

The Quest for Spirituality

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“The church is not spiritual.” “That man (perhaps an elder is named) is not spiritual.” “Our worship is not spiritual.” Such statements may be true, but they may also be no more than reckless opinions. It is good to recognize deficiencies, and considering the human element, certainly the church needs to grow in spirituality. It is very Biblical to want to be more spiritual both as persons and as a body. Most preachers I know have been preaching this all through the years. Elders who honor their task are ever working at raising the spiritual temperature of the members. The need for spirituality is no new discovery!

But when I hear some talk about the need for more spirituality in the church, especially in worship, and how to produce it, I hear some strange sounds. Whence comes spirituality, anyway? Do we create it by things that are sensational or fleshly in their appeal? Can we create it by dimming lights, lighting candles, or burning crosses? Do we make the worship hour more “spiritual” by changing the order of what we do just to make it different (or do we so confuse and shock people that they are hardly able to worship at all)? Some think that a small group is automatically a more spiritual group. Others believe that the key to a “spiritual” Lord's Supper is for all participants to face each other. A few would try to equate a purely devotional type of program, with little or no Gospel preaching, with “spiritual worship.” There are those who would have us get rid of our buildings, meet as “cells” in homes or under the trees, with no “structured” worship, to create “spirituality.” Others have swallowed the New Pentecostalism, that equates spirituality with miraculous gifts. Then, there are those who seem to feel that spirituality is either inherited or automatically imputed, for they never bother to exercise themselves to attain it.

But whence comes spirituality? Doesn't it seem a bit incongruous on the very surface for one's spirituality to depend on externals? If it makes one “feel spiritual” to merely rearrange the order of worship, dim the lights, or meet in a small group, etc., then one needs to examine what sort of “feeling” he has! Such things as the above relate to the **physical**, not the spiritual; they are superficialities, theatrics. The denominations have tried in vain to pump life into their unscriptural forms of worship for generations with just such things that appeal to the flesh, not to the Spirit (choirs, organs, “rock” bands, etc.). Now that they have tried this approach and failed, some of our own misguided brethren would have us follow along.

It seems to me that the ones who are so quick to condemn the “ritualistic” worship and to ridicule the “tradition-bound” brethren for hanging on to what they would term their “spiritual pacifiers,” fall victim to their own charge. (I don’t know of anybody in the church who thinks that it is unscriptural to have anything besides two songs, a prayer and a song before the sermon). Personally, I think my set of “pacifiers” (as some would call them) are more Biblically spiritual than theirs, however. A simple, yet glorious, experience in song, prayer, Bible study, communing, and giving is unspiritual to them. Some are just not “turned on” if it’s not dramatic, unusual, sensational, and emotionally stirring. While our emotions must surely be involved in our religion, let us take care not to confuse mere emotionalism and sensationalism with spirituality; they are not at all identical. I have seen some tears shed in a dimly lighted room where a small group met in the county jail (would you call this a “cell”?) on numerous occasions but take my word for it—it’s not very spiritual. It would seem that some have forgotten that to a great degree, the spirituality of one’s worship depends upon his own attitudes, upon what he brings with him, not just upon what he finds when he gets there (John 4:24).

Be it remembered also that miraculous spiritual gifts were not the mark of spirituality, even in the day when God gave them. They were but temporary. The lasting gift and the most excellent sign of spirituality is love (1 Cor. 12:31–13:3). To seek, to revert to miraculous gifts today, or to laud those who do, is not a sign of spiritual maturity, but of immaturity and carnality.

Do you want to be spiritual? Then “mind the things of the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:5), that is, His revealed word. (1Cor. 2:6–13). “Put away jealousy and strife and walk not after the manner of men” (1 Cor. 3:3). “Walk by the Spirit” and produce the “fruit of the Spirit” in your life. (Gal. 5:16–24). Learn the Scriptures, for they “furnish the man of God completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). To your faith, add all of the “Christian Graces” (2 Pet.1:4–11). The above-described person can worship **spiritually** whether a group numbers 10 to 1,000—whether it’s light or dark—whether the Lord’s Supper is first or last—or, whether he’s in a building or under a tree!

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