

Getting Down to Business

The Nobel Peace Prize just went to Muhammad Yunus, the Bangladeshi banker who invented “microlending.” And yes, you read that right: the Nobel Prize not in *economics* but the *Peace* Prize. The Nobel Committee knows that financing businesses even on the smallest scale can transform lives and whole communities.

Yunus and his Grameen Bank have loaned out almost \$6 billion since the early '80s, and not in six-figure chunks to fat cats but in tiny sums to the rural poor, \$10 here and \$100 there. Of Grameen's 6.6 million borrowers, 97% are women and have paid back 99% of their loans. Is this business as usual? Hardly.

Christians in the business-as-mission movement have a similar approach, with an integrated vision of a “triple bottom line”: that commerce can and should create not only economic wealth but also social and spiritual well-being. Capitalism has not always been an unalloyed force for good in world history, admittedly. But what if its powers are harnessed to benefit the poor; to bring healthcare, education, and social stability to places they're scarce; and to support the local church proclaiming the Gospel — what would happen then? Good things.

That's why creative business strategies (including microfinance) will be front-and-center at our Open for Business conference, coming up in December at InterVarsity's Urbana Missions Convention.

We'll hear from speakers from all around the world who have submitted their business savvy and high-powered MBAs for the good of others and the advance of the good news. Delegates will have a chance to meet peers and mentors who are out there doing real business and seeking the good of their customers, suppliers, partners, and their communities.

Please pray for wisdom for me and my colleagues making final preparations in the “home stretch” before the conference in December.



Tidbits

◆ In the last issue of *Off-Line*, I asked “Is ‘web ministry’ a contradiction in terms?” With the August launch of **StudentSoul.org**, we're working hard to make sure it's not. I must admit that, after a big push all summer to get it ready, I'm extraordinarily pleased about the successful launch of this first-ever InterVarsity site intended for undergraduates.



StudentSoul.org gets at issues InterVarsity students care about. (graphic: Grete Bauder)

◆ As of August, I have the privilege of supervising my colleague, **Sara Scheunemann**. She lives in Duluth, Minn., and invests her part-time efforts into writing for and editing our Graduate & Faculty Ministries (GFM) websites. Join me in thanking God for Sara!

◆ Speaking of whom, Sara handled our July launch of a new website for InterVarsity's **Law School Ministry**. As a friend of mine says, “Proper prior planning prevents perplexing problems.” We've had the technology for this site ready and waiting since 2003! That made it easy to concentrate on content without worrying about technical development when the time was right.

Financial Update

◆ As I reported in June, the generosity of many of you helped close out my last fiscal year in great shape. However, I've recently learned that, by coincidence, several donors who previously supplied 25% of my fund-raising budget will no longer be able to give as before. Will you please pray with me that God would call (and that I would be able to identify) partners to make up the difference? And if this might be you, please let me know!

Site Seeing

Life is too short for bad websites. Here are some good ones:

- ◆ *The New Yorker* has a weekly contest of submitted captions for a cartoon — and then anyone can vote on the winner. Submit, vote, or browse past winners at cartoonbank.com/CapContest/
- ◆ Be a lab rat for Google! Play images.google.com/imagelabeler/ to help improve their image-search results. You get paired with a random partner to write tags for images. Warning: can be addictive.

Boyd's Eye View

Lucy is twice the size and about half the work she was when I wrote last. She's still the big story around here (see boydsnest.org/news/ if you doubt it), but we've had lots else going on, too.

- I'm currently teaching a course in u.s. intellectual history at North Park University. That's been exciting — plus quite a stretch for our schedules.
- Our church, Grace Evangelical Covenant, has entered a transition period between pastors, so it's a time of reflection and watching for God's plans for our congregation.
- Ann and I have been trying to figure out how we can still both attend our long-running Bible-study group and also get Lucy to sleep in the evening. (Answer: We can't, so we're taking turns going.)

But mostly we relish the occasional evenings when we're all home, together, and peaceful. We wish the same to you!



Lucy would like to smile at you in person!

Prayer Requests

Please pray with me:

- ◆ For final preparations for the Open for Business conference in December
- ◆ For effective web ministry through StudentSoul.org
- ◆ For finding financial partners needed for my ministry

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To make a tax-deductible contribution to support my ministry, make checks payable to InterVarsity and mail to PO Box 7895, Madison WI 53707. Please include a note saying “For Jon Boyd.” You can also give securely online; for info, visit JonBoyd.org and click on “Donate.”