

SMART

JOURNAL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDIES

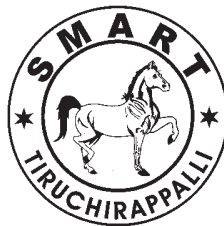
Vol.I

No. 2

July - December 2005

ISSN 0973 - 1598

Dr. M. SELVAM, M.Com., Ph.D.,
Chief Editor



SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AND ADVANCED RESEARCH TRUST
(SMART)

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (INDIA)

<http://www.geocities.com/smartbard>

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES IN ACTION – BIBLICAL INTERFACE

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Abstract

Bible is part of the Christian scriptures and it is included among spiritual writings. As the Vedas, the Upanishad, the Koran and so on, deal with spiritual salvation and truth, the Bible also is concerned about the same. Management focuses on human efforts to get best results through value oriented leadership and integrity in operations. There is thus a close association between the two. The scriptures talk about human values and management puts across certain principles through which these core values can be translated into action. The spiritual context is not something totally separated from the world of matter, though distinct from it. Therefore, it is possible as well as truly meaningful to find certain basic values which govern human life in the pages of the scriptures and in turn they could be used to evolve certain managerial principles. In this Paper we attempt to re-read miracles performed by Jesus from the management perspective. It is interesting to note that some of the principles in management, which Management Gurus have advocated, can be seen applied in the miracle narratives. These facts obviously indicate the existence of practical wisdom on how to manage in a context, long before the discipline of management developed in its present form.

Introduction

Bible is part of the Christian scriptures and it is included among spiritual writings. As the Vedas, the Upanishad, the Koran and so on, deal with spiritual salvation and truth, the Bible also is concerned about the same. Management focuses on human efforts to get best results through value oriented leadership and integrity in operations. There is thus a close association between the two. The scriptures talk about human values and management puts across certain principles through which these core values can be translated into action. The spiritual context is not something totally separated from the world of matter, though distinct from it. Therefore, it is possible as well as truly meaningful to find certain basic values, which govern human life, in the pages of the scriptures and they could be used to evolve certain managerial principles.

In this paper, we attempt a re-reading of miracles performed by Jesus from the management perspective. It is interesting to note that some of the principles in management, which Management Gurus have advocated, can be seen

applied in the miracle narratives. These facts obviously indicate the existence of practical wisdom on how to manage in a context, long before the discipline of management developed in its present form. As exhaustive study of all the miracles performed by Jesus is beyond the scope of this paper, we take two representative examples from the pages of the New Testament.

- 1) Multiplication of the bread as given in Mark 6: 34 – 44,
- 2) Restoring sight to a blind man as told by John (9:1-7).

These miracles are examined and its management dimensions elicited

1) Multiplication of Bread

The relevant passage reads as follows:

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place and the hour is now very late. Send them away so that they may go into the

surrounding villages and buy something for themselves to eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat”. They said to him, “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” “Five, and two fish.” Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Human Values and Management Principles

A careful perusal of the event brings out the following underlying values:

A. Compassion and Concern: As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Concern for the needy is a basic human virtue which is the essence of all human management efforts

B. Empowerment: and he began to teach them many things. The needy must be empowered in both spirit and body. This strengthening of human competencies is an integral part of any management exercise.

C. Multiplication of resources- “ Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to set before the people and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled”. It is the utilisation of your resources that leads you to have more. One who does not utilise what is given to him will not receive a value addition to his self. Jesus could have performed the miracle without asking his disciples to bring forth what was available in the desert but he insisted on

the same because only when their potential is exploited to the full, further addition takes place. Ensure that men use their potential skills to the optimum and development takes place automatically.

D. commanding the disciples to give the people something to eat –“but he answered them, you give them something to eat” – verse 37 is a serene citation of distinct authority and so is ordering the people to sit down (verse 39)

Henry Fayol, considered to be the father of modern management studies, has identified some fourteen principles which govern effective management of any organisation. His conclusions were from his own experience in the mining company where he was working. He watched the behaviour of the workers, the methods to be used to procure effective work and the attitudes that result in co-operation among the different sections of workers and managers. From this research study, he identified certain principles of management. We see some of these principles applied in the biblical example.

The activities like reporting the fact that the time is getting late, bringing the five loaves and fish, distribution to the people, collecting the left-over etc are done by the disciples. Here we can see the principle of division of work successfully applied in the biblical story. According to Fayol, division of work is needed because it helps to specialise in a particular activity, with the result that the output is increased and there is perfection in the product. It also helps to avoid waste of time.

In the miracle, Jesus is the expert and he cannot waste time on menial jobs. All these are entrusted to the disciples who are not experts in preaching or working miracles.

The principle of ‘authority and responsibility’ also finds application in this story. “Authority is the right to command and the power to exact obedience in order to get the work done”. Responsibility on the other hand “is the accountability of authority so that the

official authority is not misused". We can show that the principle of authority and responsibility is applied in the multiplication of bread in the following way.

Jesus is the master or manager in this story. As manager, he exercises his right to command. He commands the disciples to manage the situation created by the fact that the time was late and the audience had been staying for a long time without food. His command brings about the results. He receives perfect response to his command. The result is that everything happens in an orderly way to the satisfaction of one and all. The use of authority on the part of Jesus is not an irresponsible use. He is not making use of the authority as master and manager of the situation to enslave the disciples or to cause inconvenience to them or the audience. It is a responsible use of authority meant for eliciting response and obedience so much so that the situation is managed in an effective way.

Unity of command is nothing but the situation in which a worker or employee "receives orders from one superior only". If more than one authority gives orders, there is always the possibility of confusion because two persons will not suggest the same solution for a problem. If different solutions are proposed, those appointed for executing the orders will be in a dilemma as to what is to be done and what is not to be done. In the story of the multiplication of bread, there is only one person who gives command and all others simply execute what he commands. There is no other person in the position of Jesus to give any command.

Unity of Direction is another principle of management. It refers to the objectives to be achieved. In an activity, there should be unity of objectives. All persons involved in the activity, those giving command and those to obey the command should have one and only one objective. All the energy that is expended in the activity should be directed properly for

achieving the desired objectives. In the story of the multiplication of bread, the only concern is the feeding of the people. The disciples sense the seriousness of the situation and report to the master or manager who, in the story, is none other than Jesus. Jesus also clearly sees the seriousness of the situation and agrees in totality with the concern of the disciples. The concern is that a situation is to be created in which the people get the food to eat. It can be done either by sending the people away to the villages to buy food for themselves or by producing food in the wilderness (wilderness is the place where the preaching was going on). The disciples suggested the first possibility. But Jesus sees in it some imperfection. Therefore he suggests the second possibility. But the objective is the same. That means there is unity of direction in the story of multiplication of bread.

In the miracle of the multiplication of bread, we have three levels of authority. Jesus stands at the topmost place. He is the ultimate authority. Below him stand the group of disciples. We may call it the middle level. Below the disciples stand the multitude of people who have come to hear Jesus. They may be understood as the lowest level. Jesus gives all the directions to the disciples and never to the audience. The audience has nothing to do except to profit from the preaching and to be satisfied with the food he provides. Jesus goes neither to the level of audience nor to the level of disciples. There is no confusion between the authority, function, role and place of the disciples and the beneficiaries. Everything goes in an orderly way. Is it not the principle of Scalar Chain that is applied in this story?

2) Healing of the Blind Man (Jn.9:1-7)

This event takes place in two surroundings. First Jesus and the disciples see the blind man on their way. Jesus makes mud with saliva and spreads the mud on the man's eyes and gives the command to go and wash in Siloam. The second background is the pool of Siloam where he

washes and regains his sight. In the Bible there is a controversy surrounding this miracle, a conflict between the healed man, different sections of Jewish authority and Jesus. But this controversy does not form an essential part of the miracle story and therefore it does not concern us directly. Consequently we will confine ourselves to the miracle alone. We can see many management principles applied in this story. **Discipline** is one of the principles of management. This principle may be defined as the respect each person involved in the management gives to the agreements they have reached in their contracts, agreements “which are directed at achieving obedience, application, energy and the outward marks of respect”. In the story of the healing of the blind man, the miracle takes place at two levels – first the level of smearing the eyes with mud and the second level, at the washing in the pool. Jesus is the manager. He undertakes the responsibility to heal the person on the presupposition that the blind man will obey his orders i.e., the blind man will observe the principle of discipline. When the blind man gives respect to Jesus’ orders, the desired result is obtained. He goes to the pool of Siloam and washes there and comes back healed. It is clearly a case of the application of the principle of discipline.

In most of the miracles of the New Testament, Jesus performs the miracle single-handed. There is not the slightest doubt on the part of the writers of the Gospel about Jesus’ ability to perform the miracle. With a single word, he performs marvellous miracles. With a touch, he cleanses the lepers. With a word of command, he brings the dead man from the tomb days after the burial. If this is the power of Jesus and the evangelists were aware of this power, what is the explanation for sending the blind man to the pool of Siloam? Are we not to see the principle of decentralisation applied here? Jesus does the service of smearing the eyes with mud and for washing, he sends him to another place. This is decentralisation. In management, centralisation and decentralisation are to be done according to the availability of person-

nel or situations, which will guarantee the best result. If a manager finds some able person in the hierarchy of authorities, he can share certain responsibilities with him. This will liberate the manager from over burden and help him concentrate on more important matters. Fayol insists that “while some authority should be given to the subordinates to make operational decisions, all major policy decisions should be made at the top management level”. In the story of the healing of the blind man, Jesus takes all important decisions but he shares certain responsibilities with others especially in the final stage. The miracle is not done by him directly but by washing in the pool of Siloam. Thus the principle of centralisation and decentralisation is beautifully applied in this story.

Conclusion

The two miracles, though not exhaustive in nature, are representative in their character and have definite core values, which they convey. Management can draw from these values to sharpen their principles. Lessons put forward by our Management Gurus are in the form of explicit principles while our spiritual Gurus put it in the form of events and anecdotes which have the same ultimate objective of conveying true values for right management.

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