

Overview

There is a divide which still tends to dominate our view of the Christian life. This is the separation between the 'sacred' and 'secular'. What do we mean by these terms and how do these ideas shape or limit our thinking about the activity of God in daily work and life? What does it mean to live beyond the divide? This session encourages you in your discipleship, to recognise and respond to the 'sacred' in the ordinary and helps us to think more widely about our encounter with God in daily work and life.

This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions

Facilitator

Welcome everyone to the session. Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members. Offer a quick overview of this session, which is the second in a series of 5.

Facilitator

Introduce the activity 'Sacred or Secular'. The images are available either as a PowerPoint presentation to download, which can be shown using a laptop and/or projector, or the images can be printed as PDFs and shown to the group in turn. Show each of the images in turn briefly. Invite the group to call out a response to the question 'Is this image more sacred or secular?' The exercise should not be laboured, the group will generally be clear for the first few images but will progressively become less certain (or see them as both sacred and secular), and by the end of the exercise will come to the conclusion by themselves that it is very difficult to classify them simply. This helps to establish the view that we are living beyond the sacred-secular divide and these terms are unhelpful, even though they still influence our thinking.

Activity

Sacred or Secular?

Look at the series of images and call out whether you would define the image as 'sacred' or 'secular'.

Facilitator

Introduce the quotation from Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy (also known as 'Woodbine Willy' from the First World War). Ask the group for their reactions to the quotation and discuss in what ways it is helpful or unhelpful to speak of a sacred-secular divide.

Discussion

"If our finding God in churches leads to our losing him in factories, it were better to tear down the churches, for God must hate the sight of them."

Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy (1883-1929)

In what ways is it helpful or unhelpful to speak of a 'sacred-secular divide'?

Facilitator

Introduce the perspectives from Alan Ecclestone and Teilhard de Chardin and ask the group to think about the challenges of living the vision of life implied in these quotations.

Perspective

All of Life is Spiritual

"All of life is spiritual, for all is part of God's creation. There is no division between sacred and secular, work and worship, religion and politics. Spirituality is not apart from our daily lives, it is our daily lives. But it is a life with a cutting edge not avoiding the pain or fear."

Alan Ecclestone, Priest and Spiritual Writer (1904-1992)

“We are not human beings having spiritual experiences, we are spiritual beings having human experiences”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin , French Philosopher (1881 – 1955)

Question

What are some of the challenges of living this vision of life?

Facilitator

Ask the group to share their responses to this question. Try to draw out some of the differences of opinion. From people’s experience, what are some of the challenges? Can group members think of examples where these divisions have been apparent, or examples of where these divisions have been overcome?

Facilitator

Introduce the picture of the chemical plant at sunset. A coloured version of this image is available to download. Ask the group to think how easy or difficult it is to see God’s creation in this image. The responses are likely to be that the group will see God’s creation in the sunset and light, or in the contrast between light and dark. Some people may see a sharp divide between God’s creativity and man’s creativity, and not see them connected. Others will see God’s creativity working through man, in the technology and inventiveness of the chemical plant itself. Others will see God in the processes of transformation that are going on, as raw materials are turned into beneficial products. The discussion will clearly raise the issue of man’s impact on the environment and some will see that the capacity to reflect is itself God given, and part of his creativity in helping us to think about ourselves and our wider impact.

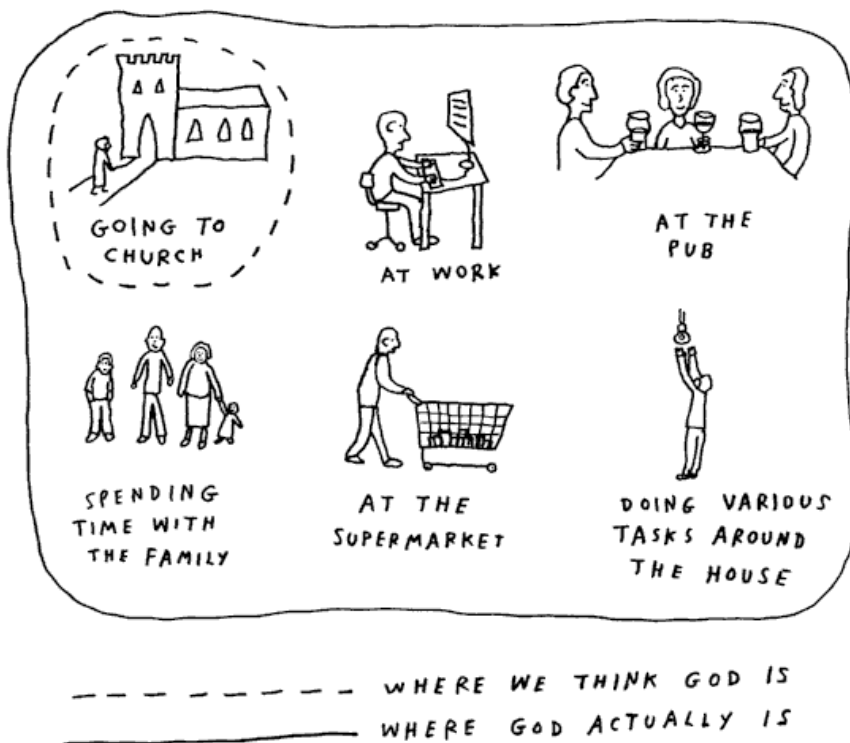
Discussion

‘All of life is spiritual for all is part of God’s creation’. Where do you find it easy to see God’s creation in this image? Where do you find it difficult?



Facilitator

Introduce the cartoon ‘Where is God?’ and the discussion. Encourage a wide view of what it means for our life to be spiritual in the context of everyday. For example, the group might highlight the nurturing aspect of supermarket shopping, the community aspect of sitting in the pub, the creativity of work etc.



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Facilitator You may like to make the connection here between this view of ‘Where is God’ and the discussion in the first session (FM1 Faith Following), about it’s not what we do, but how we do it.

Discussion **‘Spirituality is not apart from our daily life, it is our daily life. In what ways do you see these activities as being spiritual?’**

Facilitator Encourage the group to broaden the view of what is spiritual. Point out the pun in the session title ‘Wholly Living’ – how do we connect holiness and wholeness?

Facilitator Introduce this perspective called ‘Godly Work’ and have the group read it and reflect on it. Invite the group to discuss in pairs what they find helpful or unhelpful about this perspective.

Perspective **Godly Work?**

Because peoples occupation’s often centre life’s meaning so powerfully, does that mean that they are bending the knee in de facto obeisance to secular gods, kingdoms and morals of a workaday world, saving Sundays for Christian activity? What does the church say to someone who is out in the world of commerce and industry, someone whose Christian vocation seems challenged by service to idols of mammon. Typically, the church’s response is a palliative suggestion that one’s job can be a springboard for kindness towards others, a platform for keeping the Ten Commandments, an opportunity to make a witness, a location for a ministry of presence, or a context from which arrow prayers may be shot. This message implies that, while so-called secular careers have some value as a service to others, they possess no inherent value in their own right. But

what about the welder who believes welding per se is his Christian activity? What about the homemaker who believes she shares a personal delight with God in a good cheese soufflé. Would it be possible that God motivates the engineer who works on fuel cells or sustains a man who collects garbage?

Could it be that the knack for finding good teaching methods is not just hard work but also the prompting and gift giving of the Holy Spirit? Could the promise of Christ be part of what motivates the designer who wants to improve sewage disposal? Are not all these equally cases of godly work?

*From 'After Sunday: A Theology of Work' by Armand Larrive
(Continuum, 2004)*

Discussion

What do you find helpful or unhelpful about this perspective?

Facilitator

Ask the group to share their responses to this discussion. We will explore the theme of working in partnership with God in the next session (FM 3 Called to Partnership).

Facilitator

Introduce the activity called 'Connecting with God'. This activity is designed to help the group members to think about ordinary things that they do or use in their everyday life, and how they might use those to connect with God as part of their wholly living. Encourage people to share their symbols and talk about what makes the images meaningful. You might like to give some examples from your own experience.

Activity

Connecting with God

The Jewish Menorah (Exodus 25.31-40) was the seven branched candle stick that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. In Jewish folklore, the candlestick represents the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, and its oil (that kept it burning) came from the olive tree – which again, (as oil associated with all manner of benefits to human living) is also a symbol of life. The Menorah points to the flame of the Presence of God (seven is a sacred number depicting wholeness) at the heart of life.

Your Menorah

Using the Menorah on the next page as the tree to represent the whole of your life, can you label the seven main branches as parts of your life and work.

What object from your daily life and work might you put at the top of each branch, to help you connect this aspect of your life to God and what it means to live for God?

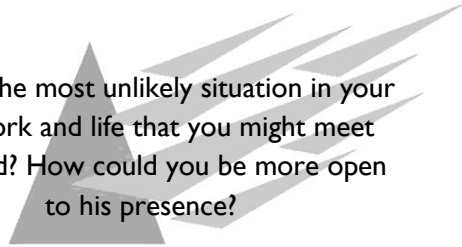


Facilitator *Introduce the question, give the group a minute or so to think about the question for themselves. Encourage group members to share the challenges and encourage group members to work together to identify ways to grow in more wholly living.*

Question **As I follow Jesus on Monday, where are the biggest challenges of living beyond the sacred secular divide, and what can I do to grow into more wholly living?**

Facilitator *Invite the group to consider this point for reflection during the week.*

During the week you might like to reflect on:



What is the most unlikely situation in your daily work and life that you might meet with God? How could you be more open to his presence?

Facilitator *Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session.*

Ponder **What did you learn from this session and what difference might this make to your discipleship?**

Closing Prayer

Lord,
Whatever we build,
Give us a glimpse of glory.
Whatever we make,
Give us a sense of wonder.
Wherever we travel,
Give us a sense of reverence.
Whoever we meet,
Give us a sense of awe.
Whatever we do,
Give us a sense of achievement.
Whatever our situation,
Give us knowledge of you.
Help us to see that everything is in your care
And that you allow us to share in your glory

From 'Powerlines: Celtic Prayers About Work' by David Adam (Triangle, 1992)

SESSION OUTLINE

Think about refreshments – beginning, middle or end? We would work on the assumption that refreshments will take around 15 mins in addition to the following time framework.

The suggested timings below are based on a group of between 6 and 8 people – timings should therefore be adjusted if there are more or less in the group.

The timings given for discussion are flexible and can be reduced / extended as time allows. It is always better to ensure that there is adequate time at the end for final reflections and planning the next session, even if this means cutting discussion short.

Time for each element of the session is given, in addition to a 'counter' for the time taken up to that point, ending at 1 hour 30 mins.

5-10 mins (10 min)	<p>Introductions – ensure all group members know each other</p> <p>Distribute worksheets to all group members</p> <p>Introduce the topic using the topic overview</p>
5 mins (15 min)	Activity : Sacred or Secular? Show photographs and ask for responses
10 mins (25 min)	Discussion following on from photographs and quote from 'Woodbine Willy'
10 mins (35 mins)	Discussion based around Alan Ecclestone and Teilhard de Chardin quotes
10 mins (45 mins)	Discussion based around chemical factory sunset picture
10 mins (55 mins)	Discussion based around the Dave Walker cartoon and the perspective 'Godly Work'.
20 mins (1 hour 15 mins)	Activity : Connecting with God
5 mins (1 hour 20 min)	Introduce reflection for the week, and final ponder
5 mins (1 hour 25 min)	Practicalities for next session (venue, who will lead etc.)
5 mins (1 hour 30 min)	Closing Worship