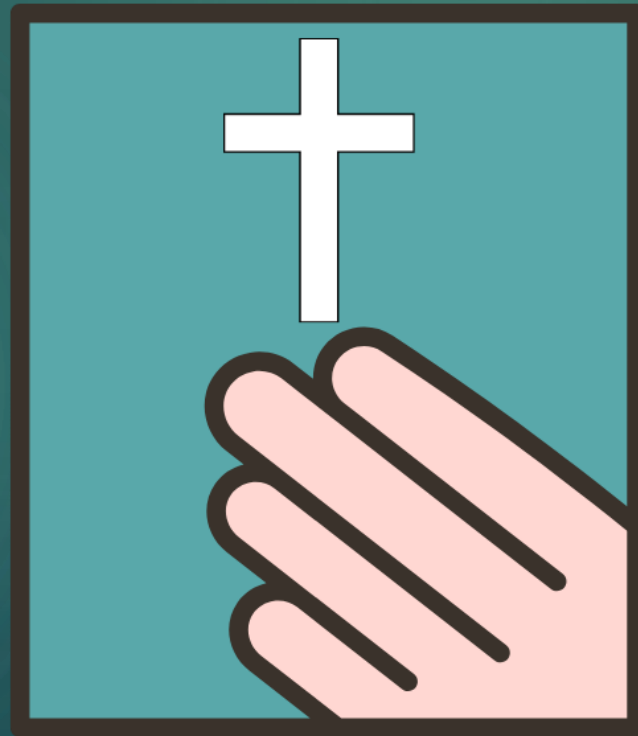


# Living in Truth

Confident Conversation in a Conflicted Culture



Bible Study adapted from  
*Living in Truth* by  
Mary Jo Sharp

# Welcome

- Recap of Week 5
  - Responding to Cultural Views
- Choose your words wisely
  - Loaded language is words or phrases which elicit an emotional response and can be used to persuade a person's thoughts or opinions (positively or negatively)
  - Be mindful of timbre – it's not just about what you say, but how you say it.
  - Misconceptions can take root and affect a person's worldview. It's important to identify a misconception and question how the person arrived at it.

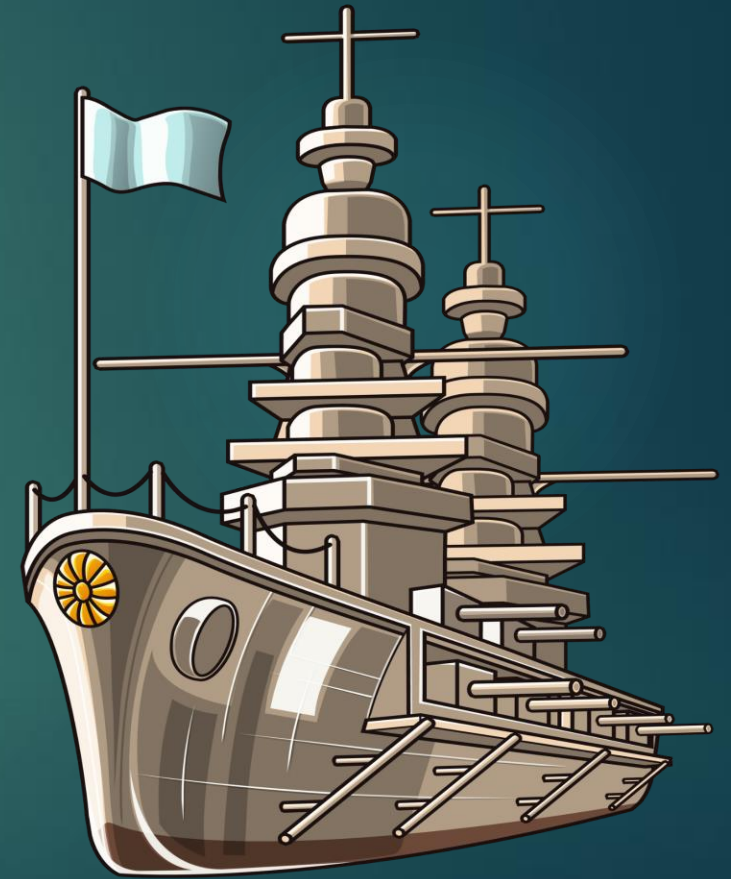


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# Session 6: Engage in Total Truth



# Cruise Ship or Battle Ship?



# Upstairs/ Downstairs



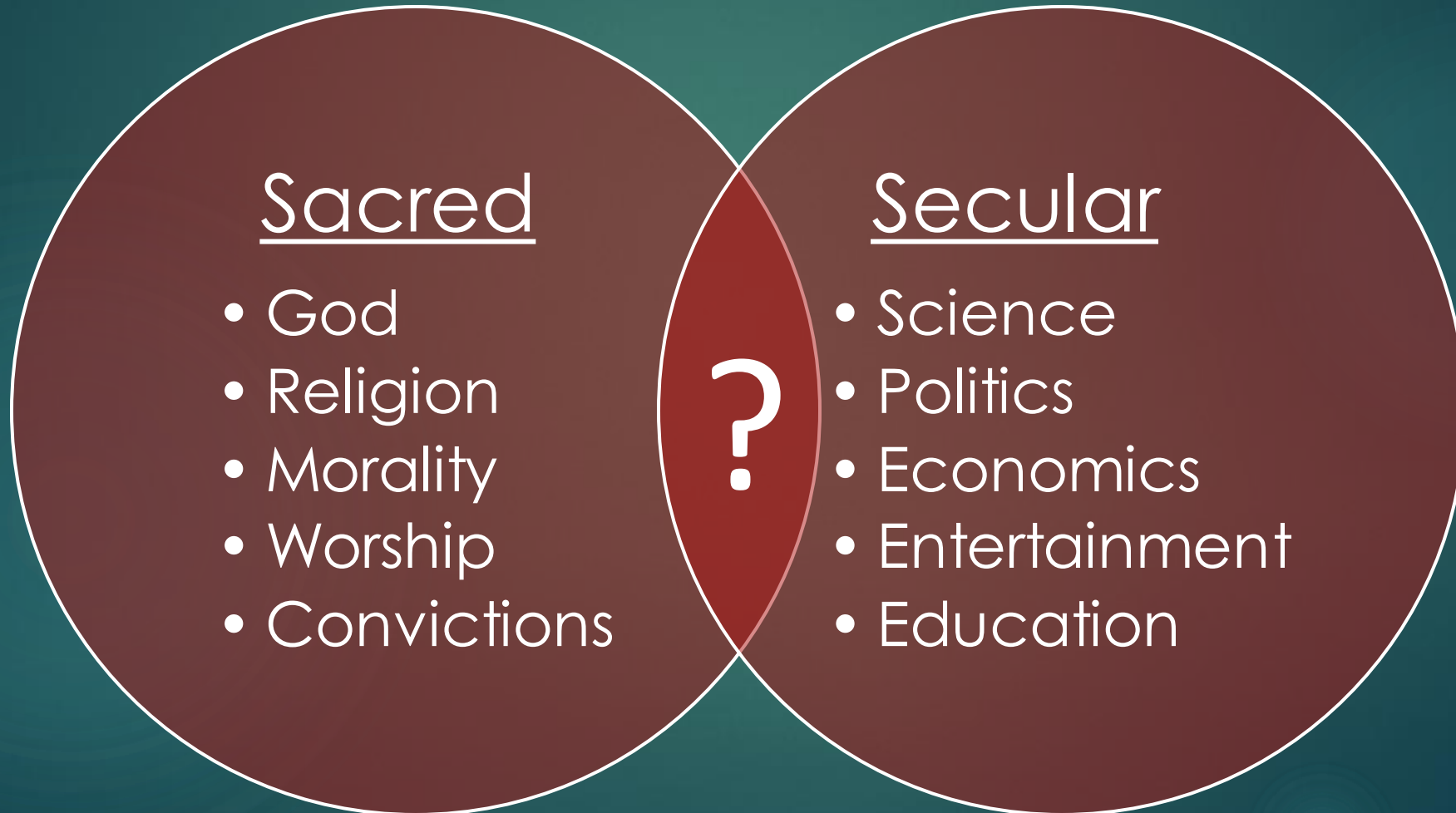
- Prior to the Reformation, the line between faith and reason began to separate. Revelation (Truth revealed by God) had been seen as absolute; it was the yardstick of human inquiry which human reason could not contradict.
- However, by the 14th century, people like William Ockham posited that "God could not be understood in rational categories at all."

# Upstairs/ Downstairs



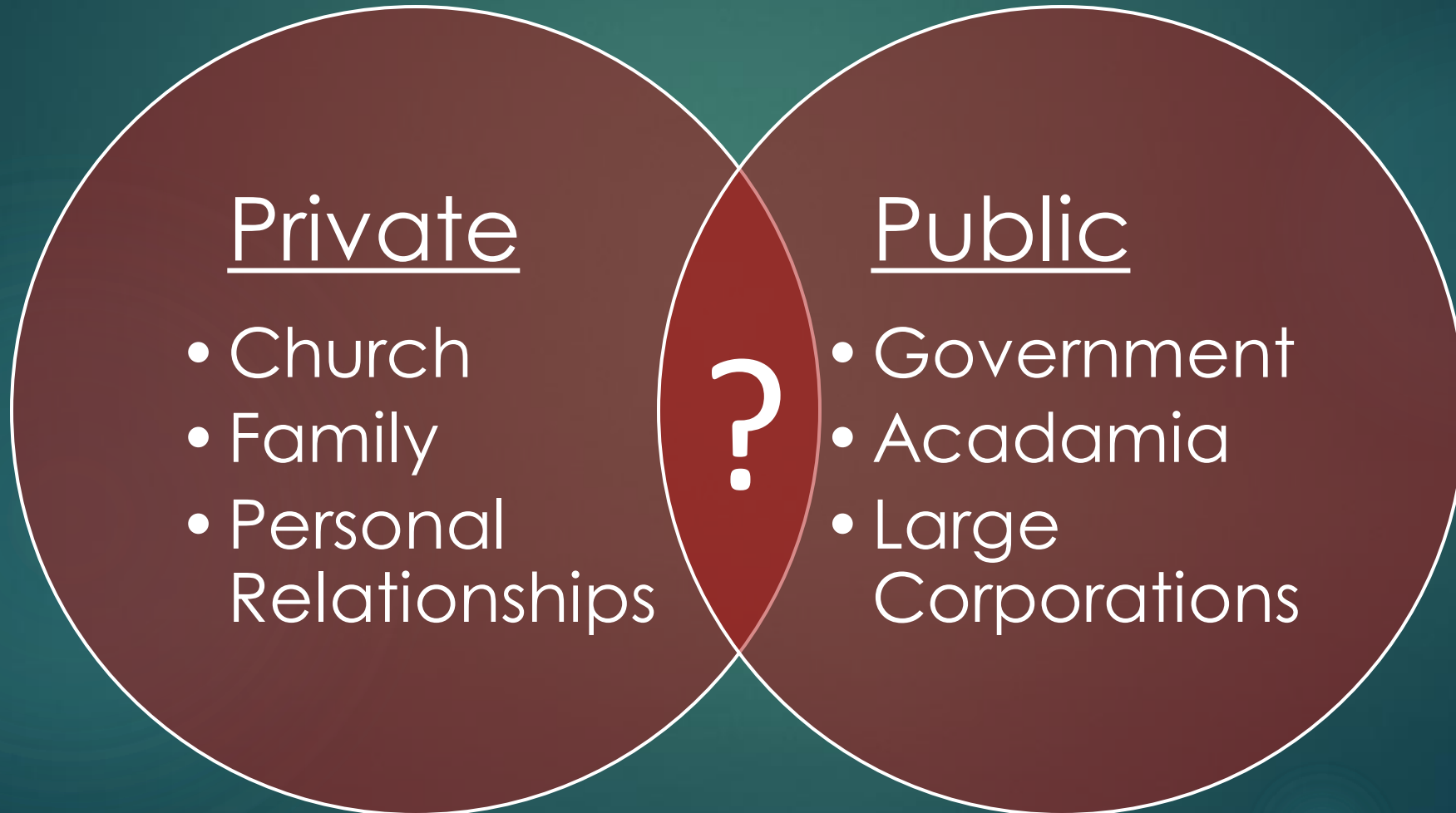
- "For if virtually everything needed for ordinary life could be known by reason alone, why do we need revelation at all?"

# The Sacred/ Secular Split





# The Public/ Private Split



# Upstairs/ Downstairs



- What personal or societal problems do you think may arise from dividing life up into the sacred and the secular?
- Why is this split so devastating in the Christian life?
- Do you think you've ever stopped yourself from having a conversation about God because of fear about violating the sacred/ secular split, even if you didn't know that was the cause?

# Upstairs/ Downstairs



- "The result is that religion is not considered an objective truth to which we submit, but only a matter of personal taste which we choose." In this system of thought, religion has nothing to offer in any public arena because it is not based in fact, but opinion.

# Upstairs/ Downstairs



- Read Matthew 5:13-16. To what does Jesus compare His followers? What do you think this comparison means?
- Salt combats deterioration. Christians are those who combat destructive powers in our culture and in our world. The cultural dogma of a sacred/ secular split is one of those destructive powers.

# Upstairs/ Downstairs

- Read 1 Peter 3:13-16. What does Peter encourage believers not to do? What should we do instead?
- In this passage, Peter was addressing a group of fearful believers who were suffering for their beliefs. Peter encourages them to trust in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, leaving no room to compartmentalize the Christian life between sacred and secular.

# Releasing the sacred/ secular split

- Read John 8:31-32. What did Jesus say to the Jews who had become believers?
- What do you think Jesus means by "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"? (v. 36)
- Many of Jesus' hearers (even those who believed) were offended because Jesus implied that they were slaves to sin and needed to be set free. Do you see a parallel to this reaction in our culture?

# Releasing the sacred/ secular split

- "That we have used our free will to become very bad – is so well known that it hardly needs to be stated. But to bring this doctrine into real life in the minds of modern men, and even modern Christians, is very hard. [...] Christianity now has to preach the diagnosis – in itself very bad news – before it can win a hearing for the cure." - C.S. Lewis.

# Releasing the sacred/ secular split

- By submitting to Jesus' authority, we are set free from enslavement to deceptive philosophies (Col. 2:8) such as the view that Christians should keep their beliefs private.
- If we are in Christ, we need not fear rejection or persecution. We can be set free from cultural untruths like, "faith is a private matter," "don't shove your beliefs on me," "Christians are ignorant," or "keep your religion out of [politics, schools, etc.]"



# Releasing the sacred/ secular split

- Why do you think Christians have such a difficult time moving from understanding Jesus' teaching on freedom to applying that freedom in our lives?
- "The trouble is this: things that strike the senses outweigh other things – more important ones – that don't immediately strike them. This is why people stop thinking at the point where their eyesight gives out, paying little or no attention to things that can't be seen." - Francis Bacon

# Releasing the sacred/ secular split

- When we remain in God's Word, we free ourselves to accept and follow the Truth. We do not have to conform to our culture (Rom. 12:1-2).
- "Christians are called to resist the spirit of the world, yet that spirit changes constantly...to resist the spirit of the world, we must recognize the form it takes in our own day." - Nancy Pearcey

# Releasing the sacred/ secular split

- What does it mean to say that "no area of life is secular"? Do you agree or disagree?
- How does the sacred/ secular split directly affect the Christian's ability to live out their faith in public?
- What can you do today to apply your freedom in Christ in the public arena? What are some practical ways to counter the spirit of the world seeking to constrain and silence Truth?

# Practical Steps for Spiritual Growth

- Find a Bible-reading routine that works for you
- Set regular alarms/ reminders to read and pray
- Subscribe to a daily devotional plan
- Join a study on basic Christian doctrines
- Join a study on basic apologetics
- Start a prayer journal
- Try not to rush through your time with God
- Don't feel guilty for missing a reading. This is an investment toward your freedom, not an activity to burden you with more things to do.

# Practical Steps to Combat Falsehoods

- Regularly analyze the things that I read/ hear/ see.
- Repeat out loud what I just heard/ saw/ read.  
Example: "This cosmetic commercial told me I would feel beautiful if I used this product."
- Ask myself, "What is the underlying assumption?"
- Ask myself, "Does this assumption match the Truth of God's Word?" "How do I know?"
- Determine what I should do with this communication (receive it, reject it, or redeem it)

# Practicing Conversation

- Suppose a friend read an article in which a congressman quoted the Bible as part of making his case for his stance on a particular legislation. Your friend is upset with that congressman for doing so and says to you, "I wish people would learn to keep their religion out of Washington!" What could you ask your friend in response to their statement?

# Practicing Conversation

- Suppose you respond with "What do you mean by that?" and they answer, "People should keep their religious views at home; that stuff is private. It shouldn't be brought up when it comes to making public policy." Now what would you ask them?

# Practicing Conversation

- One response might be to say, "Why do you believe that?" Or "How did you come to that conclusion?"
- Remember, the split view of life is a cultural dogma. People need to be pressed to think about why they believe this view is true.
- Suppose they respond with, "That's just the way all reasonable people think." What would you say in response?



# Practicing Conversation

- The statement "all reasonable people" implies that to be considered reasonable, one must agree with their worldview. That doesn't sound very reasonable, does it? Should we demand that the atheist leave their worldview at home? That request is impossible; a person's worldview informs their whole life, so why should we ask that of Christians?

# A High Calling

- Read Isaiah 59:12-15. According to Isaiah, when truth is missing from the public square, what else is missing? What happens to those who turn from evil?
- Wherever truth is missing, so goes honesty and justice. Wherever truth is missing, the righteous become prey to evil. Christians are supposed to be salt and light in a society where truth is deteriorating and darkness encroaches.

# In Conclusion

- Be alert
  - Be open to Divine appointments; you never know when an opportunity will present itself.
- Practice Questioning
  - Think of questions you might use to authentically interact with people in different situations.
- Take the Plunge
  - Remember that your purpose is not to win an argument. Your purpose is to assist the other person to examine his or her beliefs.