



SECULARISM

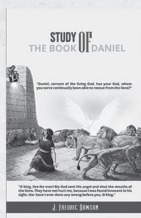
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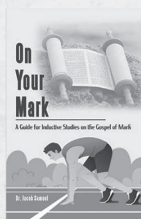
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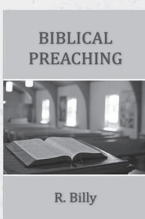
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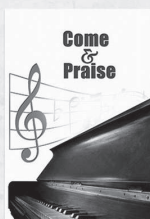
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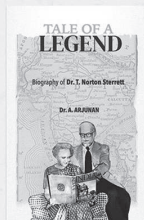
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Saltiness in the Society

We are living in this secular world, which is dominated by secular values, ideologies, and issues like violence and corruption. God created the first humans in His image and made them rulers to bring God's rule of love, peace, and justice on the earth (Gen 1:28). Humans are connected to both the worlds: Spiritual (metaphysical) and Secular (physical).

This world tasted the saltiness of Biblical leaders who were role models of the Kingdom values in their generation. Joseph stored grain and restored the people of Egypt and the nations during a famine. Israel was chosen to be "a light to the Nations" to live differently and attract them towards God's rule (Is 49:6). King David established God's rule of justice and equality (Ps 78:72, I Sam 30:23-24, II Sam 8:15). Evil people do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully (Pr 28:5).

Jesus' prayer reminds His followers that they are not of this world and are sent into the world to be His Disciple-makers and "to be different" and "to make a difference" (Jn 17:14-18). Jesus used two metaphors for His followers: to be salt in a dreary world and light in this evil world (Mt 5:13-14). Like salt, His disciples are purifying, preserving elements and as light, they live out the gospel, and dispel ignorance, falsehood, superstitions, and evils from this crooked world through the Kingdom life-style (good works - Phil 3:20 & Mt 5:16, Phil 2:14-15, Eph 5:13-14).

The Testimony, UESI's third aim, reminds us that God has placed our members to be salt and light in their campuses, workplaces, and neighbourhoods to add saltiness by raising a testimony to the truths of the Historic Christian Faith which provides a Biblical Worldview and solution to all the problems of humanity and respectfully challenges prevailing false ideologies. If they compromise with worldliness, they cannot be a preservative element in the society (Lk 14:34-35).

Let us engage our peers and professors in open dialogue with Christ's love and unwavering commitment to Biblical values. Let us bring saltiness into the society under His discipleship!



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INSIDE

Secular or Sacred ? **5**

- *L.T. Jeyachandran*

Having a Mary Heart in
a Martha World **10**

- *Valentine Davidar*

Book Review: Heart set on
Pilgrimage **14**

- *Ruth Collins*

Irreconcilable, Really? **16**

- *Hansraj Jain*

To Divide or Not To Divide,
that's the Question! **19**

- *Evangeline Rajasekar*

Self-Reliance: Godly or
Worldly **25**

- *Dr. YVR Prasanna Kumar*

Enhance Saltiness **31**

- *Vivekananda Sunder Singh Babu*

My Dear Heart! **35**

- *Angelin D*

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Secular or Sacred ?

One of the phenomena noticed in our country in recent times is that the word *secular* used in the Indian Constitution receives a lot of flak from certain quarters. In one sense, Christians should agree with that criticism since the word is derived from the Latin word ***saecularis*** which means relating to worldly things or to things that are not regarded as religious, or spiritual, whereas the opposite word ***sacred*** in English describes something holy, religious, eternal, or connected to God. The presence of the word ***secular*** in our Constitution is to suggest that although India is a country of many religions, they are to exist together with mutual respect. Discussion of this aspect from a political point of view is beyond the scope of this article.

From a Christian point of view, I want to draw your attention to the fact that we should not refer to the world as ***secular***, because the Bible begins with a statement that Almighty God is the Creator of the entire universe. In that important sense, everything in the created world is ***sacred*** because God pronounced the whole unfallen creation – including humans - to be ***very good*** – *Gen 1:31*.

I am detailing below several reasons how the un-biblical sacred-secular divide has invaded our reading of the Bible and our Christian thinking as evangelical students and graduates:

1. We begin our general understanding of the Bible with *Genesis 3* – Human rebellion against God – rather than with *Genesis 1*. Thus, the Bible is seen purely in terms of personal salvation from sin – although it

Lead

is vitally important to each of us and to all humanity – and the reality of the created goodness of all creation is virtually ignored. The first two chapters of the Bible introduce at least 4 pairs of words which have to be held together in a healthy *tension*; I avoid the word *balance* because this word implies something like 50% of each of these words whereas *tension* implies 100% of both! Here, I follow the statement of Charles Simeon (1759-1836), an evangelical Anglican theologian based in Cambridge, in the UK; he is sometimes considered as the one who gave rise to the student evangelical movement, long before any of the IFES member-movements had come into existence. His statement that is relevant to our thinking is: *Truth exists at both extremes*. We shall look at one of those pairs: *Gen 1:1* – God, Who is **Spirit**, creates the heavens and earth, which forms the **material** world; *Gen 2:7* – God creates the first humans out of the dust of the ground – **matter** – and breathes into it the breath of life – **spirit** – and the first human being comes into existence. We are thus a unique combination of spirit and matter, and I may add that the Lord Jesus Christ, through His permanent incarnation, has put a seal of approval on this combination! The first com-

mandment of God to humans in *Gen 1:28* – I return to this point in the next paragraph – is to steward His creation on His behalf. So we are accountable to Him in our study and work. We need to hold the two realities together in our thinking without any value judgement that the spiritual is superior to the material. We need to reject **materialism** – the view that there is nothing beyond the material world – but affirm **materiality** – the reality of the God-created material world. [This pair of words is not dissimilar to **rationalism** – the view that reason is the only source of knowledge and there is no place for revelation, the view that we reject – and **rationality** – the rightful place of reason that I employ when I am writing this article and which you will be using when you read it]. In fact, the Bible constantly suggests, both by the ceremonial teachings of a book like *Leviticus*, and by direct moral commandments – *Rom 12:1* – that offering our *material* bodies to God is an act of *spiritual* worship.

2. We appear to have substituted the first commandment – *Gen 1:28* – with the great commission of *Matt 28:18-20*, instead of seeing both as two aspects of the same commandment. That is one of several reasons why our message of Christ to friends from other faiths

tends always to be about saving ourselves from the punishment of hell; centrally important though this is, it is totally disconnected from the contexts of study and work in which our students and graduates are daily involved. Instead, if an EU student should tell her/his friend that the purpose of study is to qualify oneself for stewarding God's creation, that friend may even suffer a heart attack, because that understanding is not emphasised at all in the normal thinking of humans! Please also remember that such evangelistic conversations are not one-off occasions that one may have with a fellow-traveller on a journey, but an ongoing chat that can take place every day with people one rubs shoulders with. Graduates can begin to view their work as well from a similar point of view and make this their conversation piece with their colleagues.

3. Over a period of time, the conversation can turn to the question of human rebellion and how our rebellion against God also affects our work. *Gen 2:15* – God's command to humans to cultivate the land – an apparently secular(!) work – contains dynamite; the two verbs in the Hebrew language respectively translated in the NIV as *work* and *take care of* are **avad**

and **shamar**; they also respectively mean **serve** or **worship God** and **keep** His commandments! No wonder the Jews, though a very small percentage of human population, have made significant contributions to fields of science, technology, art, music, and many other fields. They tend to view work and Sabbath as continuous with each other and not contradictory to each other; please note that this is not to confuse work with worship. Similarly, the Greek word in *Acts 6:2,4* translated respectively in NIV as **serve [tables]** and **ministry [of the of the Word]** is **diakonia** from which the English word *deacon* is derived. The secular sacred dichotomy is not seen in the inspired Scriptures.

Human rebellion against God at the beginning of *Genesis 3* results in a breakdown in our relationship with nature: the woman will find child-bearing painful (*Gen 3:16a*) and the man will find work, which once was enjoyable and fruitful, toilsome (*Gen 3:17-19*).

I have lately begun to think as to how we have come to read the Bible only for *therapeutic* – what we can get out of God – and *utilitarian* – how to get God to do things for us – reasons. Please do not get me wrong – the very breath that I breathe at this stage

Lead

of my life comes from Him; we also know that our personal and corporate salvation is a free gift of His grace, worked out through the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to realise that the Bible is not to be reduced to the level of a *religious* book – although it is full of words of encouragement, prayer, and worship – but also as God’s revelation to us about significant aspects of all *reality*.

4. We seem to have a strong theology of redemption but a rather weak theology of creation; obviously, I do not mean that we believe in a purposeless, unguided, impersonal, atheistic, evolutionist beginning to the universe. What I mean to say is that we are not beginning to take God’s creation seriously enough in our study and work. We fail to realise that the scope of salvation in Christ is not limited to humans but embraces the whole of creation – *Col 1:19, 20; Eph 1:9, 10*. The Bible ends, not with a reference to heaven, but with the renewal of all creation – *Rev 21:1-5*. The Church, beautifully dressed as the Bride of Christ, comes **down** to rule over God’s new creation – *Rev 22:5* – in other words, our stewardship will continue into the new creation as well. The resurrection of Jesus – dealt with in the next paragraph – is the inauguration of

the New Creation!

5. At the end of his long chapter (*I Cor 15*) on the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, Paul concludes his thesis with the statement, “your labour in the Lord is not in vain” (*v.58*). It should be remembered that in the first century, the phrase ‘labour in the Lord’ did **NOT** mean full-time Christian work; the same Paul could tell Christian slaves in the Church in Colosse that they should work for their masters as they work for the Lord because they will be rewarded by the Lord for their work – *Col 3:22-24. I Cor 15:58* should be understood as a one-verse answer to the cry of *vanity under the sun*, uttered by the king in *Ecclesiastes* who had accomplished many things. The resurrection of Jesus introduces a new *glorified materiality* in the context of our present *decaying* reality. A Biblical example: Before the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the stone at the mouth of his tomb had to be rolled away; after he was raised to life, the grave-clothes in which he had been bound head-to-toe had to be loosed so that he could move about freely (*Jn 11:38-43*). In the case of the resurrection of Jesus, the stone at the mouth of the tomb of Jesus is rolled away by an angel but we do not see Jesus walking out; instead, we notice

that the angel tells the women who had come to anoint the Lord's body that He had already risen from the dead (*Mt 28:1-6*); in other words, the stone was rolled away not to let Jesus out but to let us in! John, who goes into the tomb along with Peter, finds the grave-clothes in exactly the same position as the body was but the body is not there (*Jn 20:3-8*); [I must say here that vernacular translations of this passage are more correct, and the English is somewhat misleading]. This is what leads John to believe that something different from the case of Lazarus has happened! All the miracles done by Jesus and others are reversible miracles – Lazarus, raised by the Lord to the present life, would have died again. Jesus, raised to a new *physical* life, will not see death again – *Rev 1:18*. In *Mt 12:39*, He refers to His own resurrection as the unique sign! His resurrected physical body was of higher physical dimensions – that we are unable to understand fully here – that it could go through the grave clothes and the stone at the

mouth of the tomb and also come through the wall of the upper room and appear to His startled disciples. When they continued to doubt, He came down to our dimensions so that He could be touched and He could eat – *Lk 24:36-43*.

How then shall we live here till Jesus comes again? During my 28 years in the Government of India, four Jewish political leaders in the Old Testament were my role models – Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah. They came to God-ordained positions of leadership in non-Jewish kingdoms. They were committed to the welfare of these kingdoms rather than like many of us, wanting to escape into a non-physical heaven where we would be floating around like ghosts, holding invisible guitars with intangible strings producing inaudible music!! Pardon my satire! If we reflect on the points made out above, you will be encouraged to be involved in all legitimate areas of life, not expecting an easy journey but pouring out your lives into society as salt of the earth and light of the world (*Mt 5:13-16*).



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Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World

Secularism essentially means to keep God out of the picture. Decisions at various levels are taken without reference to God.

Jesus and His disciples were in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Martha was concerned about serving the guests, which was an important task that needed to be done. Whereas, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His Word. Martha felt that Mary should be helping her and she was upset.

The Lord's answer to Martha was, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary

has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

What was it that Mary had chosen, which was vital and the good part? Mary had chosen to listen to God's Word. Mary had decided that it was God's Word that would make all the difference. Martha too may have heard the words of Jesus but her focus was in the serving of the guests.

We are people of God's Word in a secular world.

"It is God's Word that makes the difference between secularism and spirituality."

In the secular world, in which we live, we are pushed to reject God and His Word and pushed to operate based on the needs of the situation. Secularism tells us that there are no absolutes but only interpretations of every situation. Contingency is the decider. Secularism tells us that we must be amoral to survive and that we are trapped in our situations. We only need to look for the best and most viable solution, nothing more. Secularism tells us that there is no overarching theme to life.

It is in this context that we are to be Marys. We are to be those who choose His Word as our priority. Mary chose God's Word. We are to have a Mary heart in a Martha world.

We cannot be only hearers of God's Word. We must fulfil His Word. It is His Word that we have heard that will judge us on the judgement day.

We can see immediately how challenging it is to have Mary's heart in Martha's world.

Let us look at some examples of having a Mary heart in a Martha world.

"A Mary's heart will mean that we will bring God's Word into application in all that is taking place in life."

God's Word tells us that Man shall not live by bread alone but by every

word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

What does bread represent? Bread represents the material essentials of life. The world lives in pursuit of supplying and consuming the material essentials of life. We, as God's people, do not consider this to be strange at all. We have accepted this as the norm of life.

As believers, we say we are committed to ministry but then we ensure that first our material needs of life are looked after. We make choices with the priority of meeting the material needs of life in the most beneficial manner for us and then we tell ourselves and others that we will operate from this situation and do the ministry. We have forgotten that God examines the motives of our hearts. He knows what has driven our choices in life, was it the material needs of life or was it His Word?

Does this mean that God is against us meeting our material needs in life?

No. The Lord is telling us that He is our Father, our Husband, and our King. Our needs are considered within His plans and purposes for us. He knows how to take care of us and He will meet all our needs. He therefore wants us to give priority to His kingdom purposes. In doing

so, our material requirements will follow and will be met.

We are not anxious or troubled. We bring a Mary heart into a Martha world. The world around us is anxious and troubled. In that situation, we live in quietness and confidence, for we know that our God knows and will meet our needs. Our task is to seek first His kingdom.

God's Word calls us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. We live in a world that accepts unrighteousness. The world says that we can be righteous if it does not hurt the situation but if the need arises, we will have to adopt an unrighteous way in that situation.

Having a Mary heart in a Martha world would mean that we will be people of righteousness in all circumstances, whether we are watched by people or whether we are away from the eyes of people.

Righteousness is God's way, which we can only discern through His Holy Spirit. As we live in tune with His Holy Spirit, He will alert us that a situation is developing where we will have to take a stand on righteousness.

For each of us, in each of our situations, this will be different. It is only His Holy Spirit, who will bring clarity to God's righteous ways in any given situation. As God's

people, we will have to bring God's righteous ways into reality by the enablement of His Holy Spirit.

People around us will react differently to us being righteous but to have a Mary heart in a Martha world is to be a person of righteousness, always. As believers in Christ are we being people of righteousness in all situations?

Another area where we must have a Mary heart in a Martha world is that we do not seek attention to ourselves. The world tells us to promote ourselves. The world tells us to give priority to ourselves. The world tells us that we find our significance in ourselves.

As believers, we too, at times fall into this trap. To be a Mary in a Martha world is to deny ourselves. It is the self in us that has rebelled against God, not wanting to submit to the authority of God over us. We will not only deny ourselves but we will come to His cross. There we will be crucified with Christ. We no longer live but it is Christ who lives from within us. We have died and our life is hidden with Christ. We always carry in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus will manifest from within us.

We do not look for any recognition or importance for ourselves. We are willing to be forgotten and ignored

but we will serve people. Is this true in our behaviour? Often, we are not displaying a Mary heart in these matters.

Another area where we are to have a Mary heart in a Martha world is in relation to authority, security, and identity. Often, we do not operate out of our authority, security, and identity in Christ. We seek to establish our own authority, security, and identity.

Jesus sent us out saying that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him and therefore we go out as His ambassadors. Having Mary's heart will mean that we are rested in God's authority, security, and identity.

We will function with strength and power for we know where our authority lies. We will not be intimidated. We will respond in meekness for we will have the nature and character of Christ.

Finally, Mary was at the feet of Jesus, listening to His Word but she

was also gazing at Jesus. To have a Mary heart in a Martha world is to grow more and more into the image and character of Christ. This will be our single pursuit in life. In all things, we seek to be Christ-like, by His grace.

The world pressurises us to pursue several dreams in life. Our pursuit in life is singular. We pursue Jesus. This is being a Mary in a Martha world. We seek to grow into His character and nature. Therefore, when we face trials and tribulations, we do not look at these as threats but as opportunities for through them, the character of Christ is being formed into us.

As we conclude, let us realise that it is not possible to be a Mary in a Martha world by our own strength and effort. By our flesh, we cannot please God. Being a Mary in a Martha world is a work of His Holy Spirit.

We must always be led by His Holy Spirit in order to be a Mary in a Martha world.



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Book Review: **Heart set on Pilgrimage**

"Hearth set on Pilgrimage" is the biography of Dr Daniel Sudhakar Emmanuel, a person in whom God put a burden to go to north India where Christian witness was lacking. He moved from the south to the north as an UESI Tentmaker and lived a simple life and impacted many students and fellow professionals.

The author, Dr Margery Emmanuel, is a medical doctor who served in The Leprosy Mission. Sensing the need of ordinary role models in today's world, as she states in the Preface, she seeks to paint the ordinary life she lived faithfully for God alongside her husband Dr D S Emmanuel.

The reader is taken on a delightful pilgrimage covering 4 generations, travels from the south to the north of India with a family who pitched their tent in a cross-cultural setup and then back to the south and significant events like births, encounters with the Lord, marriages and deaths.

Neil Vimalkumar Boniface, in the Foreword, prepares the reader to meet the stalwart of faith, Dr Daniel Sudhakar Emmanuel, for whom "sound doctrine and sound

practice were non-negotiables". He mentions that Dr DSE had a dual impact on him: as his Electronics and Electrical Professor at Allahabad Agricultural Institute and as his EU Senior Advisor.

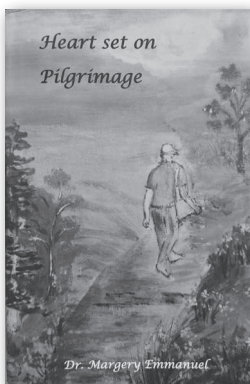
The reader is exposed, in the first five chapters, to the Creator's involvement in shaping individuals in their respective families and places to be pilgrims for God's Kingdom and Tentmakers to north

India to shape college students for the Kingdom's cause.

The reader finds in Chapters 6 to 13 that the Lord's four-year preparation to unite Dr Emmanuel and Dr Margery in marriage and build them for His cause bore fruit as they kept an Open Home for

students and graduates and Church members. During the early phase of their life together they received valuable support from Bro P C Varghese's family and Bro Ransom's family. They, as a family, invested in students and student groups (EUs) for 20 years. During their time in the north, they were blessed with two daughters Talitha and Jerusha.

The Emmanuel family later moved back to the south and pitched their



tent in Vellore and invested in the lives of many needy people for 14 years. Talitha's marriage, arrival of grandkids, unexpected health crisis of Dr Emmanuel, their UK visit, the last lap of Dr Emmanuel's life and Talitha's reflections of her father are covered in chapters 14 to 20.

Dr Margery talks of her continuing journey and response to God's call to "stretch the curtains" (Is 54:2-5) in the final chapter. Jerusha's recollections of her father are also mentioned here.

Outstanding Features of "Heart set on Pilgrimage":

- ▶ The pilgrim theme is beautifully woven into the narrative.
- ▶ The graphic descriptions transport the reader into rural south India, the lush mountains of Coonoor and the snow-clad Himalayas at Akhnoor.
- ▶ The first-person narrations lend authenticity to the account.
- ▶ Provides a rounded view of the main character as both struggles and triumphs are given equal weightage.
- ▶ The text is interspersed with pictures, quotations from books

and hymns and diary entries thus providing variety.

- ▶ The story element is predominant. God used Dr Emmanuel and Dr Margery to impact numerous people from various walks of life. Their stories find a place here.
- ▶ The importance of Mentor-mentee for the Christian walk comes through powerfully.
- ▶ God's orchestrating hand operating in amazing ways in the lives of His children is beautifully highlighted.

Appeal:

- ▶ To those who wish to pitch their tent in obedience to God's call in places lacking in Christian witness.
- ▶ To those looking for innovative ways to reach students. To quote an example, Dr Emmanuel had an "Open Christian Room" as a bachelor and it was called "The Fellowship Mess"!
- ▶ Provides encouragement to fellow-pilgrims, especially those who have suffered a loss, to continue their pilgrimage with new zest.

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IRRECONCILABLE, Really?

My friend, a committed follower of Jesus Christ, provides leadership to the workforce at the Bombay docks.

The workforce around him (from General Managers to daily wagers) is made up of secular deists and secular atheists. I am sure there are a few Christian believers 'thrown in'.

Believe it or not, from time to time, my friend even gets asked to preach in his Church.

Are you confused by the terms 'secular deists' and 'secular atheists'?

Are you asking, "What does he mean?"

Stop and give it thought for a moment. Personally, for me spirituality does not make sense outside the secular. And nothing secular exists without reference

to the spiritual. The two co-exist and are mutually complementary. Perhaps a metaphor would help. Can we say light exists if there is no reference to darkness? Can something be said to be "rotten" without reference to the fresh or good?

That makes sense. Doesn't it? Are we disturbed and horrified?

Perhaps clarifying the terms would help ease the pain in the brain.

Secular and Spiritual

I believe the secular and the spiritual are two sides of the same coin. On one side of the coin, the Secular excludes God entirely.

How?

It believes that through logic and rationality, along with life

experiences, discoveries (as in exploration) and the study of science and mathematics, humans can resolve issues, face challenges that life's journey may present, overcome obstacles and achieve success. The concept of spirituality is conspicuous by its absence.

On the flip side, the ideas of spirituality are accepted, encouraged, acknowledged and even considered a positive contributor to human existence. Spirituality, it believes, makes life comfortable. But the involvement of a God-Being is minimal. That is, a deist believes in the existence of a God only with the evidence of reason and nature and rejects supernatural revelation (distinguished from theism).

As for God, a deist's belief is limited to a God who created the world but has since remained indifferent to it.

These folks pride themselves in being genuine secularists.

The Spiritualist

While the 'tribe' of Secular Deists continues to grow by leaps and bounds, the population of Spiritualists isn't on the decline either. I guess the population explosion of the human race continues to feed the two segments sufficiently to keep them multiplying.

So, Spiritualism, as the term suggests, is built on the belief that

God exists. God has always existed. God has been, is, and will continue to get involved in human destiny and to guide its path and purpose for their existence.

For this article, we aim to briefly seek the means and ways in which the Secular and the Spiritual live within the same community. Concepts and perceptions do not necessarily cause conflict.

Having made such a claim, we must not be surprised when such a worldview triggers conflict and biased behaviour manifests in forceful actions including violence.

So, "how should we live" within this reality all around us? (Mt 6:25; 1 Thess 5:6; Rom 6:2).

Take a peek at the tourist sites. They promote Spiritual tourism in a Secular nation.

Would you agree that the secular and the spiritual are in a live-in relationship here?

Let us face the reality and consider the inclination to separate the Secular from the Spiritual. How right has it been to have imprisoned these two dynamic relationships in separate containers of our convictions, never to be reconciled?

The bubble of dichotomy between the Secular and the Spiritual has been burst. The only conclusion

this proposes is that every person alive is a walking, talking, breathing, interactive and relational paradox because he/she is secular and spiritual at the same time.

We are invited to mull over, discuss and assess:

- ▶ *Is this actual life reality as we know it?*
- ▶ *Does this align with our historical reality and current life experience?*
- ▶ *Is marriage between Spirituality and the Secular incompatible, and can the two not happily share the same bed?*
- ▶ *Is the existence of Spirituality alongside the Secular impossible?*

I think of the Centurion Cornelius. After hearing Peter's preaching, he believed the Gospel and then, along with everyone with him, believed and received the Holy Spirit and

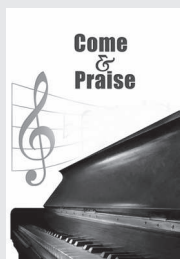
was baptised. Being a professional and the head of 100 soldiers who were anything but sympathetic to Jews or the 'People of the Way', how did Cornelius and the others find their working environment with their 'secular' colleagues and subordinates after they received the 'Gospel-driven-life'?

Did the marriage of Spirituality with Secular [worldview] succeed? How did this relationship really work out for Cornelius and his friends? Did they feel the challenge too much and decide to 'divorce' and join another group - a fellowship of believers away from the 'corrupt world' from where the Lord had drawn them (Acts 10)?

Secular and Spiritual are inseparable. Please don't attempt to part them. That would be anti-biblical.



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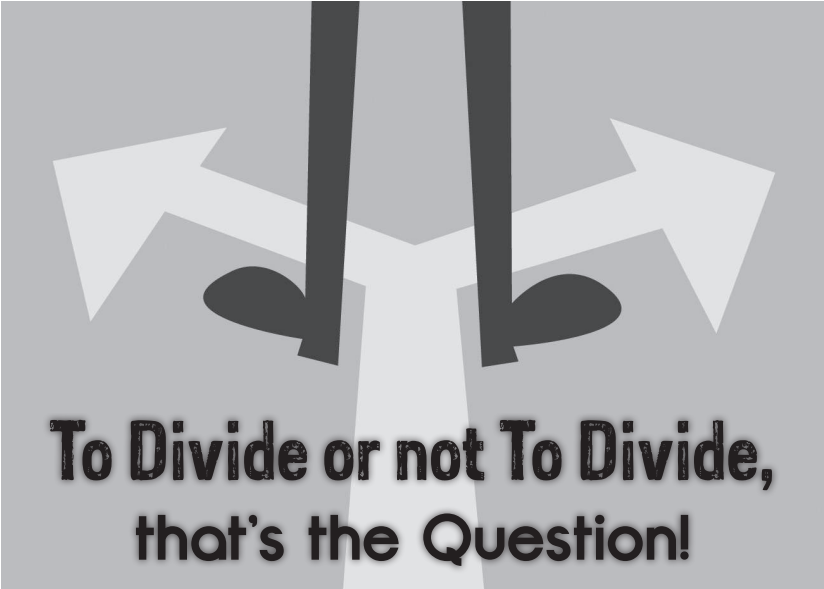
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To Divide or not To Divide, that's the Question!

It all began during one of our music practices, when a worship leader made a remark like this: "Do not bring your management, and learning and development stuff into Church". It was one of those rare moments when I had so much to say but did not. Naturally a war was going on inside of me during the rest of the practice and our time together. I got back home and decided to text in WhatsApp, to clarify if he believed there was a strict divide between the sacred and the secular. His response went something like this, "I agree there is no secular and sacred divide but I was more concerned that secular ideals should not be brought into the sacred..." I thought to myself, 'Not many will express this

paradoxical stance but then most of us believe it and live it out to some level'.

This article is an outcome of a barrage of thoughts that pounded my head in the hours and days after to answer my question – 'Should/ Can we have a sacred secular divide?'

The Merriam Webster dictionary provides us with two different definitions each for 'secular' and 'sacred': it defines Secular as 1. 'relating to the worldly or temporal' and 2. 'not overtly or specifically religious' while Spiritual as 1. 'relating to, consisting of, or affecting the spirit' and 2. 'relating to sacred matters'.

After reading the definitions a couple of times I see two possible positions:

Position 1: there is a divide or
position 2: there is no divide.

We'll leave the possibilities of a spectrum and the merger grey areas for a later discussion!

Position 1: there is a divide:

Let's take the second definitions - secular: 'not overtly or specifically religious' and sacred: 'relating to sacred matters' to best support this stance. If we attach a religious tone to these words to mean a specific religious practice or ritual etc. then most activities that do not fit under the sacred umbrella - like going to school or work, playing a game, watching a movie etc. may be termed secular.

Let us attempt to see life from 'position 1: there is a divide' perspective (a.k.a. the popular perspective). I understand it is conventional to say, Church attendance, personal time with God, what we call the Quiet Time in EU parlance, fellowship, all ministry related activities, are all stereotypically classified under "spiritual" (they directly glorify God and affirm God's will & Word). We suppose all of these glorify God by default however they are done. There's added grace for mistakes

in this realm. We tread this sacred space carefully. We ration our expectations and withhold tough and critical comments either out of fear or respect for the sacred space. The rest of the parts of our lives, from waking up, getting dressed, attending work/school, cooking, cleaning, shopping etc., until our going to bed are considered "secular". Now the "secular" list is further divided somewhat on these lines (at least among the believers) - pro-spiritual (could indirectly glorify God, affirm God's will & Word), like working or studying well, exercising and staying fit, maintaining good relationships with family and friends etc., neutral (may neither be for nor against God's glory, Word & will), like household chores, shopping or playing etc., and anti-spiritual (against God's Word & will), a believer visiting a pub, or dating an unbeliever or watching "bad movies" etc.

In an attempt to have one dividing line between the sacred and secular, we have installed many lines - dotted, blurry, opaque, transparent, semipermeable, impermeable and so on. Those warrants the many seminar and workshop topics we come up with from time to time. After most practical talks and workshops, the Q & A sessions are filled with such genuine doubts and questions. 'Is

it wrong to marry an unbeliever if he/she is a good person?', 'Are there gender roles in household chores?', and according to me, the all-time classic – 'How do I balance my work/studies and ministry?' Most believers desire to glorify God and affirm God's Word and His will in their lives but are hounded with many questions and they helplessly conclude saying "it is really hard, if not impossible to live spiritually in a secular world!" Isn't this tantamount to saying 'God's grace cannot/may not sustain His (spiritual) calling in my life, to be who and what He has called me to be in this world, so, I need the dividing lines?' Now that I have hopefully made position 1 look daunting if not downright silly, let's move on to analyse position 2.

Position 2: there is no divide:

Let me invite you to look at the first definitions of both the words: secular: 'relating to the worldly or temporal' and spiritual: relating to, consisting of, or affecting the spirit. We live in a world created by Yahweh – The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it, Ps 24:1. Every person living on earth is an image bearer - bearing the image of our Creator God! The tripartite being that God created us comprises the body, the mind and the spirit. And the LORD God formed man of the

dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, Gen 2:7. In other words, you and I are spiritual beings living in our physical bodies with operative souls. We are called to play our part to keep our spirit, soul and body blameless until the Lord's return, 1 Thess 5:23. At death my spirit returns to the God Who gave it, my soul's emotional, rational and volitional operations cease, and my physical body starts decomposing, and hence through a ritual of burial is returned to the earth it came from, Eccl 12:6,7. If spirit is the essence of who I am and you are, shouldn't everything that relates to us, affect us, consisting of us being eternal and spiritual?

As if this isn't sufficient, the Bible goes on to say, our very breath was given by God (Gen 2:7), our body is God's temple where His Spirit dwells (1 Cor 3:16), our food and water come from God (Gen 9:3), so, whether we eat or drink, or work we are called to do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31, Col 3:23-24). Our marriage is honoured and the marriage bed undefiled (Heb 13:4), our life and death are for the Lord and belong to the Lord (Rom 14:8)! Looks like God is in our lives from birth to death. Now tell me, where is the scope for the worldly and the temporal?

If you have lived long enough, and observed the mess in the world, I understand it is difficult to see God and the spiritual elements everywhere. But let me urge you to look deep and long enough, you'd be amazed at the spiritual elements present not just in the Church but all around you. The devil is attempting His best to mar/destroy them, but God, in His own amazing ways, is both restoring and preserving them. The devil began his destructive work at the garden causing the man and his wife to sin and brought about death in their spirits and sealed them for an eventual physical death too. But that didn't deter God from redeeming it back. This redemption cost God the life of His Son Jesus to be sacrificed on the cross. He did it nevertheless – The message is clear: "God loves people more than anything| More than anything He wants them to know| He'd rather die than let them go..." sings Point of Grace. When we have appropriated God's gift of salvation through faith and confession, God's redemptive work in our spirit is perfected. That's our affirmation when we sing, "Born of the Spirit with life from above into God's family divine, |Justified fully through Calvary's love, O what a standing is mine! We now become the temple of the living God and God's Spirit lives in us to convict,

correct, and guide us to live the spiritual life leading us to eternal life. Now nothing about us is secular or temporal or worldly.

This paves way for life to flow through various realms seamlessly. "From the moment that I wake up| Until I lay my head| Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God!" All of my life is called to sing of the goodness of God! I glorify God equally through my eating, sleeping, studying, working, leading worship/Bible Study or preaching on a Sunday morning and you can keep adding to this list. No activity by definition is capable of giving God lesser or greater glory. I am called to do everything as unto the Lord for His utmost glory. This infuses significance and purpose to all my everyday tasks. No space we traverse is more or less holy. Every place has a role to play in the eternal scheme of things. That leaves a believer with just two choices – good: those that fall within the will and Word of God and evil: those clearly against the will and Word of God. In other words, those that the devil has tampered with and marred. I am sure, we will all agree, we have no business dabbling with the latter.

What does the 'there is no divide' stance mean to me? It is a call to remove the watertight

compartments we have created and let life flow through seamlessly in our homes, work spaces, neighbourhood and gathering places for worship/Bible study. William J. Toms cautions “Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some person ever reads.” If I have declared God’s goodness, affirmed to live by faith with hope, joy, peace and love and an eternal perspective of things/people, on a Sunday morning I am called to live it out, with God’s help, in my home with my family, in my work/ place of study and everywhere with everyone. There are no higher or lower degrees of living it out. The manifestation of my living it out might differ – I might sing, pray, preach, design, research, code, teach, study, relate or even simply ‘be’. Francis of Assisi quips, “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.” Implicit in this saying is the understanding that our lives are the most powerful sermons. Live joyful, grateful, peaceful, exemplary lives and be a blessing. People around will notice that you possess a different, excellent and extraordinary spirit (Gen 39: 2, Num 14:24 & Dan 6:3)! God and the people around saw a difference in the way Joseph, Caleb, and Daniel carried out their work and whole life, not just in their religious actions.

While most of us agree about taking a few ideals and principles from the “spiritual” into the “secular” we still have problems when the ‘good’ ideals and principles we learnt in our Science, Social, Engineering or Management text books are applied in our “spiritual realms”. Are ideologies such as goal setting, professionalism, excellence, planning, healthy competition, accountability exercised within the body of Christ, be it Christian organisations, Churches or fellowships? It is very “(un)Christian” to hear phrases like, God leads (i.e., I don’t need to plan well), God forgives (i.e., I can go on making mistakes), God understands (i.e., I can do an incompetent job), God will take care (i.e., I don’t need to take care) etc.

It is tough to make sense of our faith if we communicate either in word/ deed, that we will pay for a mobile that is meticulously built, drive a car that is excellently manufactured, live in an apartment that’s wisely planned and constructed, but preach a sermon/lead a Bible Study/ singing that is sloppily prepared and delivered or done without sufficient learning/training/practice. I see this non-reciprocity, attempting to keep the “spiritual” in a watertight compartment, preventing the good from the outside to permeate, as a clear sign of danger. This has caused

and is causing stagnation rendering our activities boring and lifeless, bad odour drawing attention for the wrong reasons or irrelevance leading to disconnection. When numbers dwindle and we hit headlines for the wrong reasons we could perform a soul-searching here!

As we ponder more on this sacred secular divide let us ask ourselves:

- ▶ Are my thoughts, words, feelings and actions different in the sacred and the secular spaces of my life? Why?
- ▶ Does it make sense for them to be different? If there's something in my profession that I shouldn't bring into Church, should I as a practicing Christian be engaged in it at all? If there's something

I'm affirming in my Church that I can't carry into my home, neighbourhood and work should I be affirming it at all?

- ▶ *What should I do to minimise the gap so I can move seamlessly between these spaces?*
- ▶ *Did Jesus think, feel, talk and do things differently in the temple, as a wedding guest, during house visits, when teaching, while praying and on the streets working miracles?*
- ▶ *Did every act of Jesus glorify God the Father equally or were there some acts that carried more weightage to God's glory, and were more aligned to God's Word and will?*
- ▶ *What did Jesus do then? What would Jesus do now? What should I do then – to divide or not to divide, that's still the Question!?*



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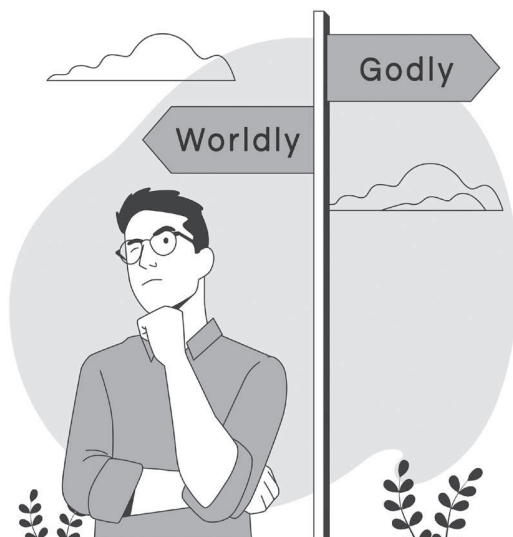
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Articles other than these Themes are also welcome!

Self-Reliance: Godly or Worldly



He was born after much prayers by his parents. His name means “the Sun or Bright Sun”. He was raised a Nazarite. He was set apart with supernatural strength from God to do His work in the nation of Israel. He was good-natured, sarcastic, full of humor, and fought with his wits as well as with his fists. Soon he became great in his own eyes and began pursuing women outside God’s plan for his life. He began to trust in himself, began to depend on his own abilities and strengths. In other words, he became worldly and self-reliant. In this state of mind, he was married to a Philistine woman. This self-reliance and not

depending on God cost him dearly. His life came to an abrupt end, of course before his untimely death he repented and sought forgiveness and guidance from God. He realized that his strengths and abilities are best utilized when he depends on God. At the end of the day, he did a grand finale of God’s work.

Dear friend, you guessed it right. I am talking about the great body-builder Samson! Also, about self-reliance.

Self-Reliance

At this juncture we need to define what self-reliance is and the categories of self-reliance.

Collins Online Dictionary defines Self-reliance as “the ability to do things and make decisions by yourself, without needing other people to help you.”

Two kinds of self- reliance.

1. Godly Self-reliance: God wants every believer to be self-reliant. It means He wants us not to depend on others for our food, clothes, and other basic needs. Apostle Paul puts this very clearly in 2 Thess 3:8“... and we did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you.” (NRSV) In 3:11 he says, “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

In this kind of self-reliance, we put our efforts, use our abilities, strengths, talents and education and more than those things we depend on God and His guidance. If we are living in Christ, He is our resource, and the Holy Spirit enables that power (Eph 3:16-20). We learn this from the lives of Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will

rescue us from your power, Your Majesty, Dan 3:16-17.

At this time in history, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was influenced by those around him to set up an image of gold and require everyone in the land to bow down and worship it. Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego respectfully declined. When the whole kingdom was following along, they stood their ground, with faith that God would take care of them no matter the result.

But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty that we will never serve your gods or worship the golden statue you have set up,” Dan 3:18.

Even in their position, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego did not feel the need to defend their decision to not comply with the king’s edict. They remained calm and confident in the face of the King’s life-threatening anger at them. They had faith that God would save them because they trusted God would take care of them. But the part that is most astonishing is their focus on God even if He didn’t save them from the flames. Their faith allowed for contentment with whatever the outcome. They trusted God completely. They were not motivated by their own success or glory when they refused to bow

down, but rather by the fact that God would be glorified through the result of either their sacrifice or their triumph.

Their unwavering faith in God even in the face of death is a testament that they totally relied/ depended on God which gave them contentment.

Sometimes though we have ability and strength God wants us to just depend on Him for achieving success or victory. We see this in the book of Joshua. When Joshua came up against Jericho's stronghold, he didn't rush in to fight; instead, he asked God what to do. The story in Joshua 6 shows how he listened to God and followed all the steps necessary to win the battle. He told them to go around the city quietly every day for seven days. Seven priests walked ahead of the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant, blowing on the ram's horn. On the seventh day, they walked seven times around the city before Joshua told the people to shout! They took the city once the city wall collapsed. When God commanded him to undertake something as absurd as a combat strategy, he obeyed God to the letter, aided the people in cooperating, and they won the fight.

The Children of Israel lost a fight to the small city of Ai after they won at

Jericho. Because of greed and lust, some of the first fruits from Jericho were kept from God, which was against what God had told them to do. Achan took some of the goods and put them in his tent. Because there was sin in the Israelite camp, the people of Ai killed some Israelites, and the people's hearts "melted and became as water."

Joshua was so happy about winning that he forgot to ask God what to do about the city of Ai. Instead, he sent his men there to look around and report back to him. He took their advice instead of asking God what to do, which led to the deaths of 36 people.

Joshua got down on his knees and cried out to God. God told Joshua where the sin had come from. God woke him up when he showed him what had happened. When Joshua asked Achan what he had done wrong, he admitted it. He and his whole family were then stoned to death and burned. The things he did because of his greed hurt the whole town and cost him and his family their lives.

After Joshua dealt with the mistake and asked God what to do, the people got back on their feet and were able to attack the city of Ai by surprise. They didn't get boastful about their win. Instead, Joshua had them worship and make sacrifices,

and God's Word was shown to all of Israel.

2. Worldly Self-reliance: This kind of Self-reliance stems from pride and an overestimation of oneself. This kind of Self-reliance is a lie from the devil himself. He is described as the "deceiver, a liar, a thief and a murderer" who is very crafty.

Sarah, the wife of Abraham is an example of this type of self-reliance. God had promised Abraham and Sarah a child but had not told them when the child would be born. It was a period of waiting and most people don't like to wait. But it is through "faith and patience that they inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). Sarah was not concerned about the glory of God; her only goal was "that I may obtain children by her" (Gen 16:2). Perhaps there is a hint of disappointment with God and even blaming God when she says, "The Lord has restrained me from bearing." It has often been said that "God's delays are not God's denials" but Satan whispers to us "God is holding out on you! If He loved you, things would be different! Blame Him!"

Sarah clearly ignored the promise and depended on her own plans and efforts. She wanted to have a child soon. She didn't wait for God's timing. She thought she is self-reliant. She could take things

into her hands. And she urges Abraham to go with her maid Hagar so that she may bear a child for her. Genesis 16 records a painful detour that Abraham and Sarah made in their self-reliant walk, that brought conflict not only into their home but also into the world.

Prophet Isaiah says that arrogant pride and self-sufficiency are particularly related to the denial of the authority and majesty of God in all spheres. We replace God's uniqueness with trust in human ingenuity or foreign gods (Is 2:11).

John Piper writes that "the most dangerous thing in the world is the sin of self-reliance and the stupor of worldliness."

Three consequences of this kind of self-reliance:

1. Self-reliance leads to further sin.
2. Self-reliance ultimately ends in defeat.
3. Self-reliance leads to broken relationships.

Self-reliance leads to further sin: We see this language clearly as we look back to the account of Jonah. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah "got up to flee from the Lord's presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to

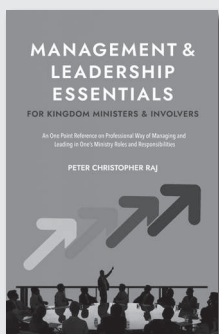
Tarshish, from the Lord's presence" (Jonah 1:3). Then as this ship was on the sea and the violent storm was whirling about them it says this about Jonah: "Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down to the lowest part of the vessel and had stretched out and fallen into a deep sleep" (Jonah 1:5). Jonah's egoism and self-reliance led to further sin.

Self-Reliance ultimately ends in defeat: It is natural for man to assume that self-reliance is the key to success in life. After all, we tend to have a high opinion of our ability

to handle things by ourselves. But self-reliance can only take you so far. Now if you were God on the other hand, self-reliance would get the job done every time. You would be indestructible. But since you and I are not God, we are neither invincible nor unstoppable. We all have limitations. We all have shortcomings. We all have sin. And this is why self-reliance is not the be-all and end-all it purports to be.

Self-reliance leads to broken relationships: Self-Reliance causes separation as seen in the following

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verse: “but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear” (Is 59:2). Sin draws us away from the God of life, the source of power that makes us alive. God is within you and me. That is why we rise from the dust where we came from. When we sin, we drive away God’s presence in us.

Conclusion

Believe it or not, worldly self-reliance ultimately ends in defeat, since, it is filled with pride, arrogance, and boasting.

As creatures that God created, we have limited strength and rely on Him. We are not infinite like God. And we are not self-sufficient like God. One of the biggest lies of our time is that we only need ourselves, and that we only need God sometimes.

We should give ourselves over to God because our spiritual and physical lives depend on Him. Through prayer, we should be

honest with God about what we need and believe that He will take care of us based on His love and wisdom. We should thank God for always making sure we have what we need.

Our need for physical rest points to our need for spiritual rest (Ps 4:8). And our need for physical food points to our need for spiritual food (Jn 6:51). We must serve God with our whole heart, for He has called us from before the foundations of the world and has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. All things are under our feet and God gives us the strategies and the victories. In Him we have rest. God Bless!

Resources:

Reset - David Murray

Disappointment with God – Philip Yancy

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/self-reliance>

<https://www.lightofword.org/index.php/teachings/teaching-series/222-joshua-gods-strategies-for-victory>



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The Preacher's Commentary states that the Romans of Jesus' day had a saying: there is nothing more useful than the sun and salt. Salt comes from the process of exposing sea water to the sun. Roman soldiers received salt as salary. Most of the salt used in Israel came from the Dead Sea and was full of impurities and thus unfit to use even as a fertilizer or catalyst for burning manure. Salt is a purifying, preserving and flavour-enhancing element. During Jesus' time, salt was used to preserve fish as it would be spoiled if it was not salted.

Jesus' followers are called to be the salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13-14). As His disciples, they are to season the earth with knowledge and grace by their lives and doctrines. They

are to prevent decay and enrich or purify the social order by following Kingdom principles and values. However, Jesus warns them that it is dangerous if their life and witness becomes "unsalty" and inadequate. It is like salt losing its saltiness/savor when it is fit only to be thrown out and trampled by men (Lk 14:34-34). God would hold them accountable for their "saltiness" (that is, their usefulness). Jesus' followers, as salt, are expected to gain saltiness. They are to grow naturally from a believer to a disciple, then to a disciple-maker and Shepherd through discipleship to the Good Shepherd.

Enhance Saltiness to be a Believer

Sincere faith in the true God and repentance plays a vital role to be born into God's family as sons and daughters of God through spiritual birth (Jn 1:12-13, 3:3-6). God's children must grow and maintain intimate relationship with Him through regular and meaningful quiet time and an obedient will. They must be sure of their salvation which comes through godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10, Is 55:6-7), confessing Jesus and believing that Jesus has authority to forgive sins and through Whom God accepts them as His children by His grace. They are then infants in Christ, silent listeners and learners in family prayer, Sunday worship service and

local EU/EGF Bible Study (1 Pet 2:2). They are in the learning process of overcoming temptations. **Jesus is the perfect exemplary Believer** with undivided faith in God the Father.

Enhance Saltiness to be a Disciple:

Discipleship is the heartbeat of God and Highway to Maturity (Mt. 5:48, Heb. 5:14, 6:1, 1 Ki 3:9, 1 Cor. 3:12-17, Eph. 4:13, Phil 3:15, Is 50:4-5). A believer who chooses to be a disciple has to maintain the discipline of sitting long hours at the feet of the Lord with a listening and learning attitude (Mk 3:11) through regular Personal Bible Study (PBS) - Josh 1:5-8, Ezra 7:10, Ps 1:2-3). PBS involves the study of God's Word, meditation, learning through obedience, practicing and teaching through Group Bible Study (GBS). The disciple deeply studies

and understands the concept, criteria, call, cost and commitment of discipleship. Every disciple is a bearer of the gospel and improves interpersonal communication skills to share the born-again experience and the gospel with non-believers in his workplace, neighbourhood and among his friends.

The disciple is a Spirit-filled Steward of God-given resources: time, talents, environment, buildings, literature, treasure and human resources (family members, neighbours, friends, colleagues, fellow believers) and invests them in God's Kingdom (Mt. 6:33). The disciple understands and fulfills his role as an individual, family, and community in God's global purpose. The disciple's spiritual eyes (discernment) are activated to sense the spiritual world (1 Cor 2:10-

The screenshot shows the Campus Link website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: ABOUT, CL EDITIONS, ARCHIVES, E-COPY, ASPIRED TO WRITE?, ADVERTISE, and CONNECT. The main content area features a large image of a person's hands holding a Bible and a bag. On the left, under the heading 'PASSION FOR MISSION', is a section titled 'INCESSANT CALL' with the text: 'Does my responsibility in God's mission end when I have fulfilled my role in an EU/EGF committee or as a missionary student? Does it end by taking up a job as a tent maker or by joining a mission organization?'. Below this is a left-pointing arrow icon. At the bottom left, the URL 'http://www.campuslinklive.org' is displayed. On the right side, there is a vertical list of links: 'Integral Mission', 'A Life That Looks Like the Great Commission', 'Biblical Perspectives on Mission', 'Tentmakers for this Twenty-First Century', and 'Incessant Call'.

16) and the movements of the devil and resists him and his schemes through spiritual warfare (Js 4:7, Eph 6). The disciple is a member of the local Community and the Body of Christ. **Jesus is the perfect exemplary Disciple**, Who wanted to be alone with the Father, denied the heavenly glory and denied Himself and learned obedience (Mk 1:35, 3:14, Lk 9:23, Phil 2:6, Heb 5: 8). Moreover, Jesus spoke and did as God the Father taught Him (Jn 8:28, 12:49 & 14:10).

Enhance Saltiness to be a Disciple-maker (*Only a Disciple can make another disciple*): Every disciple follows Jesus' method of Disciple-making. During a 3-year duration, Jesus made 84+ disciple-makers, while travelling on the road, by the roadside, under a tree, within the temple premises and rarely someone's home. A disciple-maker maintains the habit of obeying the Greatest Commandment (Love your God and your neighbour - Mt 22:37-39) and Great Commission (Mt 28:18) to make the family and city the Kingdom of love. A disciple-maker is a role model as a disciple by doing and practicing PBS and leading GBS, excels in sharing the gospel (leading a student to Christ) and in disciple-making and is an exemplary Spirit-filled Steward of God-given resources in extending

God's Kingdom. He equips others to use their spiritual sight in resisting the devil. He teaches Kingdom Principles and Values. **Jesus is the perfect exemplary Disciple-maker**: Jesus made 3 Core Disciples (Lk 9:28-29 & Mt 26:36-38), 12 Disciples and 72 disciples (Lk 10:1). Jesus equipped and empowered all His 84 (12+72) disciples to be Disciple-Makers for All Nations (Lk 5:10, Mt 4:19, Mk 1:17).

Enhance Saltiness to be a Shepherd: (*A Leader influences others to become leaders through an exemplary life*):

In the Biblical context, leaders are Shepherds, both religious and political. Biblical and Spiritual leadership is Servant leadership (serving one another) and Team Leadership or Shared Leadership (working together). A spiritual leader is an influencing visionary. A leader is always teachable, humble to listen and learn from any person immaterial of age and from any event. A leader acquires leadership principles, strategies and skills of interpersonal and team building and is a team player. A leader promotes and practices the principles of Servant Leadership in his life, family and community of disciples.

Shepherds are to tend and feed their lambs and sheep (I Ki 22:17, Ezek. 34). The key idea here is not to rule and control but to care and share. A good shepherd seeks and rescues God's sheep/flock (Lk 19:10, Jn 21:1), engages and empowers them (Mt. 10:1-2, Mk. 3:13-19), knows and prays for them by name (Jn 10:3, Jn 17, Lk 22:31-32), calls them friends but not servants/subordinates (Jn 15:15), tends/leads, feeds them with spiritual nourishment towards overall growth to become

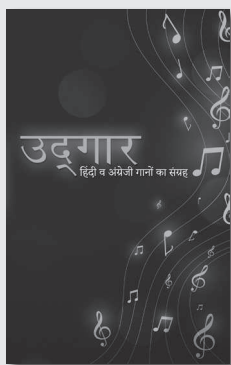
witnesses, protects them from all evils and enemies, restores and commissions them to be a shepherd of His flock (Jn 10:27-29, 21:15-17 & I Pet. 5:1-7). **Jesus is the perfect exemplary Good Shepherd.** The Chief Shepherd's vision is one flock and one Shepherd (John 10:16).

Let us introspect our growth:
Stage-1: Believer to Disciple,
Stage-2: Disciple to Disciple-Maker,
Stage-3: Disciple-Maker to Shepherd (Leader).



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My Dear Heart!

O wavering heart,
Lurking in secret,
Lusting after pleasure,
Don't you know:
You are made for
Much more than this?

O faltering heart,
Haunted with memories,
Reminding you to forget,
Don't you know:
God knocked down your mud-
house,
To build you a castle?

O wandering heart,
Journeying thru trails,
Steep, rugged and sharp,
Don't you know:
The King of the universe,
Has prepared Heaven for you?

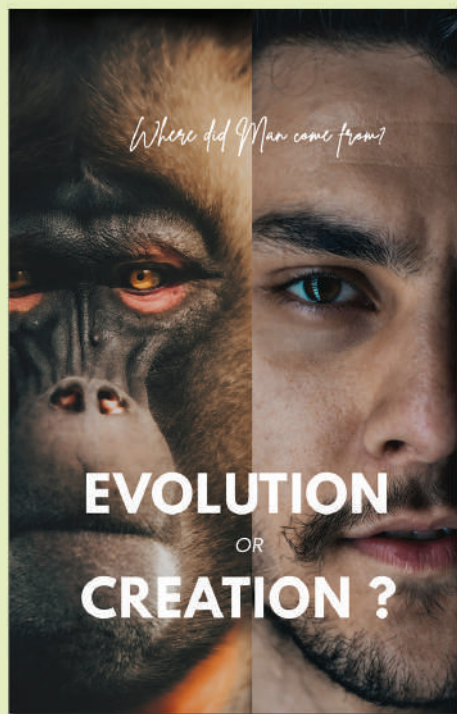
O lingering heart,
How long shall
Your eyes keep searching?
Don't you know:
The climax is gonna be
Benevolently beautiful?

O burdened heart,
Crushed with cares and
worries,
Don't you know:
After the test,
Life yields its best?

My dear heart,
It's time to overcome: Get up!
Spread your wings! Soar
in the sky!
O forgiven and sanctified one,
Let Heaven pompously
celebrate
The return of its precious child!



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