

ROCKET FUEL FOR A QUEST

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At my first interaction with the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business (JBIB)* in 2000, the *Journal* ignited rocket fuel in my quest to understand what the Bible says about business. At the time, I could not have predicted what change this might bring to the trajectory of my career. As it turned out, this interaction played a vital role in my decision to alter my course from the healthcare industry and land in higher education. Reading just one issue launched my curiosity of what it might be like to teach in a Christian business school. From that time forward, my appetite became insatiable for anything that had been written relating to biblical integration in business.

Before that encounter with *JBIB*, in the mid-1990s my role as a healthcare executive did not leave much time and energy to study the biblical foundations of business. But I was interested. In 1996, using *Strong's Concordance* and just reading the Bible, I started making a list of Scripture references related to the business disciplines. I began exploring Scripture narratives where marketing seemed to be important. What I lacked was guidance from the Christian faith community in order to make sense of it all. Some passages of Scripture closely corresponded with common business wisdom. Other passages seemed incomprehensible.

I wondered who else shared an interest in the topic. At that time I had not heard of the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA). I had not heard of Richard Chewing, Ken Armstrong, Sharon Johnson and many others who have been the influential thinkers and thought leaders in our common quest.

Sometime in the spring or summer of 2000 I came across the CBFA website and with it the reference to *JBIB*. Wow! I became excited to see that there was an organization and a group of Christian scholars who were interested in studying what the Scripture says about business. It inspired me. I also realized that I had a lot of catching up to do!

Left Behind: The Movie was being produced that year. Leaders at Cloud Ten Pictures expected to release the film in the fall of 2000. I saw in this story an opportunity to write a case study on the film's development, its theatrical release, the interesting marketing tactics being used and the public's reception. Though I felt like an outsider to the CBFA, having no previous experience with the organization, I wondered what chance I would have getting a case study accepted for publication. I sent in the manuscript and held my breath. Gratefully, *JBIB* editor Sharon Johnson and the blind peer reviewers saw potential in the story. As a result, "*Left Behind: The case study*" was published in the 2001 issue of *JBIB*. Thank you, Sharon and reviewers, for encouraging me to get involved in the dialogue.

When I accepted a position as an assistant professor at a Christian school of business in 2003, at first I felt like I was the main character in the film *Catch Me if You Can*. Put me in a conference room with other hospital managers and tell me that I am to be the chair of a committee and I know what to do to make a decision. I can lead the group to review a proposal for a new service, write a policy, or make a quality improvement to a process. Ask me to explain the monthly financial statements of a hospital. I can handle that. But put me in a classroom with undergraduate students and I felt like an imposter. To me the education process was an enigmatic "black box," part transfer of information, part entertainment, part intellectual curiosity and part other ingredients foreign to me.

Faith integration in the classroom was even more remote as a meaningful concept. But, the last thing I wanted was to work in a school of business that happened to be on the same campus as a Christian university but whose faculty and leader had little interest in extending the institutional mission into the academic processes. If the mission of the university is to be taken seriously, it must be present and accounted for in every discipline, every classroom, every semester. Engaging students in dialogue about issues of faith was at

first daunting. I wished *JBIB* was a monthly publication. Fortunately, some of back issues were available on the CBFA website.

Articles in *JBIB* began opening my mind to the teaching possibilities by giving examples of how other scholars approached the task of faith integration. Management and ethics are my disciplines. In addition to finding articles written by management and ethics scholars, I also found in *JBIB* ideas for teaching by reading articles on accounting, microeconomics, finance and marketing. In issue after issue, *JBIB* gave me hope that my own quest for understanding could someday mature.

In the early years of teaching I naively expected that if I just found the one right article or book to read, it would transform my understanding of Scripture and business giving me, to borrow an expression from the Scientific Management movement, the “one best way” for understanding everything else. Little by little, with the help of other authors who contribute to *JBIB* and the peer reviewers working silently behind the scenes, I have come to realize that understanding Scripture on business is a journey, not a one-time event. It is a process, not a destination where, having arrived, we find ourselves equipped to answer all the questions.

JBIB is an important companion on this journey of faith integration. It carries with it contributions of the faith community engaged in an on-going conversation. Without *JBIB*, the association would find it difficult to fulfill its mission “to assist and encourage Christian business faculty in the study, integration, teaching, and application of Biblical truths in service to the academy, students, and the business community.”

JBIB has had an influence on my life in other ways, too. When I saw the opportunity to develop a Principles of Management textbook from a faith-

based perspective, the articles in *JBIB* were an important source during my study and writing. The scholarship voiced in *JBIB* has expanded my worship experience inside the classroom and in church. Contemplating the ideas found in *JBIB* has sometimes resulted in experiencing more than one undergraduate class period as worship rather than merely the transference of the latest research about business. I can remember that on more than one occasion I would go from reading an article in *JBIB* right into the classroom excited about a new insight that the author had *JBIB* provided. I could not wait to share this enthusiasm with my students.

I want to thank Sharon Johnson for his long-term commitment to serve as moderator (editor) of the scholarly dialogue represented in *JBIB*. Sharon is a master at creating dialogue in community. This classroom skill he also demonstrated through his editorial work using creative approaches to engage us in conversation and debates. I also want to thank Yvonne Smith for her work during her years as editor. Soon I will be stepping into the editorial role. As I have begun to make this transition, I realize that few CBFA members may understand the degree of commitment required of Yvonne at the particular time she took over the leadership of *JBIB* editorial work. Under her leadership, Yvonne, the authors and the peer reviewers she has worked with redeemed the pledge of the Association to continue the scholarly dialogue represented in the *Journal*. Bravo for a job well done and thank you!

JBIB continues to be the leading voice in faith-business integration scholarship. As the in-coming editor, I will say more in the next issue of *JBIB* about my perspective on this important outlet for faith dialogue. Continue to hold up in prayer this important ministry of the Association.