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Dismantling the sacred-secular divide



<p>Secular (things God is supposedly less interested in”) eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families. • Work. • Friends. • Leisure. • Education. 	<p>Sacred (things God is supposedly most interested in) eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer. • Church services. • Bible study. • Missionaries. • Witnessing.
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Hardly any Christians actually believe in this divide (it's unbiblical!) but some things we do and say can reinforce it.

- “Full time Christian work” and “Christian leaders”.
- “I’ve been to Uganda before, but not in a Christian context”.
- Beginning of a service “As we come into God’s presence”.
- “The life of the church” (meaning church programme).
- Mourning the reduced availability of someone promoted at work.
- Prayer for an occasional Sunday-school teacher but not for her “day job” as a teacher; and for those beginning new church ministries but not new non-church jobs.
- Air-time-minutes (services, meetings) and column-inches (magazine, notice boards, literature) communicate (in)significance.



What is the church?

- Most of us know that the church is the people not the building.
- But we are still the church even when we’re not in the building!
- We are both **Church gathered** and **Church scattered**.
- 1 week = 168h; sleep: ~56h; ~112h awake. Church services & meetings, home group, quiet times, witnessing etc: ~11h.
- We are church gathered (doing “sacred stuff”) for ~10% of our waking hours; church scattered for ~90% (mostly work and home for most of us).



What is the church?

- It's not that ***church gathered*** is unimportant: it's very important.
- But it's part of what church is, not the whole thing.
- Keep ***church gathered*** high and lift ***church scattered*** to meet it.
- By analogy:
 - * Giving time, talent and treasure to church activities is important, but it's meant to be one (important) element of our putting all our resources at God's disposal.
 - * Worship (as in church services) is important but it's meant to be part of all of life being an expression of worship (recognition of God's worth (worship = worthship))



And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.....Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3: 17, 23, 24)



Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12: 1-2, NIV)

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (Romans 12: 1-2, The Message)



So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4: 11-13)

Whole life discipleship

- The bible teaches whole life discipleship (but, really, “whole life” should be redundant - bit like “round circles”!




Make a difference where you are




Church gathered

- If a Martian did an air-time- minutes and column-inches audit of your church services, notice sheets, notice boards, magazine, prayer diary etc, what would he conclude was most important to you? What would he conclude didn't matter much?

Any changes to better reflect what your church actually believes is important?

- Encourage your preachers to prioritise “earthing” the scriptures into real life. (Evangelical churches are often strong on exegesis, weaker on hermeneutics!)
- Give prominence to “earthing” of scriptural truth in your life groups.
- Include in your services testimony slots that focus on how faith works out in daily home / work / school life. Don't just cherry pick the triumphs!
- Who are the heroes in your church? Do their ranks include those who are doing a great job of raising their family, educating the next generation in our schools, running successful, ethical businesses? Great encouragers?
- Consider “This time tomorrow” interviews in which a church member is asked about what (s)he will be doing this time tomorrow (Monday), what the joys and challenges will likely be, how their faith works out there.
- Notice that none of these should be seen as add-ons to what currently happens but rather as a distinctive “flavour” of how things are done.



Church scattered

- Focus more on determining what plans God has in your home, workplace etc, and less on persuading him to support yours! He's already at work there, wanting to reconcile all things through Christ. Pray often: "What are you doing here, Lord, can I help?"

- Seek to live out and encourage God's values in your home and workplace: generosity, hospitality, grace, kindness, reliability, honesty, encouragement, affirmation, patience, self-control.
- Make time for people; cultivate listening properly.
- In so far as it's in your power, aim to make decisions aligned with God's values: what would Jesus do?
- "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3: 15)

Daniel lived and worked some 600 years before the birth of Jesus. So he had not inherited the centuries of church tradition that have conditioned [us] to think of work as either "sacred" or "secular." Daniel did not see himself as "just a layperson." He did not dream of quitting his job to go into "full-time Christian service."

From *JOB-SHADOWING DANIEL: WALKING THE TALK AT WORK*
Available from Amazon.com
