

# More BAM for the Buck

By Mats Tunehag, April 2019

She was amazed and perplexed at the same time. She was treated with respect and dignity. She was a woman challenged with disabilities. But her life had changed. With no or little prospect of ever getting a job, she was now working in a manufacturing company. She was creative, she had made friends, and she made money.

Women in this country and religious context were treated as second-class citizens. If they had mental or physical handicaps they were often further down.

But the company she worked for employed and offered jobs with dignity to women with disabilities. It was unheard of, and it made a huge difference not only in her life, but also for the other women who worked there. It even had a transformational impact on families and the community.

This woman asked herself: why is this workplace so different? It changes lives on many levels. She knew that the founder and CEO was a follower of Jesus. So she told herself: If that's what it means to be a follower of Jesus, I will also follow him. It was a huge and risky step for a handicapped woman in a conservative Muslim environment.

What brought her to Christ? A gospel tract? A Jesus film? A bible study? No, it was human resource management informed by biblical values, underpinned with prayer. Ultimately, it was, of course, God's doing.

This true story from the Middle East highlights some important issues as we serve God and people in and through business. There is a need for an integrated outlook on work and worship. We also need to understand timing, and our call and God's role. **We need to understand avodah, chronos and kairos.**

## **Sunday talk to Monday walk**

In the global Business as Mission, BAM, movement we talk about taking our Sunday talk into a Monday walk. Whatever we believe and profess in church on Sunday should be permeating our lives and business practices the rest of the week.<sup>i</sup>

We must strive towards a seamless integration of Sunday and Monday, of work and worship. There is a risk of seeing Sunday and Monday as two separate compartments.<sup>ii</sup>

There are pros and cons with compartmentalization. It has been a key to scientific development. But the danger is often that one may fail to see the greater whole, how bits and pieces **overlap, interact and connect**.

### **Water and God**

For example, H<sub>2</sub>O is hydrogen and oxygen. It can be compartmentalized and analyzed and it can manifest itself as water, ice and steam. But if you're thirsty you don't want a chemical formula but water, the integrated whole.

The Church teaches that God is triune; we can observe the three in one, and one in three throughout history. We can compartmentalize God; focus on the Son for example. But we mustn't fail to see how the three divine persons overlap, interact and connect. It is a mystery, indeed, but nevertheless a truth to embrace.

### **Avodah**

When we deal with Sunday and Monday, with serving God and people, with work and worship, we should learn from the use of the Hebrew word **avodah** in the Holy Scriptures. It is used interchangeably for **work, worship and service**. A few references:

- *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** (avodah) it and take care of it.* Gen 2:15
- *Six days you shall **work** (avodah).* Exodus 34:21
- *This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may **worship** (avodah) me. – Exodus 8:1*
- *But as for me and my household, we will **serve** (avodah) the Lord. – Joshua 24:15*

Worship in the temple is different from manual labor in the field. But that doesn't mean that they are disconnected from who we are, created in God's image, with a purpose to both work and worship. Work can be worship.<sup>iii</sup>

*Avodah* is a picture of an integrated faith. It is a life where work and worship come from the same root. *"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* (1 Cor 10:31)

This is also a challenge in BAM as we talk about the quadruple bottom line: financial, social, environmental and spiritual. BAM is not doing business with a touch of 'churchianity'. BAM is not Christians just doing social enterprise. BAM recognizes God as a stakeholder who has a vested interest in the multiple bottom lines and multiple stakeholders.

We can and should set goals in each of these four areas individually, as we plan, operate and evaluate. However, we also need to recognize that these areas of impact overlap, interact and connect; the result is greater than the sum of its parts, as we learn from the story from the Middle East.

We must avoid polarizing. It is not hydrogen vs. oxygen, God the Father vs. the Son, work vs. worship or financial bottom-line vs. a spiritual impact. They are not same, but they belong together.

### **Entrepreneurship as calling**

Thus our daily work is intimately related to serving God and people. Our businesses are not a distraction from “doing ministry”.<sup>iv</sup>

*“Entrepreneurs, managers and all who work in business, should be encouraged to recognise their work as a true vocation and to respond to God’s call in the spirit of true disciples. In doing so, they engage in the noble task of serving their brothers and sisters and of building up the Kingdom of God.”<sup>v</sup>*

To work is deeply divine and deeply human. The same applies also to creativity in business. It is a reflection of who we are created in God’s image. But our work is also a part of God’s redemptive mission throughout history. Thus, our work is part of a greater story – His story. To do BAM for God and people is about making history.

As Pope John XXIII says: *“In the work on the farm the human personality finds every incentive for self-expression, self-development and spiritual growth. It is a work, therefore, which should be thought of as a vocation, a God-given mission, an answer to God’s call to actuate His providential, saving plan in history. It should be thought of, finally, as a noble task, undertaken with a view to raising oneself and others to a higher degree of civilization.”<sup>vi</sup>*

### **Timing is important**

BAM must be underpinned by a Biblical worldview, informing our planning, operations and evaluations. One very important aspect of worldview is **time**. This has implications on what we can do and what God does.

Time affects how we plan, operate and evaluate a BAM business, aiming at a positive impact on multiple bottom-lines for multiple stakeholders. As we do this, there are extremes to be avoided: quantifying and monetizing everything or nothing.

### **Chronos & Kairos**

We need to ask: how is God a stakeholder in our business? How can we aim at a Kingdom of God impact in and through business? This is where *chronos* and *kairos* come in. These are two Greek words for time.

**Chronos** is quantitative, sequential and of course related to the word chronological. We operate in the chronos; it is where we plan and evaluate our businesses. It’s where we live our day-to-day lives.

**Kairos** is qualitative, the supreme moment, the right time. This is used for God’s intervention, in the fullness of time. We cannot control this, but we can set the stage for it to some extent.

### **Civil Service as Mission**

We can learn from Daniel and his three friends who were involved in Civil Service as Mission. In the first six chapters of the book of Daniel we observe:

Daniel and his friends served God and the nation with professionalism, excellence and integrity. They served faithfully in the chronos.

God used this stage set in the chronos to occasionally intervene (kairos moments) and bring glory to Himself and transform people and nations.

However, most days for Daniel and company were just another day, week, year, or decade in the office. It was their faithful and good work (in the chronos) that set the stage for miracles and changed lives; in the right moment and in His own time, God intervened (kairos).

### **Another day in the office**

This is essential as we do business. How can we serve our customers, staff and suppliers with professionalism, excellence and integrity? We can and should carefully plan, execute and evaluate accordingly.

We also need to understand that we cannot convert anyone by pushing through or forcing a spiritual impact. So what steps can we take in the chronos to set the stage for kairos? Or in the words of the apostle Paul: *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow.”*

Like Daniel and his friends, we must be prepared for another day, week, year, and decade in the business. No matter how mundane the day-to-day can seem, we must remind ourselves that we are constantly and intentionally shaping the business for God and people, for various stakeholders and multiple bottom-lines.

Like the CEO of the manufacturing company in the Middle East: she served faithfully in the chronos, with excellence, professionalism and integrity. God used that to draw a woman to himself. There was a kairos moment.

Chronos and kairos can help us to plan and set reasonable expectations, as well as help us to see the role that we can play and what God does. Having this view of time can hopefully encourage us to relax and trust God. We plant and water, but God will bring life and growth.

Avodah, chronos and kairos are key to understanding our calling in the marketplace. It gives more BAM for the buck.

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<sup>i</sup> See <http://www.matstunehag.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Business-as-Mission-is-bigger-than-you-think.pdf> for 12 examples of key Christian values and Biblical themes and how they translate into business.

<sup>ii</sup> Dorothy Sayers notes in her essay '**Why Work**': *"In nothing has the church so lost her hold on reality as in her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation. She has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turning to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world's intelligent workers have become irreligious, or at least, uninterested in religion. But is it astonishing? How can any one remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life? The Church's approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables."*

<sup>iii</sup> Tomas Aquinas' definition of beauty also has three parts: Integritas (integrity), Consonantia (proportion), and Claritas (clarity) Again, three in one. They can be analyzed one at a time or two in contrast, but it is the combined three that constitutes beauty.

<sup>iv</sup> Check video: '**Business like Bach**'. <https://vimeo.com/152713982> or at <http://matstunehag.com/videos/>. This very short video makes the cogent point that just as Bach put years of hard work and practice into developing the extraordinary musical gifts given to him by God, some of us are given the gift of business as a way to bring glory to God. We should not see business as a distraction but rather as an instrument worthy of our time, energy and for "the greater glory of God."

<sup>v</sup> Vocation of the Business Leader, published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

<sup>vi</sup> Mater et magistra. Encyclical of Pope John XXII on Christianity And Social Progress, May 15, 1961