
BOOK REVIEW:

Luke's Radical Message for the First and Twenty-First Centuries

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Management and the Gospel (Dyck, 2013) offers an unusual way to look at organizational management. Dyck provides a thought-provoking analysis of the teachings of Jesus regarding management, using Luke as a lens. The book is an excellent example of good Biblical integration and also impressive management scholarship. Though the book was written with a secular audience in mind, it would make a good supplemental text for Christian MBA and honors undergraduate business students.

The purpose of *Management and the Gospel* is “to describe what management theory and practice looked like in the first century and to use this as a lens” (p. 3) through which to explore what Jesus said about management and how His perspective could be applied to contemporary businesses. This goal is ambitious, but it is achieved with authority.

The discipline of management has deep roots in the Greco-Roman world (Crossan, 2008; Neyrey, 2005). By the 1st century, the expansion of the Roman Empire had made a professional level of managers necessary (Chapter 3), and one of the important contributions of the book is its demonstration of how Jesus used the management practices of His day to clarify the principles of the Kingdom of God.

In Jesus' day, the production centers of the empire were not firms but *oikie* — extended households or estates — with kinship at the core. An *oikos* usually included the original extended family, plus slaves, servants, and professional employees, along with their families. *Oikie* were the basic unit of economic, social, and political life in the empire, and while their management has some resemblance to contemporary family business management, the social implications of the core relationships were very different. Therefore Dyck spends several chapters explaining what the key relationships were and how Jesus' audience would have used these relationships to interpret His stories and sermons.

Understanding the basic cultural background makes Jesus' parables much clearer. For example, in the Roman culture, respectable people usually identified themselves as members of certain *oikie*. Jesus, however, taught that people who do not belong to a conventional *oikos*, such as foreigners, social outcasts, and the destitute poor, could be members of the *oikos* of God. He also taught that though the Kingdom of God was outside conventional *oikos* norms, it was so supremely important that even respectable people needed to be willing to forsake their traditional *oikos* in order to become part of this qualitatively different one. “If a person comes to me and does not hate [his family] and his own life [in relation to the Kingdom of God] he cannot be my disciple,” Jesus stated (Luke 14:26, NIV). In a society where human kinship was a central economic identity, this was a radical idea.

Thus an understanding of 1st-century management relationships can give 21st-century managers and business students significant insight into the sermons and parables of Jesus. Dyck demonstrates this by discussing two of Jesus' parables in depth: first the Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-15), which is possibly Jesus' most controversial story, and then the Parable of the Ten Talents (Luke 19:26-27). Using the Aristotelian view of natural and unnatural money, Dyck shows how Jesus' contemporaries would have understood these parables and how that understanding transforms the meaning. The lessons for 21st-century managers are less comfortable than many would wish.

But Dyck goes deeper than this first level of Biblical integration. After establishing the management landscape in the Roman world and demonstrating how Jesus' parables reverberate in that landscape, he moves into a detailed examination of key management themes in the book of Luke (Chapter 7). The first half of *Management and the*

Gospel ends with Dyck suggesting a new way of seeing organizations (Chapter 10-12). He shows how key elements of Jesus' teaching, such as the Kingdom of God, salvation, and the Holy Spirit, relate to 21st-century organizations. For example, he discusses a key passage in Luke where Jesus talks about his mission in patron-client terms: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives...to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of [Jubilee]" (Luke 4:18-19, NIV). Dyck suggests that Jesus used this declaration to signal his intention to transform the easily abused institution of patron-client, that was usually based on self-interest, into a qualitatively different one based on love.

Having stretched our minds to envision ideal organizational relationships, Dyck uses the second part of the book to show how these relationships can be created. First, he presents a series of extrapolations, combined with action responses, to encourage managers to implement the principles Jesus taught. But the book does not suggest a simplistic "Ten Steps" or "Six Principles" of popular literature. The model of organizational transformation presented is a sophisticated tool for contemporary managers.

Dyck argues that the transformational model in Luke is based on a chiasmic, or ring structure (A-B-B-A). Luke uses the narrative of Jesus' life to create a four-phase process model of organizational transformation: Problem Recognition, Action Response, Changed Way of Seeing, and Institutional Change (Chapter 13). When complete, the model is, arguably, unique in the transformation literature because it suggests a pattern of institutional transformation based on the radicalization of people's thinking. The intent is to change the assumptions and worldview of the people inside the organization and use that transformation to change the institution.

The four-phase process model is, by itself, a valuable addition to the organizational transformation literature, but Dyck takes the reader still deeper into the change process by showing how Luke uses Jesus' ministry to illustrate six complete cycles of the four-phase process, "...first three times forward, and then three times in reverse" (p. 133). In Chapters 14 and 15, Dyck describes this process and its implications in detail, arguing that Luke is endeavoring to show how the words and actions of Jesus transform people and their *oikos* relationships. Dyck suggests that transformation might be more apt to occur inside an *oikos*, basing this on the fact that Jesus most often began the cycle by forcing Problem Recognition in his group of disciples and friends.

Dyck understands that these ideas of Jesus are not easy to implement in contemporary organizations. In the last section of the book, he gives lengthy examples, almost case studies, of how the different themes play out in dif-

ferent organizations. In the opinion of this reader, this is the weakest part of the book. Dyck's impressive research is still evident, but the examples of companies he argues are utilizing Kingdom of God principles seem a little stretched. For example, he uses the Grameen bank as an example of Kingdom of God principles. While the official founding story of the organization might be argued to be somewhat consistent with those principles, the well-documented problems with the microcredit movement in general (Befus, 2012; Dichter, 2005) and the Grameen bank in particular (Karnani, 2011) suggest that a fuller story might show otherwise. The same critique could be used of the other examples; it is difficult to find organizations that consistently reflect Kingdom of God principles over a period of time. In fact, it becomes apparent in reading this part of the book that it takes a supernatural transformation of the individual human spirit for Kingdom of God transformation to occur in an organization. Jesus said as much.

This book is a good resource for any professor interested in teaching Christian business students how to do good and scholarly Biblical integration. It is also valuable for management professors interested in teaching students what Jesus might say to present-day managers. Those interested in using this book for a class should be aware that the hard copy version is quite expensive. However, reliable sources say that a paperback will be coming out soon. When that occurs, use it to the benefit of your students.

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