

Engaging with Secular Culture

How do we live in our predominantly secular culture where the majority of people are not Christians? How do we interact with our secular co-workers or non-Christian family members when their ethics are so different from ours. Often, the church has tended to judge the world while overlooking sin within the body of Christ. That is not the biblical model. The biblical model is to love sinners. How do we do this?

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I. What is secular culture?

- A. Separation of Church and State
- B. Exclusion of “faith” from public discourse
- C. Distinction between public and private spheres
- D. Implausibility of religious belief

II. Why do Christians find secular culture such a challenge?

- A. End of Christendom
- B. Rejection of Christian worldview and values
- C. Marginalisation of Christians as a tiny minority
- D. Lack of cultural power and dominance
- E. Rejection/stigmatisation of Christian ethics and morality

F. Empirical and philosophical pluralism dominant

G. Celebration of diversity and “tolerance”

III. Are their parallels between contemporary secular society and the world of the Bible?

A. God’s people living in a pluralistic world

B. God’s people living in exile

C. God’s people as a minority with no cultural power

IV. What is the mission of the church in a pluralistic society?

A. To Christianise society?

B. To impose Christian morality and values by law?

C. To win the “culture war”?

D. To seek and save their lost?

V. 1 Corinthians as a Model for Christians Living in a Secular Plural Society

A. Exercise church discipline against professing believers who refuse to repent of sin

- 1 Corinthians 5v1-8

B. Do not exercise judgement against unbelievers who sin

- 1 Corinthians 5v9-13

C. Have confidence in your ability to exercise judgement within the church

- 1 Corinthians 6v1-6

D. Have confidence in the power of the gospel to change people

- 1 Corinthians 6v7-11

- E. Flee from immorality and live a holy life of purity
 - 1 Corinthians 6v12-20

VI. 1 Peter as a Model for Christians Living in Exile

- A. Live amongst the pagans but not like the pagan
 - 1 Peter 2v11-12; 4v1-3
- B. Do good to everyone
 - 1 Peter 2v12; 3v16
- C. Fulfil your duties to others
 - 1 Peter 2v13-3v7
- D. Obey and respect the authorities
 - 1 Peter 2v13-17
- E. Be prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ
 - 1 Peter 2v18-25; 3v8-17; 4v1-2; 4v12-19
- F. Commend the gospel by your Christlikeness
 - 1 Peter 1v16; 2v12
- G. Speak the gospel when you have opportunity
 - 1 Peter 3v15

Suggested Readings:

D A Carson, *The Gagging of God* (IVP)
D A Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Eerdmans)
John Piper, *Think It Not Strange* (Desiring God)
James Hunter Davison, *To Change the World* (OUP)
Leslie Newbiggin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*
Larry Osbourne, *Thriving in Babylon* (David C Cook)
Tim Chester & Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church* (IVP)
Gilbert & DeYoung, *What is the Mission of the Church* (Crossway)
Sam Alberry, *Is God Anti-Gay* (The Good Book Company)
Ed Shaw, *The Plausibility Problem* (IVP)