**"CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE CHURCH"**

**Secularism**

**INTRODUCTION**

Last week, studied denominationalism. That challenge contributes toward changing the church into something very different than Jesus intended. Churches that are carnal, fleshly, more of the world than of God.

A similar challenge confronting churches is the trend toward **secularism**.

**I. DEFINING SECULAR AND SECULARISM**

**A. SECULAR...**

1. Worldly rather than spiritual - **American Heritage Dictionary**

 2. Of or relating to worldly things as distinguished from things relating to church and religion; not sacred or religious; temporal; worldly - **YourDictionary.com**

**B. SECULARISM...**

 1. Indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations - **Merriam-Webster**

2. Worldly spirit, views, or the like; esp., a system of doctrines and practices that disregards or rejects any form of religious faith and worship - **YourDictionary.com**

**Note: Secularism in society is a real problem. A secular spirit attacks the church, attacks religion. (For example, a person is not qualified to be President if he believes the Genesis account). However, an even greater danger exists when churches themselves become secularized. (Conforming to the enemies standards!)**

[One would think that by definition churches would be religious, spiritual, sacred, in nature. Yet many have noted that in too many churches, there are...]

**II. MANIFESTATIONS OF SECULARISM**

**A. THE CHURCH AS A BUSINESS INSTUTITION...**

 1. In the Bible, the church is a spiritual institution

 *a. The body of Christ, the kingdom of God -* [***1Co 12:27***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%2012.27)***;*** [***Col 1:13***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col%201.13)

**(1 Corinthians 12:27),** *“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.***(Colossians 1:13),** *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”*

 *b. The bride of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit -* [***2Co 11:2***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2Co%2011.2)***;*** [***1Co 3:16***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%203.16)

**(2 Corinthians 11:2***), “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*

**(1 Corinthians 3:16),** *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

 *c. With elders served as shepherds, feeding and guiding the flock of God -* [***Ac 20:28***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ac%2020.28)

**(Acts 20:28),** *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*

 *d. Deacons met physical needs, but so others could focus on spiritual needs -* [***Ac 6:1-7***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ac%206.1-7)

**(Acts 6:3-4),***“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

 *e****.*** *Preachers were devoted to the Word, serving as evangelists -* [***1Ti 4:16***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Ti%204.16)***;*** [***2Ti 4:5***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2Ti%204.5)

**(1 Timothy 4:16),***“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”*

**(2 Timothy 4:5),** *“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”*

 2. Today, many churches function more like a business

*a. Elders are more like board members, directors, corporate managers;*

*b. Preachers have become staff managers, counselors, figure heads;*

*c.* *Members divided into committees, departments, with chairpersons, superintendents;*

*d. Evangelism has turned into marketing, public relations)*

**B. THE CHURCH AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION...**

 1. Today, many churches have become social clubs *(a. Building gymnasiums, eating ("fellowship") halls; b. Offering mental counseling, babysitting services; c. Providing entertainment for children and even adults)*

 2. Whereas in the Bible the church focused on the spiritual

 *a. They assembled to worship, edify one another -* [***Ac 20:7***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ac%2020.7)***;*** [***He 10:24-25***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/He%2010.24-25)

**(Acts 20:7),** *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”*

**(Hebrews 10:24-25),***“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

 *b. Trends leading to make the focus social or secular were addressed -* [***1Co 11:17-34***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%2011.17-34)

**(1 Corinthians 11:22) [Turning Lord’s Supper into a common meal] ,** *“What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.”*

 *c. The assembly was their "fellowship hall", the Lord’s Supper their "fellowship dinner"*

 *d. Families were expected to take care of their social needs, lest the church become burdened and unable to fulfill its primary duties -* [***1Ti 5:16***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Ti%205.16)

**(1 Timothy 5:16),** *“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”*

**III. AVOIDING SECULARISM**

**A. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SACRED/SECULAR...**

 1. Let the church fulfill its role as a spiritual institution, focused on:

*a. Teaching the Word of God, praising God*

*b. Providing opportunities to fulfill spiritual duties [e.g., Lord’s Supper, assembling]*

*c. Equipping the saints for ministry, much of which will occur outside the church*

 2. Let family and society fulfill their roles

*a. Parents and friends providing entertainment, physical needs*

*b. Professionals providing medical and counseling needs*

*c. Individuals joining together in charitable organizations to serve others*

**B. ADOPT BIBLICAL GUIDELINES...**

 1. The church focus on spiritual - [**1Co 11:34**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%2011.34)

**(1 Corinthians 11:34),** *“But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.”*

2. Be careful not to take on unnecessary burdens [**1Ti 5:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Ti%205.16)

**(1 Timothy 5:16),** *“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”*

 4. Follow NT pattern for organization- [**Php 1:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Php%201.1)

**(Philippians 1:1),** *“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”*

**CONCLUSION**

* The Lord’s church is a wonderful institution; but God has other institutions as well (family, government, etc.)
* The Lord’s church is uniquely designed and qualified to fulfill its limited role *(One that is spiritual and sacred. One that can easily be neglected or burdened)*. That is the danger of secularism!