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Doing Business Christianly

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Doing Business Christianly

Abstract

"We are also called, in doing our work Christianly, to join God in His redemptive work—as Christ brings everything to its conclusion in perfect shalom."

Posting about Christian life and work from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/doing-business-christianly/>

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Doing Business Christianly

 [inallthings.org/doing-business-christianly/](https://allthings.org/doing-business-christianly/)

Dale Zevenbergen

I appreciate adverbs. They add texture, richness, and dimension to our activity words. “Christianly” is a complex adverb. “But how exactly do we do that in our work?” is a common question students will ask as we work together in developing their insight. To respond to that question, though, perhaps it might be better to first drop the prepositional phrase “in our work,” and step back to ask simply, “How exactly do we do that?” period. How do we live “Christianly”? Looking at a bigger picture and including some more adverbs might help:

First, I’ve learned that all of life is lived *corum deo* – before the face of God or in the presence of God. It’s not about us. We live to glorify God. Spiritual disciplines are certainly part of the idea of living Christianly, but it also shows up in the mundane of day-to-day life. Living *corum deo* includes cleaning the house, changing a diaper, cutting the grass, caring for an aging parent, disciplining a child, volunteering, shopping, investing, and, yes, even working. One of my favorite songs builds off of one of my favorites passages, [Colossians 3](#). In verses 17 and 23, Paul emphasizes that whatever we do, we should do it with all our heart and give thanks to the glory of God’s name.¹

So if life isn’t about me (which seems like a bummer, but this is probably a good thing for me and all of you), and if we live *corum deo*-before the face of God-what does that mean for work in a business? How might we do business “Christianly”? A few more adverbs might help: humbly and unselfishly², thoughtfully, thankfully, lovingly, justly and mercifully ([Micah 6:8](#)), graciously, and responsibly, and I’m sure there are many more that might fit. It strikes me that at the heart of all these adverbs lies our view of people and creation.

How do we view our team members? How do we view our superiors, colleagues, and customers? How do we view our corporate neighbors or even our competitors? Are they image bearers, who deserve to be treated with the dignity that their preciousness and uniqueness deserves? Or are they a means to our ends? Do we view those around us as ones to be cared for and developed or used and abused?³ Our view of God – who He is and who we are in Him – underlies our view of other people and of creation. But I would challenge us to think beyond our own words and actions that these adverbs describe. We are also called, in doing our work Christianly, to join God in His redemptive work—as Christ brings everything to its conclusion in perfect [shalom](#).

I had a couple of meaningful interactions in the last year that really struck me, that get at this idea of bringing positive change and shaping organizations and culture toward Christlikeness. I was visiting recently with someone who was almost three decades into a very successful career and was growing into a senior leadership role at a thriving organization. She was sharing that from the very beginning of her time there, she made it clear who she was and *whose* she was, and what that meant for how she was going to act, talk, and go about her work. She then shared that her impact in the organization—living *corum deo* in her work—went way beyond her own words and actions. She shared (quite humbly) that the organization today has a culture of high integrity and honesty. It has policies, procedures, and norms that foster an environment of respect and empowerment where everyone involved can thrive. Her fingerprints (or better yet, the fingerprints of her Maker and Savior) are all over the organization. There are hundreds, maybe even thousands, more stories like hers, of Christ followers shaping and impacting organizations and culture.

Second, last summer I attended a business conference that was part of the 125th anniversary celebration of the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls. One of the speakers was Fr. Robert Sirico of the [Acton Institute in Michigan](#). He shared a term and idea that blew me away – to *Christo-finalize* our businesses. I had heard this idea phrased as “joining God in His redemptive work” or “shalom”, as I mentioned above. But *Christo-finalize*? Wow. Not simply to *Christianize* by adding decorations and artifacts of our faith to our desks, or even confronting and condemning

behavior that offends our Christian sensibilities, but to *Christo-finalize*, to join Christ in bringing things to their “right end”, which of course, is in Christ.⁴

So where does that leave us? Personally, it leaves me humbled and a bit overwhelmed. But as Paul wrote in [2 Corinthians 12:9](#), “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in my weakness.” Thankfully, it is not only “not about me”, but it also is not solely “on me”. Praise God.

Much more could be said on this rich and complex topic of living and working Christianly. My hope is that these thoughts might lead you to ponder how living *corum deo* looks in your life and work.

Footnotes

1. Casting Crowns recorded [Lifesong](#) a few years ago, and I think it beautifully captures the perspective Paul was sharing with the church in Colosse. I encourage you to listen to it. [↩](#)
2. [Philippians 2](#) describes Christ's perfect example. [↩](#)
3. [Genesis 1:28](#) [↩](#)
4. Hear it in Fr Sirico's own words here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgUxu3eOk5s>. [↩](#)