey is different.

My own journey began in 1979. I became a Christian at a music concert. At the end of the concert, the performers asked everyone to stand and hold hands. After explaining how to receive Christ as our Savior, they asked us to squeeze the hand of the person on our right to acknowledge that we had done so. I was standing beside my friend and professional colleague, Bill. We taught business together at a local college. I had known him for about nine months, and we had spent many hours talking about "religion" and Christianity. He had become good friend. And, as I squeezed his hand that night, he became something far more: he became my brother in Christ.

Over the next weeks I rejoiced in my new life in Christ, but also wrestled with an important issue: if I had been so blind all my life (I was 33 years old at the time) to the one thing that really mattered, perhaps I had also been blind to God's will regarding my choice of career. Perhaps my doctorate in business management was a waste. What would God have me do now that I had come to Him through grace? Would He have me leave business teaching? Should I go to seminary?

God's answer to me, revealed through a variety of ways, was that He wanted me to use the knowledge and skills I had learned as a business teacher for His glory. He wanted me to integrate, to build for myself and to share with others a world-and-life view that would bring my business knowledge under submission to His Word. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul writes "[We are] destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and [we are] taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..." (NASB). At the time I was not familiar with the idea of biblical integration, nor did I know the term "world-and-life view." That would come later as a godly man, Dr. Richard Chewning, became my mentor. But what was

clear was that I wanted to bring together in my understanding my experience with business with my new exposure to God's Word.

It has been 16 years since that journey began for me. Along the way I have been privileged to write a few articles discussing some Bible-business connections, to share ideas about these connections both in college and church settings, and to join with a team of writers to produce a study Bible (*The Word in Life Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson Publishers) that contains a number of articles relating problems and prospects in the workplace to biblical truth. But more than any of these rather small accomplishments has been the privilege of associating with other men and women who are walking journeys also. And it is their stories that this journal will seek to express.

One of the lessons I have learned about this journey is that it is more like a jungle adventure than a vacation trip down an interstate highway.

## **THE JUNGLE**

Biblical integration is neither obvious nor easy. The challenge is to “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV). That work is a labor that is at once both scholarly and spiritual. How to engage in that labor with proper attention to both business truth and biblical truth is a unique challenge for several reasons.

First, *there is no single accepted definition of biblical integration in business*. We all understand it to be the joining together of something, but the joining together of what? Does biblical integration in business require citation of specific biblical passages, or is it better done by referring to more general biblical principles? Is biblical integration in business more effective if it is deductive (“Here is a business practice-what does the Bible say about it?”) or inductive (“Here is a Bible passage-what does it tell us about how business should be practiced?”)? Who might be best at accomplishing biblical integration in business: those trained in theology who may have little background in business, or those trained in business but who may have little background in theology? Is the proper aim of biblical integration in business to influence business philosophy or business practice?

Second, *there is little formal training available in biblical integration in business*. There are efforts in some Christian colleges to provide some internal workshops, and The Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities does sponsor integration workshops (I recently attended such a workshop at George Fox College and had a wonderful time). But, insofar as I know, most of us who majored at the master's/doctoral level in business or economics received no formal training at the college level about the process of integration. We have learned to integrate by watching some others do it (perhaps) and then working at it ourselves.

Third, *there have been few avenues for sharing with others the results of our integration work*. The CBFA meetings have provided a forum for sharing papers and perspectives. There also is an association of Christian economists. Some Christian colleges have a tenure requirement that faculty must produce an integration paper discussing the linkages between their academic specialties and their Christian beliefs. But, by and large, there have been few channels through

which Christians teaching in business could put their work “on the table” for others to read and respond to.

So, the process of biblical integration in business is a difficult, sometimes lonely journey where we forge rather than discover trails through the jungle. (It is good that God's Word *is* sharper than a two-edged sword!) The *JBIB* seeks to become a friend to jungle journeymen and journey women!

#### **THE JOURNAL: FROM AN AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

The *JBIB* is an idea that has been discussed for sometime. CBFA members and officers have felt the need to create channels of communication for sharing and shaping ideas about biblical integration in business. The *JBIB* was formally authorized at the October 1994 CBFA meeting. The issue you hold in your hands is the first of what we hope will initially become a bi-annual journal.

The fundamental values that are reflected in the journal are:

***Integration.*** This journal is a forum for a hybrid kind of discussion. We are looking for explorations of the connections between business and the Bible. We are not focused on either theological debates or debates about business affairs. We are seeking commentaries exploring the ways that business-Bible links are compatible and/or conflicting. The articles in this first issue seek to explore the way business concerns and biblical concepts both touch and “tussle” with each other.

***Imagination.*** This journal is a forum for a creative kind of discussion. We have not prejudged the way integration “ought” to occur. We seek a forum for discussion, not a formula. Each article in this issue is unique in theme and development.

***Integrity.*** This journal is a forum for a biblically-faithful kind of discussion. The authors have great freedom in application of biblical material. However, the review and editing process for each manuscript has included an expectation that biblical material will be used with full appreciation for proper contextual interpretation. We (the reviewers and editor) have worked with the authors where we felt that the biblical text cited did not support the point being made or was being used in ways that were not consistent with the context of the biblical passage.

#### **THE JOURNAL: FROM A READER'S PERSPECTIVE**

The first manuscript submissions for the journal arrived early in January of this year. Working with the authors and reviewers has been a pleasant task. But the readers of the *JBIB* also have some obligations regarding their stewardship of this resource. In particular, we all need to:

***Be open.*** By openness we do not mean being gullible or assuming that anyone's ideas are above critical assessment. Rather, we mean that we need to grant each author the integrity of their position. We should be open to examining their assumptions and assertions with a desire to understand “where they are coming from” and where their ideas may lead. The *JBIB* articles are

not screened to avoid controversy. While we do hold all authors to high standards of biblical authority, logical development, and writing skill, we do censor subject material.

***Be active.*** We should feel great freedom in responding to the ideas presented by the authors. The *JBIB* will print letters of response from both readers and authors. Also, readers are encouraged to contact the authors directly. We want the journal to be part of the catalyst for encouraging interaction among its readers and authors.

***Become an author.*** The *JBIB's* success, from a human perspective, will rest upon the quality and quantity of manuscript submissions from its readership. Many of our readers have not published before. The journal is dedicated to building a climate to encourage people to take that first step. Putting one's ideas in writing and placing them before editors, reviewers and, eventually, fellow readers is a challenging process. But if our ideas are working for us in the classrooms, we need to share those ideas with others.

### **A FINAL WORD OF THANKS**

To those who have labored so diligently to produce this first issue of the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, I thank you. To Doug Miller, Martha Baldwin, and Dara Fraley of the Cedarville College Public Relations Office who took an idea and transformed it into a tangible work, I express my deep appreciation for your skill and dedication. To the writers and reviewers, I express my admiration for your effort. To Dick Chewning, my mentor and friend, thanks for your encouragement and example. To Dr. Paul Dixon, president of Cedarville College, and Dr. Duane Wood, academic vice president, thank you for the moral and financial backing of this project. And, to the members of the Christian Business Faculty Association, thank you for sustaining the vision of helping students make an impact for Christ in the workplace and the marketplace. To all, look for the second issue of the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* in late Spring 1996. *[Editor's comment inserted Friday, July 20, 2001: a decision was made after the publication of the JBIB in the Fall of 1995 to continue to publish the journal on an annual rather than a bi-annual basis.]* Keep those manuscripts coming!