TRUE ETHICS IN THE MARKET PLACE

BY JEAN JONES 2025

BLS 200

Thesis – This paper will demonstrate how the application of biblical principles I can restore true ethics in the marketplace and how businesses who practice biblical ethics will be truly successful.

The code of professional ethics for all professions is getting longer and longer. This results from the marketplace no longer adhering to biblical principles. Christians in the marketplace are believing that Christian principles do not belong in the marketplace. I quote a business owner I know who also pastors a church who said– “You can’t run your business like you run your church; it doesn’t work.” This is a Godly man who I respect who has done well in business and from what I have seen –(I audited his companies for a few years) he really does apply biblical principles in his business because he believes them to his core but he doesn’t *realise* he does, he has been blinded somehow or he has reached such a level of unconscious competency that the principles are part of him.

When biblical principles were the foundation of society a one-page code of conduct for most professions would suffice. In modern society, the absence of ethical principles necessitates detailed regulations and guidelines to ensure that both social and business operations function effectively.

For example, in the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) code of professional ethics **2024** is 242 pages long.

The fundamental principles are integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour. [1]

Jesus sums it up in Matthew 22 vs 37 – 40 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ [c] **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ [d] **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” [2]

If every code of ethics were based on this principle the business world would be transformed. As stated by John Maxwell in his book ethics 101 “There is a version of the Golden Rule in just about every culture. It states that you should treat others the way you want to be treated” [3]. By contrast, ’Babylonian economics motivates people out of selfish gain. Therefore, self remains the ethic of organization with the enormous and costly economic management price tag accompanying that ethic.” [4]

I saw an example of this when I was auditing at a large firm. Staff could claim transport money for going to the client. Since it was possible to catch a combi to the client at a fraction of the price of taking a taxi but taking twice or three times as long. The staff would claim the taxi money, take a combi using company time and pocket the difference. When I confronted them that this was unethical, they could not see why. They too were blinded to the truth, and they were professing Christians. I had to

[1] Code of Professional Conduct of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, (2022 Edition)
[2] The bible New International Version, Biblica, 1978
[3] Go Business 200 by Dennis Peacock, Go Strategic 1995
[34] Ethics 101 John C Maxwell, Hachette book group, 2005
[4]

solve the problem by making a rule against the practice. This is why the code of ethics and rule books need to be so long these days and why companies need to hire more managers.

Christians need to know that applying Christian ethics in the marketplace will transform their lives. They “must recapture the marketplace for God’s Kingdom as a centre point for evangelism, applied Christian ethics, and job and capital creation.[3]

It is a bit of a cycle, if we transform businesses and evangelise in the marketplace then those Christians will go home and transform the families who will then go into the businesses and transform the businesses. BLS 200 Transformation Principle #2: Biblical change is obedience-oriented rather than fulfillment oriented. [3] This is the opposite of selfish gain.

The family unit is where the marketplace gets its trained people. We build our foundation through relationships at home. How we relate to authority, our work ethic, communication skills, teamwork, stewardship.

BLS200 teaches the definition of a Christian Business.

A CHRISTIAN BUSINESS is a commercial enterprise that consistently serves its customers, suppliers, and employees with monetary compensation, products, and services which bring value to their lives before God, applying biblical principles and ethics in such a way that God’s Spirit has free access over the actions, operations, and profits of those who own and operate the organization. [3]

And that A truly “Christian business” is a business where Christ’s commandments and ethics have taken control of those making and executing the decisions.

When people have the right ethics, biblical ethics which include decent work ethics then the companies they work for are successful and they in turn are successful. Jim Collins demonstrates this throughout his Book, Good to great. Getting the right people on the bus is about the people with the right ethics. He says “Nuclar built its whole system on the fact that you can teach a farmer to make steel, but you can’t teach a farmer work ethic to people who don’t have it in the first place.[5]

If we apply biblical ethics in the marketplace, we will have truly Christian businesses that will be transformed into profitable companies who treat others well and it will be a testimony to the world that Gods way is the best way.

[5] Jim Collins Good to Great