

Spiritual Schizophrenia

Short Circuit:
Only Some of Life is Spiritual

“The worst lies are not the ones we tell, but the ones we live.”

ANONYMOUS

Do I have Spiritual Schizophrenia?

John Nash had a stellar career. He was a brilliant thinker, mathematician, and economist; a Nobel Prize winner; universally recognized as brilliant. From the very beginning of his schooling, he seemed destined for greatness. At a very young age, his advisor recommended him to graduate studies at Ivy League schools with a letter of only one sentence: “This man is a genius.” At age twenty-two, he had already graduated from Princeton with a doctorate in Mathematics. His dissertation was only twenty-eight pages, but it revolutionized math and economics. His creative intellect was legendary. He taught at Princeton and MIT, two of the most prestigious universities in the world. Truly, John Nash had a career most could only dream of.

But soon, tragedy struck. While at the top of his profession at age thirty, he began to hear voices in his head. These voices led him to believe that he was really a secret agent who was the target of dark, powerful forces in a cold-war communist conspiracy.

He imagined encoded messages in almost everything he read. John Nash had become schizophrenic.

Schizophrenia is the psychological disorder ascribed to a person medically diagnosed as having a split or “disassociation” between the rational and emotional parts of the brain. The word “schizophrenia” comes from the Greek words *schizein*, “to split,” and *phrenia* meaning “the mind.” People diagnosed with schizophrenia may go through life struggling to navigate two or more apparent realities. At times, they may see the world as it really is, but when under the influence of schizophrenia, their mind and emotions can build a false reality of their own.

Do You Struggle with Spiritual Schizophrenia?

A Monday Morning Atheist is living with a kind of “spiritual schizophrenia,” a case of having a split mind with God and work on opposing sides. This spiritual schizophrenia comes from a false belief that life divides neatly into different compartments



ANDY

Automotive Technician

“Sure, I’m a
Christian.
But what
does that
have to do
with my job?”

**...a case of
having a split
mind with God
and work on
opposing sides.**

with only a small part of life being truly spiritual and the rest being non-spiritual, or at least spiritually neutral.

In this belief, the spiritual aspect of life involves activities like church (when we make it), prayer (when we are in a tight jam), and possibly reading our Bible (if we are really “religious”). Other spiritual activities like serving the homeless or short-term missions may also qualify. But thinking that these types of activities are the only things that really matter to God is a mistake. Today we too often see our job purely as an earthly enterprise, and we rarely see any spiritual component at all. We need to absorb a truth that teacher and author A. W. Tozer once expressed this way: “It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, but why he does it.”

Why do you work? Do you ever treat your work as if it were unrelated to God? If so, then you’ve probably struggled with

spiritual schizophrenia and the dim and lifeless work that comes with it.

Being Blind to the Problem

Many years ago I was on the verge of making a decision that would change the course of my life. During this period I had a conversation with a colleague of mine named Peter. At the time, I was the CEO of a consulting company, but I was feeling like I needed a way to make a more meaningful impact—to be significant in God’s eyes.

Peter recognized this, I think, and asked, “So, Doug, how’s life?” I answered, “It’s okay, but I’m feeling a little unsettled. I’ve been trying to figure out my mission in life. And right now I know God is calling me to help in a way that matters most to Him—probably something here at church like evangelism, or at least being on staff to help our church’s mission.”

At that point, he challenged me with a simple and powerful question: “Well, Doug, let me back things up a little. Tell me about

your work—what has God been doing in your life Monday to Friday? Who have you been influencing?”

That question almost seemed off-topic at first, irrelevant to the more spiritual aspirations I had in mind. But Peter continued to say, “Doug, I am trying to get at something a little different. Have you ever considered that maybe God has plans for you in the workplace? Ministry plans through your job?”

Even as I answered, I was beginning to understand the problem in my thinking. “Huh. Well, I...I guess I haven’t ever thought of my actual ‘work’ in terms of mission or ministry before.”

Looking back, I find it sad, because here I was, a guy spending over fifty hours a week working, and I was seeing it as a spiritual write-off. Regrettably, I was actively looking for a way to contribute to God’s kingdom, but I was only thinking in terms of quitting work and following a narrow idea of “God’s work.” I was totally in the dark about the problem, a victim of a full-blown short

circuit in my spiritual wiring that had switched off a huge chunk of my life from God's influence.

Ironically, I was just a step away from joining the staff of my church in some capacity despite my own spiritual confusion. Serving in your church is a great thing, but the tragedy is that somehow, even while taking the question so seriously, I got the idea that my work was not spiritual at all. Looking back, I realize that I was operating with spiritual schizophrenia; as a result, I was thinking like an atheist for most of the week. Since that time, I've found that my story of having a huge spiritual blind spot is not an exception but the norm. Seeing work as inherently non-spiritual is a major false assumption causing Monday Morning Atheism to grow in our work lives.

My Narrow Thinking

When I held up my work in comparison to my ideas about what I thought God wants for us, somehow I came away with the message that my work was not that important. I was trapped by

“I am so conflicted almost every day.”

Christian ministry, I would be happy”—this was my private thinking. Some of you have had this very same thought.

This divided view of life saturates our value system. We think that the big questions about eternity are all that matter to God, that He wants us to think about souls and nothing else. But limiting our idea of what is spiritual in that way attempts to put God in a little box of our own design and He’s not meant to be confined to that.

Dorothy Sayers, a famed Christian writer from Oxford, once said it well: “[The church] has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world’s intelligent workers have become irreligious, or at least, uninterested in religion.”

Working Truth: Everything is His

So we're starting to see this idea, that only some types of work are spiritual is flawed. It denies the biblical truth that everything was created by God for His glory. It fails to see that everything that exists is His domain. Abraham Kuyper, a Christian philosopher and the prime minister of the Netherlands, once said, "In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which the Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare, 'That is mine!'" In reality, everything in creation was made by God and belongs to Him. "For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16 NIV). Everything in the world, everything in your life—it's all His.

**Everything
in the world
is His.**

The Apostle Paul wrote to Christians living in the pagan city of Corinth, "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:21, NIV). He wanted them to make sure that there was no division

in their lives between their relationship with God and what they did on a daily basis. God created all of life, so therefore, all of life is spiritual. We are on a divine mission for God while at work.

Whatever your specific work situation, believing that God is not interested in the work that takes up so much of your time

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will lead to a schizophrenic spiritual life. We become spiritually deadened to most of what we do during our waking hours, and soon enough the lights dim and leave us in the dark spiritually. We can't let that happen. We spend more time working than we do in any other

activity—more than home responsibilities and certainly more than church. We have left our faith out of work as if it did not matter, and everything about work has suffered for it. Your heavenly Father wants to be Lord of everything. Everything is His, and acknowledging that fact is part of what we were designed to do.



ANNE

Marketing Consultant

“I find myself being two-faced at work like everyone else, and I can’t seem to stop.”

Think About God's Reputation

This false notion about what is and isn't spiritual causes us to live hypocritically as well. In fact, this is the number one reason most people give for unbelief—the hypocrisy of Christians they work with or live around. On Sunday we see the world through

“Lack of loyalty and honesty at my work is a huge challenge for me.”

a spiritual lens, but when we get ready to work on Monday, our behavior all too often can't be distinguished from anyone else's. We claim to have seen the light, but many of us stumble around in the darkness the entire time our coworkers see us at work. This

contradiction has done immeasurable harm to the reputation of God's character and love.

Of course, this particular area of wrong thinking goes well beyond the boundaries of our work. Studies show that, on almost every measure, nominal Christians are just as likely to lie, cheat, and get divorced as the general population.

Working (and living) Monday to Friday as if there was no God of Sunday results in a two-faced way of living. This smears God's reputation particularly among those we work with. What are we to do?

Living a Bold and Flavorful Life

This attempt to separate life into the spiritual and the non-spiritual is similar to the way a frozen dinner's little white tray is divided up into different compartments, each part tightly sealed by cellophane into separate spaces. With these meals, the manufacturer doesn't want these various parts to spill over into one another. To keep it neat and clean, they compartmentalize everything. If this sounds bland and sterile, you're right. It's food built for convenience, not for quality.

Similarly, we are tempted to limit faith to a small area of life for the sake of extra convenience. We often compartmentalize our lives, keeping God separate from areas such as our finances, sex life, and work so that everything is safe, separated, and easy.

The result, of course, is unappetizing. To gain convenience, quality is sacrificed. And to those on the outside looking in, it probably looks about as good as a frozen dinner.

On the other hand, consider a stir-fry—bold and flavorful. Stir-fry is very different from a frozen dinner’s careful separation—the opposite, in fact. In a stir-fry dinner, all the ingredients are

God never intended any part of life to be kept apart from a relationship with Him.

sautéed in the same sauce along with spices and high heat. You toss everything around violently, mixing it up thoroughly so that everything gets covered in the good sauce. That’s what gives it flavor. Living with God is meant to be bold and delicious, like a stir-fry, spiritually flavoring every aspect of life. It

was never meant to be a frozen dinner of cellophane, cardboard, and unappetizing fare. God never intended any part of life to be kept apart from a relationship with Him. He is the ingredient who should touch all of our thoughts and actions.

Fixing this short circuit—the one that tells us that work is not spiritual and is separate from God—makes us more likely to stay switched ON in our work. Is it any wonder that work can be a bland, lifeless effort when we keep God separate from it? It's only when we address this problematic thinking that work begins to take in the sense of life and purpose that comes from God. Just by knowing this truth about your work, it can seem immediately brighter. Remember, God wants to be included in all of life, and where He is invited, life and purpose are sure to follow.

Work Life Illumination



“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’” John 8:12 (NASB)

Dear God,

I am finally realizing that You are interested in my work. Thank You for walking with me no matter what I am doing. Help me as I face the challenges of today. I need Your guidance and direction. Grow me spiritually through my work. Thank You for Your care and love...

*“I am starting to feel whole again knowing
God never leaves me, even at work. I am seeing places
where I was headed in the wrong direction.”*

—David, Engineer

Switch Check



- Yes** **No** Do I behave one way at work and another way at home or church?
- Yes** **No** Do I rarely think about God at work?
- Yes** **No** Do I think work is cursed, mostly bad, or worldly?
- Yes** **No** Do I think pastors or missionaries are more blessed than I am?
- Yes** **No** Do I feel my work does not matter to God and has little spiritual value?

If you answered “yes” to any of these, there is a good chance that you are struggling to some degree with spiritual schizophrenia.

Reflections

- 1) When was the last time you saw something at work that was contrary to your values or religious beliefs? What was it?
- 2) Give an example of a behavior or attitude in you that is different at work than when you're at home or church.
- 3) How would you work differently if you knew that Jesus would be your customer or your coworker?

Bright Ideas



- Keep a packet of soy sauce in your desk drawer or briefcase to remind you that God is the sauce that flavors all you do.
- If you do something wrong at work, admit it. Keeping short accounts is healthy for relationships.
- Go out of your way every day to do something extra for someone. When you catch someone else doing well at work, tell them you noticed.

Stop the Switch



Let's switch on the lights. Use the 5-minute Switch Quiz to pinpoint your most prevalent spiritual challenges at work. Get it free at www.MondaySwitch.com.

Notes and Ideas
