

"Spiritual and Religious"

Do you considered yourself spiritual or religious? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." This week we'll be examining the truth about being righteous in the eyes of the Lord according to the Word. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The truth of God's Word matters because on the last day the Lord Jesus will judge us all based on the Word of God. We'll not be judged by opinion polls or human creeds or councils. The Lord Jesus is the head of His church and the Judge of all mankind. He doesn't need to ask our opinion about His commandments or get our approval for His decisions. What He said in the first century will stand till the end of time. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

According to a 2023 Pew Research Center poll, 41 percent of Americans say that they have become more spiritual over time, but only 24 percent say that they've become more religious. The same poll found that 33 percent of Americans say that they've become less religious over time. According to Pew, a spiritual person is someone who believes there is a spiritual realm beyond this world. A religious person is someone who belongs to a religious group and practices what it teaches. More than 80 percent of Americans say that they have a soul or spirit, and more than 80 percent say that there's something spiritual beyond this natural world, even if we cannot see it.

Being spiritual and being religious have value, but one can be both spiritual and religious yet not be righteous. Being righteous means being right with God; it means one has been saved by grace through faith. It means that what we believe matters. It means we've left sin behind and taken to heart and life the will of God. It means we're practicing our faith, denying ourselves, and taking up our crosses to follow Jesus.

Now we offer this study on spiritual and religious free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We will now worship in song, read from Acts 17:16 to 21, and explore the difference between being spiritual or being religious and being righteous.

Our reading today comes from the book of Acts chapter 17 verses 16 to 21 and discuss the events of Paul at Athens.

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," — because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

That's the way it was at Athens. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we can understand people who may not understand You. Help us Father to bring them to You. To love them and to help them to see Your love for them. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Athenians were open to every new thing and only wanted to hear Paul because he brought something strange to their ears. Paul had been preaching Jesus and the resurrection. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter'" (Acts 17:32). A spiritual person knows there's something beyond this world, but he or she is often not settled on what they believe. They may acknowledge God, but they're often open to whatever comes along. For them, spirituality is like a salad bar where people choose what they like. They determine for themselves what they hold to be true and really don't care what others think.

Paul warned the church at Colossae about listening to whatever came along. Colossae was on a highly traveled road, and strangers and travelers brought in all kinds of ideas. Paul warned them in Colossians 2 verse 8, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."

There are many ideas in this world, but not every spiritual notion is true. As in every age, people deceive and are being deceived. They often believe what they've been told without question. Interestingly, because people wanted to know the truth, they have questioned whether Jesus Christ is the Messiah and arose from the dead. Christianity, unlike other religions, can be tested in history. The New Testament contains the most attested documents in ancient literature. No ancient book has been examined or translated more. The facts found in the New Testament have been corroborated by archaeology, by ancient history, and by the existence of the early church. According to history, the eyewitness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ found in the New Testament have never been disproved by the theories of men.

This is why God lovingly gave us the Scriptures so that we might know the truth. The gospel author Luke said in Luke 1:1 to 4, "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

I tell you, Jesus really is everything He claimed to be! He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and He rose from the dead. And we can have confidence in Him; we can have our questions answered. We don't have to live in confusion, never knowing the truth. No one, no one compares to Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Now this is why Paul said in Colossians 2:6 to 7, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

Some say they are more than spiritual; they are religious. And being religious is not a bad thing in and of itself. Sadly, some people who call themselves religious don't realize that their religion doesn't make them righteous. Paul explained about some Jews who had rejected Christ and had established their own way. He said in Romans 10:1 to 3, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." Now these people had developed their own laws and depended on the Law of the Old Testament.

Paul had to rebuke some Jewish Christians for twisting the gospel. He wrote in Galatians 1:6 to 9, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” One can’t change the gospel of Christ and can’t change the rules found in the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus too had to deal with religious people who would not follow His commandments but lived lawless lives. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 to 23 that, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” Now these folks were active in their religion but they weren’t following the teaching of the Lord. The Lord Jesus expects His followers to keep His commandments, not make up their own religion.

And many today, like the Jews in the days of Jesus, call themselves religious but follow the commandments of men. They follow human traditions or the ruling of church councils, while they set aside the clear teaching of Scripture. The Lord Jesus said to the Jews who followed oral traditions in Matthew 15:7 to 9, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain (do) they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” Those who claim to be close to Jesus but follow human traditions written by councils also worship in vain.

Many others today call themselves Christians, but they’re non-practicing. They say they believe in Jesus Christ but are not practicing their faith or worshiping with the church any more. Many have quit going to church because they’ve seen their denominational church leave the truth and follow the culture. The many social and moral changes among liberal denominations have caused conscientious people to feel confused and abandoned. Some today are seeking a true church that wants to follow the Scriptures and remain true to the morals of Christ. Now if you’re in that category, I invite you to investigate the church of Christ.

Please don’t be fooled by thinking quitting the Lord is acceptable. Do you remember the one-talent man? The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 25:14 to 30, “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

The Lord Jesus made a clear distinction between those who serve Him and those who don't. One may presume they can quit the Lord and His church and still be saved on the last day, but that's a fantasy. The Lord will judge His people; and it matters whether they serve Him. It's not enough to become a Christian by obeying the gospel. Christianity is a lifelong commitment; it has no retirement plan in this life. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us, “not forsaking our own assembling (that is gathering) together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” When you forsake attending worship altogether, you're not only forsaking the act of assembling; you are also forsaking the Lord Himself.

Now I'm not speaking here to those of you who have become homebound because of age or illness. I'm speaking here to those who can attend worship but have stopped worshiping the Lord with the church. You have abandoned assembling with God's people; and you're hurting your spiritual life and hurting the church. A non-practicing Christian may think he is spiritual; he may even think he is still religious; but the Lord Jesus regards that person as having abandoned the faith. Hebrews 10:26 and 27 says, “For if we go on sinning (willfully or) deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”

The promises of God goes to those who remain faithful and committed. James 1:22 to 25 says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” True faith always lives out what it believes.

If we plan on living with the Lord in heaven, we need to be committed to the Lord during our stay upon this earth. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Are you committed to the Lord? Are you worshiping regularly with the Lord's people? Are you living for the Lord Jesus? Are you worshipping regularly and pray and reading your bible daily. Are you really close to God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You love us and have blessed us in so many ways. Help us to be committed to You to do Your will always. And to stand fast in our love from our heart soul and minds and to love others. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you decide to become a Christian, Jesus expects a total commitment. The Lord said in Matthew 10:37 to 39 that, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow

after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." We must not let anything or anyone come before our commitment to the Lord.

Paul wrote in Romans 12:1 to 2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Now Paul could say in Galatians 2 and verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." A total commitment means the Lord Jesus comes first.

To make a loving commitment to the Lord, one must believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. One must repent of sin and follow the Lord. With love, faith, and repentance, one must be baptized into Christ so that one's sins may be forgiven (Acts 2 and verse 38). And today, today is the best day to make that life commitment. Romans 6:3 to 7 teaches one is united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection when one is baptized. He has newness of life and is freed from sin.

We hope that today's study about "spiritual and religious" and being righteous as well has helped you evaluate your own relationship to God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH on YouTube! We ask that you subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and then like the programs, every single one of them. That helps to spread it. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us don't worry, we're not going to charge you anything we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you show God your love by worshiping at church. I tell you, you need a church family. Every one of you. And if you can attend worship, don't neglect worshipping at church. There's probably a church of Christ that's near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We want you to be a part of a church family. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. Encourage them to watch. Tell them that you really get a lot from it. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.