

Editors' Perspectives

Cases as Stories, Laboratories, and Parables

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The cases in this special volume of *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* have been carefully developed, edited, and presented as a service to every Christian business faculty member who has sought a case study with a Christian worldview. Each of the cases approaches its topic differently. For some cases, the Christian worldview issues are starkly clear – for others the issues are more subtle. For some cases, the issues are fundamentally ethical – for others the issues are more strategic and/or operational. For all the cases, the reader is invited to enter into both a story and laboratory.

Storytelling

Stories engage, entertain, excite, and enrich. The best business cases are at the core good stories. More than simply descriptions of an organization, a case invites students to “walk around” inside a company and encounter the people, processes, problems, and prospects that create the web of relationships of every organization.

Business cases allow students to co-write the case's story line by extending it into the future by playing “what if.” What if the company were to pursue path “A” rather than path “B?” What if the supervisor does “X” rather than “Y?” Business cases weave past and present together with the future imagined by the student.

Laboratories

Cases are also laboratories. Students are invited to pick up the elements of the cases (ranging from first-person testimonies to financial and statistical data to industry factors) and to “test” those elements using a variety of qualitative and quantitative tools. Cases present a “research problem” for students to take things apart (analysis), to put things together (synthesis), and to rearrange and recreate the company's future (imagination).

Laboratories permit students to investigate various phenomena in a three-dimensional way. Ideas and insights are taken off a page and placed into a multidimensional experimental context where they can be handled, measured, and better understood.

Christian worldview cases invite students also to bring their Bibles to the laboratory – examining the people and decisions described in the case through the lens of Scripture. While such an examination is not likely to result in “THE biblical answer,” students do learn that Scripture, indeed, is relevant to today's business and economic issues.

Parables

Jesus used stories to illustrate his most important theological truths. Parables, mostly fictional stories rooted in the common experience of ordinary people of His time, helped make the invisible visible. That is, ideas about redemption, heaven, hell, living in community, righteousness, and so on were moved from the abstract to the concrete, from the theoretical to the tangible. The parables of Jesus offered portals for His listeners to enter into a common shared experience.

Cases are, in important ways, parables. Whether they are based on real or fictional organizations or real-world accounts, they present the reader with problems, possibilities, and personalities all of which must be wrestled with to create meaning. All the cases in this special edition have important moral, strategic, and operational truths to be developed and learned.

An Invitation to Engage – Three Different Paths

If you are a case user, we invite you to consider the cases in this first special edition (we plan on future editions as explained by Tom Buckles in his forwarding article). If you have not used cases before, we invite you to explore the possibilities these cases provide to deepen and enliven your courses. For both experienced and experimenting users, you will find instructions about how to obtain a set of “Teaching Notes” for each case. These notes will help you employ the cases with greater impact by indicating possible questions to raise and analytical techniques to employ, and they will offer additional insight into the industry/company context within which the case occurs.

At a different level, we would invite you to help us deepen the material for each case by providing your own perspectives or notes for

the case. Please send all such materials to Tom Buckles. Once accepted, such material will appear along with the teaching notes for the case and may appear in subsequent publications of *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business: Business Cases with a Christian Worldview*.

And, finally, we hope these cases inspire you (and your colleagues) to write your own case stories. The Christian Business Faculty Association sponsors an annual case-writing workshop preceding the annual meeting. Contact Tom Buckles for information about these workshops where you will have the opportunity to bring rough drafts of cases and engage in a process that will help move the case forward to eventual publication.

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