

Laura Castle

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The Technical Communicator in a Corporate Culture

Paper #4

Introduction

As Childs, in his book, “Ethics in Business” (1995, 72), quoted Charles Watson, “To cast aside, arbitrarily, what has obviously been a major part of the human experience and a significant influence on the course of civilization [i.e., religion] is limiting.” For one to deny that religion plays a part in every aspect of life, specifically in the business world, is to give humans too much credit for their successes and take the honor away from where it belongs.

The Technical Communicator in a Corporate Culture is a class that has taught me many things, including how to incorporate my religious beliefs into my future corporate lifestyles so that I can be an effective witness to my co-workers and peers. Along those lines, I learned how emotional intelligence relates to cognitive intelligence and what I can do to become a better person overall.

My Worldview

My worldview is a fundamental set of beliefs that controls how I react to the world around me. As a Christian, God should be the ultimate source for all my thinking. If someone can explain my life without mentioning God, there is a problem that I need to fix. When my life one day contains the business world, God should be influential to that part (and the other parts as well).

I can divide what I believe into how I answer five general questions: What do I value? What is real? What does it mean to be human? What is wrong with the world and how can it be fixed? Where is history going? These questions are answered differently by different people, depending on who or what is their reference point and who or what they choose to let influence

them. Some influences include family, friends, media, experiences, and religious practices/literature.

For me, my influences come mainly from my family, my friends, the Bible, and my experiences. The media may have a subtle influence on me, but being older, I can filter the media's influence on me to pick and choose what I want to accept better than a child or teenager. In general, I have gotten to the point in my life when I have the ability to make wise decisions about my worldview opinions.

What do I value?

I find value in many people, things, and concepts, more than I can list out at any one time. Some of the things I value are specifically out of the Bible, like love, mercy, and grace. Jesus said Matthew 22:37 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Two verses later, Matthew 22:39, Jesus said “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus recognized these two verses as the greatest commandments, therefore showing their importance. Because He saw love as important, I should also do the same.

Some of my values clearly relate to the business world as well. First, I value honesty in people and in work. I believe that it is important that I people know me as an honest person who works hard to do honest work. According to a survey mentioned in an article titled “Business Integrity: An Oxymoron?” in the April 6, 1992 issue of *Industry Week*, “two in every three Americans believe there is nothing wrong with telling a lie; only 31% believe that honesty is the best policy” (Sonnenberg and Goldberg). This data may be a little out of date, but the concept is still the same; Americans don't seem to value honesty enough to make it a priority in their lives. This is evident through some of the scandals we have had to deal with as a country – former

President Clinton's sex scandal, the Enron scandal, and the Watergate scandal in the 1970s.

Telling lies and hiding the truth has become part of the culture now. I don't want to contribute to that reputation.

Another thing that I value that relates to business is friendships. Later in his book, Childs (1995, 81) said that "[contracts and corporate structures] are important, but they exist to serve [people and relationships]." I think that making friends at work is very important and make going to work something to look forward to. I always hear people complaining about work, but I think that if I had friends, I would not dislike it so much.

I also value education. I believe that it is important for people to make the most of their time on Earth and the intelligence that God has given them, which can be done by keeping up with their education. I would not necessarily like to stay in college forever, but I know that through working in the field of technical communication, I will need to keep up with my studies as I learn new programs and technologies.

Finally, I value a strong work ethic. I like it when people are responsible and do the things they say they will when they say they will do them. I believe that it is important for people to know that they can count on me at work because they know I will not let them down. I do not think becoming a work-aholic is healthy, but I do think that people who use their time wisely and follow through with their commitments are worth commending.

What is real?

Based on what I have learned at home and at church, I believe there is both a physical and spiritual reality. The physical reality is all that God has created on Earth, and spiritual reality is things like angels and demons. I believe that God created all reality for His glory and honor, and He uses signs and wonders to reveal Himself to us.

Another part of my worldview to answer what is real is the question about if God exists. I believe that He does and His nature is revealed through His creation. God exists and wants to have an immanent and personal relationship with His creation, particularly humans.

This is important to remember for when I work in a business because I need to live my life so others can see God in me. God is the One who controls everything that happens to me, and I need to set an example for others by accepting His will for my life and the reality that He has put before me.

What does it mean to be human?

I define humanity as beings made in the image of God based on what is in the Bible in Genesis 1:27: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Humans are made up of both physical and spiritual parts, and God has designed us to carry out His will on Earth.

Part of this design is intelligence. The human race is the most intelligent group on the planet, and we are able to reason and create similar to our Creator. Because of this intelligence, God has given us responsibilities to take care of the Earth and to use our time wisely. This is a privilege that we get as God’s work of art.

I believe that being human also means living life for God’s approval only, not for the approval of others. In the end, we are only responsible to God. People should hopefully see me as doing a good job at something despite my circumstances, which may be bad, and I will hopefully get a chance to share with them why I do what I do.

What is wrong with the world and how can it be fixed?

I can boil down this answer to two words: sin and Jesus. Sin is what is wrong with the world. Humans are sinners by decree (which means we inherit the sin of Adam), by nature (we

are born with it), and by practice (we are not perfect). This persistence in sin makes us guilty and worthy of death by God's standards (which are the only ones that matter). Paul said in Romans 3:23 "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and then in Romans 6:23 said "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Therefore, Jesus is how the world can be fixed. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). God sent His son to Earth so that our sins could be forgiven and we could go to Heaven one day.

Most people, both Christians and non-Christians, would agree that their greatest fear is death and their deepest question is why bad things happen to good people. People who don't have assurance of Heaven after death are afraid of the unknown. I am not afraid because I know that I will live with Christ forever. Paul answered the question of why bad things happen to good people in his second letter to the church in Corinth: "We had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). Jesus said in John 16:33, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." We do not have to be afraid because Jesus wins in the end.

These answers can influence my ministry at work because I can know without a doubt that I will have trials and tribulations, but they are all for the greater good. Work will be hard, but I will be molded into what God wants of me in the end. I can also use my assurance of eternal life after death to talk to people when they lose loved ones and be a comfort to those who are hurting.

Where is history going?

History will ultimately end in death. Everyone dies because of sin. But those who believe in Jesus as their Savior have the hope of going to Heaven. Jesus will judge everyone in the last

days for the deeds they have done in the flesh, but no one will be righteous unless he is saved by His blood. “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54). History ends in death, but death is not the end for Christians.

I need to use this truth at work among my co-workers so that I can prepare them for what is to come. The corporate culture is only focused on the present, so therefore it isn't prepared for the future. It is important that Christians, including me, go out into the world and declare the word of the Lord.

Emotional Intelligence

“Emotionally intelligent individuals, who can cope flexibly and adaptively with changes in their environment, would be at a major advantage in the changing and dynamic work environment of today” (Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts 2002, 494). Emotional intelligence is the ability to control emotions and react to situations in a responsible and mature manner. Individuals can learn and perfect this ability over time so that they can lead productive and successful lives. Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002, 3) defined emotional intelligence as “the competence to identify and express emotions, understand emotions, assimilate emotions in thought, and regulate both positive and negative in the self and in others.”

According to scientists who studied emotional intelligence, “by tapping into the rich information that emotions provide us with, we can often alter our thinking and behavior in such a way as to allow us to negotiate organizational challenges in a more adaptive (and productive) manner” (Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts 2002, 468). It seems like secular scientists, and these authors in particular, have looked at emotional intelligence as a way to justify the inner self and

build self-esteem. Many of their most important emotions focus purely on the individual doing the feeling.

The first emotional skill that Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002, 354-56) developed in their book, "Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth," is empathy. Empathy is the "sharing of the emotional state of another person." It includes being sensitive to the needs of others, agreeable, and able to process and analyze nonverbal signals.

Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002, 361-66) also cited self-control as an important soft skill. They believe that the ability of a person to regulate internal mental states, inhibit impulses, and focus attention on a single activity is an important attribute of a successful person. Along those lines, conscientiousness is also important to these authors. The motivation to learn and be persistent in working towards long-term goals is a sign of emotional intelligence.

There are four main competencies that Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002, 471-475) believed an emotionally intelligent person should have. First and foremost, the awareness of personal emotions is a basic building block to emotional intelligence and makes a person recognize his feelings, both positive and negative, and their causes. Second, the regulation of emotions in the self can cause a person to exercise restraint when he knows his reactions to his emotions are not healthy. Third, empathizing with and understanding others' emotions builds a person's "social radar" and allows him to be aware of, and at least show interest in, the lives of his peers. Finally, an emotionally intelligent person should be able to regulate other people's emotions through influence and communicating conflict-management skills.

Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts had some very insightful things to say in their book. Weisinger (1998, 1), in his book, "Emotional Intelligence at Work," also talked about the importance of a strong emotional intelligence for people, particularly in a business setting. He

started out by saying that emotional intelligence “can be nurtured, developed, and augmented – it isn’t a trait that you either have or don’t have.” It is through this assumption that he explained the need for self-awareness and strong motivation.

According to the dictionary, self-awareness is having knowledge of one’s personality or individuality. This skill ties into what Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts said was essential to emotional intelligence. Motivation, although not entirely related to self-awareness, is also important for businesspeople because those who have strong desires to excel in their work are successful and well-liked by their bosses and co-workers.

Comparing Emotional Intelligence and Christian Character

These examples of emotional intelligence are good and important, but as a Christian, I should focus all of my intelligence of any kind on other people and pleasing God. In her book, “Christians at Work,” Wood (1999, 43) quoted Brother Lawrence, a French monk from the sixteenth century, who said “Our sanctification did not depend on *changing* our works, but in doing that for God’s sake which we commonly do for our own.” In this context, this quote goes to show that emotional intelligence, as described by Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts in their book and Weisinger in his, does not make people better, but rather taking those suggested skills and doing them for God’s glory.

Christian Character in the Business World

The Bible is very clear about what skills every person, not just those in the business world, should practice. First, Jesus said that the greatest commandment after loving God is to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). In a corporate culture, this is very important for me to remember because often times, my co-workers will not treat me with the respect that I

deserve as another human being because they don't value it the same as I do. But I need to remember to "love [my] enemies and pray for those who persecute [me]" (Matthew 5:44). A loving attitude can be very effective to those who don't see love in the world.

Woods (1999, 45) also spoke about the importance of love in a working relationship. "Love means taking into account the other persons involved in every action; it means acting and deciding in favor of their well-being...It may require caring about the whole person rather than the work-doer."

Another characteristic of a successful Christian employee is servanthood. Paul said in Philippians 2:5-7 "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." Serving others may be hard and uncomfortable, but it is what God desires of me and therefore I need to obey.

Positive attitudes on the outside in every situation, regardless of whether or not I feel completely positive on the inside, are essential to living a life that is God-honoring. In Philippians 2:14-15, Paul said "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." God wants me to have a pure heart, but when people can only see a negative attitude on the outside, I am not following God's desire for my life.

Along with having a positive attitude, God has said that I need to do everything as working for Him rather than for man. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23 that I need to work with all

my heart all the time, even though I may not want to. I need to constantly set a good example to others.

It is crucial for me as a Christian in a secular environment to obey those who are in authority over me. The writer of Hebrews said in chapter 13, verse 17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.” I need to treat others how I would want them to treat me if I was the leader of a group, even if they don’t treat me the same in return.

Another thing about having a Christian character as a means of emotional intelligence is that I need to live an authentic life. In “Christians at Work,” Woods (1999, 47-49) defined authenticity as “being the same on the outside as on the inside,” and she gave five practical advantages to this decision. First, people will trust me when I am consistently living a pure life. Second, people will listen to what I have to say about a situation and take me seriously. Third, real problems can be solved when I say what I mean and mean what I say. Fourth, people are more comfortable and at peace with others when everyone is authentic. Last, trustworthy people (and businesses) prosper in the end. People like to know that they are treated fairly, and they will return to where they feel happy.

The list could go on and on for essential principles for Christians to live by at work, but I particularly believe that being authentic is one of the most important, especially in the corporate culture. People need to see God in all areas of my life all the time if I am going to be an effective Christian. As Childs (1995) said in his book, “Ethics in Business:”

There is no such thing as [Christian business ethics]. Rather, there are Christian ethics that shed light on issues of business ethics and, in so doing, give expression to the faith from which they flow. Moreover, there are, of course, Christians in business whose moral

vision is shaped by their faith and whose responsible ethical practice is a witness to the hope that is within them. (p. 11)

Practical Things to do as a Witness

Along with the things I already mentioned about Christian character and emotional intelligence, there are some other things I should do and some things I should not do to be a witness at work. But before I get into the specifics, there are a few over-arching things that I need to remember when I interact with non-Christians at work.

First and most importantly, I need to be able to identify their worldview and work within it (Zigarelli). A non-Christian will not necessarily believe everything that I believe in my worldview, so trying to defend my beliefs with Bible verses is not the way to gain acceptance and trust. I need to be able to find the things that we agree on and focus on them. Truth can be found in secular research, although not all of it is truth (because only the Bible is completely true). I can look for the truth found in science and use that as fact in discussions about life.

Second, there are some questions that I can casually bring up in conversations, such as “Why do you think some people believe in God?” that don’t point any fingers or make anyone feel uncomfortable. Other questions may be brought up after watching some current Hollywood movies, such as “Bruce Almighty” or “A Walk to Remember.”

Finally, I need to not be afraid to talk about my beliefs in God and I need to know what I believe. In 1 Peter 3:15, the author said “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.”

In “Not Just a Job: Serving Christ in Your Work,” Shelly (1985) told the story of a woman named Sue, who wanted to witness to Maribeth, one of her fellow co-workers, but chose to let Maribeth ask the questions rather than she:

By acting wisely, Sue won the right to be heard. It took a while for Sue to get around to sharing the gospel, but she had made the most of her time because, when she did share, it was effective. She spoke graciously and gently, yet without compromising her own position. Maribeth became a Christian. (p. 44)

Things I Should Do

There are so many things I should do, and shouldn't do, especially as a Christian, but also just as an intelligent human being, to testify my faith in my future workplace, so I am just going to list and briefly explain some of them.

- Stand out – be a positive example of someone people admire
- Speak up about moral issues – comment when necessary in ethical situations
- Go above and beyond – do things that need to be done even if I'm not asked
- Make friends – accept everyone, even if I don't like his or her lifestyle
- Be a servant – do the menial tasks that no one else wants to do
- Invite friends to church groups – interact outside of work in positive settings

Things I Should Not Do

- Complain – don't whine, because no one, especially the boss, likes to hear it
- “Scream” Christianity – don't turn people off right before they even know me with my clothes, attitudes, or actions
- Set a bad example – don't do things that give Christians a bad name

- Only have Christian friends – don't live in a Christian bubble, because God told us to go into *all the world* and preach the gospel

Conclusion

Applying all the things I have learned in my Corporate Culture class is going to take the rest of my career because they are all so important. However, a few things stick out in my mind right now that I didn't touch on through this paper.

First, I am glad that I learned about emotional intelligence now, before I have a job in the secular business world, so I will be prepared to deal with people and maintain my composure as a professional. I think that this class should be a requirement for all students, especially those who will work in Corporate America one day. Working with people is fundamental to all professions, and being effective at such a vital mission is priceless.

Second, I learned that being intelligent means a lot more than just having a high GPA. As Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002, 478) said, "IQ gets you hired but EQ gets you promoted." My resume may prove to a potential employer that I am qualified to do a job, but the way I handle myself in the interview will convince him if I could handle the work.

Third, I learned that I cannot be an introvert and expect to be successful in a job. Corporate cultures are always people-oriented in one way or another, because the very definition of a culture involves a group of people called a society. This class has taught me how to effectively interact with people so that I can not only make friends, but also share the love of Christ with those friends.

Finally, I learned that the skills I learn in the Technical and Professional Communication program at Cedarville University are not the only things that will get me jobs. This was a very

hard lesson for me to learn, especially because I know English majors who have graduated and gotten jobs in a technical communication field because they don't want to teach or don't have any books to publish. It still does not always seem fair that I can study technical writing, editing, and design for years to get a good job in my field, and someone else can take literature and poetry classes and get the same job. However, I just need to be grateful that I have the opportunity to have an education from a university like Cedarville with such qualified professors.

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