

# To Be Spiritual

by Joseph H. Smith, D.D.

What is it to be spiritual? Probably our conceptions of this are sometimes too shallow. We may confound spirituality with religion and speak of one who is constant and regular and precise in his religious duties or habits as being a "very spiritual person," whereas one may be all that and be no more spiritual than the Pharisees in the time of Christ.

Demonstrativeness under religious excitements, or somberness in the sanctuary may be mistaken for high or deep spirituality, whereas this may be but similar temperamental effects which may be noted of others at ball games, or horse races, and may be of the other type at funeral occasions or in a court room when a murderer is being sentenced.

A spiritual person is not always talking about things of God, yet his speech is "always with grace, seasoned with salt." His inclinations are not to things of vanity and sport, though he can be playful with children, and cheerful with all. His spirituality does not indispose him for labor or duty to home, or shop, or to the State; but it causes him to see all these as of but secondary place in life, and wealth itself as of minor worth so that he dispatches these things to redeem time for things that are higher in the spiritual world.

Spirituality differs from intellectuality in that it has been most apparent in Him that had never learned of the sages or the schools of earth. And again in case of two that were rated by the accreditation authorities as being ignorant and unlearned, and having no other record than "they had been with Jesus," who nevertheless have produced and left at least three such books as keep the wise men of the world puzzled to this day.

Perhaps the world has never produced a greater reasoning intellect than Paul who possibly had a university training at Tarsus besides his Bible school course with Gamaliel, who nevertheless renounced all philosophy of men to make place only for the revelation of Christ as the source of man's spiritual life and the base of his eternal hope.

God himself has everywhere put a discount upon the wisdom of men. From its topmost round they could only erect an altar to "the unknown God." Instead of spirituality, their religion was "superstition." Nor was this peculiar to Mars Hill or to that age of learning.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

None are able to see spiritually until they are born of God. Even a master in Israel was ignorant of things which humble fishermen knew and could bear testimony to since they had been turned from darkness to light.

None need wait until heaven dawns and eternity bursts upon mankind to form a personal acquaintance with God. The Apostle Paul declared before he left earth: "I know whom I have believed." The experiential knowledge of God is the beginning of spirituality. Yet it is not the completion of spirituality—neither in kind nor at all—if ever in measure.

There is a state of the "Beginning of the Spirit," wherein one, as a babe, may have relish and capacity for the "sincere milk of the word" and may make some growth thereby. But much of the thought and effort and prayer of the infantile life must be directed against the flesh which, with its various affinities and propensities, lusts against the Spirit.

Hence, to be truly spiritual according to the Bible phraseology two things are yet necessary—in fact we

might add a third. The first is Christ's baptism with the Holy Ghost, which as "Refining fire goes through the heart; illuminates the soul; scatters his life through every part and sanctifies the whole."

The second, and this coincides with the first, the inmoving of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, to satisfy all the soul's longings and direct all his ways.

And, lastly, the abiding in the conditions of utter abandonment to the will of God and of unwavering faith in the cleansing Blood of Christ, which insures not only a permanence but an endless progression in Christ and a sacrificial life for the sake of others, together with a brightening hope of the coming of Christ and an everlasting reign with him in glory.

This is what it is to be spiritual!

## FASTING EMPOWERS PRAYER

In describing conditions that would prevail on the earth at the Second Coming of Christ, Scripture says, "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat . . ."—Luke 17:26-27.

One of the signs of Christ's returning is eating—instead of fasting and praying for a world hastening to perdition.

The New Testament Church fasted much in the day when she ministered in power and glory.

J. G. Morrison says, "Every great leader who has moved his age mightily for God was a faster."

Martin Luther was a weekly faster and God used him to lift the curtain of night that had hung over the world during the "Dark Ages." Luther is criticized for fasting too rigorously, to the probable injury of his health, but he moved the world toward God.

John Knox fasted regularly, and history shows he had power with God in prayer and prevailed with God and saved Scotland from the darkness of Catholicism.

John Wesley fasted two days each week. The pioneering Methodists had two weekly fast days and were on fire for God. John Wesley says, "While we were at Oxford, the rule of every Methodist was to fast every Wednesday and Friday in the year in imitation of the primitive church.

"Now the practice of the first disciples of our Lord was universally allowed. 'Who does not know,' says Epiphanius an ancient writer, 'that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week, (Wednesday and Friday) are observed by Christians throughout the world?'"

"So they were by Methodists for several years, by them all without exception. But afterwards some in London carried this to excess and fasted so as to impair their health. It was not long before others made this a pretense for not fasting at all. Yea, there are some that do not fast one day from the beginning of the year to the end.

"But what excuse can there be for this for any who believe the Scriptures?"

In Colonial days, Jonathan Edwards was a regular faster. It was under his ministry that sinners seized the pillars of the church and the backs of the seats under the mighty conviction of the Spirit, feeling that they were in danger of dropping into hell.

Seth C. Rees, a successful soul winner, never attempted to hold meetings without appointing days of fasting.

It is a fact that the decline in real old time revivals and the increase in worldliness in the churches is in proportion to our neglect of fasting and prayer.

In the days when conviction was deep, restitutions and confessions were thorough and conversions were genuine; the people of the Lord fasted regularly and prayed mightily—and God gave them revivals.