

What is BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY?

While secularism is the reigning spirit of our Western society, polls show that there is a widespread hunger and search for the "sacred." In 1966, Philip Rieff predicted that the modern era would witness a wide range of people with "spiritual" concerns who would engage in "spiritual" pursuits. He also observed that this spirituality would be a pick and choose spirituality through broad experimentation of a variety of approaches. Rieff's prediction has become true. In their search for spirituality, Canadians are looking everywhere. As a result, "spirituality" has become such an ill-defined word that it now covers all kinds of phenomena, trends, and ideas an earlier generation of Christians would have dismissed as error or even as "paganism". The new "spirituality" is intensely individualistic, built much more upon personal experiences and feelings than on community, doctrine, and a belief system.

Christians also talk about spirituality. But their spirituality is not derived from pop psychology. It has its roots in the Bible. What then is Biblical spirituality? First, it is based on and nourished by the Bible, the Word of God. It is this word that is the power of God unto salvation (Rom.1:17). Bible reading leads us into the very presence of God. We are addressed by Him every time we open the Bible and meditate on its divine truth. All spiritualities must be tested by the Bible. It is a sufficient and infallible guide for what we are to believe and how we are to live as Christians. Second, Biblical spirituality focuses on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and fallen humanity. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12). Jesus Christ is the heart of Scripture. He is our prophet, priest and king "through whom God has come to us and through whom we come to God." Truly God and truly human, He gained victory over death and hell through His atoning death and glorious resurrection. He ascended to heaven and will come again in glory to make all things new. Third, Biblical spirituality spells grace. How will God look upon sinners? What must we do to be saved? Careful examination of the Scriptures shows that through repentance of sin and faith in God's Son we become children of the heavenly Father. We can do nothing for our salvation. We come to God with empty hands. Acceptance by God is completely unmerited. God reached out to us before we reached out to Him. Thank God that salvation does not depend on our seeking for Him. We would never become the children of God if salvation had to depend on our good works. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph.2: 8f.). Does grace lead to careless living? Not at all.

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph.2:10). As Allister McGrath put it "To speak of grace is to speak of changed lives." Out of gratitude for our salvation so rich and free, we seek to live in obedience to our Lord. Fourth, Biblical spirituality does not think small of God. It stresses the absolute sovereignty of God. Our Creator God is in full control of the destiny of humankind, all things, and all events. We submit to His sovereign rule. The knowledge that our God is sovereign gives hope and confidence in our troubled times. Fifth, Biblical spirituality is driven by an all consuming passion for the glory of God. The

primary goal of life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The spiritually mature Christian offers his whole life - body and soul as a living sacrifice to God (Rom.12: 1-3). He does not limit worship to Sunday or to a special hour during the week; he does not cut himself off from the world. The South African philosopher B.J. van der Walt describes this spirituality as touching on all the spheres of life; commerce (Acts 4: 32-35; justice, 1 Corinthians 6: 1-6), the relationship between husband and wife (Ephesians 5s 21-32) and many more - even the food and drink we consume (1 Corinthians 10:32).

Biblical spirituality is practical. Although we are not from the world, we must live in it to glorify God. We do it by giving our best to our studies or our job; by putting our faith into action we praise our God. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever!" (Rom. 11:36).

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