THE OVERFLOW

What if the secular/sacred divide does not exist as we think?

I've been listening to a lot of Michael Patrick Kelly lately.



If you're unfamiliar with him, Michael Patrick Kelly is a German-Irish singer-songwriter who achieved extraordinary success as a member of the Kelly Family, one of Europe's most popular musical groups during the 1990s.

After selling millions of records and performing before enormous audiences, he walked away from the music industry and spent six years living in a monastery in France. He eventually returned to music, building another successful career as a solo artist.

Through it all, his relationship with Jesus has become central to how he understands himself and the world around him.

What fascinates me about his music is how naturally his faith finds its way into his songs. He sings about romantic love, broken hearts, injustice, loneliness, hope, and the struggles of being human. Sometimes he sings explicitly about God. Other times, he doesn't mention God at all. Yet his faith seems to be woven throughout his music.

He doesn't seem particularly concerned about whether his songs fit into the category of Christian music. He's simply creating music that reflects how he sees and experiences the world. And because his relationship with Jesus has profoundly shaped his life, that relationship inevitably influences what he creates.

His audiences aren't necessarily Christian. Many probably have little interest in religion. Yet they connect with his music because he's singing about things that matter to them.

The more I listen, the more I find myself thinking about something much bigger than music.

We can become so preoccupied with making things Christian that we overlook what it means to be Christian.

Somewhere along the way, we've become remarkably good at dividing the world into categories. Christian music and secular music. Christian books and secular books. Christian businesses and secular businesses. Sacred activities and secular activities. Spiritual conversations and ordinary conversations.

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We've even created an entire vocabulary to distinguish the things we believe belong to God from the things we assume belong to the world.

But I've been wondering whether we've misunderstood something fundamental about the world God created.

Psalm 24:1 makes an extraordinary declaration: *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."*

Everything.

Not simply the things we've labeled Christian. Not just our churches, worship services, Bible studies, or ministry activities.

Everything.

Of course, that doesn't mean everything in the world reflects God's goodness. Evil is real. Sin has corrupted what God created. People do terrible things, and much of what we experience in this world is far from what God intended.

But the presence of evil doesn't change who owns the world. And the corruption of something good doesn't mean God has abandoned it.

Colossians 1 tells us that everything was created through Jesus and for Jesus. Then it reveals something even more remarkable. Through Jesus, God is reconciling all things to Himself.

The world belongs to God. Sin has distorted His creation. And through Jesus, God is at work bringing reconciliation and redemption.

That changes how we see the world.

It also challenges the artificial divide we've created between what we call sacred and secular.

A song about a broken heart isn't somehow less meaningful to God than a song about heaven. A conversation about someone's anxiety isn't less important than a conversation about theology. An evening spent laughing with friends isn't simply a secular activity that needs a spiritual component to become worthwhile.

These are the experiences of people God created, knows, and loves. And they're part of the world Jesus came to redeem.

Which brings me to our dinner table.

Every Sunday evening, my wife and I welcome Disney Cast Members into our home for dinner. They're young adults from around the world who have come to Walt Disney World to work for a year before returning to their home countries.

The faces around our table are constantly changing. Some become family, others join us occasionally, and new friendships are always beginning.

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One thing they have in common is that they haven't yet met Jesus.

We eat together, laugh together, share stories, and talk about whatever happens to be on their minds. Sometimes the conversations are hilarious. Sometimes they're surprisingly personal. Occasionally, someone shares something painful that they've been carrying for a long time.

And sometimes we talk about Jesus.

Recently, three young women from Mexico were sitting around our table when one of them asked if I would read a parable from my book *Keyholes*. I was happy to oblige.

By the time I finished reading, all three were crying.

Later, each approached me separately to tell me how deeply the story had touched her. I didn't try to turn their emotions into a spiritual decision or steer the evening toward a particular outcome. I simply listened, grateful that something I'd written had connected with them in such a meaningful way.

I've thought about that evening quite a bit.

You see, we don't invite Cast Members to dinner so we can talk to them about Jesus. We invite them to dinner because Jesus is teaching us how to love them.

There's a tremendous difference.

If our primary objective were to make sure every dinner included a sufficient amount of Christian content, we'd probably begin dividing the evening into two categories. First, the food, laughter, and ordinary conversation. Then, the spiritual part.

But that's not how we experience our evenings together.

The meal matters.

The laughter matters.

The stories matter.

The friendships matter.

And when we talk about Jesus, that matters too. It's all part of the same evening.

We're not trying to make dinner Christian. We're simply opening our home and sharing our lives with people we genuinely love. And because Jesus is transforming our lives, His influence is present in how we welcome them, listen to them, care for them, and respond to what they're experiencing.

We aren't inviting Jesus into the dinner conversation. We're inviting people into a life in which Jesus is already present.

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I think this is where we sometimes get things backward.

We become so concerned about finding ways to bring Jesus into our conversations, professions, relationships, and activities that we overlook the deeper invitation Jesus has extended to us.

He wants to transform who we are.

That doesn't mean we stop talking about Jesus. Quite the opposite. There are moments when speaking openly about Him is the most natural and loving thing we can do. There are also moments when we need to be intentional, courageous, and clear about who He is and what He has done.

But those conversations don't have to be manufactured to prove that we're being faithful. They can emerge from relationships in which people are genuinely known, valued, and loved.

And sometimes, before anyone asks a question about Jesus, they encounter something of His character through the way we treat them.

That isn't the whole gospel. But it can awaken a curiosity that opens the door to discovering Him.

I wonder how many opportunities to reveal Jesus we've overlooked because we were too busy trying to make something Christian.

How many ordinary conversations have we hurried through because we were waiting for an opportunity to make them spiritual?

How many expressions of goodness, beauty, compassion, and creativity have we dismissed because they didn't carry a Christian label?

And how often have we confused the presence of Christian language with the evidence of a life being transformed by Jesus?

I don't believe the answer is to make everything sacred.

Scripture makes important distinctions between good and evil, holiness and sin, truth and deception. But I do believe we've created divisions that make it harder to recognize God's goodness in the world He loves.

And perhaps we've made following Jesus more complicated than He intended.

Jesus gave us a different picture.

In John 15, He describes Himself as the vine and His followers as the branches. He doesn't tell the branches to manufacture fruit. He invites them to remain connected to Him.

And as His life flows through them, fruit grows.

That's how I want to live.

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I want my relationship with Jesus to shape how I see the world, how I treat people, how I listen, how I love, and how I respond to the opportunities He places before me.

And when I talk about Jesus, I want those conversations to be natural and unforced. Not because I'm hesitant to speak about Him, but because He's already part of who I am becoming.

The overflow isn't something we manufacture. It's what happens when we remain connected to the source.

Which leaves me with a question I've been asking myself.

Are we trying to make Jesus part of what we're doing, or is Jesus transforming the way we do everything?

If you are curious about Michael Patrick Kelly, check out one of his many videos on YouTube. A couple of my favorites are ***The One*** or ***Wonders*****.**

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