



Your God is Too Unspiritual

Your God is Too... Series

Rich Nathan

November 21st and 22nd, 2015

John 14:11-27

Sermon Summary

Continuing in the sermon series, “Your God is Too...” Rich Nathan talked about the full landscape of the western world in regard to “spirituality.” For the last 200 years Enlightenment and secular philosophies have tried to propagate the idea that there is no spiritual world. Hard line materialists would say that any spiritual experiences are fabrications in people’s minds. Despite the western atheist attempt to convince the world that spiritual experiences and desires are not real, we see only an increase of experiences and interest in spiritual things. Others who have little to no framework for spiritual experiences are often left to figure it out on their own.

Unfortunately, many churches in the country have no idea what to do with the increased interest and desire from people regarding spiritual things. The truth is, people are inescapably spiritual. But, simply engaging in spiritual things and experiences will not always be beneficial. Spirituality, like all reality, is comprised of both good and bad things. One can be engaged in unhealthy spirituality or in healthy spirituality. Unhealthy spirituality will do great damage and could destroy you. Like drinking unhealthy water from a poisoned well, unhealthy spirituality will not be good for you in the short or long term. Healthy spirituality is Jesus-centered, morally demanding, and miracle-expectant.

Background and Context

John includes long teaching and prayers of Jesus that the other gospel writers leave out. In particular, his record of Jesus’ teachings on the Holy Spirit and the Father speak clearest regarding the doctrine of the Trinity.

The gospel of John was written with primarily a Jewish audience in mind. Jewish spiritual experience was centered around a Temple in the center of Jerusalem. The idea that Jesus was God would have been hard to accept. For Jesus to then say that the Holy Spirit was God and in some mysterious way his spirit, would be even harder to accept. Despite the difficulty, Jesus was compelled to tell the people the truth for their benefit. For Jesus to keep these things secret would allow them to continue in unhealthy spiritual practices. The Temple, the Law, and the smoke that would fill the Temple were all pictures of the true reality of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

Pray

Link to the Sermon

- How many of you like to eat leftovers from the refrigerator?
- Of those who do enjoy eating leftovers, have you ever had something spoil or mold for being left for too long?
- What did you do with that spoiled food? Why did you not eat it?
- The human body is made up of mostly water. Humans can survive a few dozen days without food, but can only survive about three days without water. Is it a good idea to drink any water you come across? Why would you not drink water from a puddle beside a busy highway?
- Why do you think some people view spiritual matters differently than we do other matters vital to human flourishing?

This Week's Bible Study

(Have a few volunteers read the passage aloud. It may serve you well to read it twice!)

John 14:11-27

11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

15 "If you love me, keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

25 “All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Study & Discuss

- 1) There are little to no demands put on people who engage in New Age Spirituality or who are self-guided spiritually. Why is this so appealing? What dangers do you see in such an approach?**

(The demands are low. You know you can always succeed without sacrifice. Self-guided and self-centered spirituality gives you ultimate control over results. It is dangerous because it always depends on you as the standard. It is dangerous because you end up guiding yourself. It is based in the assumption that there are no dangers in the spiritual world that are against you or can harm you.)

- 2) Think of people you know who are searching, who may have had experiences they can't explain, who even claim to be simply “spiritual.” Has anything they have shared with you made you think that the Holy Spirit may be working? If so, what? Does your relationship with this person allow for open dialogue regarding spiritual things?**

(Allow people to share.)

- 3) Christians believe that healthy spirituality begins and ends with Jesus. What is safe about having *Jesus* determine what is “healthy” and “unhealthy” regarding our spiritual lives and practices?**

(Jesus' life, example, sacrifice, and resurrection make him an authority for what is healthy and unhealthy. Great follow-up question— **How do we check to see if our practices are “healthy” or “unhealthy”?**— The safest way to check is to look at scripture and check with church.)

- 4) If following Jesus' commands are the starting point for healthy spirituality, what commands of Jesus do you see as demanding and difficult?**

(Allow people to be honest about how they would feel if this happened. This is a safe place to be yourself! Forgiveness is hard. Merciful acts are hard. Holiness is hard. Patience with others. Loving your enemies is hard!)

- 5) **This passage illuminates and helps point to the doctrine (correct thinking) of the Trinity. How would you explain Jesus and the Holy Spirit to someone who asked you?**

(Allow for people to answer. Key verses would be 15-18. The word “another” in this passage is the Greek word “allos” which means “another of the same kind.” Another helpful verse in linking the Holy Spirit, who is God, and who lives in us is Romans 8:9 “You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.”)

- 6) **According to this passage, why does Jesus give the Holy Spirit to live in us?**

(Spirit helps us verse 16 “advocate” means “to come alongside with help.” Teaches us truth verses 15-17. Enables us to fulfill the commands of Jesus verse 21. Gives us life verse 19. — Great follow up question: **Why do people, even Christians, often slip into thinking the Holy Spirit exists to fulfill their dreams? Their goals?**)

- 7) **Why is it healthy to be miracle-expectant even though we don't see miracles every time we pray? How do we balance verse 14 with our experiences?**

(First of all, we believe things that take great faith already! The resurrection is at the center of our faith and it is hard to believe. This is a great opportunity to teach the Vineyard belief or reinforce the “already and not yet” of the Kingdom of God. Jesus instructs his followers to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We see this happen, but it does not happen in all circumstances.)

- 8) **Our senior pastor said, “I chose to believe before I understand. Timing is the issue. God will heal. Right now, tomorrow, next week, next month, in eternity. It is just a matter of timing.” How can this inform our spiritual life? What are some ways that help us live comfortably in this tension?**

(**Answers will vary. Try give space and time for this.)

Ministry Time

These are suggested ways to pray as a group and in smaller groups. We encourage each group to break up into smaller groups of 2-3 people and pray for one another on a regular basis in addition to “ministry time” or “waiting on the Lord.” This allows for greater transparency and honesty.

Setting time for God to speak: ***Don't forget to explain what you are about to do! This may be awkward for some of the people in the group. That is okay. It is okay to be uncomfortable sometimes! Explaining will relieve some anxiety that people may feel.***

- If there are not many words for the group that night, then perhaps pose this to the group. "Are there any areas where you feel spiritually unhealthy? Is there any areas which you believe you have grown in spiritual health over the years?"
- Who can you be praying for that is engaging in a unhealthy approach to spiritual things? Ask your prayer partner to pray for them also.
- Is there anything that you believe God is asking you to do that you don't like. Which command? Praying with a trusted friend for encouragement will help!