

COMMON SENSE

MANAGEMENT

A Biblical Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

Management, planning, and organization is not that complicated. It boils down to common sense. According to the Bible, we are to do our work heartily as unto the Lord. Unfortunately, we often neglect this command. The Bible never gives us suggestions. What we are instructed to do are, indeed, commands, and we are commanded to perform the duties of work in such a way that we see God as our boss rather than the person to whom we report. We are to be doers of the Word, and the Word clearly states how we are to conduct ourselves in our work lives.

This is revolutionary, even for the twenty-first century. God knows what is best for His people, and His Word states that it is He who promotes. He will allow us to go through seasons during which we might be tested with a trying boss, but we must trust that God knows what is best for us. Perhaps we were to endure such a season to become more patient. Our sanctification process is a lifelong journey and is designed to shift us from relying on our own strength and wisdom to relying on the Holy Spirit. The end result is that we are to be more like Jesus.

Regardless of how one chooses to define “work,” we can be certain that schoolwork and volunteer work are included in God’s definition. To be sure, work, then, consists of everyday endeavors and may include several types of work for one person. For example, one who works and attends school is meant to perform both tasks with equal vigor and dedication as if purposing to glorify God.

Our efforts would be in vain if they excluded the Lord and His precepts. Work does not have to have a negative connotation. Seldom does a day go by when we don’t hear someone complain about having to go to work. God’s Word offers many common-sense principles that we can use to our advantage in our work lives as well as in our personal lives. Covey reminds us that we are not human beings on a spiritual journey but rather spiritual beings on a human journey. Once we

embrace that common-sense revelation, we should conclude that everything begins and ends with God. One might argue that many atheists have had successful business careers.

What is the definition of successful? Anything God permits us to achieve when we exclude Him is achieved only by and through His grace. But the achievement comes without contentment. A widow's mite given from a godly heart brings more contentment than all the riches hoarded. We must remember that God gives us the ability to make wealth. Everything we need to succeed can be found in His Word, through godly counsel and through prayer. If we utilize these, we will soon be astounded at how much common sense we can find in the profound. God may place people in authority over us, or God may give us authority. If we are faithful in the former situation, the latter is sure to come. The secret is to remember that God has authority over all, that His Word is His authority recorded, and that His children have been given authority.

How we come to terms with these truths may very well determine how we succeed in this life. We can get caught up in the mysteries of God's Word or we can apply His common-sense principles to manage our lives, our homes, our time, and our work. When we ask Him to teach us to number our days, He will surely direct us to His Word, and because His Word is Truth, even a nonbeliever can benefit from the principles found there. "What a man sows, so shall he reap" is true to both believer and nonbeliever alike. One might ask how the nonbeliever knew to apply a principle he may have never heard of; one answer is common sense.

LITERARY SEARCH

In *The Relationship between the Integration of Faith and Work with Life and Job Outcomes*, Walker (2013) presents how Gallup surveys show that nine in ten Americans express belief in God, religion, and spirituality. However, the ability to integrate the beliefs and practices of one's faith with

work can be a neglected area in research. It is interesting how Walker examines the possible positive benefits of integrating work and faith.

Applying Models of Employee Management Across Cultures: Christianity in the USA and South Korea (Lyons, Wessel, Ghumman, Ryan, & Kim, 2014) shows how the way one presents an identity to social groups must be made by individuals who come to the workplace with a range of minority identities including gender, class, racial, political, and religious. The objective of the research is to present practical and theoretical understanding of identity strategies of Christian-identified employees from USA and Korea.

In *Spirituality and Christian Values in Business: Pilot Study*, Kumpikaite-Valiuniene and Alas (2014) respond to the question whether there are differences of how people from different institutional settings see spirituality at work. Interviews were conducted with 23 Christian managers belonging to Europartners and 79 Lithuanian respondents. The conclusion shows that Europartners accept spirituality at work more than the Lithuanians. The study is interesting in the questions set to prove how faith has been influencing Europeans at work while, because Lithuania was a post-Soviet country, its people were less inclined to use faith at work.

In *Faith at Work Scale (FWS): Justification, Development, and Validation of a Measure of Judeo-Christian Religion in the Workplace*, Lynn and VanderVeen (2009) show how workplace spirituality research has side-stepped religion by focusing on the function of the belief more than on the substance. The authors have constructed a 15-item measure of workplace religion informed by Judaism and Christianity. It is interesting to find how many people of faith have challenges connecting their religious beliefs with their work. Still, a look at what many verses of the Bible teach and preach would have made a difference.

COMMON SENSE PRINCIPLES: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

Here are some common sense principles for better management. Each has a unique title that illustrates the point. Each has a biblical basis.

CARE AND FEEDING OF THE BOSS: *Our attitude toward authority.*

. . . make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:2-4 NIV

How good and pleasant it is when brothers (coworkers) live (and work) together in unity!

Psalms 133:1 NIV

Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

James 4:17 NIV

CARE AND FEEDING OF THE EMPLOYEE: *How we treat those that report to us.*

6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown.

2 Corinthians 9:6, 10

PROMOTION THEORY: *Train your replacement; help others develop.*

Think about:

Moses and Joshua

Elijah and Elisha

Paul and Timothy

Jesus and the 12 Disciples

ICEBERG THEORY: *Stay on the lookout for danger.*

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Proverbs 15:22

A wise man sees danger; the fool goes his merry way.

Proverbs 22:3

Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Proverbs 19:20

Every purpose is established by counsel

Proverbs 20:18

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counselors there is safety.

Proverbs 24:6

MANAGING IS LIKE PARENTING: *Be a responsible manager.*

Train up a child in the way he should go (and in keeping with his individual gift or bent), and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

STINGER PRINCIPLE: *Sometimes Christians must tackle problems head on.*

13 Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die.

14 You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 23:13, 14 NAS

Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul.

Proverbs 29:17 NAS

PAY ME NOW, OR PAY ME LATER: *Do it right the first time.*

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established.

Proverbs 24:3 NIV

A tyrannical ruler lacks judgment.

Proverbs 28:16 NIV

A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 22:3 NIV

AFRAID TO FAIL: *Like the Nike commercial says, "Go for it."*

When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you

Deuteronomy 20:1 NIV

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

Psalms 37:23

DEFENSIVE END THEORY: *Get tough if you have to.*

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Ephesians 6:10

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Proverbs 24:10

SNOWBALL: *Things, events, a course of action can get out of control.*

Now finish the work so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

2 Corinthians 8:11 NIV

ALAMO THEORY—TO THE LINE: *Make sure everyone is heading in the right direction.*

He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded.

Proverbs 13:13 NIV

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. . . .

Exodus 32:26

A servant cannot be corrected by mere words; though he understands, he will not respond.

Proverbs 29:19 NIV

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.

Proverbs 15:31 NIV

A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.

Proverbs 17:10 NIV

LAWN-MOWING THEORY: *There is a way to get organized: Each does what they do best.*

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

1 Corinthians 12:21, 22 NIV

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psalms 133:1

SEED FAITH: *Better to give than receive.*

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 6:38

STEW IN YOUR OWN JUICE: *Better get your team with you.*

But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced.

Philemon 14 NIV

. . . He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.

2 Corinthians 9:6b

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Galatians 6:7

GET YOUR HEAD ABOVE THE CLOUDS: *Take a look where you are going.*

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:6

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

Proverbs 16:9

BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE: DON'T GIVE THE LORD SECOND BEST.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17 NAS

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 NAS

FAILING TO PREPARE IS LIKE PREPARING TO FAIL

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

Proverbs 11:14 NIV

NATURAL RHYTHM: *There is a rhythm to everything.*

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

Psalm 127:1a

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it: for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Joshua 1:8 NAS

- 1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
- 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
- 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

NEVER GIVE UP: *Just keep plugging.*

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

1 Corinthians 9:24 NAS

DO IT WHEN IT IS IMPORTANT: *We tend to put things off.*

27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

28 Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Proverbs 3:27, 28

SUCCESS—THE WHOLE PERSON: SUCCESS IS BROADER THAN YOUR CAREER.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

3 John 2 NIV

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.

Proverbs 23:4 NIV

THE PRODUCT MUST BE BETTER THAN THE SALES PITCH

Oral Roberts, former President of Oral Roberts University, made this statement at the beginning of a School of Business Marketing Conference at ORU. He was referring to Jesus and the message to the business audience was that “their product must be better than the sales pitch.”

THE O-RING

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

Proverbs 11:14 NIV

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 15:22 NIV

Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.

Proverbs 19:20 NIV

CONCLUSION

The Bible remains the best book ever written about how we manage our affairs. Libraries are full of books on business, planning, management, and other organizational topics. This article proposes that there is a common sense approach, key to common sense in the Bible: our daily tasks should always be dedicated to God aiming at glorifying Him regardless of how much value the tasks provide. All our work should reflect our love to God and our reliance on Him. Such attitude at work or in life reflects that we see God as a beginning and as an end, and all that is done, said, accomplished is directed by “His Word.” It is common sense but many fail to recognize it and go around in life trying to do things out of necessity, not out of dedication. It makes such a difference in our lives to seek God first in all what we do. The Bible guides in many verses as how to work heartily as unto the Lord and to how to see God as our boss. By doing so, we enjoy anything we do when we integrate faith in work and life.

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