

True Spirituality

1 Cor 12.1-11

“Spirituality” has become one of the big buzz words for our society. It’s good to be a “spiritual person.”

The first sentence in chapter 12 reads, literally, “Now, about the spirituals...” *The spirituals* could mean spiritual gifts, although the idea of gifts doesn’t come up until verse 4. It could mean spiritual things in general. Or it could mean spiritual people.

True spirituality is not about me (v2-3)

² *You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.*

Much of the spirituality that the Corinthians were dealing with was what we would call “self-help spirituality.” It also had a darker side, one that involved curses.

Paul goes on to say, ³ *Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” [or “Jesus is a curse”] and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*

There may not be many people who curse their enemies in Jesus’ name. But there is a great temptation to use Jesus’ name to get what we want. To make the gospel just one more form of self-help spirituality.

True spirituality is rooted in God (v4-6)

⁴ *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.* ⁵ *There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.* ⁶ *There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people.*

All true spirituality is rooted, not in us, but in God. He is the one who gives the gifts and abilities. Our role is to receive them and use them in the way that he intends.

Gifts: The Greek word is related to the word for “grace” which means there’s nothing in the person receiving the gift that makes them worthy of it.

Service: The Spirit gives gifts to people in the church so that they can serve the church, and in doing that serve the Lord Jesus.

Working: The idea that behind everything that happens, God is at work, upholding the universe and carrying out his intentions, sometimes through people, sometimes in spite of them.

True spirituality serves others (v7-11)

God is at work through his people to carry out his will, and his will is to reveal his character. Or, as Paul says, ⁷ *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

Truly spiritual people are interested in how they can reveal God (make him manifest) in how they serve the common good. They’re more interested in how they can serve others than they are in showing off their gift or skill.

Takeaways

Tests for true spirituality. Some questions to ask about teachers or movements that claim to be spiritual.

1. Does their spirituality draw attention to themselves, or does it direct attention away from them and towards God?
2. Is their spirituality focussed on making their own lives better, or is it focussed on serving others and making life better for the community?
3. Does their spirituality build up the church, or does it make the church weaker?
4. Do they give credit to the Holy Spirit for the good work that is being done through them, or do they claim the credit for themselves?