



Are you Spiritual or Just Religious?

Steve Highlander

Contrary to popular belief, God does not want you to be religious. Actually, His desire is for you to be SPIRITUAL! There is a major difference.

Religion is man's attempt to relate to God based on his own ideas and efforts. It may be a noble goal, but it is entirely futile according to God. Spirituality on the other hand is the result of a man's connection with God through the Holy Spirit.

Religion (any religion, even that with Christian ideas) starts on the outside with a set of laws, rituals and ceremonies and basically says, "If you do the dos and don't the don'ts and go through the prescribed rites and rituals, it will all somehow soak into you and change you inwardly. The problem is, it simply doesn't work that way. External things can never produce inward spiritual change.

Spirituality on the other hand starts on the inside. God says, "let me come on the inside of you and change your heart inwardly by My Spirit and those inward changes will work their way out of you and change the way you act, think and talk. It will affect your outlook on life and the direction in which you pursue life.

I can illustrate it with a computer. You can change the tower color, add some hardware, give it a faster internet connection, but if the programming is messed up nothing external will make a difference. The computer will spit out the same errors; it will just do it faster and be prettier. This, in effect, is what religion does to people. It really doesn't reprogram them to act different; it just makes them look a bit better on the way to hell.

Man is religious by nature. While many people today would say they don't "practice religion," (i.e. go to church) most still have a belief system that includes God. It has been said that man was created with a "God-shaped hole inside of him." There is an emptiness in every person that drives them to find fulfillment.

Some allow God Himself to fill the void and make them complete. Others try religion. Some people, either ignorant of God or rejecting Him as a viable answer to their need, try to fill the void with other things. For some it might be relationships or sex; for others it is money, fame or power; still others fall prey to alcohol and drugs. The options are endless and the end result is continual emptiness. The excitement that comes with the new relationship, job, car, house, etc soon fades and the old emptiness creeps back to the forefront. You can't fit a square peg in a round hole. Neither can you fill a spiritual void with natural things.

Religion starts with man's effort to connect with God through externals. Spirituality starts with God's desire to redeem man through His Spirit.

The fact that man is basically religious was proven some time ago. Some anthropologists set out to prove that religion was introduced into society later in man's existence. However they proved the exact opposite: Every society they found, no matter how far back they looked, not only had religious elements to it, they were generally centered on their religion as a society.

This explains why Pacific Islanders sacrificed virgins to volcanoes and primitive jungle tribes threw their babies to crocodiles. Most primitive religions involve blood sacrifice; even it isn't always human blood. What does this teach us about man's inherent religious nature? Even if a man does not understand God and has a really warped concept of who He is and how He operates, somewhere deep inside of man is a concept that he is not right with God and that a death must occur to appease God.

Without even realizing it, people throughout the ages, spanning cultures and societies witness to the Biblical truth that a sacrificial death is the only thing that can fix the problems between sinful man and a Holy God. They simply are ignorant of God's plan and set about trying to solve the problem in the best way they know how. While noble, it is futile.

To this the Bible agrees when it says:

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10 & 23.

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23.

"He (Jesus) became sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus." II Corinthians 5:21

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" Colossians 1:14

I have often illustrated spiritual life with a light bulb. A light bulb exists for the purpose of giving light. That is its destiny at its creation. While you can use a light bulb for a few others things (paint it, put a face on it and some yarn and make a craft out of it) that is not what it was created for, Likewise your life was created with a divine destiny. You have an eternal purpose that can only be fulfilled in connection with the creator.

You can have a room full of light bulbs and still have no light. Why? Because, even though the light bulb was created for the purpose of giving light, it can not do so on its own. It must have an external power supply running through it to fulfill its destiny. Likewise, though you were created for an awesome relationship with God and with great potential and divine destiny, you have no more power to fulfill it without the Spirit of God flowing through you than the light bulb does without electricity.

The Bible tells us, "He that is joined to the Lord is ONE SPIRIT with the Lord." God created man in His image and likeness. God is a triune being. Triune means 3 in 1. Accordingly He created man as a triune being: body, soul and spirit. Man is essentially a soul, living in a body and possessing a spirit. The soulish part of man is the real person. The soul has two "interfaces." Through the physical body the soul interfaces or

interacts with the physical world. Through his spirit man interacts with the spiritual realm. He may connect to God or even with occultic power.

When a person responds to God and believes the truth about Jesus Christ, confessing and repenting of their sins and accepting Jesus as their savior, God connects with that person via His spirit and the human spirit. All of a sudden (just like the electricity running through a light bulb when the switch is flipped) there is an external power supply available to enable a human to fulfill their divine destiny.

This CONNECTION is called salvation, or being saved, or being born again, or any one of a dozen other terms Christians use to explain the event. Essentially when the issue of sin is dealt with through Jesus, God pours life into that person by His Holy Spirit.

You see, religion is external, man made and does not require God at all. It is based on what man can do to connect with God externally. Spirituality on the other hand requires God to make it work.

How about you? Have you successfully asked and answered the question about your sins? Have you been born again? Are you spiritual or are you just religious?

Copyright 2009 Steve Highlander and C3M Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission granted to use this for personal or corporate Bible study, provided the contents remain unchanged and all contact and copyright information remain intact. For copies of this and other free resources please visit www.c3ministires.com. If you use these resources, please drop us an [E-Mail](#) and let us know.