

Discipleship in Today's World: 'The Great Divide'

In a recent poll of church members, 47% said that the teaching they receive on a Sunday is irrelevant to their daily lives. In another survey, 50% of those polled said that they had never heard a sermon on the subject of work. Contemporary Christians are simply not being equipped for life where they spend two-thirds of their waking time. Alongside of this, we have to acknowledge that Christianity seems to have little impact in the public sphere of our society, whether it be work, the media or politics.

All of this is simply an expression of the sacred-secular divide which pervades our modern discipleship; the false but pervasive belief that some parts of our life are not really important to God, including work, school, sport, TV; but anything to do with prayers, church services, church-based activities is.

It is well illustrated in our home groups when we will pray for a missionary's contacts overseas, but never think of praying for our friend's contacts at work! Or we pray publicly for our Sunday school teachers who teach for 40 minutes a week, while neglecting to pray for our teachers who teach for up to 40 hours a week!

This divide is one of the greatest challenges we face as a church today, as we seek to make a genuine impact on our society and culture. Our discipleship is not 24/7, whole-life Christianity. Instead, we promote a leisure-time Christianity; evenings and Sundays belong to God, 9-to-5 is the world's. In Matthew 5: 13-16, Jesus compares his people to salt and light in the world. He presents a balance (not a divide) between the people of God scattered in the world and gathered together.

Spend some time reflecting on this picture and listen to what God is saying to you about his claim on the whole of your life and discipleship.

The Rev Paul Hardingham continues his series on discipleship

May

**I feel a newer life in every gale;
The winds, that fan the flowers,
And with their welcome breathings fill the sail,
Tell of serener hours –
Of hours that glide unfelt away
Beneath the sky of May.**

**Fairer and brighter spreads the reign of May;
The tresses of the woods
With the light dallying of the west-wind play;
And the full-brimming floods,
As gladly to their goal they run,
Hail the returning sun.**

J G Percival