

Living an Everyday Faith

The Church of England wants to:
Equip all people to find and follow God confidently in every part of life, and
Recognise the gifts and callings of all people, whether ordained or not, and encouraging all people to use these skills for the good of God's Kingdom.



What can get in the way of us being disciples every day of the week?

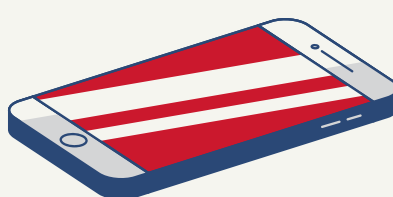
Growing up with the sense that certain activities matter less to God.



I do Sunday school for one hour a week, and my church get me up to the front and pray for me. I teach 30 children for 39 hours a week and no one ever mentions it in church."

Absorbing the idea that certain callings are more acceptable expressions of discipleship.

This can lead to us having a split view of life and God's mission. We can have one way of looking at things in church, but as soon as we step into a workplace, we can be operating by a different set of assumptions. We can split life up into "sacred" and "secular".



Thinking that being "spiritual" does not include worldly things.

In a lot of religion, it is common to see the body as something to "escape from". Christians have been influenced to see life this way in part by thinkers such as Plato, for whom "the body is a source of endless trouble..." The more we can be freed from "worldly" concerns, the more truly "spiritual" we will be.

If we are influenced by this in any way, it is easy to see why this would lead to an understanding of some areas of life being more set apart for God than others, some callings being more sacred than others, and why some things which seem more "worldly" are distractions for discipleship, rather than part of God's mission.

We might wonder if work should be experienced as a blessing or a curse.

We might be overwhelmed by the complexities of making decisions in a mixed environment, and find it tempting to compartmentalize life into parts in which God is involved, and those in which He is not.

Believing that ultimately the earth will no longer exist, and instead our souls (without our bodies) will go to be in a place called heaven when we die.

The main aim of life becomes preparing for heaven and winning souls for God. The earth is simply the temporary stage on which this is played out. If we believe this it is easy to see why we might feel that much of what we do now is at best a distraction, and at worst wasting our time.

There will be two areas of life – the real and eternal one of church and worship, and the ultimately pointless one of everyday life – work, politics, rest, entertainment, football, business, art, sexuality.

While we seek to be a disciple in the church sphere as soon as we step outside of that we are not sure what it is God really wants us to be doing with this temporary life.

What might help us to be disciples every day?

Knowing our everyday life can be part of the original task God gave us.

God told us to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." God makes human beings to be "fruitful...fill the earth" by unlocking the potential of the world that He has placed within it. This is the main human task. And Jesus did not change it. It is what we were made for. Theologians call it the "cultural mandate" – a commissioning to develop things. We are made to "rule over" and "subdue" creation in the sense of protecting it and keeping destruction at bay.



Knowing that God will restore the world, not rescue us from it.

God's mission is not to destroy the earth and take us off to heaven, but to renew it. God aims to bring healing to every aspect of life. Everything has been created and will one day be redeemed.



We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience."
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



Knowing that God will include the fruit of our work in His future creation.

God's mission to restore the world is not a return to the Garden of Eden, before human beings were able to make any changes to the world, but a renewal in which everything we do in our lifetimes, which reflects His goodness, will be included in God's future. Isaiah promises that God's "chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain." (Isaiah 65: 22-23) So Paul writes, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58)



Knowing that there is no such thing as a "secular" job.

Every part of life belongs to God, every part can be spiritual. To call some things "sacred" and other things "secular" creates a false gap between areas of life God created and those we think He did not. There is no job or world in itself that is purely "secular". But while nothing God has made can be secular in itself, it can still be heading in a secularised direction. Every sphere of life can be lived according to God's rule, or not. Instead of calling things "sacred" or "secular" it is more helpful to ask,

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“How is this aspect of life or my work originally good?” and “Is the direction it is going reflecting God's kingdom, or is it being secularised?”

Knowing that work is a blessing and broken at the same time.

Work is given to human beings as part of God's imprint and blessing before human beings fall. Human beings are designed to be fruitful and productive for all our lives. Lack of work (paid or unpaid) denies us this fulfilment and leaves us incomplete. While we might stop being paid to work, the idea of retirement from being fruitful is not in the story. Yet work is shown as being affected by the brokenness of the world, and our current experience is that aspects of it cause toil, sweat and hardship.

Knowing what calling is.

In joining in with God's mission, every disciple has a calling from God, and there are no callings that are more or less important than others. To think that those who have callings within the church sphere have a "vocation", while those who have a calling to God's mission in a hospital do not creates a destructive split in our individual lives, but also in the church.

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The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

In other words, if I ask myself, “What makes me happy?” and, “Which needs do I care about in the world?” the answers to those two questions will point to our God-given calling.

Knowing that joining in with the Spirit in a workplace, while involving prayer, witness and kindness, has the potential to bring transformation at every level – reflecting God's "cultural mandate" and bringing healing to what is broken.

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: 23-24)

