

BAM GLOBAL MOVEMENT:

Business as mission – concepts and stories

By Gea Gort & Mats Tunehag

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The Bible contains many stories of people witnessing and sharing something of 'the kingdom of God' whilst working. Paul and his tent-making (Acts 18: 1-4) is a prime example. In recent years this intentional approach of using business as a means of mission has become topical.

BAM GLOBAL MOVEMENT: Business as mission – concepts and stories (referred to henceforth as *BAMGM*) explains key ideas and illustrates them with many examples of Christian businesspeople living out their calling. 'Business as mission' (BAM) is a generic term covering a range of activities. It is summarised as "a growing movement of Christians in the marketplace asking: How can we shape business to serve people, align with God's purposes, be good stewards of the planet, and make a profit?" (p121). "Ultimately, Business as Mission is about 'redeeming' business and having Christ reign in this sphere of society. Equally important and complementary to those efforts is church planting and church development. They go hand-in-hand" (p127).

Far from being a technique, BAM "is a worldview and a lifestyle. It is about following Jesus in the marketplace and to the ends of the earth, loving God and serving people through business" (p151). Given the emphasis on discipleship as well as doing business, BAM is more than just 'social enterprise'. Although BAM is currently seen as more applicable to entrepreneurs, many of the insights provided by *BAMGM* are relevant to

every Christian businessperson, including traders and business-builders (p77). The authors have practical experience of combining their faith with business activities to impact communities. This helps to ground the book in the realities of work.

The book is in two parts. Gea Gort provides the global context to BAM before Mats Tunehag explains the underlying concepts. The writing is



clear and largely non-technical. Each of the 22 chapters in *BAMGM* consists of a short explanatory article followed by one or two illustrative stories. These will challenge readers to focus on hearing what God wants them to do. As Georges Dubi, a Swiss citizen whom God called to work in Romania, puts it: "So much more is possible...if we are open to be inspired by God, learn to think beyond ourselves, and are willing to take risks" (p13).

The encouraging and inspirational tone of the book is further exemplified by Georges who, in echoes of George Muller and Hudson Taylor, challenges us "to think bigger, because when we step out into the impossible we also become aware how much we need God. I learned that he desires to provide. So much more is possible" (p16).

Part I, BAM in light of a broader movement, covers one-third of the book and outlines the need for BAM through a consideration of mission, work, aid, place and community. It encourages us to get our priorities right and establishes the starting point for making a difference: "we don't live to work but work to live for a higher [Christ-centred] purpose" (p20).

Community is central to Christianity. The idea that '[a] community could be a church, but also a group of people connected through a business as mission-type endeavour' (p53) is very true and reflects Ed Silvoso's view that "Jesus is calling us to become shepherds to the people in our circle of influence. They may not know yet that we are their pastors, but we should know they are our sheep!"¹

Through their work, Christian businesspeople can further the kingdom of God. But how exactly is that done?

Part II, BAM Concept explained, illustrates a variety of approaches through a consideration of 17 practical elements. Topics covered include how God is restoring the marketplace, wealth creation, countering human trafficking and alternatives to mainstream capitalism.



The importance of discipleship comes through in many stories where the subjects "... see the business ... as a way to provide useful and fulfilling work to people, [and] as the context where discipleship can be lived out" (p141).

I related to many of the stories and believe they will enlighten, inspire and challenge readers.

Sam Cho sees BAM as "one of God's initiatives to get Christians active in the marketplace ... We are called to be active in the public sphere"(p195). He and his colleagues feel that BAM "is not just about how we set up a Christian company... it is much more fundamental". They aim to develop countercultural kingdom values through questioning the present paradigms. "We should not accept the business culture and capitalism as it is. Some of it is good, but a lot is not. We need to ask ourselves what God has to say about consumerism, production, and investment" (pp197-98). Equally, we should question the values, policies and practices in our companies and society as a whole so that we can move

to "reflect God's character of justice, fairness and love in all activities" (p198).

God can use businesspeople where they are or can call them to move elsewhere for kingdom impact. Businesspeople can often go into places where the Bible is restricted and be salt and light there. "Within a neutral setting of a business, trust and relationship can flourish, exchanges about faith can become natural, and it can become a place where God is experienced" (p43). Isn't that what we should be aiming for in our workplaces?

BAM is more than just business - it is about mission too. Developing a business that assists the local community is helpful, but if as a result it can witness, it will 'spread the aroma of the knowledge of Jesus' (2 Cor 2:14) to many who may otherwise not have any contact with Christians. For this, our "Christian faith has to be real, demonstrating God's kingdom in all areas of life and business" (p144).

Ryan and Andrea Crozier moved from America to Romania to combat human

trafficking. Ryan believes "Christians need to become involved with the needs of our society.... My hope is to be a small part of seeing the church in Romania rise up and engage their community in a way that leaves a lasting impact on society" (pp 188-189). This must surely be something we hope for all countries.

Richard Higginson has called Christian faith "a power for good in the global economy when it fulfils five criteria: stimulating enterprise, reducing poverty, promoting integrity, encouraging sustainability and fostering discipleship."² The Business as Mission approach should enable each of these.

BAM Global Movement clearly and concisely explains the ideas underlying BAM. It provides powerful insights into the challenges as well as the blessings of doing business with a mission focus. This inspirational book, along with its comprehensive bibliography, has something for everyone and is highly recommended. **REO**

1 Ed Silvano, *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's instrument for Global Transformation*, Chosen Books, 2017, p 215

2 Richard Higginson, *Faith, Hope & The Global Economy: A power for good*, IVP, 2012, p20



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