

## Spirit-uality or spirituality?

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### Spirituality in the movies

Before going any further, discuss as a group what the movies are conveying about spirituality. Take any recent blockbuster familiar to some of the group and talk about whether it was just entertainment, or whether the movie actually had a message about spirituality.

It might help your group's leader if they go to [www.hollywoodjesus.com](http://www.hollywoodjesus.com) a site that discusses the movies from a broadly Christian perspective. Use their search engine and type in the word 'spirituality' and explore what you find.

It is not hard to see that certain fundamental ideas about spirituality underlie even the most apparently simple and entertaining movies.

When you consider that the Bible is widely thought to be about spirituality, it might come as a bit of a surprise that the actual word 'spirituality' never occurs! This could be because the Bible never sets out to be a guidebook on spirituality. It has a big story to tell and its focus is primarily on the triune God, and only secondarily on us.

It also could be that popular ideas of spirituality just fail to integrate the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

### What is the significance of Jesus Christ in spirituality?

In the previous study you should have observed that "spiritual" is not frequently used in the NT. There is a concentrated use of the word in Romans 8:4-11. This section of the Bible gives us a radical orientation to the whole idea of spirituality.

Can you make two columns with headings *Natural (sinful nature)* and *Spiritual*? From verses 5-8 make a list of the characteristics of each condition.

According to verses 9-11 what's the key to whether a person is classified as "natural" or "spiritual"?

Did you notice that in almost the same breathe Paul talks of the “Spirit of God” and the “Spirit of Christ”? He’s not confused. It is the presence of God’s Spirit that makes a person “spiritual.” This is the most profound insight into spirituality according to the Bible. It might be helpful to think of spirituality after Jesus’ death and resurrection as *Spirit*-uality. Discuss with your group some of implications of this insight.

What does *Spirit*-uality look and feel like? In Romans 8 Paul says real *Spirit*-uality is

- A condition of freedom (from domination by sin and slavery) (verse 1, 15)
- Impossible to describe apart from talking about Christ’s death and resurrection (Verse 3 and 11)
- Deeply experienced in a fight against sin and selfishness (verse 12-14)
- A matter of mind AND body (and thus the soul) (verses 5-7, 27)
- An intimate experience of God as Father (verse 15-17)
- Accompanied by suffering (verses 17-18)
- Incomplete in a way that has you longing for heaven (verses 22-24)

Discuss with your group whether there are any surprises in this list. Would your group have listed suffering for the sake of Christ and struggling to pray as hallmarks of Christian spirituality?

## Conclusion

These studies set out to map the terrain of spirituality in the Bible after Jesus’ death and resurrection. For a book that is supposed to be spiritual the Bible doesn’t talk about spirituality as it is popularly conceived.

If the profile of *Spirit*-uality is realistic then the absence of the word spirituality is easily understood. Whole books of the NT can be understood to be about spirituality. In your group choose either Colossians or 1 Peter and survey how much of what is said is about real spirituality.