



# NURTURING SPIRITUAL HEALTH





# CONNIE'S EXPERIENCE



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# WHY IT'S HARD TO DEFINE SPIRITUAL HEALTH

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- In a culture that both quantifies and categorizes everything, spirituality is elusive:
    - **Physical health** can be *quantified*—weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, heart rate, blood tests, empirical observation, etc...
    - **Mental health** can be *quantified* and/or *qualified*—symptoms, behavior, relationships, blood chemistry, etc...
    - **Spiritual health** is about *quality, transcendence, and transformation*
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# WHY IT'S HARD TO DEFINE SPIRITUAL HEALTH

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- Spiritual health often is recognized through personal transformations:
    - From **self-focus** to **other-focus/service**
    - From **indifference** to **compassion**
    - From **ego/hubris** to **humility**
    - From **self-reliance** to **surrender**
    - From **control** to **acceptance**
    - From **strength** to **vulnerability** and **empathy**
    - From **independence** to **inter-dependence**
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# WHY IT'S HARD TO DEFINE SPIRITUAL HEALTH

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- **Spiritual health is often paradoxical:**
    - To be strong we have to be weak (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
    - To be rich we have to be poor (2 Corinthians 8:9/Sermon on the Mount/Widow's mite...)
    - To save our lives we have to lose our lives (Luke 9:23-24)
    - To become mature, we must become like children (Matthew 18:1-5)
    - To live we have to die (Romans 6:5-11)
    - To receive we have to give (2 Corinthians 9: 6-15)
    - Pain is the pathway to joy (John 16:20-23)
    - Faith blooms in the desert and withers in the garden (Genesis 2-4/Jewish tradition)
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# So what is spiritual health?

*It's a **relationship** with the holy, the divine, the sacred, the OTHER, the mystery, GOD—that **transforms** us from merely being made in God's image to growing in Christ's likeness;  
from instinct-driven to spirit-guided;  
from numb to aware;  
from self-obsessed to God-aware...*



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## So what is spiritual health?

*It's a foundational **openness** to the “**in-ness**” and “**through-ness**” of God*

*let me come back to this....*



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# THE CONFLICT

## BETWEEN THEOLOGY, RELIGION, AND SPIRITUALITY

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- We have a hard time in the modern church with spiritual health because we tend to be more attracted to **theological knowledge** and **religious practices** than a **spiritual relationship**
  - We're more comfortable *thinking about* God and *doing* obligatory practices than we are in *being connected* with God in ways that lead to the *experience of God*, and *transformation by God*.
    - Right theology and doctrine about God is often seen as being more important than authentic experiences of God.
    - Right rites and practices are often seen as being more important than than authentic experiences of God.
  - When experience is accepted, it is generally the experience of worship and sacraments, prayer practices that don't violate rules of logic, or theological reflection on big questions.
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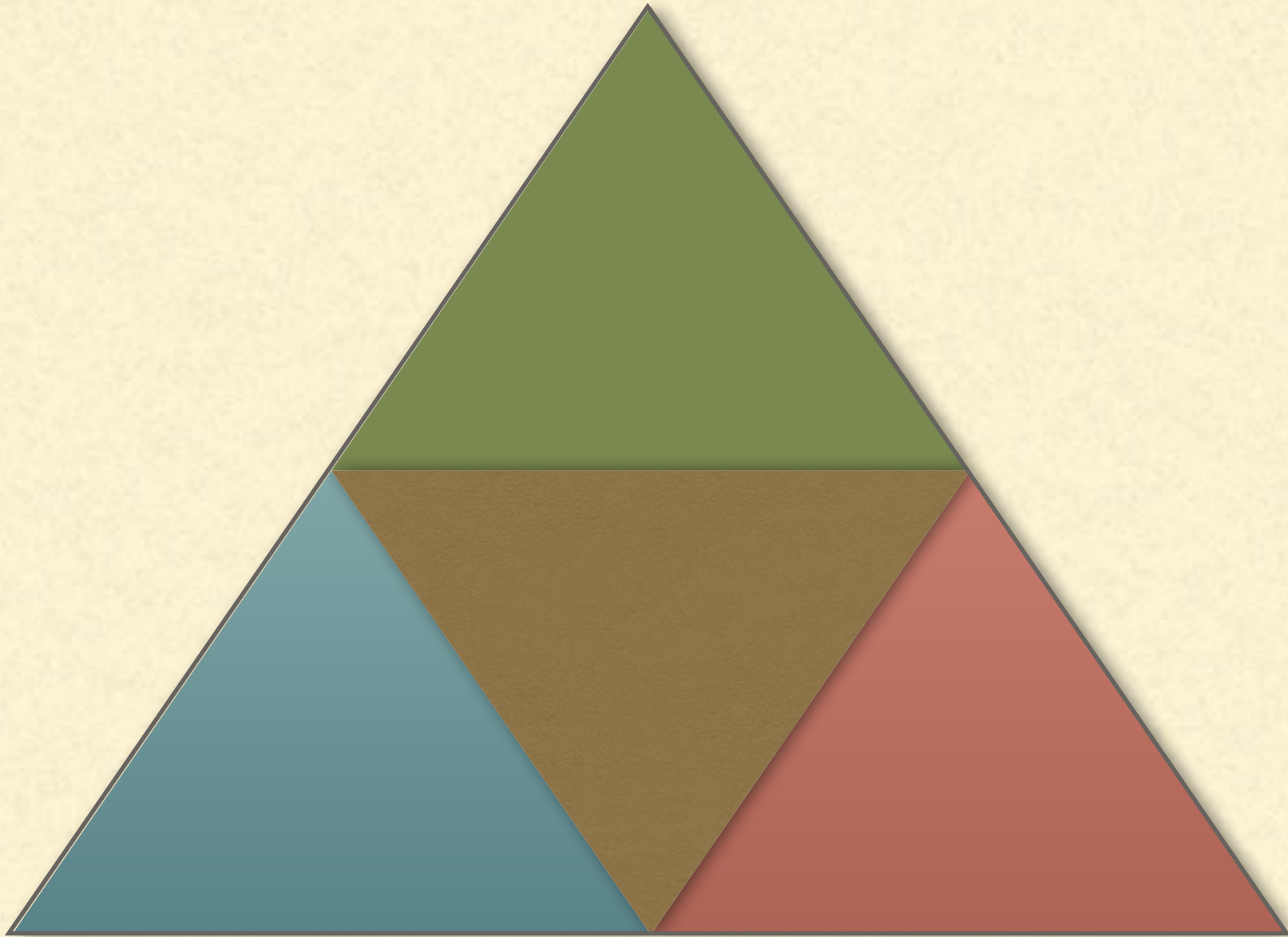


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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY, RELIGION, AND SPIRITUALITY

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**Spirituality**  
*Breath*



**Theology**  
*Bones*

**Religion**  
*Body*

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# NURTURING A HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

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- Having a belief system and a set of practices that nurture the relationship with God
    - **Beliefs:**
      - A theology rooted in a relationally-oriented theology.
      - A theology rooted in ancient, traditional, and contemporary insights
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# NURTURING A HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

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- **Practices:**

- Prayer for self/others
- Scripture/spiritual reading
- Centering
- Mindfulness/Awareness
- Living in the present moment

- ❖ Gratitude
  - ❖ Generosity
  - ❖ Self-reflection
  - ❖ Compassion
  - ❖ Trust & surrender
  - ❖ others?
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## So what is spiritual health?

*It is a foundational **openness** to the “**in-ness**” and “**through-ness**” of God  
—to the breath of God **within us** and **through us***



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# “IN-NESS” AND “THROUGH-NESS”

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## **John 14:8-10, 15-17, 19-20**

Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?...

‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you...

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

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# “IN-NESS” AND “THROUGH-NESS”

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## **Ephesians 4:4-6**

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

## **2 Corinthians 13:5**

Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to pass the test!

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# THE PROBLEM OF BELIEF

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Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.

*~ St. Patrick of Ireland*

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# “IN-NESS” AND “THROUGH-NESS”

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**Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy***

Jesus' good news about the kingdom can be an effective guide for our lives only if we share his view of the world in which we live. To his eyes this is a God-bathed and God-permeated world. It is a world filled with a glorious reality, where every component is within the range of God's direct knowledge and control – though he obviously permits some of it, for good reasons, to be for a while otherwise than as he wishes. It is a world that is inconceivably beautiful and good because of God and because God is always in it. It is a world in which God is continually at play and over which he constantly rejoices. Until our thoughts of God have found every visible thing and event glorious with his presence, the word of Jesus has not yet fully seized us.

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# “IN-NESS” AND “THROUGH-NESS”

**Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion***

Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us. It is a Light Within which illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the face of men. It is a seed stirring to life if we do not choke it. It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. And He is within us all.

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# SO WHAT'S THE SECRET TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH?

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- **The Great Command**
  - **Openness to being transformed**
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