

*Bringing Your Business to Life* examines the virtues necessary for *being good*, within the complexities of the life of the entrepreneur. The book is a unique blend of real entrepreneurial cases and practical insights of the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, courage and temperance. *Bringing Your Business to Life* provides principles, practices and stories that display the importance of a *good* life as an entrepreneur.

The book was inspired by a theology course we taught at the University of St. Thomas, entitled Christian Faith and Entrepreneurship. The course was an instant success among the entrepreneurship students and in 2002 the course received the *National Outstanding Course Award* from the *United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship*. We felt we were onto something that was, for the most part, repressed by mainstream culture and ignored by the churches. In the classes we have taught and in the talks we have given to various business groups and business academic groups around the country, we have heard a strong message that entrepreneurs are searching for ways to integrate their faith, their principles, and their entrepreneurial spirit together in their work. Too often books on entrepreneurship are morally light. While rich in the technical understanding on entrepreneurship, they are surprising simplistic on the moral complexity of starting and growing an enterprise. This book draws upon the rich and profound tradition of the virtues. In a similar way, books on the moral and spiritual character of America are simplistic on the complexities and pressures of running a business. This book is grounded in extensive interviews with entrepreneurs who share their experiences of struggling with how to integrate their principles into their businesses.

An entrepreneur's capacity to create wealth always faces the question: for what? For all the technical and skillful advances we can make in creating wealth, the techniques and skills do not answer the question of whether they make us truly better off or not. While income statements and balance sheets may tell us that we have created more wealth than last year, and technological advances may increase productivity, they do not tell us if the entrepreneur is really better for it as a person and whether our world is a better place. The book contends that entrepreneurs and their firms have the capacity to be a great force for *good*, so long as they are connected to a robust faith and culture that prepares them for challenges of running a business.

This moral and ultimately spiritual question, “for what do I create wealth” begs for an answer that gets at the heart of a deeper question: “who is the good entrepreneur and what exactly makes such a person *good*?” These are not easy questions to answer, but the virtues are a helpful source to a profound understanding worthy of our time. For the good entrepreneur this entails the following:

1. **Being Good Stewards: Prudent Management of Scarce Resources.** The prudent entrepreneur is not to be seen as cunning and opportunistic, the tactician, who by concealing her real intentions, deceives others in achieving his self-centered goals. Rather, she is a person who has the necessary entrepreneurial skills, perceives the situation as it is, and directs her activity toward greater ends that multiplies the resources of the world. She is a good steward, often using a variety of bootstrapping techniques to make the most of the resources she has available to her. She is not a

“drawer” from the resources of the world, but a contributor. We focus on how prudence connects effective means to good ends in the right circumstances.

2. **Distributors of Justice: Creating Right Relationships with Employees.** The entrepreneur tends to be suspicious of justice largely because it is so often understood as externally imposed constraints by the government and other forces. In this chapter, we focus on the meaning of justice within the Christian tradition and examine one company’s struggle to establish right relationships from its founding through its compensation system. We show that justice is not some imposed restraint on the company, but it is a natural reality that needs to be named for what it is—a search for right relationships that creates a community of work. Justice may not be the first virtue that comes to mind when we think of the entrepreneur. But, by creating right relationships with the stakeholders of the business, entrepreneurs become distributors of justice in their ventures.
3. **Taking Risks for the Good: Courage in the Face of the Unknown.** Entrepreneurs usually begin their businesses with a great vision for their companies, yet they often find they are overwhelmed by adversity. They are tempted to restrict their concerns to survival issues and retreat from the difficulties of a grander vision for the enterprise. While entrepreneurs will acknowledge these feelings of being overwhelmed, they rarely describe them as temptations of retreat, of fear, of being vulnerable. Instead they point to these times of difficulty as opportunities to respond courageously. This chapter names these fears, these doubts, these temptations, and see how the virtue of courage can be a response to such difficulties.
4. **Tempering the Workaholic: When is Enough, Enough?** Many entrepreneurs find that their work brings out a certain flow, a rhythm, a certain sense of being connected and alive, that other activities don’t seem to give. Their work often brings a great deal of pleasure, satisfaction and self-esteem. Yet, like all desires, when does an entrepreneur’s desire to make her enterprise successful cross the line from being a healthy passion to achieve something, to an addiction that disorders other important aspects of his life? One of the more difficult moments for an entrepreneur is to recognize is when enough is, for them, enough. It is precisely the pleasure of the work that can lead entrepreneurs into the temptation to disorder all other important things in life, such as marriage, family, health, friendships, religion, etc. – to sacrifice them all for the sake their businesses. This chapter examines this disease of workaholism in the entrepreneur and prescribes important practices of temperance that can resist its spread.

Running a business is no easy matter and the virtues are not some magical moral technique that takes away its pain and difficulty. What the virtues do reveal is a holistic understanding of the enterprise that helps the entrepreneur see how particular practices fit within the whole life of the organization, and how to bring all of the virtues together to become a *good entrepreneur*.