

BEING SPIRITUAL

One of the EFCAs 10 indicators of a healthy Christian is passionate spirituality.

We agree that:

"The religion which God requires and will accept does not consist of weak, dull, and lifeless wishes which scarcely raise us above indifference. In His Word, God insists that we be 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Those who deny this may as well throw away their Bibles and get some other rule by which to judge the nature of religion."
(Jonathan Edwards)

Yet there is no more elusive topic than spirituality.

The word is slippery

- animated, lively
- mysterious
- the abundant life produced by the Holy Spirit

The idea is slippery

- 100%ism
"How may a Christian be established in grace? First, the consecration must always be complete. Second our obedience to all the known will of God must be complete. Third, our faith in the cleansing and keeping power of God must be complete."
- Cloudcuckooism
"Do we eat up here?"
- do nothingism
"Since God is sovereign, and has it all planned out, all I need to do is sit and wait"

On a personal level, what does spirituality involve?

Four ingredients of the life that pleases God
(1 Thessalonians 5:19-28)

I. DECISION (1 Thess. 5:19-20)

"Stop pouring cold water on the Holy Spirit. In particular, quit squelching prophecy with your contemptuous attitude."

Spiritual people have made a decision to allow the Holy Spirit to do his work in our lives.

ILLUS: The story of Dave Chapman.

According to William Law in *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, "You and I are only as spiritual as we intend to be."

Question: How spiritual do I really want to be? What do I fuel and what do I quench in my life, my family, in my church?

II. DISCERNMENT (1 Thess. 5:21-22)

ILLUS: The experience of Naaman and Elisha in 2 Kings 5.

Question: What is my level of spiritual discernment? Am I growing in my ability to determine God's will where there are no hard and fast rules?

III. DEPENDENCE (1 Thess. 5:23-24)

ILLUS: The meeting of Amy Carmichael and Andrew Murray.

"He was quiet for a while with his Lord, then he wrote these words for himself:

First, he brought me here, it is by his will I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest.

Next, he will keep me here in his love, and give me grace to behave as his child.

Then, he will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons he intends me to learn, and working in me the grace he means to bestow.

Last, in his good time he can bring me out again—how and when he knows.

Let me say I am here,

1) by God's appointment

2) In his keeping,

3) Under his training,

4) For his time"

Question: How dependent on God am I—especially when things are hard, and life just doesn't seem to be going my way?

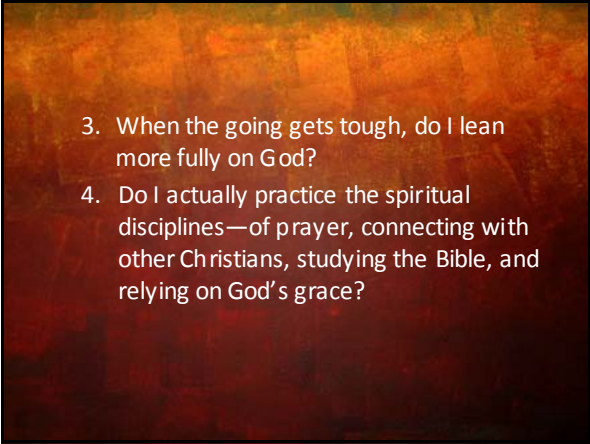
IV. DISCIPLINE (1 Thess. 5:25-28)

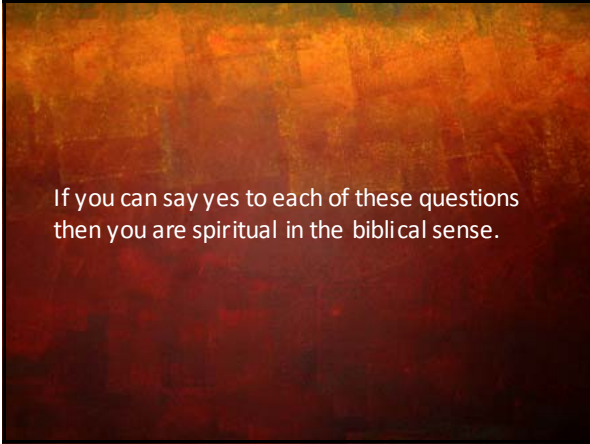
1. Prayer (25)
2. Expressions of Unity (26)
3. Read the Book (27)
4. Grace (28)

Question: Do I practice the spiritual disciplines? Have I become proficient in the God-given means of grace?

CONCLUSION:

1. Have I made a choice—that I reaffirm daily—actually to be a spiritual person?
2. In a complicated world, am I practicing authentic spiritual discernment—or do I simply fly beneath the radar, and try to get away with as much as I can, or wait for somebody else to tell me the rules?

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3. When the going gets tough, do I lean more fully on God?
 4. Do I actually practice the spiritual disciplines—of prayer, connecting with other Christians, studying the Bible, and relying on God's grace?



If you can say yes to each of these questions then you are spiritual in the biblical sense.