

MONDAY MANNA

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GOING TO WORK WITH THE 'INTEGRATION BOX'

By Rick Boxx

One of the challenges of being a follower of Christ in the marketplace is understanding how to integrate our faith effectively into what we do. In his book, *God at Work*, author David Miller addresses this question. He highlights four different facets of faith at work with what he calls his "Integration Box": the "four E's" of Ethics, Evangelism, Experience, and Enrichment.

The Integration Box reminds me of driving a car. If you take care of three of your car tires, but ignore or overinflate one of them, the tire will eventually go flat, bringing the car to a standstill. When integrating your faith fully into your work, you need to embrace all four facets of the Integration Box to God's glory:

Ethics. Years ago, in Kansas City where I live and work, there was a pharmacist named Robert Courtney who made a \$1 million pledge to his church. Unfortunately, Robert determined to fulfill his pledge by making more money from diluting chemo drugs for his cancer patients. Many cancer victims died, and Courtney was convicted for this crime and sentenced to life in prison.

Being generous pleases God, but not if we ignore ethics and legal guidelines. Proverbs 11:3 warns, *"The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them."*

Evangelism. We have all been called to tell others about Jesus Christ, but we can err by rushing into evangelism before earning the right to explain what we believe. A friend, Bob, loves to evangelize, but one day one of his vendors complained to me, "Bob has a lot of gall preaching at me when he hasn't paid my bill in 90 days!"

Evangelism is important, but we first must earn the right to share our faith through action, and genuine love and concern for others. *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"* (1 Peter 3:15).

Experience. This category emphasizes the importance of understanding one's vocational calling and purpose. Years ago, I consulted with Chuck on purchasing a trash hauling business. When the transaction was complete, our pastor wisely called Chuck forward to pray over his new calling.

Tears were shed that day as many in the audience realised if a trash man could be called by God, maybe God had a purpose for them too. As Ephesians 2:10 says, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."*

Enrichment. Integrating our faith with our work requires becoming spiritually grounded and enriched, but we can take our spiritual enrichment to extremes. John, an entrepreneur, attended a faith-in-business conference. When I asked what he thought of the conference, he replied, "It was full of theologians wanting to talk about theology. They didn't share a practical business idea all day!"

We should strive to grow in spiritual knowledge, but also seek ways to apply knowledge practically as well. As the apostle Paul instructed in Philippians 4:9, *"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."*

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

What do you think it means, in a practical sense, to integrate our faith into what we do in the workplace?

Do you think a person can have an effectiveness in sharing his or her faith with others if they do not make a strong commitment to consistent ethical behaviour and practices? Why or why not?

When you hear about “earning the right” to share our faith with others, what thoughts come to mind? Have you ever experienced someone trying to talk with you about what they believe, before demonstrating they were sincerely interested in you as a person – rather than a project? Explain your answer.

How does understanding one’s vocational calling relate to integrating our faith into our approach to work? What is the importance of balancing the acquisition of spiritual knowledge with our ability to apply it in the workplace?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 12:24, 22:29
Ecclesiastes 9:10
Colossians 3:17,23
2 Timothy 3:16-17