

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it

David Stroud leads ChristChurch, London, and the Newfrontiers UK Team. He is launching a new conference to equip people to transform culture. For more information visit www.everythingconference.org

I recently spoke to an actor who, in a moment of candid honesty, admitted, 'I have never felt at home in a church before, because people have never understood my job.'

How many of us feel our careers are devalued or misunderstood? How many see our jobs as secondary to mission and struggle to have a vision for how Jesus can use us in our sphere of influence?

Many of us work in the secular world and it is tempting to see a divide between church and our work. But I am increasingly convinced that we need to be people who shape culture, and if this is to happen, we dare not devalue our careers! We need to see our workplaces as mission fields and ask the question, 'What does Jesus want to do in my workplace?'

A businessman, soon after coming to faith, told me he was dissatisfied with the recruitment industry in which he worked. He was put off by the cut-throat attitude that cared more about profits than the welfare of their clients. In January he established his own recruitment agency, with the vision of seeing the whole industry changed, based on the principles of fairness, honesty and customer care. Within eight months its reputation had spread and he had relocated from his mother's kitchen to an office in a prime location.

I am thrilled by examples like this: men and women who have a vision for their career and see it as a key part of the Church's mission. Shaping culture is not just about planting churches and leading individuals to Christ, as vital as that is. It's about promoting the common good: benefitting everybody by creating better environments in which to live and work.

There is great potential for effecting change through positive influence. If we promote beauty, truth and goodness, everyone benefits. Christians are too often known for campaigning against the negative aspects of secular culture. I'm for creating rather than complaining. We need to seek opportunities to promote positive culture: helping Christian artists to exhibit their work and businessmen to operate ethically. What's more, if Christians are seen to be having a positive effect, we will gain credibility and a platform to speak on many issues.

Josiah Wedgwood is a prime example. In 1787, this well-known and influential businessman created a range of hat-pins and brooches for fashionable women. They bore an emblem of an African slave in chains and the provocative slogan 'Am I not a man and a brother?' Within three years, thousands had been distributed. Wedgwood's contribution to the world of fashion became a significant factor in raising public awareness for the Society for the Abolition of Slavery.

I am passionate about equipping Christians to make a difference in whatever area they find themselves. Psalm 24:1 tells us that 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.' Everything. Not just the so called 'sacred' elements of culture, but our work, study and leisure as well. Everything belongs to God, and, as His people, we are called to get involved and, have a positive influence on society. As we commit ourselves to impacting culture by being faithful in whatever area God has placed us, I am excited about the many possibilities that will emerge.

■ David Stroud

