

**Three Bible Studies Focusing on
the Workplace**
by Sharon G. Johnson

In recent years there has been some effort to bring biblical principles and perspectives to bear on workplace philosophies and decisions. At the academic level, such books as *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* (Richard Chewning, John Eby, and Shirley Roels, published by Harper and Row under the sponsorship of the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities, 1990); the four-volume *Christians in the Marketplace Series* (edited by Richard Chewning and published by Navpress, 1989, 1990, 1991); the significant book of readings and commentary, *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life* (edited by Max Stackhouse, Dennis

McCann, Shirley Roels, and Preston Williams, published by William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995, and reviewed in the Fall 1996 issue of the *JBIB*); and the 1996 textbook of readings, cases, and commentary *Beyond Integrity: a Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics* (Scott Rae and Kenman Wong, published by Zondervan and reviewed in this issue of the *JBIB*) all provide a substantive “library” of material for use in the classroom.

However, materials designed for the Christian layperson involved in the day-to-day problems and opportunities of living their Christian values on the job are rather less available. There are some trade books such as Bob Briner’s currently popular *The Management Methods of Jesus: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Business* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996); Perry Pascarella’s *The Ten Commandments of the Workplace and How to Break Them Everyday* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1996); and Myron Rush’s venerable *Management: a Biblical Approach* (Victor Books, 1983). Also Thomas Nelson Publisher’s *The Word in Life Study Bible* contains a variety of workplace related articles (reviewed in the Fall, 1996 issue of the *JBIB*).

This reviewer has for some time, when visiting Christian

bookstores, looked for materials related to the workplace. Of particular interest was the availability of small-group Bible study material focusing on workplace issues. There may be many more than I am reviewing here, but these three are excellent resources for small-group studies.

- *Serving God by What We Do* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1994) is a series of six studies based on an adaptation of Ben Patterson’s work in *Serving God* (originally titled *The Grand Essentials* published in 1987 by Word). The studies focus on a specific biblical passage and contain biblical text (New International Version), commentary, and questions intended to provoke individual consideration and group discussion. Study notes are included for Bible study leaders and include the purpose for each of the six studies and helps for leading the discussion for each question in the study.
- *Work: Life Application Bible Studies* (Valerie Weidemann and James C. Galvin, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1996) follows the *Life Application Bible* approach by offering “Starter,” “Study,” “Summary,” and

“Supplemental” questions framed around specific Bible passages. The “Study” passages are presented in a three column format with the King James, New International and New Living Bible translations which provide a good way of comparing the perspectives of the translators. Included along with the Bible passages themselves is some fairly straightforward commentary material which helps relate the passage to workplace situations. The questions are simple and direct, and provide maximum opportunity for group participants to discuss their particular experiences.

- The most ambitious of the three Bible studies in this review is the *Making Your Work Count for God* volume from Thomas Nelson Publishers’ Priorities for Living Series (1994). The series is based on the material developed for *The Word in Life Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993). This volume is 184 pages long making it appropriate for either college classroom use or an extended group Bible study. Articles from the *Word in Life Study Bible* are reproduced in whole or slightly modified along with

the biblical text (in the New King James translation). Each of the 13 chapters contains a variety of questions, cases, self-check lists, and other materials to engage the reader in thoroughly working through his or her Christian life-view of the workplace. A Leader’s Guide at the end of the “workbook” provides a short overview, lesson objectives, and group discussion questions.

These three Bible studies provide an excellent starting place for focused attention of Christians in the workplace. Small group settings can provide a supportive environment for business men and women to discuss the difficult choices and demanding conditions presented by their workplaces.

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