

### 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***

### Activity

#### **Sacred or Secular?**

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

### 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'?**

### 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

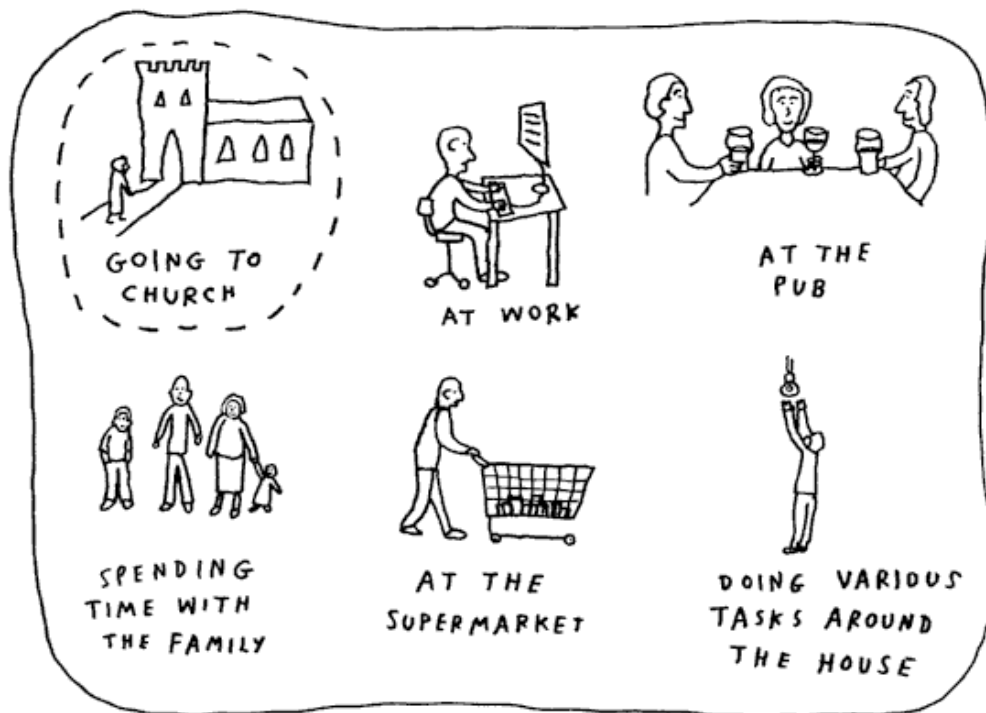
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**What are some of the challenges of living this vision of life?**

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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?



----- WHERE WE THINK GOD IS  
 \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE GOD ACTUALLY IS

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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?

### **Perspective**

#### **Godly Work?**

Because people's 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 Larive  
(Continuum, 2004)*

### **Discussion**

#### **What do you find helpful or unhelpful about this perspective?**

### **Activity**

#### **Connecting with God**

The Jewish Menorah (Exodus 25.31-40) was the seven branched candle stick that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. It is a good symbol of how we can connect the ordinary aspects of our life to God. 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 the Tree 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?



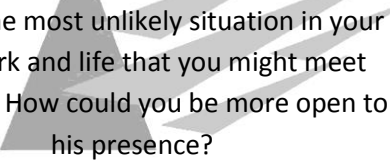
**Question**

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**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?**

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**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?

**Ponder**

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**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)*