

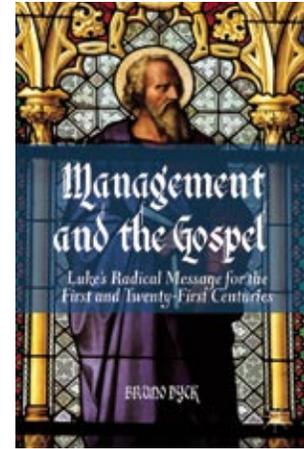
BOOK REVIEW

A kingdom of God management primer

Management and the Gospel: Luke's Radical Message for the First and Twenty-first Centuries.

By Bruno Dyck. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; 320 pages.

REVIEWED BY GALEN LEHMAN



Recently, I gave a presentation on the tension between answering God's call and the demands of the world. I explained how hard it is, because most North American consumers seem to care more about buying at the lowest possible price than about whether or not people live in kingdom of God conditions. It creates an economic reality that often feels like a grinding death march to entrepreneurs who just want to make a difference.

than the 21st-century world of Christians today. The New Testament understanding of a household—*oikos* in the original Greek—is a significant differentiating factor. The *oikos* of that day was the centre of faith and life, in the same way that your family kitchen may be, or the village square was in the 1950s.

In the *oikos* of Jesus' day, as in ours, true relationships are built on mutual benefaction, not personal gain. One thing I crave in business today, but seldom find,

Dyck helped me to understand how Jesus calls us into relationship with others.

Imagine my surprise to discover that a member of the audience was Bruno Dyck, a fellow Mennonite and professor of organization theory in the I.H. Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba since 1990, who told me he understood how difficult it is to help create kingdom of God conditions here on earth. He promised that his new book, *Management and the Gospel*, would provide some new insights into Christ's expectations on how we should run our businesses, lives and households.

He lived up to his word! I think every Christian leader who cares about leaving a kingdom of God impression on the people they know, live and work with should read it thoughtfully.

Luke was one of the most educated New Testament writers, and had a wider worldview than most of his peers. Possibly because of this, he placed a much greater emphasis on how we manage our wealth than the other gospel writers.

Luke wrote to a very different audience

is meaningful relationships; Dyck helped me to understand how Jesus calls us into relationship with others. It's built on sustenance economics, where our goal is to sustain relationships and community. By comparison, the world works mostly on acquisitive economics, or, as the saying goes, "Looking out for No. 1."

I loved how Dyck approached Jesus' parables in *Management and the Gospel*. He illuminated Jesus' words by explaining how Jesus' disciples heard and understood them.

For example, I was struck by how the Parable of the Talents can be turned on its head if understood through a first-century lens. Most Christians today view it as an endorsement of wise management and investment. But to his first-century listeners, Jesus is, in fact, reminding us that everyone has a role in managing towards a better world. And that we are called to be countercultural moral agents, and stop exploitation wherever it occurs.

Dyck shows how Luke's writing helps us understand how to live out our

kingdom-of-God call, how to deliver salvation to a troubled world, and how to allow the Holy Spirit to work through us. Put another way, the Holy Spirit empowers us to build organizations that free people trapped in a cycle of oppression, greed and self-centredness.

I found the examples and advice he provided helpful, but I wasn't always able to figure out how they could be applied in my business. For example, he explains how Ten Thousand Villages succeeds in living out kingdom of God values. However, it is enabled in that mission by an eager and dedicated volunteer workforce, a resource most entrepreneurs don't have access to.

And Dyck admits that achieving the ideals Christ calls us to in the Gospel of Luke are challenging. "Kingdom of God managers never arrive; rather, kingdom of God management is a process to be savoured," he writes. Although he gave me new inspiration to seek the kingdom of God today, I'm still trying to figure out how to do it in a world where "looking out for No. 1" is the most common practice.

All in all, though, Dyck takes an insightful and fresh look at Jesus' life and words, and his book engaged my head and challenged my heart. ❧

Galen Lehman is president of Lehman's (lehmans.com), a family-owned online retailer of non-electric lights, appliances and housewares, located in Kidron, Ohio. A book launch is scheduled for Dyck's book at McNally Robinson, Winnipeg, Feb. 27, at 7:30 p.m.