

**Institute of Christian Teaching
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**BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING BUSINESS
SUBJECTS IN ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A
CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

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Biblical Principles in Teaching Business Subjects in Adventist Secondary Schools

It is sin that distanced man from God, and created dichotomies between secular and the sacred, science and religion, faith and learning. God and human were linked with a sacred relationship that man had all the opportunity to learn all truth from God Himself. Sin caused man to separate from God. Man had to search for knowledge that was once freely flowing from God. With His grace to uplift man from his fallen state, God from time to time revealed His will to him through His word. Man himself began to search for knowledge since he was separated from the presence of God. Earlier man was clothed by God's glory, but later sin made him to search for knowledge for his survival. The truth that he discovered through learning and experience is commonly identified as secular knowledge. Since the source of all knowledge is God, there cannot be a separation as spiritual and secular knowledge. Nevertheless Satan adds evil with truth that of God in order to deceive man as he did in the beginning.

For the purpose of study in this paper we shall consider the revealed knowledge as spiritual or sacred knowledge and the discovered knowledge as secular. Thus the Principles in the Business subjects are identified as part of secular knowledge. It is assumed that the majority of the students in Adventist schools in Sri Lanka come from non-Christian background. In this paper, we will discuss how teaching sacred writings

in the elementary educational level build a strong character embedded with biblical principles in the students. This becomes the foundation for teaching business subjects at the secondary school level in the schools.

The Components of Integrating Faith and Learning

Faith. Many descriptions are given of faith. Faith can be described as belief or as a religious section that one affiliates. In this paper, faith is discussed as Christian beliefs, specifically as Biblical principles that are related to business practices.

Learning. Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge either through day-to-day life experience or through formal education system. Learning through experience mostly does not fall in a curriculum unless if it is a laboratory experiment. A child learns his basic life skills through experience in his day-to-day life. It is a spontaneous attempt to acquire knowledge. This is God given instinct for every human being. A teacher does not a play a major role in this process of learning.

Schooling is a deliberate learning attempt through a systemized way of acquiring knowledge. Teacher, student, and curriculum are the integral parts of this type of learning. The formal education is systemized as curriculum. The learner has less or no choice in selecting the contents of the subject when sacred and secular contents are integrated. Therefore, the teacher uses the formal education system as his instrument in the integrating process.

Teacher and curriculum. The Christian teacher plays a role not as an authoritarian in the classroom, but as a model of the Master Teacher. He/she shows in practice whatever he/she teaches. It is the Holy Spirit that influences the student. Arthur F. Holmes (1987) rightly states:

“Integration is an Ideal never fully accomplished by anyone but God himself.”

The teacher in the classroom totally depends on God for the redemption of the pupils, which is the ultimate aim of the integration process. Integration of faith and learning will be easier if the child acquires biblical knowledge prior to secondary school level. Having this as the prime concern in teaching, Ellen White (1923) says:

“In our schools science, literature, painting, and music, and all that the world's learning can teach are not to be made first. Let the knowledge of Him in whom our eternal life is centered come first.”

She meant that the foundation for learning should be the knowledge of God. This foundation is laid at the primary education level of the students. The molding and shaping of character begins at childhood stage. Ellen White (1958) elaborates how non-spiritual early education molded the lives of the Israelites in the desert:

“They professed to have renounced idolatry and to worship the true God; but their early education and training had molded their habits and character, and they were more or less corrupted with idolatry and with irreverence for God.”

If the foundation of early education were laid according to the expectations of the Scriptures, the learning of other disciplines and

encounter theories that are worldly and secular would not bring anarchy within the students.

Transformation of Teacher and Student Mindset from Secular to Spiritual

Apostle Paul draws a contrast of two types of mindsets:

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1Corinthians 2:14-16).

In Paul’s comparison of natural man and spiritual man, the natural man does not receive the things of God. It is assumed that the students who come from a non-Christian background are non-spiritual in nature that the things of the spirit of God may seem like foolishness for them. The teacher in the class cannot expect that all the students understand the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. Apostle Paul further speaks about types of mindsets:

“To be carnally minded is death; but spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Romans 8:6, 7).

There are two kinds of mindsets, the carnal mind and the spiritual mind. The carnal orientation is counter to God and His truth. It is a secular mind that attempts for a temporal, world oriented, fragmented perspective. By contrast, the spiritual mind is a Christ like mind, in harmony with God’s plan for life and the universe at large. It incorporates an eternal, and heavenly and holistic perspective. The

teacher should identify traits of the carnal mind in the children entrusted in his/her hands. The children that are brought up in a non-Christian environment take life as temporal and live for today assuming that this world is the only place we live. Thus their life is segmented and that guides the behavior of the children. Their behavior and moral conduct varies according to the situations they face. For example; the students from various religious backgrounds participate in their worships and their religious rituals. But it does not have an impact in the other parts of their life such as family, business, and society. The biblical teaching of God's judgment for all our actions has no meaning for them. Whereas the spiritual minded person has an eternal orientation. He/she believes that every decision and every action in this life has eternal consequence. The student sees life in a spiritual perspective. He/she makes value judgments based of God's character. The child has a holistic worldview that he/she embraces the Christian values all of his/her life. It is the great challenge for the Christian teacher to transform the children to spiritual mindset by introducing Jesus to them. Ellen White (1948) states:

“Wise teachers should be chosen for our schools, those who will feel responsible to God to impress upon minds the necessity of knowing Christ as a personal savior“.

Thus the teacher plays a major role in guiding the students towards the faith that leads to eternity.

Teaching Business Subjects in Secular Perspective

Today's students live in a highly competitive world and they study business subjects in a worldly perspective. In Adventist secondary schools in Sri Lanka, non-Adventist teachers teach Business Studies, Commerce, and Economics. The schools follow a curriculum designed by the examination board without considering the biblical view towards these subjects. These curriculums do not emphasize on biblical principles and values.

The government mostly controls the secular schools in Sri Lanka. Business subjects are taught with the aim of educating students to excel in the business world by competition. There are no biblical principles and values taught along with the business subjects. So the students are power oriented and greed for success. They are taught to live for the present. Money and fame become their priority. The schools are satisfied with the children's performance on these subjects as long as they pass their exams. Financial scandals, bribery, and manipulation of accounts are most often the rungs of their ladder of success.

Business ethics is the guiding factor for the application of principles in business transactions. Business ethics is not taught in Government as well as Adventist secondary schools in Sri Lanka. The foundational interest in the students on these subjects should have been laid at secondary school level. It is appropriate that business ethics be

taught at secondary school level rather at university level. Business ethics is defined in the words of Fry, Stoner and Hattwick (1998):

“The search for and commitment to meet appropriate standards of moral conduct in business situations.”

It is suggested that the business ethics alone be not taught in the secondary schools, but most importantly the biblical principles and the values should be the foundation teaching of any discipline and be interwoven with the curriculum. There is no standard ethics in business as discipline. Ethics in business vary from society to society. Determining what is ethical and what is not ethical depends on the societal acceptance of practices. According to Etzel, Walker and Stanton (1997) the business ethics is viewed as follows:

“Take bribery; though repugnant in most societies, it is an accepted and even necessary aspect of business behavior in many parts of the world. Thus, for our purposes it is sufficient to say that ethics are the rules we agree to play by. They are the standards of behavior generally accepted by a society.”

Therefore, in Adventist schools the business ethics should be taught in biblical perspective. In the business world there is a widely accepted concept called situational ethics. People find improper ways to earn quick money and then justify their earning by spending them for noble purposes. One of the business sayings is that to grab the opportunity when it crosses your way and take maximum advantage of it. It does not say in what way the advantage can be taken from the opportunity. Situational ethics according to Fletcher (1974):

"Decision-making should be based upon the circumstances of a particular situation, and not upon fixed Law. The only absolute is Love. Love should be the motive behind every decision. As long as Love is your intention, the end justifies the means. Justice is not in the letter of the Law, it is in the distribution of Love."

Fletcher founded his model upon a statement found in the New Testament of the Bible that reads, "God is Love" (I John 4:8). An unknown author contradicts Fletcher, saying that Fletcher's argument on Situational Ethics appears reasonable upon a glance yet given careful consideration its flaw becomes apparent. Though situational Ethics is based upon "God is Love", in the very next chapter we read, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3). While Fletcher holds that any commandment may be broken in good conscience if Love is one's intention, the Bible states that the keeping of God's commandments is loving God. To break any commandment, regardless of your intentions, is to not love God. Therefore, logic holds that the breaking of the commandment was not done in Love.

Teaching Business Subjects in Biblical Perspective.

The biblical principles do not vary from society to society or situation to situation. They are the revelation of God and guidelines for the preparation of the heavenly citizenship. Business ethics revolve around business aspects such as organizations, consumers, suppliers, employer, employee etc., whereas the biblical principles are the guiding light for the whole human race regardless of social backgrounds. The

Bible should be adopted as the major textbook in Adventist schools. The Holy Scripture has to be the reference for all the subjects. Teaching business subjects through the light of the Bible eliminates the tendencies to believe that commonly accepted practices considered ethics.

In Adventist schools, there is a separate period for moral studies where the Bible is used as the textbook. Since the students are acquainted with the biblical teachings in their early stages of education, it is convenient for the business subject teachers to integrate biblical principles with the course content. The students are expected to practice their trades according to biblical norms and principles. The ultimate aim is to prepare them for the joy of service in this world and wider service in the Kingdom of God.

Biblical Concepts and Values in Business

The following are some of the examples of biblical concepts that are followed in business practices:

Concepts

Delegation of Authority - (Exodus 18:17-23) Jethro advises Moses to delegate the job of settling disputes. - When Jethro saw how Moses was sitting all day long from morning till evening to judge the people's civil grievances with each other. Jethro told Moses that he was doing it all wrong, and that he would wear himself out. Then he gave Moses the benefit of his own wisdom. His advice was that Moses should discern men of accomplishment from among all the leaders of Israel and appoint

them as heads of the people, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens. How was Moses to choose these men? Jethro's words were "and you shall discern. [Since Jethro did not say choose] he wanted Moses to select the leaders by means of his Divine Insight.

Stewardship and Entrepreneurship – Stewardship is a sense of personal responsibility for taking care of something that is not one's own. Entrepreneurship is defined as the willingness to take the risks involved in starting and managing a business. In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus told the parable of talents. This parable contains the business concepts of entrepreneurship and stewardship. It concludes that entrepreneurs and good stewards are rewarded and the slothful are punished.

Strategic Planning – Strategic planning is defined as Long-term plans based on the organizations overall business objectives. Strategic plans are typically multiple years and reach out 5 or 10 years (or more) using Scenarios or other planning methods that identifies Assumptions, Risks, and Environmental factors. In Genesis 41: 25-56 when Joseph came to know of future famine, he drew a grand plan to avert the peril. He had a strategy of saving food for future distribution that saved many lives.

Taxation - Jesus taught us to pay taxes. In Mark 12:13-17, Jesus taught clearly that everyone should, "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars." Caesar was the Roman Emperor and the ruler of the

known world at the time. Rome was at the pinnacle of its power and Jesus was living under and subjected to their tribute. He stressed that whatever belonged to Caesar should be given to Caesar.

Values

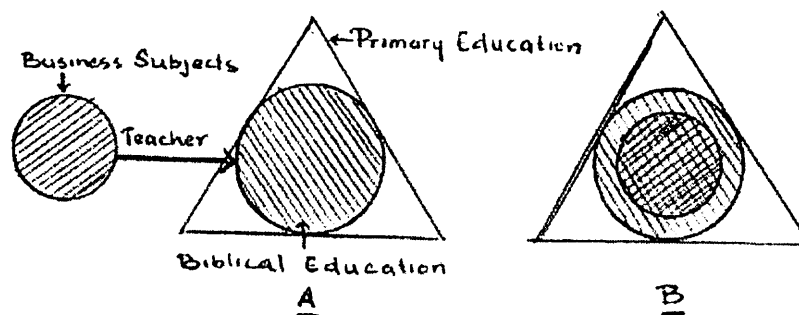
Charity – The story of Boaz and Ruth is told in the Book of Ruth (2:1-17). A wealthy man of Bethlehem in Judah, Boaz, followed the Israelite law that required farmers to leave the edges of their fields unharvested and its gleanings ungathered so that the poor might reap them. During the barley harvest, the young widow Ruth came into Boaz's field to glean. Boaz learned that Ruth's deceased husband was his kinsman. Boaz invited her to eat with him and asked to glean only in his field, instructing his workers to leave sheaves of barley especially for her to gather.

Honesty – just weight - A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight (Proverbs 11:1). This verse in Proverbs deals with dishonesty. In Bible days much of the trade was done by weighing items on a pair of scales. While the item to be purchased was placed on one of the trays, the other tray held a corresponding weight and when the scales were balanced the amount could be determined. Since the item was sold by quantity, and the price was determined by weight, a fair and equitable price was established. However, just as we have crooks today, there were traders who tampered with the weights, thus causing the customer to pay for more than they were actually

getting. The weights were unjust, which resulted in a false balance or standard. The Lord says that a false balance is an abomination to Him because it is cheating. Our God is a just God, so He loves justice and equity.

Conceptual Model

The model below depicts how the biblical principles influence the teaching of business subjects in secondary school.



In the above model the triangle represents the primary education. The bigger circle represents the biblical education (principles). The smaller circle represents the business subjects taught at secondary school and the arrow represents the teacher.

The triangle indicates the early stage of a child's education and the circle within shows that the biblical teachings are one of the main subject contents. The children are taught about values and principles in their early childhood. The character development starts at early childhood. According to Solomon:

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

Once the early childhood education establishes the biblical principles and values in the child, the secondary school teacher (as indicated by an arrow) takes the student through the biblical knowledge that is already within the student. The teacher may ask the students to recollect what they learned about certain areas that related to the business topic she is to introduce. The student is reminded about the relevant biblical value or principle that the student learned and is now practicing in day-to-day life. When the new subject is introduced (as indicated by a small circle), the student filters the content that is been taught and makes a decision for what is right and what is wrong having the Bible as the measuring criterion. The student absorbs the business knowledge with the biblical knowledge as the background. When the student enters the business world, he/she practices the trade with the business techniques he learned and biblical principles guide his conduct in the business dealings. The second segment of the model shows the integrated part of the education. The early childhood biblical education still influences the child when he/she comes to the secondary level of education. The triangle with the two circles depicts the outcome of teaching business subjects in biblical perspective.

A proper foundation of biblical principles and values in the primary level education makes the student to see the business principle through

biblical perspective in the secondary school. It is believed that the biblical principles and values have a life long influence in the students.

Conclusion

Every teacher's dream is to mold the characters of the children that are entrusted in their hands. It is a responsibility of each a teacher to be an instrument in the Lords hand to redeem these little ones for him. Primary school teachers are powerful influence in the children's lives. Early biblical education is the fundamental character builder that will last for eternity. Such characters will win the world for Christ including the business world.

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