

An Integrated Life

Failing to see the relationship between sacred and secular hinders God's blessings.

Jeffrey, a young business professional, works on a major deal that will result in huge profits for his company, setting him up for his long-desired promotion. The deal will be clinched if he, conveniently, leaves out some of the known expenses, making the offer appear more lucrative than it truly is. Jeffrey leaves ethics behind and reminds himself, "Business is business."

Somehow it has become easy for believers like Jeffrey to separate the foundations of their faith from daily living. Segmentation of life leads to justification of actions that otherwise violate the very core principles of the Bible.

Many people see their lives as divided wedges, like pieces of pie, with little real connection to each other. This dangerous perspective violates the very nature of God's created order.

Powerful words found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 remind us, "'The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (NKJV). God created us to love Him with all our being. Just as God Himself is one, so are we to be in our worship and our living.

Living out one's faith should be a natural overflow of the soul-stream within. Faith is interwoven into life, not reduced to a mere Sunday ritual. The principles of the Bible guide decisions, plans and actions.

Yet many people view their lives as divided into separate, unrelated parts. There are the parts that some view as secular, such as work, hobbies and recreation. These parts occur outside a sacred place, such as a church, and therefore

are not related, in their minds, to faith. Then there are parts that are usually identified with a sacred place. A subtle dualism has developed among many people that divorces the sacred from anything that is considered secular.

For many Christians, the mandate in Scripture that states, "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15) is proof that a division exists between Sunday and the rest of the week. Holidays (holy-days) are confusing for many people who do not understand how these should mix. It is far too easy to draw a line between the sacred and the secular.

The Bible teaches that God is everywhere. In fact, everything is known to God-whether holy or profane. "Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" is the song from David in Psalm 139:7.

God is omnipresent, and, especially for the believer, there is reassurance of His presence. When one is at work, God is there. When one is at play, God is there. When one is at worship, God is there. The integration of life is assumed in the Bible.

In some way, this understanding of the unity of the sacred and the secular means, for the believer, nothing is secular. Everything one does, thinks or feels has something to do with God. The Bible presents a challenge: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

The challenge is to live in the fullness of this unity. The marketplace and the church hold opportunities to fight the dualism of thought and live as a whole person for God.

As president of a Christ-centered college, I see in students and their parents the results that subtle segmentation has rendered. Parsing one's life into segments is understandable for organization, but failing to see the interrelationship of those parts leads to deception and ultimately hinders the full

blessings of God.

A person with a Christian worldview sees things differently. Whether he is a third-grade teacher in a rural elementary school or a corporate officer in a leading mega-business or a minister in a suburban church, all he does can be for God's glory.

Faith in Jesus Christ is not mere mental assent but a life-changing, life-pervading relationship with the living Lord. Therefore, all that we do is informed and influenced by His Word and His power. In every decision, action and thought one draws from the foundation of Jesus Christ and the guiding principles of His Word.

When all the parts of our lives are surrendered fully to the Lord and bringing honor to Him, then and only then are we truly living.

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