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Who are you?
Spirituality series #2
Luke 7:18-35

I would like to think that if everybody here could know the same information that I know and also have been exposed to the same experiences that I have, then you too would see life in a very similar way to the way I see life. I would like to think that if both knew the same things and experienced the same things then we would both make similar decisions and choices and hold comparable priorities and values. But we know that doesn't happen, because it assumes there is only one response to a given set of experiences. Our course we assume that our response is the only right response, but that is not necessarily the way other people see it. Others respond in ways that are radically different than us.

As a father I may think that the best family vacation is one where we go backpacking up in the mountains for a week and enjoy the beautiful vistas and God's creation, catching trout by a mountain stream with few people around eating over a campfire, sleeping in a tent on the ground. Now others in my family may not share that same delight for a perfect vacation. They may view a perfect family vacation as renting a home near a sun drenched beach, sleeping in on a cozy king sized bed with a pool to lounge by and read books all afternoon. Going out to dinner every night. No cooking. Sunset walks on the beach. Other family members would want to upgrade that perfect vacation to include Disneyland just around the corner. I may spend hours explaining the benefits of hiking, exercise, fresh air and why backpacking is perfect for us as a family, but they still will prefer Disneyland.

Just like we are crafted by God with different personality temperaments, that enjoy and responds to different activities, we are also created with different spiritual temperaments that cause us to enjoy and respond to God in different ways. Because of that there are times when we have difficulty accepting the validity of the way someone else connects with God that is radically different than our own. We may think that other person is far too emotional or far too traditional or far too intellectual or far too expressive or far too caught up in nature or caught up in service, or far too caught up in study, or far too relational. We may scratch our heads wondering why they don't relate to God like we do. We may even look down at them thinking our way is the only right way, but the truth is we are all different and will connect to God best in different ways.

That is not to say there is no such thing as absolute truth and there is no black and white absolutes. I am not saying it doesn't matter how you get to God, all roads lead to Rome. Pick any road to God and it will eventually lead there. No. I am not saying that. I am simply saying that there are a number of right roads you could take that may be different but take you to the same place. I am not feeding you an excuse not to read the Bible, not to worship God with enthusiasm. I am simply saying that our spiritual temperaments of what things we will do that draw us close to God's heart will differ between strong followers of Christ. The best way to get there depends on who you are and where you are at in life.

From the church if I want to drive into Battleground, the quickest way is up over the hill on Garner Road. But if its snowy the safest way to go is the lower, elevation flatter route through Amboy. But if it happens to be a warm summer afternoon, I want to enjoy the drive and get maximum scenic experience. So I will take the cool, refreshing drive down along the Lewis River. All three are valid ways to get into town, but I may choose different paths depending on my needs and what season of

life I'm in. Some of you may purposely go over the hill when it's snowy just to test out your 4-wheel drive and get some adventure. It depends on how you are wired by God. Some of you always go the same way into town regardless of the season, because it works for you and you are used to it.

This is sermon number two in our Spirituality series: Keeping it simple. We may try to make things complicated but God never planned it that way. God went out of His way to keep access to Him simple. The truly spiritual ones are not necessarily those who can read deep theology books, (though they may well be) or have attended church for a minimum of 20 years, or have vast Bible knowledge, or are the leaders and teachers. They may be spiritual, but those things are not requirements of being spiritual. One who is spiritual simply obeys God and follows His Path.

Spirituality: definition

Let me give you my definition of Spirituality. In a general sense spirituality relates to the unseen immaterial spiritual realm as opposed to the physical material world that we can see and touch. In a general sense people tend today to be very spiritual as they swerve toward mysticism, eastern religion, new age, religious a'la'carte, feel good spirituality to try and satisfy their God-shaped hunger and emptiness. But for purposes of this sermon I would like to **define spirituality as the degree to which ones affections, will and desires are being influenced by the Holy Spirit of God.** The more one walks in step with the Spirit and follows His leading and allows his life's decisions to be controlled not by self, but by the Spirit, he is spiritual. Galatians 5:16 says, "...walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." ..."The flesh is set opposed to the Spirit." Gal 5:18 "but if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." V.22 "But the fruit of the

spirit is love, joy peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” V.25 “if we live by the spirit let us also walk by the Spirit.” Simply; the spiritual person will obey God, and follow His plan for him.

So we see from our definition that we can know that we are filled, or control by the spirit or spiritual people when these types of fruit are reflecting in our lives. Each of us may take a different path to grow and demonstrate the fruit of our spirituality. We will see spiritual godly fruit.

Two Different men...Two different methods

Lets take a look at two different men in the Bible. They were cousins and both very spiritual men whose priorities and affections were influence by God, but they were very different in the their approach to ministry. Their heart for God was similar, but their methods were very different. Is it OK to be different? Lets read about the first guy in Matthew 3:1-6 (READ). Is it OK to be different? John the Baptizer certainly was a bit odd. If we met him down an isle of the Trading Post, and not from the safety of a Bible lesson, we would certainly think he was strange. Dressed in his camel hair coat, he would get quite a few stares bringing up a tub full of locusts and a jar of wild honey to the checkout stand. John lived alone way out in the desert and preached a harsh message of repentance. When the theologians came out to hear him he called them names and told them they too needed to get right with God. He preached to the people the Messiah, the Savior was coming soon, and when Jesus showed up, he baptized him and proclaimed him to be the One. Jesus then began His public ministry.

Now Jesus ministry method was very different than John’s. In Matthew 9:10 (READ) we read that Jesus went to parties and ate and drank and dined with many rich tax-gatherers and sinners. Jesus performed many miracles and taught amazing truth with power and all

those things fit well with peoples expectation of a Messiah, but the party going and hanging out with sinners had them scratching their heads. John himself was confused. So he sent over a couple of his guys to ask Jesus whether or not He was indeed the Messiah?

Lets turn to Luke 7:18-35 (READ). Why did John send some of his men over to question Jesus' Messiahship? This is John who baptized Jesus and heard God the fathers voice from heaven say, "This is my son in whom I am well pleased." Why did John send some of his men over to question Jesus? I'm guessing it had more to do with the way Jesus did ministry than the actual ministry itself. John is wondering; If Jesus is the Messiah why is he acting this way? Why does his life's conduct not look like the typical holy man of the day? V.20 "are you the Expected One or do we look for someone else." Jesus wasn't acting the way they expected. Why isn't Jesus doing ministry the same way I am? Some of what Jesus does looks downright scandalous to me.

v.21 at that very time Jesus was curing diseases, making blind people see and performing miracles. Instead of answering Johns messengers with a sermon on how he fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies and instead of giving a defense for His eating and drinking with sinners and defending His ministry methods and style, Jesus simply said in v.22-23 "go and report to John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."

Jesus sent back a very clear message to John. If you want to know the truth, look at the fruit. You have been looking at the wrong things. The proof that Jesus was the Messiah was not about His ministry methods or style, it was found in the fruit of His ministry. And it was easy to see that God was working powerfully through Him in the lives of many people.

Luke 7:24. When John's followers left the people in the crowd probably were wondering what Jesus now thought of John since he had questioned Jesus. Especially since many of them had formerly been followers of John. Jesus didn't use this opportunity to rip on John's mistake. He did the opposite. He spoke about John with glowing praise saying he was a great man and prophet. v.28

That seem to satisfy the people of the crowd v.29, but the Pharisees and religious leaders saw these differences between John and Jesus as an opportunity to ridicule and divide and mock. The Pharisees viewed John as crazy and accused Jesus of being loose, drunkard, party-animal, discounting his miracles to being Satan empowered. So Jesus turns his words toward them in v.31-35 (READ) Jesus equated these critics to spoiled children who were calling out to each other in the village marketplace, never satisfied with anything. Nothing could make them happy. When someone played an upbeat tune on the flute (a picture of Jesus joy filled ministry) they sniffed down their nose and refused to dance and sing and celebrate. When someone sang a funeral dirge (a picture of John's grim ministry) they wouldn't cry, weep or mourn, they refused affected by either type of ministry. John and Jesus had very different methods to their ministry, but Jesus explains in v.35 "yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children." Children being fruit. Jesus commended John's ministry and very different methods and at the same time declared its not about the style but the content and the fruit it produces. Both John and Jesus ministries were pleasing to God and proved by the children or fruit of their ministries.

Look past the method and style: Where's the fruit?

Two very different people. John lived in isolation waiting for people to come to him and Jesus went into the villages seeking out sinners who had great need. One followed a very strict religious diet and the other

attended parties and was known for having turned even water into wine. They were so different that even their close followers became confused. Yet even though they were different, the Father was pleased with both. What can we learn from this? That perhaps someone else who is choosing to practice a ministry, or lifestyle very different than our own could actually know God as well or even better than we do. If you need to know, then look at the fruit. If the fruit of the spirit is growing out of the life. Jesus said, "you shall know them by their fruit." Conversely even if someone looks into their life and see themselves saying all the right Christian things and acting all the right Christian ways, if they have no fruit growing from their life than we are forced to ask the question. Do we really know God very well? Lets take a look past the method and style, lets see the fruit.

Who are you?

Who are you? Are you more like Jesus or more like John? And what spiritual temperament has God crafted you with? What means, methods draw you to God's heart. Are you an intellectual that loves to read the deep theological classics? Are you a contemplative person that comes to Gods heart in quiet meditation away from the crowds and people and business of life. Are you a traditionalist who profoundly worships God perhaps with hymns and liturgy and prayers and structure and orders and awe-inspiring architecture? Are you one that loves to meet God in the beauty of nature and experience His power of creation outdoors? Are you drawn to God in the sensual/experiential of candles and drama and cloth and banners and kneeling and worshipping and praising enthusiastically? Do you feel closest to God when you are serving others or working for others toward a common cause? Do you delight in God with exuberance and expressive declarations of song and worship and movement? Each of us are very different. There are many

different paths that will draw us to the same place, God's heart. It helps us to recognize there is nothing wrong with us simply because we relate to God in a certain way and it also helps us understand other people who may worship God in equally valid ways. If you are interested in learning more about what your particular spiritual temperament might be, on our church web site Yefc.org you can click on a link to a survey you can take to help you determine how God has spiritually wired you to respond to His heart.

All crafted differently

We are all crafted differently by God. I am glad we are not the same, but God wants to grow the same great looking fruit in our lives, the fruit of the spirit. Some of us are wired to be driven like Braveheart type Christians, others God has wired to be calm and steady and easy-going. Some of us are wired to charge up and take the hill and for others your idea of a great life is to live a very quiet life. Both can be very spiritual. The same author, Paul, affirmed both spiritual temperaments as pleasing to God. In I Corinthians 9:19-27 Paul describes his desire to become all things to all men in order to save some. He plans on burning strong for God. He plans to run in such a way to win the prize. He buffets his body to win the prize from God. The problem with driver types is that they can get easily puffed up with pride and run over people and become so caught up with the pursuit they forget the real goal. The real goal is not to become a leader, to get there first, but to know God and please Him. If you are a high-D driver leader, you can get to know God and please Him, but don't let your gifting get in your way of knowing God. The goal of the spiritual life not to become a better leader, its to know and obey God and be influenced by the Holy Spirits control in all things.

For some of you, your idea of a great life is a quiet life. I'm not talking about Christians who as spiritually lazy and disobedient to God.

I'm not talking about people who refuse to exercise the spiritual gifts God has given you. I believe that to whom much has been given, much is required. If God has crafted you to be a Ferrari then run fast and hard. But for some of us God made us a Volkswagen. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being a Volkswagen. There are far more Volkswagens than Ferrari's, and those Ferrari's often need a lot of maintenance to run at peak performance. No when I talk about those who desire to live a quiet life, I'm talking about great people who have character and integrity and treat their wives and husband and family with respect and kindness. People who are fair in their business dealings and speak truth.

Paul affirms your desire in I Thessalonians 4:11-12 "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands..." You may view yourself as pretty as a pretty average Volkswagen Christian, but even though you may not be a super dynamic leader or have great gifts of teaching or an upfront guy, that doesn't mean you can't be one who is just as spiritual as your affections and will and desires are influenced and controlled by the Spirit. If God made you a Volkswagen be the very best running, steady, peaceful, truthful running Volkswagen you can be for God.

Is average OK? Absolutely if that is how God has crafted you. Don't use that as an excuse for disobedience or inactivity, don't stand watching in envy as others teach and lead, just enjoy walking in the skin that God has crafted you. Are you more of a leader/driver? Then don't try to turn everyone else into a leader. Don't write them off as less Spiritual just because they aren't go-go driver types ready to storm the castle. Understanding who you are and how God has crafted you will help you understand other people and yourself. If you would like to study this whole area of Spiritual temperaments more I've added a link on our church web site YEFC.org to a short survey that will help you discover how God may have spiritually wired you to best draw close to him.

(Many of the concepts in this sermon have been adapted from Larry Osborne's work *Contranarians Guide to Knowing God*.)