

# MONEY – SPIRITUAL vs SECULAR

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In the book, *Money and the Gospel*, I talk about a problem that has emerged as a critical and foundational issue when we think about money. **The problem is, we're all tempted to separate the sacred from the secular.** So, here's what I mean:

One major temptation is to put life into two compartments – the spiritual compartment or the secular compartment. When we do this, we live as if some activities like being in church or reading the Bible or attending a small group meeting or praying with a friend – those are spiritual activities, while other activities, like work, leisure, or thinking about money – those are not spiritual.

We might find the occupation of pastor falling into the spiritual category while being a truck driver would not. Your friends at church would fall into the spiritual relationships category while your friends at work would not. Praying with someone in pain would be a spiritual activity while disciplining the children is not.

And so, when we're active in the spiritual arena, we assume God is present and interested and working, and so we adopt a thoughtful, loving, contemplative, and caring personality. And when we're in the secular arena, we might think and act differently, like God is uninterested or not there.

When we have a God-is-not-involved compartment, dealing with the things in that compartment will be done from a worldly perspective that focuses on self. Living with this type of division can remove God from almost everything.

## A false reality

The truth is that this spiritual/secular division is a false reality. Life in Jesus doesn't have this separation. The gospel is meant to dominate every area of life. When Jesus asked a religious leader if he knew what a God-pleasing life was, the man said, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* And then Jesus agreed – he had it right! (Luke 10:27)

The apostle Paul didn't believe in a spiritual/secular division. He wanted to do everything for the glory of God. Even the regular and mundane things of life should reflect God's value. This is how Paul put it in his first letter to the Corinthian church:

*Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31)

The thing is, unifying life under the gospel is critical if we're going to live as we should and impact this world for Jesus. If we yield pieces of life to a separate, secular compartment, those pieces will weigh us down in compromise. They'll continually fight against Jesus living in us as he should.

## Money and the spiritual/secular divide



One of the most common spiritual/secular divisions is found in the way we think about money and our

financial planning. By putting money and money decisions in the secular category, we get away from being a steward, and we get away from living as servants, and we get away from praying for help in our decisions. We will live for ourselves in these areas and make bad choices.

It's easy to fall into this way of thinking. For example, it's easy to think that the money I give to the church belongs to God, and the rest belongs to me. This is unbiblical because all we have belongs to Jesus.

The battle to think about money in a Christ-exalting way is difficult because money opens the door to almost everything that this world offers, and it calls us away from our mission. Money-temptations can connect to practically every aspect of life and tempt us to think about ourselves rather than about God or others.

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Here's what David Livingstone said: *I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity.*

Thinking the way we should about money is tough. Money and everything that money represents is a powerful source of influence and temptation. But living a life that is given to “God first” in everything is what the gospel was meant to accomplish in us. Christ in us should do away with every idol. Here's the Apostle Paul:

*...[Jesus] died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. – 2 Cor 5:15*

So, how do you think about money? Do you think about your financial decisions knowing that you're here to live for Jesus in every aspect of life?