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Word Study: **INTEGRITY**

Integrity (Latin, *integritas*) is the quality or condition of being whole or undivided, resulting from a steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code. The Christian code of conduct in the Bible calls us to be people of integrity (cf. Proverbs 10:8-10 & 11:2-4).

Today's competitive business environment makes acting with integrity increasingly difficult. The temptation to take a shortcut, act without full disclosure, be dishonest or rationalize behaviors may result in rewards, but as Proverbs 13:6 admonishes, "wickedness overthrows a sinner."

The need to gird ourselves and each other with prayer and encouragement is great. Psalms 25 & 41 are good resources: we can ask, "May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you" (25: 21), and know that "In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever" (41:12). ◇

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SEVEN GUIDELINES FOR HOME PAGE USABILITY

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A company's home page is its face to the world and the starting point for most user visits. Improving your home page multiplies the entire web site's business value, so following key guidelines for home page usability is well worth the investment.

It has been said that home pages are the most valuable real estate in the world. Each year, companies and individuals funnel millions of dollars through a space that's not even a square foot in size. For good reason. Increasingly, potential customers will look at your company's online presence before doing business with you—regardless of whether they plan to close the actual sale online.

The home page is the most important page on most web sites, and gets more page views than any other page. Of course, users don't always enter a web site from the home page. However, one of the first things these users do after arriving at a new site is go to the home page.

Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed, coauthored by Jakob Nielsen, the accepted industry expert in web usability, and Marie Tahir, an expert in user profiling, contains a list of 113 usability guidelines for home page design, as well as recommendations for how to best design 40 common home page elements to meet users' expectations. Below are seven of those guidelines you can use to increase the usability of your home page and thus enhance your web site's business value.

- 1. Include a One-Sentence Tagline**
Start the page with a tagline that summarizes what the site or company does, especially if you're new or less than famous. Even well-known companies presumably hope to attract new customers and should tell first-time visitors about the site's purpose.
- 2. Group All Corporate Information in One Distinct Area**
Finding out about the company is rarely a user's first task, but sometimes people do need details about who you are. Good corporate information is especially important if the site hopes to support recruiting, investor relations, or PR, but it can also serve to increase a new or lesser-known company's credibility.
- 3. Include a Search Input Box**
Search is an important part of any big web site. When users want to search, they typically scan the home page looking for "the little box where I can type," so your search should be a box. Make your search box at least 25 characters wide, so it can accommodate multiple words without obscuring parts of the user's query.

The home page is the most important page on most web sites ... it's your company's face to the world.

A CHRISTIAN ETHIC for Business

Scott B. Rae, Ph.D.

The following is an excerpt from Dr. Rae's publication *Christian Ethics for Business: Norms & Benchmarks*, published by Wilberforce Forum, a division of Prison Fellowship Ministries.

The culture of business presents numerous challenges to men and women aspiring to conduct business ethically. Business, it seems, has its own set of rules by which it is played, rules that can be very different than the norms governing one's private life. The temptation is great to compartmentalize one's life, and to live life as a dichotomy, with different standards for each sphere. Such a dichotomy in one's life is contrary to Christian ethics, which takes as the norm Christ as Lord over all areas of one's life. Thus, while some believe that one must separate out workplace morality from the morality of private life, this is neither necessary nor desirable.

Not everyone approaches ethics in the workplace from the perspective of the Bible. In fact, there are numerous ways that people make moral decisions. The Christian business person, however, has the advantage of having important Biblical guidelines and concepts to provide guidance. Some of these are discussed below.

Use of the Bible in Ethics

The foundation for Christian ethics is the character of God, on which moral principles and rules are based. The goal of Christian ethics is to emulate the character of God (Matthew 5:48, "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"), and the specific moral principles and rules help spell out more precisely what that involves. Christian ethics are a mixture of virtues that reflect God's character and principles that are derived from His character. The Bible is the central source of information for Christian ethics, and when it speaks to a moral issue, it does so with authority.

However, it is one thing to recognize that the Bible is the authoritative source for Christian ethics. It is quite another to use it correctly. To insist on the centrality of the Bible does not justify simplistic proof-texting, often done out of context, to address complex business ethics problems. Rather, one goes to Scripture primarily to discover broader principles that then can be applied to specific situations encountered in business. Although the Bible does address some business practices, those practices occurred in the ancient world, with an economic system very different from a globalized market economy. Applying the Bible in business ethics can be complicated. Even though we may agree on the Bible's authority for ethics, we may disagree on what the Bible teaches on a specific issue.

The economic world of the Bible was very different than that of today. It is unreasonable to expect that the Bible would directly address complex issues such as insider trading, mergers and acquisitions, and consumer safety, since these are relatively new issues, far removed from the sociological world of biblical times. However, it does have a good deal to say about general principles of economic justice, fairness, and integrity in one's business dealings. As long as there have been human communities, there has been economic activity, and the Bible boldly addressed economic

injustices of its time. Though the specific issues certainly have changed, there is nothing new about biblical ethics addressing economic life and business practices.

Theological Norms for Business Ethics

In his book *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace*, Alexander Hill reinforces that a sacred-secular split is not justifiable from the perspective of Christian ethics. We are not to have separate moralities for our work and private lives. Hill is correct when he insists that the goal of Christian ethics is for the believer to imitate the character of God, by applying His character traits in one's life. He boils this down to three fundamental traits that are central to Christian ethics: holiness, justice, and love. Let's spell out in more detail why these are central to Christian ethics and what is meant by each trait.

Holiness

The Bible is very clear that holiness is a central component of Christian ethics. In ethics, being holy refers to the person who is set apart, in terms of purity and behavior, from his or her surrounding culture and environment. That is, the person stands out as different, and has the sense that God has set him or her apart so that by the way he or she lives life, people around will notice something distinctive. That difference is designed to bear witness to the reality of God in the person's life. The goal of holiness is that others might see this difference and recognize that God was in their midst.

Contrary to what many might believe, the practice of holiness assumes contact with the world, not withdrawal from it, living out a different way of life in the midst of numerous ethical and numerous challenges. Basically holiness does not mean non-contact with the world, only non-assimilation of its values. For example, the demands of holiness might involve treating employees you have laid off better than the "industry standard." Or it might mean handling your expense accounts accurately, refusing to pad the accounts, as may be customary in your company.

Justice

In the Bible, justice is also one of the principal virtues that should characterize those who desire to follow God. The core idea behind justice is that the just person is the one who meets the standards set by God's character. Hill emphasizes meeting the standard of fairness in providing due process (procedural justice), keeping contracts (contractual justice), upholding fundamental rights (substantive justice), and rewarding merit (meritorious justice). These reflect later philosophical categories of justice in common use today and are consistent with the biblical notion of justice as meeting a standard.

When it comes to business practices, justice involves treating people fairly, according to the standard of what they deserve. It would

mean giving people truthful explanations of the reasons for their termination, not hiding behind the common justification “We’re eliminating your position.” It would mean not covering for coworkers when they ask you to lie for them, not signing off on something that is misleading, and not enabling others to steal time or equipment from the company. One needs to be careful about emphasizing justice at the expense of the other virtues, particularly love, lest the workplace become a rigid, harsh place with no room for grace, mercy, or second chances. Justice must be balanced by love.

Love

It may sound strange to think of love in the context of business relationships, but the Bible leaves no doubt about the centrality of love for Christian ethics. In the Bible, love is not a sentimental feeling, but a willful act to seek the best interests of another. In the Old Testament, it is often rendered by the term *covenant* loyalty and has the idea of sticking by someone, accepting the person and seeking his or her best, without any strings attached. You don't necessarily have to like someone in order to love them. If holiness and justice emphasize distinctiveness and standards, then love focuses on relationships in ethics.

Contrary to popular opinion, love is very important to a well-run business. Hill rightly points out that many companies have come apart because of problems in relationships, such as among the company leadership, the board, employees, suppliers, or customers. Money is not the sole motivation for people to do their jobs well; management consultants have pointed out for some time that people need to feel loved, cared for, connected, and valued in order to function at their best. Love in the workplace may mean showing some flexibility in meeting performance standards or sales quotas, rather than rigidly holding to the numbers. Or it may mean giving flex time to employees facing family crises such as caring for sick children or elderly relatives.

One clear example of love in action concerns a group of American companies operating manufacturing plants just across the border in Mexico. When the Mexican government devalued the peso, the employees’ purchasing power was diminished. The companies wanted to raise their wages to compensate for the devaluation, a loving thing to do in itself. But the government prohibited companies from raising wages because they wanted to avoid fueling further inflation. So the companies provided a variety of non-cash benefits to the employees, such as non-perishable food, clothes, and blankets.

Balancing Holiness, Justice, and Love

If any one of these three primary virtues is allowed to dominate the other two, the three-legged stool becomes unstable and will fall. For example, holiness alone can produce withdrawal from the world, a judgmental attitude toward others by taking pride in one’s holiness, or a grinding legalism, in which rules take precedence over all other considerations. Further, justice alone can produce harshness and rigidity in its application, leaving no place for one to recover and learn from failure. Finally, love alone degenerates into permissiveness or favoritism, where maintaining relationships counts for everything, at the expense of upholding standards. If taken to an extreme, love can turn one into a doormat who neglects his or her own needs and interests.

You are encouraged to use these parameters of holiness, justice, and love in making moral decisions that you face in business. When approaching a specific moral decision, ask yourself what is demanded by these three traits and how they can be balanced.

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Rock or SAND?

Larry D. Strand

Dean of the School of Business

“Educational institutions, media, government, communities, churches, and families do much in the way of preparing future employees and leaders. Moreover, many of the daily economic transactions we take for granted are utterly dependent on the time-honored virtues of honesty, trust, and cooperation” (Scott Rae, Kenman Wong, eds. *Beyond Integrity*, p. 117).

This quote from an ethics textbook edited by two of Biola University’s faculty gives insight into the role played by Biola in preparing our students for both their personal and professional lives. We have been doing this for over 30 years in the undergraduate program and for the last two years in our MBA program. One of the distinctives sought by Biola’s School of Business is the integration of Biblical principles in all of our coursework and classes, including the business ethics course taught in both the undergraduate and MBA programs. In this issue Dr. Scott Rae, one of the professors for this course, has written an article that is worth your time to read. We also recommend his textbook, *Beyond Integrity*, for more examples of a Biblically based approach to ethics.

One of those biblical principles that guide our efforts is found in Matthew 7: 24-27: a life based on practicing God’s Word is like a house built on a foundation of rock, whereas a life that is not is like a house built on a foundation of sand. **Preparing students wholly for their vocations and fruitfulness in their lives is one of the important reasons for this integration distinctive in the MBA and undergraduate programs!** ◇



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"GO TO" RESOURCES

This space will provide web site, article, and book reviews to help build the character necessary for the ministry for which you are called. If you come across a resource you think is worth sharing, please let us know (mentor@biola.edu).

Scruples Online Marketplace Community www.scruples.net

Scruples is an acronym that stands for *Serving Christ Radically in an Uncompromising People Loving Entrepreneurial Spirit*. The Scruples Web site is dedicated to equipping Christians in the marketplace with helpful information, Biblical principles and business skills, and is intended to be a resource place for Christians in the marketplace. Several years ago the site's webmaster, Mike McLoughlin, wrote to about 50 Christian business people asking them for the resources that had helped them to integrate their faith and their marketplace activity. Most responded with the comment that there were no resources available. So part of Mike's vision of discipling business people was to make sure there were ample teaching resources available to them. The web site went live on the Internet in September 1996 and has grown to be the principal Internet resource site for Christians in the marketplace. No other site offers the breadth and depth of material that is presently offered at the Scruples site.

The site has a multitude of resources available, including discussion forums (e.g., business & mission, faith at work, marketplace articles, marketplace ethics), marketplace ministries network (e.g., consulting & coaching, Christian business networks, educational institutions, role model companies, ethics), a library of teaching resources, and examples of Christ-centered company policies. ◇

SEVEN GUIDELINES continued

4. Begin Link Names with the Most Important Keyword

Users scan down the page, trying to find the area that will serve their current goal. Links are the action items on a home page, and when you start each link with a relevant word, you make it easier for scanning eyes to differentiate it from other links on the page. A common violation of this guideline is to start all links with the company name, which adds little value and impairs users' ability to quickly find what they need.

5. Offer Easy Access to Recent Home Page Features

Users will often remember articles, products, or promotions that were featured prominently on the home page, but they won't know how to find them once you move the features inside the site. To help users locate key items, keep a short list of recent features on the home page, and supplement it with a link to a permanent archive of all other home page features.

6. Don't Over-Format Critical Content, Such as Navigation Areas

You might think that important home page items require elaborate illustrations, boxes, and colors. However, users often dismiss graphics as ads, and focus on the parts of the home page that look more likely to be useful.

7. Use Meaningful Graphics

Don't just decorate the page with stock art. Images are powerful communicators when they show items of interest to users, but will backfire if they seem frivolous or irrelevant. For example, it's almost always best to show photos of real people actually connected to the topic, rather than pictures of models. ◇

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