

In search of...

Truth & Right

Volume 10 Issue 49

December 6, 2015

Religious or Spiritual?

There is in the popular mindset today, the idea that an individual can be spiritual without being religious. I've seen this concept presented in some recently read articles. I've also heard such touted in some television programs on the subject. And, there are many people today who have bought into this idea that one can be spiritual without being religious. The mindset basically is this: everything that is associated with organized religion is "religious," whereas, everything that is associated with the individual person's heart is spiritual. Hence, as long as I am taking care of my "inner self" by being "spiritual" then I don't need to be religious (by practicing some form of organized religion). I want to ask two questions regarding these presuppositions. First, is this a distinction that ought to be made? Second, is God happy with such a distinction?

Perhaps we should begin looking at this subject by defining these two terms. The American

Heritage dictionary offers several definitions of the word "spiritual":

1. Of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material.
2. Of, concerned with, or affecting the soul.
3. Of, from, or relating to God; deific.
4. Of or belonging to a church or religion; sacred.
5. Relating to or having the nature of spirits or a spirit; supernatural.

On the other hand, the word "religious" has the following definitions:

1. Having or showing belief in and reverence for God or a deity.
2. Of, concerned with, or teaching religion: a religious text.
3. Extremely scrupulous or conscientious: religious devotion to duty.

It should be noticed that there are similarities in both definitions. Some things that are spiritual are religious and some things that are

religious are also spiritual. However, those who set up such a contrast between the spiritual and the religious have a special definition of each in mind. By "spiritual" they mean specifically, religious behavior related to the mind (such as meditation, prayer, devotion, etc.). By "religious" they mean behavior that is associated with the activities of religion (such as the forms of worship, church attendance, participation in church activities, etc.). It's not that these individuals are opposed to what they consider to be "religious." It is just that they don't feel as if they need to engage in "religious" activities.

Is there a real distinction between the "spiritual" and the "religious?" There is a distinction inasmuch as there is a difference between the inward person (spirit) and the activities of the outward person (body). We see this in passages such as 2 Corinthians 4:16 "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." And in our worship to God, there is such a distinction as well. Jesus talked about worship being in spirit and worship being in truth in John 4:24. This would roughly correspond to that which is "spiritual" (in spirit) versus that which is "religious" (in truth). So, yes, there is a distinction between the two words. However, the Biblical distinction between these two concepts isn't nearly as great as what some are making it out to be. In fact, instead of promoting the idea that you can have one without the other, the Bible teaches that being religious is dependent upon spirituality and

that being spiritual is dependent upon being religious as well.

Take for example what James writes in James 1:26, 27: "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." One might think that controlling our speech would be a "spiritual" thing. But here, James speaks about it as being "religious." Visiting orphans and widows is also an activity that we would consider "spiritual." But again, we are told that this is "pure religion." The point here is that one cannot be religious without being spiritual.

The opposite is true as well. One cannot be spiritual without being religious. Galatians 6:1 states: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Those who are "spiritual" are to be involved in "religious" activities, such as helping those who have gone astray to return to the church. Peter describes the church as a spiritual institution in 1 Peter 2:5. He says, "ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." The worship that the church offers up to God is supposed to be "spiritual" in nature. Worshipping God entails that we involve ourselves in certain religious activities. Hence, one

cannot be spiritual without being religious as well.

Returning to John 4:24, Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." There is no doubt that God expects Christians to be spiritual. This is the basic idea of what it means to worship God "in spirit." However, Jesus didn't stop there. He also said that we must worship God "in truth." We must have both the right attitude and the right actions, the right internals and the right externals. God wants us to be both "spiritual" AND "religious."

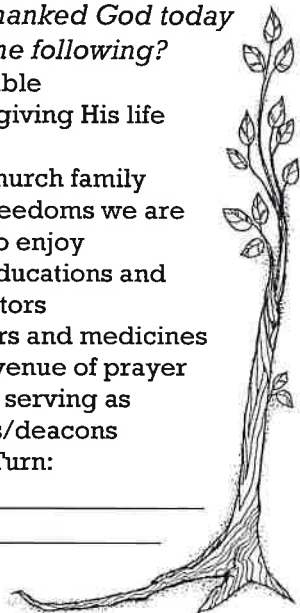
Really, when one starts examining the truth on this subject, one finds out very quickly the codependent nature of these two things. The bottom line is that a person cannot be spiritual without being religious and a person can't be religious without being spiritual. The problem today is that there are so many "religious" people who aren't spiritual, that this has driven many away from true religion. They have been turned off by the extravagant measures to which modern day "churches" go in order to attract the masses and have given up on practicing religion altogether. But let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater. We can be both spiritual and religious. In fact, we must be if we are going to please God! Let's resolve to be both spiritual and religious in the way that God would have it by following His word, the Bible. Here is the true standard for that which is both spiritual and religious.

Kevin Cauley

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



This bulletin is published by the
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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: *Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.*

1) MEMORIZING BIBLE FACTS

2 Cor. 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

It is important for Christians to have knowledge of God's Word. This month, our challenge will be to memorize some facts from the Scriptures so we can recall them at a moment's notice. Here are some things we should commit to memory:

- a) **The twelve sons of Israel-** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin
- b) **The apostles of Jesus-** Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James, Simon, Thaddaeus, Judas, Matthias, Paul
- c) **God's promises to Abraham-** The Land promise, Gen. 12:1; The National promise, Gen. 12:2; The Spiritual promise, Gen. 12:3
- c) **The organization of the Lord's Church-** Jesus is its founder & owner (Matt. 16:18) and head (Col. 1:18). As such there is no earthly headquarters (John 18:36). Local congregations are overseen by a plurality of elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Deacons are to serve and minister to the needs of the congregation, but do not have an authoritative role (1 Tim. 3:13).
- d) **The plan of salvation-** Believe, Heb. 11:6; Repent, 2 Pet. 3:9; Confess, Rom. 10:9; Immersion, Acts 22:16; Remain faithful, Rev. 2:10

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Jude 17-25

17 "But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. **18** They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." **19** It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. **20** But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, **21** keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. **22** And have mercy on those who doubt; **23** save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, **25** to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.