

## TEACHING NOTES ON “DECISION MAKING” AND “FUNDAMENTALS OF ORGANIZING”

### TEACHING NOTE #1: Teaching “Decision Making” from a CST perspective<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps one of the most amazing things about how God created the world is that people were given the freedom to make decisions and choices. Indeed, this is an essential component of what it means to be human, and of how people can bring CST principles into workplaces.

In many ways a central challenge from a CST perspective is to make decisions that minimize oppressive/evil/death-giving conditions, and to optimize liberating/good/life-giving conditions (Dt 30:19; Matt 16:19). In other words, how can people be *saved from* oppressive structure and systems, and *saved for* redemptive structures and system? And more to the point, how does one do this in the workplace? The Bible describes a variety of ways people have used to make decisions, ranging from prayerful deliberation (Mark 14:36) to putting out “fleece” (Judges 6: 37), to drawing lots (Acts 1:26).

Most M&OB textbooks describe decision-making as having four (sometimes five) main steps: 1) recognize the need for a decision, 2) develop alternatives to consider, 3) choose the most appropriate decision, and 4) implement your decision. A four-step decision-making model that can be seen to parallel these four conventional steps, and is consistent with CST principles, is based on the four *corporate* spiritual disciplines—confession, worship, guidance and celebration—as described by Richard Foster.<sup>2</sup> This teaching notes suggests that instructors present these four “alternative” steps after they have presented the four conventional steps of the decision-making model.

#### **Step 1: Confession** (identifying need for decision).

In this context the first corporate spiritual discipline—confession—has less to do with forgiveness *per se* than with exhibiting humility and mutual acceptance. By confessing our

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<sup>1</sup> This material draws heavily from Bradley, J., B. Dyck, R. Martinez, M. Neubert, and D. Wong (2010). Instructor’s Resource Manual (Special Edition for use in Christian schools) for Management: Current Practices and New Directions. Boston MA: Cengage. See also Dyck, B. and K. Wong (2010). “Corporate spiritual disciplines and the quest for organizational virtue.” Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion, 7(1):7-29.

<sup>2</sup> While *individual* spiritual disciplines (e.g., meditation, prayer) are also obviously of great relevance, the choice here is to focus on the four disciplines that Richard Foster says are practiced in community (such as an organization). Quotes in this section come from Foster, R.J. (1978). Celebration of discipline: The path to spiritual growth. San Francisco, Harper & Row. Note also that, in order to understand how the spiritual disciplines are related to decision-making, we must be careful not to confuse them with their more everyday meaning. For example, “worship” as a corporate spiritual discipline is not synonymous with what happens in a church on Sunday mornings when like-minded believers gather to adore God. Similarly, it is different from what happens when an individual, say, goes for an inspirational walk in a park. Rather, the corporate discipline of worship has more to do with seeing the Go(o)d in others, whether they are students in a classroom setting, colleagues in a committee meeting, or like-minded believers in a church.

shortcomings, it “forever delivers us from conveying any attitude of superiority” (p. 135). In short, Confession has much to do with humility, especially in our dealings with one another, and in providing a necessary foundation upon which to build a discerning community. Confession in the workplace has a lot to do with community-building, where people mutually share common struggles and success. Managers and other organizational members practice Confession when they consciously recognize the need for change, and at the same time recognize that their own actions have prevented change and have contributed to organizational shortcomings (rather than resort to blaming individual coworkers or subordinates).

In short, whereas the first step in the decision-making model in a conventional approach emphasizes that (top-down) managers identify the need or opportunity for a decision, a CST perspective would place greater emphasis on (humble) managers recognizing that the identification of a need for a decision can come from any stakeholder associated with the organization. In particular, this means that the need for decisions can come from stakeholders whose primary concern is not to do with maximizing the productivity and profitability of the firm. The need for a decision can come from neighbors, customers, or the imagined call of future generations, and so on.

### **Step 2: Worship** (consider alternatives)

Following from Confession, as used here Worship refers to expecting others to be insightful, to initiate and to welcome new ideas and positive change. Foster talks about Worship as a “holy expectancy,” a waiting for the voice of God from others:

“To worship is to experience reality, to touch Life ... in the midst of the gathered community. It is breaking into the Shekinah [Presence] of God, or better yet, being invaded by the Shekinah of God. ... When more than one or two [people] come into public worship with a holy expectancy [i.e., expecting to hear the *Kol Yahweh*, the voice of God] it can change the atmosphere of a room. People who enter harried and distracted are quickly drawn into a sense of the silent Presence. Hearts and minds are lifted upward. The air becomes charged with expectancy. ... Worship opens the door to guidance” (pages 138; 142; 171: emphasis in original).

The spiritual discipline of worship is not limited to weekly gatherings of like-minded believers. Rather, it should “permeate the daily fabric of our lives ... every business transaction. ... [For example] We stop at a gas station and sense a divine urging to get acquainted with the attendant, to see him as a person rather than an automaton” (p. 145).

From a CST M&OB perspective, the corporate spiritual discipline of Worship might be summarized as seeing Go(o)d in others, and deliberately listening to and inviting them to participate in the decision-making process. Seeing that of God in others implies treating other people and their ideas with respect. And, in this light, it is not unlike why people attend religious worship services (e.g., rather than worship by themselves or watch a worship service on television)—they want to see how God has been active in other peoples’ lives, and to share their own experiences in a healing (Confessing) community. Similarly, people with a worshipful attitude attend work on weekdays in order to deliberately see the good in their co-workers, and to belong to an improving team.

Thus, unlike a conventional approach to decision-making, where managers typically themselves develop the alternative, from a CST approach the emphasis is more on listening and

being sensitive to alternatives offered by others. This is consistent with seeking the common good.

**Step 3: Guidance** (choose appropriate alternative)

The corporate spiritual discipline of Guidance, first and foremost, has to do with discerning ideas *in community*. Individual guidance is insufficient. “All the teaching on divine guidance in our century has been noticeably deficient on the corporate aspect. . . . Perhaps our [present-day] preoccupation with private guidance is the product of our Western individualism” (p. 151). Foster provides several examples of corporate Guidance, including the Quaker meetings several centuries ago where they decided, together, to abolish slavery and to reimburse their own slaves for their time in bondage. Those *groups* discerned that this was the right thing to do, the proper response to the social and economic structures and systems of their day. By now the contrast with a conventional *top-down* “choose-the-appropriate-alternative” approach is self-evident to students: a *participative* approach in this step is consistent with CST principles like subsidiarity.

**Step 4: Celebration** (implement choice).

The fourth corporate spiritual discipline describes the response to implementing positive choices: “. . . a [positive] restructuring of social arrangements cannot help but bring celebration. When the poor receive the good news, when the captives are released, when the blind receive their sight, when the oppressed are liberated, who could withhold the shout of Jubilee?” (p. 163). Foster goes on to lament that: “The carefree spirit of joyous festivity is absent in contemporary society. Apathy, even melancholy, dominate the times” (p. 164). He argues that an emphasis on hard work and rational calculation has contributed to a lack of Celebration in our lives. Celebration is evident when our “work and play” have been redeemed, when there is “joy where there once was mourning” (p. 166). Genuine celebration “must work itself into the ordinary fabric of our daily lives. Without that our celebration carries a hollow sound” (p. 165). When positive changes are implemented in the workplace, the world becomes a better place, and all humankind can rejoice because of it.

Again in this final step a CST approach has a different feel to decision making. It results in genuine celebration, which comes naturally because the process has treated people with dignity, enhanced to common good, and often manifest the preferential option for the poor. This is decision-making from a different-moral-point-of-view and with a different meaning. The spiritual disciplines remind us that decision-making is not a mundane or instrumental activity – it is very much connected to how God has created us and to our identity as spiritual beings.

**Questions for class discussion**

1. Although society in general is becoming increasingly interested in spirituality, contemporary expressions of spirituality are (1) typically very personal experiences (e.g., meditation, walks in nature) and (2) seldom found in M&OB textbooks (where the emphasis is on rational, rather than relational or spiritual, decision making).

Is it appropriate for organizational members to allow an understanding corporate spiritual disciplines to inform how they make decisions in the organization? Is this a denial of rationality? Is this an imposition of one’s religious beliefs? Or is this exactly what the world is hungering for?

2. Business schools teach “scripts” on how to make decisions -- do a SWOT analysis, maximize financial gain, reduce risk, etc. Do you think that the “scripts” you have learned in religious institutions influence how you make decisions (and if they have, how have they)? Should they?
3. According to Scripture, God has given humankind free choice. Put in terms of this chapter, God has delegated responsibilities to people, and people will be held accountable for the decisions and actions they take. What sorts of things has God delegated to humankind? And, given that God is to be their mentor, what sorts of things should Christian managers delegate to the people reporting to them? Is this different than simply following generally good management principles?

### IN-CLASS “HANDS-ON” ACTIVITY

Ask students to respond to the following questions regarding decision making, indicating where they are on the 7-point Likert scale between the two choices

**To be an effective manager, I should ...**

Identify problems and opportunities for the organization <i>that will meet or surpass its financial goals.</i>	Identify problems and opportunities for the organization <i>that will improve both financial and other forms of well-being.</i>
1    2    3    4	5    6    7
Develop alternative ways to respond to organizational problems or opportunities, ensuring <i>that the financial benefits of an alternative outweigh its financial costs.</i>	Develop alternative ways to respond to organizational problems or opportunities, ensuring <i>that overall well-being is enhanced.</i>
1    2    3    4	5    6    7
Make choices among various alternatives by using an appropriate method <i>based on how much goal consensus and knowledge there is available for each alternative.</i>	Make choices among various alternatives that have been developed, <i>appreciating the healthy tension among various goals, and drawing on both explicit and tacit knowledge.</i>
1    2    3    4	5    6    7
Implement decisions using <i>a participative approach only when necessary to overcome resistance.</i>	Implement decisions <i>using an experimental approach that nurtures continuous learning.</i>
1    2    3    4	5    6    7

**Provide feedback to students to see how they compare to previous students who have responded to these questions (responses given in “percentages”)**

<b>Conventional approach</b>	<b>Approach more consistent with CST principles</b>
Identify problems and opportunities for the organization <i>that will meet or surpass its financial goals.</i>	Identify problems and opportunities for the organization <i>that will improve both financial and other forms of well-being.</i>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0.9 11.8 10.0 18.2 31.8 20.0 7.3	
Develop alternative ways to respond to organizational problems or opportunities, ensuring <i>that the financial benefits of an alternative outweigh its financial costs.</i>	Develop alternative ways to respond to organizational problems or opportunities, ensuring <i>that overall well-being is enhanced.</i>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0.9 7.3 20.0 26.4 21.8 19.1 4.5	
Make choices among various alternatives by using an appropriate method <i>based on how much goal consensus and knowledge there is available for each alternative.</i>	Make choices among various alternatives that have been developed, <i>appreciating the healthy tension among various goals, and drawing on both explicit and tacit knowledge.</i>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1.8 3.6 20.0 24.5 32.7 14.5 2.7	
Implement decisions using <i>a participative approach only when necessary to overcome resistance.</i>	Implement decisions <i>using an experimental approach that nurtures continuous learning.</i>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0.0 6.4 12.7 22.7 32.7 20.9 4.5	

**TEACHING NOTE #1: Teaching “Fundamentals of Organizing” from a CST perspective<sup>3</sup>**

At first glance the idea of organizing and organizational structure may seem quite abstract, value-neutral, and far-removed from Christian teachings. For example, the Bible does not seem to have many teachings on “how to organize” (with some exceptions, like the Nehemiah), and Jesus never says: “Truly I say to you, whenever you structure your organizations, you shall ... .” It may come as somewhat of a surprise then to learn that that Max Weber describes how the conventional understanding of organizing that arose during the Protestant Reformation was grounded upon (a particular interpretation of) biblical principles. Basically, as depicted in the table below, Weber identifies four fundamental issues related to organizational structure.

Four fundamental issues in organizing	Conventional approach (consistent with Weber’s understanding of the “Protestant ethic”)	Alternative approach (consistent with principles associated with CST)
1. How to ensure that work activities are being completed in the best way.  2. How to ensure that members’ sub-tasks contribute to the whole.  3. How to ensure orderly deference.  4. How to ensure that members work together harmoniously.	<b>Standardization</b> - specify desired behaviors  <b>Specialization</b> - provide job description  <b>Centralization</b> - create authority structures  <b>Departmentalization</b> - create formal job groupings	<b>Experimentation</b> - encourage constant improvement  <b>Sensitization</b> - seek and respond to needs and opportunities  <b>Dignification</b> - respect everyone  <b>Participation</b> - encourage mutuality

**The conventional approach (consistent with Weber’s understanding of the *Protestant Ethic*)**

*Standardization* is related to an understanding of the biblical teachings that Christians should not conform to the patterns of this world (e.g., Romans 12:2). Instead, they should explicitly develop and conform to biblical standards, because having such standards can help to overcome undesirable human tendencies and temptations. As Weber put it: “the repudiation of all idolatry of the flesh” serves as an “ideal foundation” to undergird the “powerful tendency toward

<sup>3</sup> This material draws heavily from Bradley, J., B. Dyck, R. Martinez, M. Neubert, and D. Wong (2010). Instructor’s Resource Manual (Special Edition for use in Christian schools) for Management: Current Practices and New Directions. Boston MA: Cengage. See also Dyck, B. and D. Schroeder (2005). “Management, theology and moral points of view: Towards an alternative to the conventional materialist-individualist ideal-type of management.” Journal of Management Studies, 42 (4): 705-735. Quotations are from Weber, M. (1958). The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (transl. T Parsons). NY: Scribner’s.

uniformity of life, which to-day so immensely aids the standardization of production” (Weber, 1958, p. 169).

*Specialization* is related to the biblical emphasis on mercy and *phileos* (“brotherly love”), where community is enhanced when everyone knows their place and contributes accordingly. Weber argued that “specialized labour in callings [is] justified in terms of brotherly love ... [which] is expressed in the first place in the fulfilment of the daily tasks ... in the interest of the rational organization of our social environment. ... [T]he division of labor and occupations in society” was seen as “a direct consequence of the divine scheme of things” (Weber, 1958, pp. 108-9; 160).

*Centralization* is related to the biblical idea of submission. Weber notes that differentiating people into “different classes” (e.g., employers vs. employees, managers vs. subordinates) is “a direct result of divine will” and thus should not be challenged (Weber, 1958, pp. 160, 178).

*Departmentalization*, though not explicitly discussed by Weber, could certainly be seen as an extension of the first three fundamentals. Thus, as organizations grew in size, community would be further enhanced if each sub-unit within the company would know its place within the larger firm (macro specialization) and conform to consistent practices across the organization (standardization) and submit to overarching leadership (centralization).

### **An alternative approach (consistent with CST principles)**

When biblical teaching are interpreted via a CST lens, then Weber’s four fundamentals of organizing give rise to four qualitatively different organizations practices.

*Experimentation*, like conventional standardization, is also related to the biblical teaching of non-conformity. But the alternative approach places emphasis is on experimentally implementing increasingly socially-just structures and practices so that people can become “loosed” from oppressive structures and invited to become “bound” to liberating structures.

*Sensitization*, like conventional specialization, is also based on brotherly love/mercifulness/compassion, but starts with the observation that compassion means, literally, to suffer alongside those who are suffering. “Mercifulness involves living with compassion, acknowledging the intrinsic dignity of others, and treating other people—including subordinates, competitors, and the marginalized—as “thous” rather than as face-less “its” (Buber, 1958). Brotherly love is disposed to being helpful and deliberately knowing others’ needs” (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005). Sensitization sensitizes people to the needs of all socioeconomic statuses without blaming *individuals* for problems.

*Dignification*, like conventional centralization, is also related to submission, but based on an understanding of mutual submission (and thus is associated with a *decentralization* of power). “Submission leads to mutual support and counsel as people treat one another with dignity in community” (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005).

*Participation*, like conventional departmentalization, is built upon each of the first three fundamentals of organizing. It is associated with community discernment, inviting others to understand each other’s work and develop ways to work together more harmoniously.

In sum, this suggests that conventional hallmarks of organizing (standardization, specialization, centralization, departmentation) are very different from the hallmarks associated

with CST principles (experimentation, sensitization, dignification, participation). Both are specific ways to approach the four basic dimensions of organizing, which is fundamental for understanding M&OB. Research suggests that managers who are less materialist-individualist, and managers who are deliberately engaged in spiritual practices (e.g., prayer about their worklife), are more inclined to the alternative four practices than to the conventional four practices associated with organizing.<sup>4</sup>

Taken together this discussion suggests that Christian managers should be very interested in organizational structures. The fundamentals of organizing are based on biblical teachings, but one's moral-point-of-view influences how those teachings are interpreted and manifest in organizational structures.

### **Questions for class discussion.**

1. CST/Biblical teachings have been used to develop standards or rules that Christians use to guide their decision-making. Have students brainstorm ideas for a list of "Ten Commandments for Christian Managers." What happens when you ask students to agree on items on the list? Can they identify items that will hold across a wide diversity of situations and people?
2. Consider the following: The Bible has several famous passages (Romans 12: 3-8; I Cor. 12) that describe how the members of the church have differing gifts (specialization). The challenge is for all these to work together under the headship of Christ (centralization). Departmentalization may be evident because some body parts belong to specific limbs (arms, legs) and other body parts belong to the core (stomach, heart). The body works best if the members work together in a coordinated fashion, following shared standards and expectation.

Does this description suggest that the Bible tends towards a conventional versus a CST understanding of organizing? How might these passages be interpreted from a CST perspective?

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<sup>4</sup> Dyck, B., and J. M. Weber (2006). "Conventional versus radical moral agents: An exploratory empirical look at Weber's moral-points-of-view and virtues." *Organization Studies* 27(3): 429-450. For a review of the literature on faith-based spirituality among managers, which shows that practitioners who seek to put into practice the teachings of the largest world religions consistently de-emphasize on materialism and individualism, see Dyck, B. (forthcoming) God on Management: The world's five largest religions, the 'theological turn', and organizational and management theory and practice. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*.

## IN-CLASS “HANDS-ON” ACTIVITY

Ask students to respond to the following questions regarding organizational structure, indicating where they are on the 7-point Likert scale between the two choices

### To be an effective manager, I should ...

Managers should develop standards to ensure that members complete their work activities in the best way.	Managers should encourage members to develop and experiment with new ways of performing tasks.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Managers should use specialized job descriptions to ensure that staff members do their specific jobs.	Managers should encourage members to be sensitive to and address the opportunities and needs around them.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A centralized hierarchy of authority is the best way to achieve orderly deference.	Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Members should be grouped into departments to ensure that everyone works together harmoniously.	Members should be welcome to participate and practice mutual discernment and guidance.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Provide feedback to students to see how they compare to previous students who have responded to these questions (responses given in “percentages”)**

<b>Conventional approach</b>	<b>Approach more consistent with CST principles</b>
Managers should develop standards to ensure that members complete their work activities in the best way.	Managers should encourage members to develop and experiment with new ways of performing tasks.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1.1 8.8 18.7 19.8 30.8 19.8 1.1	
Managers should use specialized job descriptions to ensure that staff members do their specific jobs.	Managers should encourage members to be sensitive to and address the opportunities and needs around them.
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A centralized hierarchy of authority is the best way to achieve orderly deference.	Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0.0 2.2 9.9 19.8 26.4 26.4 16.5	
Members should be grouped into departments to ensure that everyone works together harmoniously.	Members should be welcome to participate and practice mutual discernment and guidance.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0.0 13.2 24.2 24.2 26.4 11.0 1.1	