

Finding God through the Organisational Margins

*In FIBQ 19.1 Karen Blakeley wrote about the importance of love in the transformation of business. In this article **Chris Bemrose** starts by exploring the theology of the centre and the margins, and the way that Jesus appears to have a partiality for the margins. He suggests two contrasting models of organisations based on power and love, and explores the potential implications of these models for organisations and their leaders, highlighting the role of the margins in generating change and transformation.*

God and the margins

God is often seen – particularly in the Old Testament – as the ultimate power and authority, the creator of the world. There is no other power above. Despite this, particularly in the New Testament, God appears to have a fascination for the margins:

God,
so the storytellers
say, sent Jesus to be born
on a marginal planet - earth - in a
marginal place - a stable - to a family
from a marginal town - Nazareth - in a
country on the margins of the Roman Empire.
The baby was welcomed by marginal people -
shepherds - and escaped to Egypt as a marginal
refugee. He lived 30 years in marginal obscurity.
He surrounded himself with a marginal group of
followers, healed marginal people and preached
a gospel of the margins. He was crucified as
a marginal outsider. In so doing, he went
beyond the margins, was resurrected
and ascended to be one with
God.

Jesus' ministry was founded in the margins. The beatitudes – the foundational bedrock of his teaching – are a paean of praise to those who are in the margins: the poor, the grieving, the meek, the hungry, the pure, the merciful, peacemakers and those who are persecuted. In Matthew 25:36-40 he teaches how he is to be seen in people on the margins: the poor, the naked, the hungry and those who are in hospital, in prison or who are strangers. In the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14 and Luke 15:3-7) he tells of the shepherd going out to the margins to recover the lost sheep and bring them triumphantly back into the centre. In the story of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24) he tells

how the Master instructs his servants to go out into the streets to invite the poor, crippled, blind and lame.

The prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32) is similarly a story of a son going away from the centre to the margins until, finding himself out of money and friends, he decides to return to the centre, a humbled and contrite figure. I wonder if the elder brother was secretly envious of his younger brother's courage in leaving the security and comfort of the centre (home), losing everything in the margins and yet in the process finding himself.

Jesus not only spoke about the margins. He experienced them. His moment of greatest weakness – on the cross – was also the point of his

Marginalised
left out of the
group



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