

THE MEANING OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Intro: Many observers of culture have noted that there is a revival of “spirituality”. However this “spirituality”, emphasis on the inner man, has taken many roads and forms, many of which are not Biblical..

How can we distinguish between what is truly spiritual and what only appears to be spiritual?

SOME THINGS SPIRITUALITY IS NOT:

Emotionalism is not spirituality.

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Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. (Romans 10:1-2)

It is easy to presume that feeling great passion for the Lord is equivalent to a proper relationship with Him; but this is not so.

Mysticism is not spirituality.

Mysticism is the idea that people can communicate with God in a way other than through divine revelation.

Some people place great emphasis on personal encounters with the deity as the evidence of spirituality.

There are people who claim that God is talking to them, not literally but through intuition. They have been given some kind of revelation or the Lord has led to do something.

God revealed an end to the prophetic gifts of the first century. God is not revealing new truth to man.

a) Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. (1Corinthians 13:8-10)

The miraculous gifts of the N.T. were for a purpose and that purpose has been served.

Asceticism is not spirituality.

Asceticism is: “the doctrine that through renunciation of worldly pleasures it is possible to achieve a high spiritual or intellectual state 2: the trait of great self-denial (especially refraining from worldly pleasures) 3: rigorous self-denial and active self-restraint
Sometimes you find people who demonstrate amazing desire to control the flesh. They may even withhold from themselves legitimate pleasure. They may forbid even legitimate relationships and situations. There was a time when many religious people thought it

improper to participate in “worldly” entertainment (aka playing cards, going to the movies, etc.)

Paul warned that apostate movements would arise that stressed refraining from legitimate pleasures and lawful activities.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

These ascetic activities were hallmarks of an apostate movement.

How could they be the manifestation of true spirituality?

Legalism is not spirituality.

Legalism is the belief that people can earn righteousness by keeping law without the need for forgiveness or seeing the terms of forgiveness itself as meritorious. Usually it involved outward conformity to rules.

The Pharisees were such legalists. They often conformed outwardly to the law but inwardly had missed the principle embodied in the law.

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:20)

All this seems to be summed up in Col. 2:16-23.

WHAT SPIRITUALITY REALLY IS:

Spirituality is not emotionalism but it is being emotionally moved by the Spirit’s message.

and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:5)

and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (1 Peter 1:8)

Spirituality is not mysticism but it is relying upon the Spirit’s revelation of God in all our actions.

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16)

Spirituality is not asceticism but it is refraining from fleshly living by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Romans 8:12-14)

We need not worry too much about things lawfully right. We have plenty to do to eliminate the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19ff).

Spirituality is not legalism but it is trying to obey God's law as perfectly as possible.

When the gospel reveals that are our righteousness not rooted in the perfect keeping of law, it is not affirming that the Christian does not try to keep God's law.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (Romans 6:1-2)

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

Conclusion: Let's be careful to identify the subtle pseudo-spirituality that is ever increasing in our world; and let us cultivate true spirituality as God has revealed it.