
The Sacred And The Secular

Many "helpers" such as doctors, nurses, social workers and law enforcement officials are faced with the choice of sharing their Christian principles with people in need, or doing what is "politically correct" to please their bosses. What is the right course of action?

AT ISSUE

I am a qualified social worker with some emphasis on counseling. I am doing secular counseling where I deal with people with a wide range of social and religious beliefs. How does one apply Christian principles in a secular situation like this?

OUR INSIGHT

You are facing an issue with which most Christians in the workplace can identify. You probably feel the pressure more than most because you are actively trying to help people whose behavior and values are different than your own.

It is a myth that life is divided into the sacred and the secular. The truth is that all of life is sacred to Christians. Paul said, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 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: 23-24).

That is why certain arguments, like what day of the week is the proper one on which to worship, are futile. All days are holy to Christians, not just Saturday or Sunday, and we should be worshipping the Lord constantly without regard for the calendar. There should be no mixture of holy and unholy parts of our lives.

Non-Christians are happy to believe that life is divided into compartments. Such people think, for example, that prayer is wrong in a "secular" place like a public school. On the other hand they think it's okay to talk about religious matters in church, but don't like pastors addressing political issues from the pulpit. Dividing life into sacred and secular elements suits the nonbeliever's worldview because it allows them to disregard the holy, and box-in people who do regard it.

A.W. Towzer was right when he said, "One of the greatest hindrances to the Christian's internal peace is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas—the sacred and the secular. But this state of affairs is wholly unnecessary. We have gotten ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, but the dilemma is not real. It is a creature of misunderstanding. The sacred-secular antithesis has no foundation in the New Testament" (The Pursuit of God).

What does this mean to you? It means you are a Christian counselor no matter who you are working with. I hope that

idea alone changes your entire perspective about your work. Like all Christians in the workplace, we must recognize the privilege we have to show the love, mercy and wisdom of Jesus Christ to all we meet. The socio-economic background or religion of those we encounter doesn't make any difference -- it is our Holy Spirit empowered beliefs that make the difference.

-DLH