

Why Calling Work, “Worship” does not solve the Sacred-Secular Dichotomy.

by Kevin Norris

As YWAM has grown over the years, a problem has emerged with our attitudes towards practical service. We have carried on the popular belief that evangelism, prayer, worship etc are serving God, while housework, business, maintenance etc are secular (non-holy) endeavours.

This is shown in the difficulty of staffing practical ministries such as kitchen service, accounting, grounds maintenance, construction etc. Those involved in these areas often feel second rate for two reasons. Firstly, they haven't adequately gained God's perspective on practical service and secondly, because YWAM's main emphasis is missions (and rightly so), those involved in evangelism and missions “out there” are the ones who are heard from mostly in public meetings.

One answer put forward to solve this dichotomy has been to say that everything we do is worship - i.e. work is worship. When people catch on to this they seem to feel really happy about their practical work and begin to sense that it has value. Why is this? I believe this works because using the word worship puts a connotation of “holy” or “valuable” on their work. Why does calling work “worship” help? It's because deep down we believe that worship is a holy occupation and if work is worship then work is holy.

Why don't we believe that work is holy and valuable to the Lord in and of itself? - just because God has ordained it. If we have to call it worship to make it valuable, we are calling on the idea that worship is somehow more valuable (???) and that attaching the word to daily tasks will somehow sanctify these more mundane activities.

If we say that everything we do (our work) is worship then we fall into the trap of over-generalizing the meaning of worship, we lose the distinctives of what the bible calls worship and therefore are in danger of trivializing worship.

Calling our work “worship” is only a bandaid to the problem. A better way to solve the sacred-secular is to get God's perspective of the material world - to see what He thinks of practical tasks and be guided by that revelation in all that we do.

Then worship can be seen for what it is, and have it's rightful place among all the other holy and valuable activities that we engage in.