



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

A teacher says, “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.” Why do you think this happens?



Understanding the information (15 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

The Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper famously said, “There is not one square inch of creation over which Christ does not say, “It is mine!””

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 that is purely “secular”.

However, any area of life made by God can be going in one of two directions. It can be reflecting and shaped around the goodness of God’s kingdom – such as someone like George Cadbury’s approach to business.

Or it can be shaped around the values of the present world, as if this is all there is and God has nothing to do with it.

To be secular literally translates as to be only shaped around the values of this particular age or world. So 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.

Historically some Christians have thought various things are wrong in themselves. For example, some have said that Christians should not get involved in pop music. They have said the same thing about dancing and playing cards.



But they are getting confused between the structure of music – the essence of the gift of music, the thing that God made – and the direction in which that music is going. Nothing God has made is evil in itself, in its structure. Dancing is wonderful – but it can go in sinful directions. Playing games is part of the structure of God’s creation – but games can be warped by over competitiveness, corruption and gambling.

The structure of atoms created by God can be made into energy to resource or destroy life, the films we watch or make can reflect something of God’s values or dehumanize other people, the organization of societies through the gift of politics can free or enslave people.

Instead of calling things “sacred” or “secular” it is more helpful to ask, “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?”

Discuss: Is it possible for every part of life to be either sacred or secularised?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

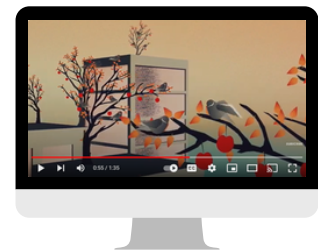
Read Isaiah 28: 23-29 in which God’s involvement in farming is shared

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:
What does this passage teach me about God?
What does this passage teach me about people?
How does this passage call me to obey God?
What might I do in response to this this week?



Imagining how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4E_dSz_yd6c&feature=emb_logo
What struck you as important in the video?



Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

Is work a blessing or a curse?

The preacher John Stott called work “... expenditure of energy (manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfilment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God.” In itself work can be a great blessing. But many experience it (or aspects of it) as more of a curse.

This balance in our experience is reflected in the Bible in which 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.

James Davison Hunter writes that "People fulfil their individual and collective destiny in the arts, music, literature, commerce, law and scholarship they build, and in the institutions they develop - family, churches, associations, and communities they live in and sustain - as they reflect the good of God and his designs for flourishing."

Lack of work (paid or unpaid) denies us this fulfilment and leaves us incomplete. Fruitfulness does not have a cut-off date. While we might stop being paid to work, the idea of retirement from being fruitful is not in the story.

Yet soon 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.

Part of our calling as disciples who are being restored in God's image is, like Cadbury, to try and reverse these effects.

Discuss: How can work help develop God's creation and/or deal with sin? What makes work a blessing? What makes it a curse?

Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

Bless, Lord God, my little plot of land,
and the strength with which I'm tilling it, bless the seed I'm carefully planting,
and the prayers I'm sowing with it.



Bless the seasons that are coming,
and the sunshine and the rain.
Bless the days and shortening nights,
and the hopes of my small barn.

Bless, O Father of good giving,
Bless, O Son of redeeming.
Bless, O Spirit of the living,
Bless, O Holy Three all-loving.

Amen.

(Bruce Prewer)



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Additional notes:

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