"WHAT IS 'SPIRITUALITY'?"

Romans 8:1-8

Introduction:

1. Most difficulties in life can be traced to "false centers" (as when a phonograph record is played off center.) Though it was designed for beautiful music, it produces only dissadence! Life, too, that is centered in the wrong place is out of harmony--with others, self and the universe.

2. Sensitive people are wanting to be "right on" the solid and proper center. It's a universal hunger.

(a) the world calls it "getting my head on straight"
(b) the religious person often calls it "spirituality"

3. The term spirituality is used often in scripture. But, note, with a variety of meanings--Rom. 8:6, 1 Cor. 2:11-15, Gal. 6:1, Gal. 5:19-24, etc.

4. But, what does this mean???

Discussion:

1. What Spirituality is not (This is important because wrong concepts[pseudo-spirituality] can spell disaster for persons--though the church can survive anything. Mt. 16:17-18.

A. It isn't cognitive (i.e.: Theological "rightness" and information.

1. This often serves pride and technical religious discussion rather than the deeper life.

2. We usually "know" a lot better than we "be" and "do".

3. Yet - there is no spiritual depth without learning and living with the word. John 8:31-32

(This knowing" is experiential and relational--Adam "knew" Eve--rather than technical and informational.

4. Knowledge in itself "puffs up" and tends toward a "display of proof texts and concepts" unless it is a John 8:31 & 32 kind of knowing.
B. It isn't moral (just being morally pure and ethically sound, while admirable, is not "spiritual" nor the road to spiritual strength.

1. We are saved by grace, not by works - Eph. 2:8-9

2. While morality is characteristic of the "spiritual" man, it is a "by-product" not a cause. Phil 2:13-14 (note the L.N.T.)

3. A totally moralistic concept of spirituality results in either:
   
   (a) Self-righteousness, intolerance, and rigid "works righteousness"

   (b) and/or the despair of futility, guilt and hopelessness because of our imperfect performance.

4. We don't get saved by good works, we can't stay saved by good works--But, we do good works in joy and confidence because we are saved (see again Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4 in R.S.V. and Phil 2:12-14 in the L.N.T.)

C. It isn't Emotive - (Thesis of some: "If I can achieve a high spiritually [actually emotionally] and maintain it, I will be a consistently "spiritual" person.)

   (1) Emotion is fickle.
      (a) Sad movies can bring tears not related to reality.
      (b) A touchdown can bring exhilaration not related to personal well-being or spiritual depth.

   (2) Emotionalism needs to substitute "atmosphere" for "costly discipleship" (cry in the chapel and cheat on your tax return; write love poems and steer clear of folks you "don't like"!)

   (3) Emotionalism will surely disappoint the sincere seeker. (What goes up, must come down.) And, "It's not how high you jump, or how loud you shout, but the way you live when you hit the ground—that really matters."

   (4) Emotion is a normal element in the life of the spiritual person, but it is a by-product—an "effect" not a "cause" of spiritual depth.

D. It isn't ritual - While going to church, have "devotionals" and Bible reading habits are characteristic of the "spiritual person"—"sitting in a church won't make one a Christian any more than sitting in a car port will make one an automobile."

This approach, too, can become "self-righteous" and "works-oriented."
E. It isn’t Miracle: (Every new birth is a miracle in
the sense that it is God changing a life that is
powerless to change itself, and filling it with His
power— which far surpasses human power— I John 4:4.

1. But, miraculous claims of "special gifts"
(prophesies, visions, revelations, tongue-speaking,
etc.) are not evidences of nor power for
"spirituality".

2. The Corinthians spoke in tongues, but rather than
this being a sign they were "spiritual", they
are called a "carnal" (or unspiritual) church.
I Cor. 3:1, 14:21-23.

3. Was Balaams Donkey (who spoke in a "human tongue")
to be regarded as a "spiritual" donkey?

(No God bestowed gifts on whom he would, carnal or
spiritual; animal or human.)

4. Miraculous claims of spiritual gifts often
a. Lure people away from the clear objective revelation
of the scriptures.

b. And make our eyes turn to the "gifts" rather than the
"giver". (Note: If we seek Christ, He promises us
all we need.)

5. If we want a gift, why not seek the "greatest" (I Cor. 13:13)
or the "toughest" (Phil. 1:29-30).

II. What Spirituality Is (now to the positive side).

A. The unspiritual man.

1. The issue is not "body" vs. "non-material" in the flesh/s
spirit struggle.

a. The body is sacred—

I Cor. 6:13 - "For the Lord".
I Cor. 6:19 - "Temple of the Spirit"
I Cor. 6:20 - "Glorify God in it"

b. The battle (Gal. 5:17) is not between the body
("soma" Grk.) and the "non-material"—But between
the flesh ("sarx" Grk.), i.e., "the lower self/sin
centered nature and the Holy spiritual forces in
our natures and in our universe. (Note: Actually
the "sarx" (flesh - lower nature) is "spirit".)
c. The real you is "spiritual". I Cor. 2:11. (Body is controlled by mind, and mind is controlled by the "inner spiritual you").

2. The Devil is "spiritual." Eph. 2:1-3 & 6:12.

3. And--God is "spirit". Jno. 4:24. So, the real battleground is "spiritual". (God vs. Satan in my heart.)

   NOTE: (Appendum)
   - The "lower nature" is dominated by a real spiritual power - Eph. 2:1-3, Eph. 6:12, I Cor. 2:13-16.
   - And - The "lower nature" makes his appeal through the material universe (even our bodies) as well as in the spiritual realm. I Jno. 2:15-17, Eph. 2:3.
   - Thus even "good" men (morally) and (ethically) are often dominated by "self" at the "center" - though "enlightened" and sophisticated in their self-interest.

B. The "Spiritual Man" (I Cor. 2:11-16, Rom. 8:9-11).

1. So the issue is "what is at the center of my life (or more accurately, "who"?)

2. The Spiritual Man is one whose life is centered in God (the Divine, Non-material, Spiritual Power or Being). II Cor. 4:16-5:1 and Col. 3:1-3.

   a. His will is to do God's will.

   b. His spiritual person is inhabited by God's Holy Spirit. Rom. 8:9-11. (vs. Satan's power in the "unspiritual man" - Eph. 2:1-3.)

   c. His strength is in the power of God, I Jno. 4:4, which brings victory over Satan.

   d. He is in constant companionship with and response to the Loving Father.

   e. He is confident of his acceptance and sonship by the Grace of God. Eph. 2:8-9, Gal. 3:26-27, I Jno. 3:1.

Conclusion:

1. Where is your life centered? Rom. 8:6A vs. 8:6B.

2. I know Him. I don't always trust Him like I should. I understand so little of Him. But I think I would lose my mind if I should lose Him. I might even lose my life--and I know I would lose my soul.
3. Poem

Thou shalt know Him when He comes.
Not by any din of drums,
Not by the vantage of his airs,
Nor by anything He wears,
Neither know Him by His crown
Neither know Him by His gown.
But His coming known shall be
By the Holy Harmony
Which His presence brings to thee.
VANDALIA, LOUISIANA, TX - April 76
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Roswell, N.M. - July 77
Oxenland, St. Louis, MO - Sept 77
Richland Hills, Texas - Oct 77
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Single Again - July 79
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Hawley 36 - Aug. 82
College, Victoria, Texas - Oct. 82

College Church, Seattle, WA, - Sept 1984

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