

## Editor's Perspective

### Going Back to the Classroom

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I taught my first class in 1973 as a graduate assistant in the doctoral program at Florida State University. This year will mark my 28th year as a college teacher. By now I thought I had pretty much “mastered” things, in the sense of knowing what to expect from my students and myself. But this last academic year was different in two ways. First, I returned to the classroom as a student. Second, my oldest child went through his first year in college. Both experiences had unusual impacts in different ways, and I was reminded of some important principles related to our work as Christian professors.

#### **Becoming a Student Again**

In the first case, I returned to the classroom as a student myself. I entered a 40-hour training regimen for a program called CASA—Court Appointed Special Advocate. CASA volunteers are appointed by the local juvenile court as special investigators in cases of young children whose

parents or guardians are involved in such matters as child abuse or neglect. A CASA volunteer investigates all the circumstances surrounding such a case and brings to the court the “voice” of the child—a report on what the volunteer believes to be in the best interest of the child. The training involved four weeks of seminars taking place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and most of the day on Saturdays. There were reading and writing assignments and an end-of-course “exam” in the form of a day-long simulation. I am now applying my learning “on the job.” This experience reminded me:

*1. It is easy to become comfortably fitted into my present Christian surroundings, doing good things, but separated from a very real world.* I love academics—I felt so long before I became a teacher. I love the reading, the research, the writing, the instructing, the developing of classes, and even *sometimes* grading. But the academic world

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can be very closed and protected. It is a world of titles and structure, a world where students mostly sit and listen to teachers who mostly talk and make assignments. I entered the CASA program for a variety of reasons, but one of the main reasons was the realization that unless I made a conscious effort otherwise, I would rarely, if ever, have any contact with non-Christians and the world in which many of them live. So, this was one very small step back to reengaging a world where the tests are not “Scantronable,” because they are tests of the struggle between good and evil, between poverty and capitalism, between accountable choices and unimaginably painful circumstances.

**2. Excellent teachers bring passion and experience into the classroom.** During our training, a number of people from various public and private agencies and organizations which are related to the juvenile justice system spoke to our training class. Many were extraordinary teachers. They spoke with different accents, and some were not as “polished” as some with “Dr.” in front of their name, but they communicated with passion and precision. They used concrete examples in a way that can only come from

those who have “been there, done that.” They spoke with credibility and commitment, and I was both instructed and motivated as they touched both my head and my heart. The challenge of which I was reminded was not just the need to bring to my classroom a degree of emotional fervor, but also the need to bring concrete, experiential credibility to the classroom. For me that means being very current and involved in the activities of my field of expertise through consulting, reading, and personal research. Effective professors build on their own personal experience, and that of others, to communicate to students a legitimate sense of the professor’s having “been there, done that.”

### **But That’s My Son You’re Talking About!**

I worked hard as an undergraduate and graduate student and earned fairly high grades. Classroom performance was one of my highest priorities. I had few other interests than academic achievement.

My son’s entry into higher education has been challenging to me in many ways because *he* is not *me!* He has his own sense of identity and priorities, he approaches the classroom in a

different way than I did, and he has interests that are broader than mine were. The result of all of this is that his grades, while certainly not deplorable, were not quite up to my expectations.

I had assumed that anybody who wanted to could get an “A” or a “B” in class—it was just a matter of effort. I had assumed that teachers would provide students a variety of ways to demonstrate their mastery of the material in recognition of the different learning styles of students. And, I had assumed that low grades were a sign of either indifference or indolence.

It was easy to make all those assumptions as long as the students involved were someone else’s children. But teaching and learning have become much more up-close and personal now that it’s “my son you’re talking about!”

### **Another Learning Curve**

It has been a good first year in ways that I never expected it to be. My son and I have wrestled through a variety of issues ranging from dorm life to Internet use. Because he attends the university where I work, we have been able to have a regular morning breakfast time and another lunch time each week to

talk. We have debated university rules, chapel speakers, the need for liberal arts courses, and why teachers give hard tests. We have discussed matters of equity and the basis upon which someone should select one teacher to take over another. I have visited his dorm room fairly often, and we have had his friends over for dinner to our house. I have, I would summarize, seen “the good, the bad, and the ugly.”

I know that my son has grown significantly this first year in college as he has learned so much from his teachers, his friends, and university staff. But I also have been learning from him. Let me capture some of this as principles I want to remember as a professor.

**1. Students are very unique in their approaches to learning. Therefore, we professors should consider providing adequate variety in our course and assignment design and delivery to allow for different learning styles and previous work/academic experiences.**

In most of my son’s classes, teachers did not provide a variety of different assignments for students. Mostly it was three to four exams. Now, I know that large classes mitigate against

some assignment types (papers, for instance). But all professors can seek creative ways to provide students some options about how they display their mastery of the material in class. In some cases, I knew that some of the teachers my son had were using the same approach to their class that they had used for the last 10-20 years. Our obligation goes beyond mere delivery of knowledge. Our challenge is to continuously seek creative ways to both reach and teach our students.

**2. Teachers are competing for the interest and time of students.** While I believe that what I teach is really inherently important and that my assignments are truly sacrificially valuable, my students make their own judgments about these matters. Part of my role as a professor is to “market” my course to students. Now, don’t get all upset! I don’t mean that we have to “discount” our courses to “cater” to students. I mean that we must face the reality that we have to compete with all the other things that pull at our students’ attentions and actions. As a professor I need to make sure that I find ways to clearly, compellingly, and continuously communicate to my students why my course matters and why the

assignments I am asking them to do are both reasonable (in light of course objectives) and reachable (in light of their abilities). Each term is another chance to offer enough value to get students to “buy into” my course.

**3. Some of the most significant impact we have on students is unplanned and uncharted.** Students sometimes tell me at the end of my course that they “learned more than their grade shows.” There have been times when I really hoped that was so, given the grade they earned! More seriously, I now know in a new way that this is so. In talks with my son, he was able to articulate new understandings and perspectives about a broad number of matters that will never be reflected in the specific grades he earned in a course. He learned, among other things, that some people have to study harder than others to get the same grade, that sometimes our best efforts fall short of success, that in the long run who you are becoming as a person is just as important as what you know as a student, that submitting to authority is frequently a challenge, that some teachers are more interesting than others, that life is very complicated, and that scientific

“truth” is more ephemeral than many people commonly believe. These are wonderful lessons but are lessons learned in ways that will ultimately be measured only by a life well-grown and well-lived rather than by a score on an exam or a paper.

### **About This Issue of the JBIB**

With this issue of the **JBIB**, we are pleased to announce that we are now being indexed in the Christian Periodical Index. The original suggestion came from Dr. John Delivuk, systems librarian at the McCartney Library at Geneva College. The Association of Christian Librarians requested a full run of all back issues. I am informed by other sources that we are likely to pick up several subscriptions from various libraries because of this.

This 2001 issue of the **JBIB** focuses much of its attention on the “art and science” of biblically-based teaching and scholarship. As usual, the writers and review board members have “teamed up” to provide articles that are provocative, engagingly articulate, and well-researched. It has been a joy as editor to see how this issue has come together through the efforts of so many committed and talented people.

Monty Lynn and David Wallace from Abilene Christian University have teamed up to write *Doing Business with the Hebrew Bible: A Hermeneutic Guide*. The paper suggests ten principles for rightly understanding and applying biblical material to the fields of business and economics. With Monty from the department of management sciences and David from the department of Bible, missions, and ministry, the paper also models out the wonderful cross-department synergies possible in our Christian colleges and universities.

Brad Lemler (from Grace College) and Murray Young (from Colorado Christian University) provide a valuable “dialogue” response to Lynn and Wallace’s article by applying the Lynn-Wallace model to land tenancy issues as described in the book of Leviticus.

James Kellaris and Jae Min Jung, from the department of marketing at the University of Cincinnati’s College of Business Administration, provide a research-based look at *Business Students’ Perceptions of Shifts in Core Values of American Culture: A Report from the Trenches*. The manuscript provides significant insights about the

values of today's college students and proposes some intriguing possibilities for future research involving both secular and Christian college/university campuses. Some of our CBFA members may wish to follow up with Kellaris to investigate possibilities for further collaborative efforts.

Alec Hill, a good friend to many in the CBFA, has authored the challenging article *Let Justice Flow Like a River: International Business and The Book of Amos*. The discussion of the integration of biblical perspectives and international business practices is certainly timely in an increasingly globalized business world. We are sorry to see Hill leave his post as dean of the School of Business and Economics at Seattle Pacific University—his leadership was instrumental in helping the School of Business and Economics obtain the prestigious accreditation by AACSB. However, we also rejoice in his new position as president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. We hope that he will continue to have time to write both books and articles. Brian Porter (Hope College) offers a useful dialogue as he explores some of the implications of Hill's article

relative to ethnocentric tendencies and the character of bribes.

Kent Seibert, a long-valued member of the **JBIB** Review Board, has authored the wonderful paper *Learning the Ropes Without Getting Strangled: The Believer and Socialization in Business*. The paper reviews some of the literature on organizational socialization and then offers a discussion of spiritual principles for maintaining one's identity and values in the face of organizational socialization pressures. The principles are derived from Scripture and illustrated by the life of Daniel. Calvin Fields (Belhaven College) offers an accompanying dialogue that touches on the issues of socialization, contingency theory, and language while pushing the reader to consider seriously the teaching implications of Seibert's paper.

We are delighted to present Richard Chewning's article *A Dozen Styles of Biblical Integration: Assimilating the Mind of Christ*. This article is a departure from some of the more theologically-oriented pieces we have been privileged to publish in the past. Chewning's purpose is to both broaden and deepen our understanding of the variety of

approaches that can come under the broad umbrella of "biblical integration in business." Like Hill, Chewning is also making a career transition, leaving Baylor University's Harry and Hazel Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business and coming as a distinguished scholar in residence at John Brown University. Chewning will be working with JBU's faculty development efforts and will be involved with the Donald G. Soderquist Center for Business Leadership and Ethics. Accompanying Chewning's article is a thoughtful dialogue response from Calvin Fields (Belhaven College), which offers a particularly useful overview of Chewning's piece.

Michael E. Cafferky, chief financial officer and chief operating officer of Quincy Valley Medical Center in Quincy, Washington, has contributed the intriguing case study *Left Behind: The Case Study*. All those who have read LaHaye and Jenkins' book series or have seen the movie will find this behind-the-scenes look at the effort to move the book series from print to the movie screen a wonderfully instructive case on the dynamic interaction between biblical concerns and business efforts.

Many of the articles in this issue of the **JBIB** are accompanied by "responses" written by members of our review board. This "dialogue" dimension of the **JBIB** is valued by many of our readers. We look forward to publishing your "response" pieces to articles which appear in previous issues of the **JBIB**. Consider this a personal invitation from the editor to send in your responses for print!

We are privileged to launch a new space in the **JBIB** "town square" of discussion, focusing on "Best Practices." In this area, we will publish pieces that focus on successful efforts at both Christian and secular campuses to knit together business education efforts with biblical principles and perspectives. Brad Stamm at Cornerstone University shares some of the creative classroom approaches he used in his economics classes to help students see more clearly the connection between the Bible and business. William Fowler and John Neill discuss the "Senior Blessing" event at Abilene Christian University's College of Business—a unique effort to offer business seniors a day of both celebration and commitment. Eric Elder of Northwestern College recommends the book

*The Clashing Works of Economics and Faith* for integrating economics and Christianity.

This issue of the **JBIB** also includes a list of our current review board members (if you are interested in joining the board, e-mail me at [johns@cedarville.edu](mailto:johns@cedarville.edu)), *Guidelines for Manuscripts* (we always are looking for the opportunity to work with both experienced and inexperienced writers to turn manuscripts into publishable articles), and a cumulative 1995-2000 index of **JBIB** articles (thanks to the readers who e-mailed me and suggested we do this).

This 2001 issue of the **JBIB** will soon be available in PDF form at the official CBFA Web site ([cbfa.org](http://cbfa.org)). The 1995-2001 issues are available at the Web site. Paper copies of past issues are available at a nominal cost. And, we will be pleased to send a complimentary copy of the current (2001) issue to anyone who contacts us. If you have a colleague who would benefit from reading the **JBIB**, please contact me, and I will see that the material is sent.

As always, my heartfelt thanks goes to:

- The officers of the CBFA for their support and encouragement

- The review board for their thorough and thoughtful support of the **JBIB**'s effort to offer a distinctively high quality peer-reviewed forum for publishing

- The authors for their willingness to move through the editing and revision process with both grace and zeal

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- The staff and faculty of the department of business administration at Cedarville University whose support and example are a constant encouragement

- And, finally, to the CBFA for extending me the privilege of acting as editor for the **JBIB** since 1994—it is a responsibility that I never take for granted and that I hold as a sacred trust.

If you discover mistakes in this issue, the responsibility is solely mine. If there be any praise, may it be offered to God alone, for it is by His grace that the **JBIB** was created and is sustained.

