



CEO Briefing



How do I integrate my Christian faith with day-to-day business practices?

Five Practical Steps - #3 -- Seek to Live Out the Fruits of the Spirit

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This is a question that lurks in the deeper reaches of almost every Christian professional and businessperson's mind. The answer isn't simple, and it varies from time to time and place to place. In an effort to shed some light on it, I'm going to do a short series of posts on it. This is the third.

The Christian life is a journey and it is best lived by focusing one step at a time. It's like walking through a forest at night, with just a small flashlight to light your way. You

can't see more than a few feet ahead, and the light illuminates only the next few steps.

Use that analogy to gain a perspective on the question. Your answer to the question today may be different than it will be just a bit down the road. Because our circumstances vary, we'll encounter different opportunities and relationships today than we will further down the path. So, the specific answers to the question of "how do I integrate my Christian faith with day-to-day business practices" often depends on the details of the situation in which you find yourself.

As a consultant for 35 years, I've observed that the tactical details often differ dramatically, even in similar situations. For example, an executive may be mulling over the decision to terminate an employee. Another executive, in a similar situation, has an almost identical set of circumstances. In one case, the decision to terminate is obvious, and in other not nearly so. The difference is in the details. The answer to today's circumstances is just today's answer, and not necessarily a lifetime prescription.

What's important is that you keep asking the question and that you seek to build deeper attitudes, principles and habits into your personal routines. If you want to confidently make tactical decisions, then you need to commit to a set of unwavering values.

Those unwavering values are composed of principles, practices and habits that extend beyond the specific details of our current situation. These apply regardless of the circumstances.

In the first of these posts, I identified the first: **Shift Your Paradigm**. In the next, I unpacked the second: **Pray more and pray more intentionally**. In this article, I'm unpacking the third: **Seek to live out the fruits of the spirit**.

Let's begin by understanding the fruits of the spirit. They are listed in Galatians, chapter five:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22, 23

These are character traits -- which is another way of saying habits which have been cultivated over time and begin to manifest more explicitly as a person matures in Christ. Notice that they are fruits of "the Spirit." These habits, like all others, are built over time. They are built by the Holy Spirit in the character of a person who cooperates with him in the process of slowly acquiring these traits. Just as it takes time and the right conditions for fruit to appear and ripen in nature, so too the fruits of the spirit manifest increasingly over time, out of a willful heart, a relationship with Christ, and an activity of the Spirit.

Notice too that almost all of these traits are most apparent in relationship to other people. While one can love God, for example, it is impossible to love others if there are no others. One can't exhibit kindness if there is no one to which to be kind. In order to be good, there has to be someone to which to be good.

This is readily apparent when the passage is viewed in context with the rest of the chapter. Paul first tells us how NOT to act by describing the worldly approach:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21

He then positions the fruits of the spirit as the Godly prescription for us:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22, 23

The fruits of the Spirit, then, function to attract and soften the people around us. If we lived alone on a desert island, there would be no need for love, peace, patience, etc.

As such the fruits of the spirit are a prescription for significant interpersonal success in the marketplace. They are the result of a relationship with Christ and model his character in our lives. Just as Christ attracted people and impacted them, so too we attract and impact people by displaying His character through the fruits.

It is interesting to note that Paul asserts, “against such things there is no law.” These traits are so universally valued and admired that no law stands against them.

But is it bigger than just a law? Can the ‘cancel culture’ squads object to joy, peace and love? Can the hordes of anonymous social media detractors find something objectionable in kindness, goodness and self-control? Can a super-sensitive, easily offended atheist find fault with you for practicing kindness, gentleness and patience? Probably not, at least not without showing themselves as fools.

If you ask the Holy Spirit to manifest the fruits of the spirit in your marketplace activities, you will have embraced a bullet-proof strategy for living your faith in the marketplace. You’ll be protected from criticism and reflect the attractive,

impactful character of our Lord.

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Galatians 5:22, 23



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