

Spirituality in Modern Times
Our Quest to Be Spiritual in a Religiously Diverse Nation
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Introduction: Our Search for Spirituality.

- A. Pursuing spirituality has become extremely popular and desirable to many people in America.
- B. To find spirituality, many have looked to a number of religions for answers as a means toward being spiritual.
- C. People try to find spirituality wherever they can (e.g., nature, wisdom of the world, entertainment, emotional experiences, physical means, etc.).
- D. In our quest for spirituality, let us study this issue with an open mind and examine the evidence for what it means to be truly spiritual.

I. There Are Many Different Views of What it Means to Be Spiritual.

- A. Many believe spirituality and *all* religions go hand in hand.
- B. For others, being spiritual has little or nothing to do with organized religion, but is highly personal, determined by each individual's own definition of spirituality (e.g., New Age, Existentialism, emotions, physical pleasure).

II. What Does it Mean to Be Spiritual According to the Bible?

- A. Being spiritual involves a person's spirit as given to him or her by God (**Prov 20:27 – cf. Eph. 3:16; Eccles. 12:7; 1 Thes. 5:23 / Gen. 2:7**).
 - 1. The spirit is *that limited expression of God -- a likeness* image of Himself -- by which the spirits of all people have been and will be created (**Gen. 1:26-27**).
- B. To be spiritual is to be like God!
 - 1. God did not give us a spirit identical to His, but a spirit *like* His, a *limited* expression of Himself (**Gen. 1:26-27**).
 - 2. We share in the *likeness* of the intrinsic nature of God: His intellect, His will, His ability, and emotions.
- C. A person who is spiritual is a person who submits his or her spirit unto God.
 - 1. The spiritual person concentrates on using and developing the spirit within him unto the glory of God.
 - 2. A spiritual person is one who *chooses* to walk by the Spirit of God (**Gal. 5:16, 22-25**; cf. – **3 John 4**) instead of the desires of the flesh.
 - 3. Instead of dominated by the flesh (sins of the flesh have their origins in the mind/ heart; **Jas. 1:14-15; Mark 7:21**), the spiritual person obeys God.
- D. Being “spiritual” in a positive sense will depend on our response to “spiritual evil” or wicked spirits of Satan who tempt us to sin (**Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8**).
 - 1. We are commanded to put away sin or cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh *and spirit* in order to commune with God (**2 Cor. 7:1**).

III. What Does it Mean to Be Spiritual According to Other World Religions?

- A. Islam
 - 1. Spirituality is achieved, primarily, by “the Five Pillars of Faith.”
 - 2. The Koran teaches salvation is earned by the good deeds outweighing the bad deeds (Surah 101:6-9; 42:17; cf. 6:73ff; 18:99ff, 20:102ff, etc.).

B. Buddhism

1. To be spiritual (noble or holy), one must strive to be a person of wisdom and compassion; qualities believed to be *innate or inborn*.
2. Though given “the Five Precepts,” wisdom and compassion or morality is established by your own personal experience, not by any authority.
3. Spirituality is thought to be achieved by freedom of suffering by means of meditation in the goal to be detached from the world and self.

C. Hinduism

1. Spirituality is achieved through the belief in Brahman the Supreme soul.
2. Every creature is continually being reincarnated. Only by “spiritual self-realization” or Pure Consciousness can there be freedom from this cycle – by Self-Knowledge, yoga (corresponding to various lifestyles), and the merging of one’s own soul with the Supreme Soul achieves salvation.

D. Jainism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism.

1. For *Jainism*, spirituality is achieved by liberating the jiva (immortal part of man) by removing bad karma by good deeds.
2. For *Sikhism*, spirituality and thus salvation can only be achieved by uniting with Vahiguru (god) through devotion, meditation, and detachment from social conflicts and worldly pursuits.
3. For *Zoroastrianism*, spirituality is achieved through “good thoughts, good words, good deeds” by following the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster. Reward or punishment in Eternity depends on your good deeds.

IV. Why Choose Christ as the Way to Be Spiritual Over Others?

A. Jesus’ claim to be of God can be verified by *historical evidences*, whereas the persons of other religions cannot be verified.

1. Unlike all of the other religions mentioned, the foundation of Christianity depends on the identity of its founder (**Mat. 16:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:12-19**).
2. Jesus claimed to be God or the “I AM” (**John 8:24, 56-59; Exod. 3:14**) and His resurrection from the dead proved this to the world (**Rom. 1:4**).
3. Numerous eye-witnesses saw Jesus after He was resurrected (**1 Cor. 15:3-7; Acts 2:32; 3:14-15; 5:29-32; 10:39-43; 13:27-31**).
4. In every way, the apostles passed the test as credible, eye-witnesses (**1 John 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:1-8; 30-32; accuracy – e.g., Luke 1:1-4**).

B. The gospel way offers salvation by grace through faith in Christ, *instead of a meritorious system*.

1. A common thread that all other religions share is that spirituality and thus salvation is achieved or merited by one’s own personal efforts.
2. In contrast, Christianity speaks of spirituality and salvation as being possible by grace through faith (i.e., living faith) in Jesus Christ (**Eph. 2:8-10; cf. James 2:14-26**).
3. While other religions place a burden upon people no one can bear, the gospel provides the free gift of eternal salvation (**Rom. 6:23; cf. 3:23**).

C. To define spirituality by “whatever feels good” is too subjective and unreliable, leading to many invalid concepts of spirituality.

1. While our feelings can affect our spirituality (**Prov. 15:13; 17:22**), they are not the *primary* basis for being spiritual.
 2. Our emotions are continually changing and are not reliable indicators of spirituality (**Jer. 10:23**).
 3. Important decisions in life must not be made on sheer impulse or merely by what *feels* right (**Prov. 14:12**).
- D. Spirituality cannot be based on each individual's concept, for this will blur distinctions and destroy the concept of true spirituality altogether (**Isaiah 5:20**).

V. What Does It Take to Be a Spiritual Person in Christ?

- A. First, a person must hear God's word or the Gospel.
1. Each person must hear God's word (**Rom. 10:17**) or "the spiritual seed" must be sown within a person's heart (**1 Cor. 9:11; cf. Luke 8:15**).
 2. All have sinned and are dead in sin w/o Christ (**Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1**).
 3. Only the power of the gospel can bring a person alive again *in the spirit* (**1 Pet. 4:6 – cf. Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12**).
 - a. The gospel's power works to save the spirit, not the flesh (**Gal 6:18- cf. Phil. 4:23; 2 Tim. 4:22; Phm. 25**).
- B. A person must believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ to gain spirituality and spiritual blessings in Him (**Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:3**).
- C. To grow spiritually, the Christian is to continue to hear and study God's word. (**Col. 1:9; cf. Eph. 1:17; 1 Pet. 2:1-2**).
- D. Spirituality is not a possession, but an attitude, not a mere feeling, but a way of life as defined by God's spiritual law (**Rom. 7:14; cf. 1 Cor. 9:21**).
1. One must develop a spiritual attitude according to God's spiritual law (**Mat. 5:3; Rom. 1:9; 12:11; Phil. 4:5; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:13; 3:4; Gal. 6:1**).
 2. To be spiritual, a person needs to obey God's word (**1 Cor 3:1-3**).
 - a. One does not have to possess a miraculous spiritual gift to prove himself to be spiritual! (Such gifts have ceased – **1 Cor. 13:8-10**).
 - b. Worshiping God the way He directs is to be spiritual as well (**1 Pet. 2:5; cf. Heb. 13:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; John 4:23-24**).
- E. Spirituality does not rely on physical means (**Mat. 26:41; cf. Prov. 18:14**), but instead spiritual resources in Christ.
1. Only in Christ can we be wise, righteous, holy, and redeemed, thus spiritual (**1 Cor. 1:30**).
 2. Even when we are weak in the flesh, we can be strong in Christ (**2 Cor. 12:7-12; cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-4**).

VI. Why is it Important to Be Spiritual?

- A. In order to abide with God or have fellowship with Him who is Eternal (**2 John 9**).
- B. In order to live the kind of life we were meant to live.
1. We, who were made in the image of God, have a greater purpose than the rest of Creation to be spiritual (**Gen. 1:26-27; Heb. 2:7; Eph. 2:10**).
- C. In order to go to Heaven (**Rom. 8:6**).

Conclusion: True Spirituality Can Be Found in Jesus Christ! Commit Yourself to Being the Spiritual Person You Were Meant and Called to Be!