

RECOGNIZING HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

A spiritual life that is healthy is recognizable by :



- Being liberating , not confining. Spiritual development is separate from adopting a religion. "Religion" is the "package" while "Spirituality" is the content; it is adherence to a particular faith or allegiance to a particular religious denomination by which we choose to live out and act out our spiritual beliefs.
- Involving inclusion rather than exclusion . It draws a circle that encompasses the whole world. It says , " We (all peoples) are all the children of God" and God desires to reach all. Thus Spirituality should not be confused with Religion. Religion involves creeds and catechisms, while spirituality involves feelings and experiences. It (spirituality) is not based on dogma but rather on engaging in the task of forming integrity of character and a healthy, contented approach to life based on life experiences. Religion is often born out of a search for Identity and a desire to stay out of Hell; while Spirituality is the result of having been to Hell and back, while learning how to affirm, forgive , love, and be vulnerable.
- Embracing a Right Headed (Healthy) Religion that encourages serving a loving God in ways that benefit humankind while also encouraging personal - as well as community - growth, Wrong Headed (Unhealthy, dysfunctional) Religion is largely evil, self-serving and stifles development.
- Not trying to manipulate God - or the Spirit of God - through "special prayers" or "prayer rituals". Such behaviors verge on superstition and wizardry (the belief that people can control the forces of nature and 'gods' or 'spirits' through special chants and rituals).
- NOT being mere rituals of worship, church attendance (or any other place of worship) , or prayer mantras. Rather it is an ongoing dialogue with the Divine as we go about our day and a sense of comfort that comes from the knowledge that God loves us and cares for us independent of any efforts on our part.
- The imparting of a joy and love of life despite circumstances. It sees purpose in living even when the world around us seems to have gone mad. Moreover, it provides the motivation to find purpose for living, even in the doing of what may seem to be unimportant small things.



This is a consolidation of views on spiritual well-being taken from the following sources:

Meier, Minirth, Wichern, and Ratcliff : Introduction to Psychology and Counseling - Christian Perspectives and Applications, , Baker Books, 10th printing, 2000

Kenneth Pargament : "The Psychology of Religion and Coping", Guilford Press, 1997

George Vaillant, "Aging Well ", Little, Brown and Company, 2002

Viktor Frankl, "Man's Search for Meaning", 1984 Edition, Washington Square Press

The Holy Bible - New Testament : Paul's Epistles, NIV Version , specifically Galations 5:22 ¶ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,