

*Jim Collins*

# BEING SPIRITUAL

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*2 Peter 3:18*

## *One Main Thing*

Which is more important to you: to look spiritual or to be spiritual?

## *Introduction*

Jesus came to the earth to bring forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and hope to lost people in the first century and for all of mankind throughout eternity (John 3:16). His ministry began among His own people, some of whom were spiritually empty and just going through the motions. Some of the Jewish spiritual leaders were worse off than others. Why? Because they placed a higher priority on looking spiritual than on being spiritual. Some of them had become arrogant, empty, and unacceptable to God. On one occasion, Jesus gave a scathing attack on their hypocrisy stating, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For

you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matt 23:27). The people Jesus castigates presented themselves in public as pious and spiritual leaders, but it was fake, false and hypocritical. So, as Christians, how and where do we start in order to be genuinely spiritual?



I suggest we start with Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. This was where He started with His own people in the first century and emphasized the need for these spiritual qualities. He gave them some serious, eye-opening teachings. He says we should begin our journey with a deeply rooted sense of humility and sorrow for our sin. We move on to have a hungering and thirsting for being righteous and spiritual (Matt 5:3-12). In v.8, He presents an important characteristic for growing spiritually as a person of God. Observe His teaching: "Blessed are the pure in heart [Gk.: "kardia"] for they shall see God" (Matt 5:8). The Jews understood the idea communicated by the word "heart" as a reference to the seat of the physical, spiritual, and mental life. It was the center of a person's whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling and decision-making. It is where God looks, in order to see the real person. In other words, it is more about our attitude of seeking God with a deep-seated spiritual quest to truly know God and to be what God desires for us, rather than just going through the outward ceremonial motions.

The illustration of the man's approach to being spiritual vs. God's correct approach is described by Jesus in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). In the text, the "Pharisee, stood and prayed thus within himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.'" He also allows us to witness the humble non-judgmental approach made to Him by the tax collector. "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner'" (Luke 18:13)! The important question for each of us is which of these approaches do we use when we go before God to the worship assembly and in the community where you live and work? Which attitude should we use in our approach to God in our everyday life, if we are genuinely seeking to be spiritual?

Once we determine the appropriate heart with which to approach God and make the journey for spiritual growth, we can begin. This is described by Jesus to a Jewish lawyer who was trying to trap Jesus when he asked, "What is the greatest law in the commandments?" Jesus explained the Great Commandment to the Pharisee: "You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart [kardia], with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37).

### *Application*

How can I apply my spiritual heart to achieve the spiritual growth God wants me to have? First, I comprehend the importance of my love for God and desire to be a sincere person of God. After realizing God's great love, we are ready to begin the journey. If we love God with all our heart, soul and mind, we also desire to be humble enough to know we are not perfect. We make mistakes; We have sin in our lives. We know that we are not all that we can or should be for God. Therefore, we sincerely desire to be more spiritual.

Begin your spiritual journey with *an intense desire to grow* (Rom 12:1-2). Paul explains to Roman Christians that an intense desire to grow is about sincerely and deeply striving after the mind of Christ. Paul declares it is possible. It can happen when we make the choice to follow God's way rather than our own sinful way and/or Satan's. We make this choice, within ourselves, to become a willing sacrifice. It all starts in the mind, heart, and soul. We make a decision to study God's word more (2 Tim 2:15), to trust its direction (2 Tim 3:16-17), to read it, study it, and apply it to our life. We will pray deeply and often (Phil 4:6-7), while trying to live less for self and more for God and others; "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself (Phil 2:3)." We will be conscious of how Satan works in our lives and will choose to not be overcome with the ways of the world and worldliness. We strive to have this

deeper knowledge of self and make a conscientious effort from the heart to be spiritual.

Secondly, *seek to incorporate Christ-like attitudes and characteristics within*, (Phil 2:2; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 12:3-8). This will help in dealing with the world and people who may not always treat others fairly and respectfully. It has been said by some as “garbage in, garbage out.” Therefore, rather than inputting un-Christ-like ideas, thoughts, and characteristics, we seek to input spiritual thoughts and godly characteristics. When you are incorporating spiritual qualities into your heart, mind, and center of life [kardia], you are laying a good foundation for being spiritual. You will strive to have a deep-rooted spiritual center and an expectation of responding in a godly, Christ-like way when faced with difficult and worldly situations. While others are being ugly, hateful, spiteful, and ungodly, you can respond respectfully, kindly, and caringly. When you respond in a Christ-like way, you will be demonstrating to the world that there is a better way of life.

Since you have the intense desire to grow and input the right thoughts and characteristics to be God’s person, you have the solid, spiritual foundation. Once you have *implemented the use of Christ-like attitudes and actions*, people will see Christ truly living in you. You will strive to be without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil, and cling to what is good. You will seek to be kindly affectionate to others, serving the Lord. You can rejoice in hope, be more patient in tribulation, steadfast in

prayer, help the needy, and be hospitable. You can even seek to bless those who are mean or mistreat you. Because you have the love of God in your heart, you will attempt to be more compassionate with those who are hurting, sick, sad, or lonely, and allow the Lord to respond to evil, while seeking to overcome evil with good (Rom 12:9-21; I Cor 13:1-8; Col 3:12-15).

Since you are striving daily to be like Christ, you can be more holy, loving, kind, humble, filled with meekness, full of tender mercy and patience, bearing with and forgiving others. Because you are striving to be a child of God, you recognize God's forgiveness for you and your sins, which requires you to forgive others. You can be spiritual, more thankful for how God has blessed you, and know that the peace of God rules in your heart and life (Phil 4:7, 9).

### *Discussion*

1. Why is the heart of a person so important?
2. What is the significance of our heart when making a decision that pertains to our life and how we interact with others?
3. Explain the parallel of our lives in accordance to first century Jews.
4. What are some of the vital attitudes and characteristics that can help us be more spiritual?