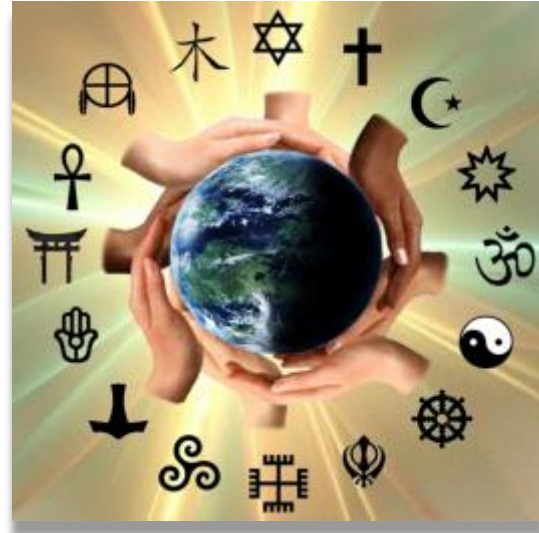


# Spirituality vs. Religion: The Call to Unity

Opening the door to spiritual knowledge is a gift that realigns our sense of self to something bigger and grander than our everyday life. This distinction is so important that I reconnect with this message repeatedly throughout my spiritual development program. Spirituality shows us that we are “limitless,” beyond our wildest imagination and through exploration of our higher self we uncover more of our unlimited self to emerge. Spirituality shows us that an extraordinary divine light exists inside of us, waiting for recognition. This same light is also present within everyone else we know and in everyone we will ever know in the future. Many of us think we're limited to just our physical body and life as we know it: our gender, race, family, job, organized religion and status in life, but spirituality tells us that there is more to us than this; so much more. We know some things about a spiritual journey. First, it inspires us to fill our life, with love, joy, wisdom, peacefulness, and service. Next, we recognize that we all die to this life, putting the ordinary stuff of daily life in perspective as unimportant. While on the other hand, showing us why we never really die at all.



Spirituality connects us with the profoundly powerful and divine force that's present in this universe. Whether we're looking for worldly success, inner peace, or supreme enlightenment, no knowledge can propel us to achieve our goals and provide as effective a plan for living as does spiritual knowledge.

**Spirituality vs. Religion** Although religion and spirituality are sometimes used interchangeably, they really indicate two different aspects of the human experience. You might say that spirituality is the mystical face of Christian religion as the Kabbala is the mystical face of the Jewish religion and Sufism is the mystical face of the Hindu religion.

Spirituality, as Sharon Janis states, is the spark of divinity that pulsates and flows through us as the essence of every soul. Spirituality unfolds as our deeply personal search, to finding greater meaning and purpose in our existence. Some elements of spirituality include the following:

- Looking beyond outer appearances to the deeper significance and soul (essence) of everything
- Love and respect for higher power, Source, God, Universe
- Love and respect for ourselves

- Love and respect for everyone else [1]

Alternatively, religion is most often used to describe an organized group of people that come together to express a theory advanced from a Bible. This is in conjunction with early leadership whose interpretation of that Bible structures a particular tradition. Religions usually act with a mission and intention of presenting specific teachings and doctrines while setting forth a particular way of life.

**Religion & Spirituality Offer a Compatible Fit** Actually these elements can blend beautifully. Different religions may look distinct and separate from one another, but at the core of them, they are quite similar; they all lead to Source/God/Universe. Outwardly a tradition may choose a symbolic way to express or metaphorical way to communicate to their higher power. Some traditions communicate their prayerful respect when they bow to colorful statues of deities, others listen intently to inspired sermons, and yet others set out their prayer rugs five times a day and bow their heads to the ground. Some use rote memorization, mantra-like, with prayer beads to track prayers, while others speak to Source in simple dialogue. There may be overlap within these great traditions as well. Regardless of the outer actions of showing reverence, the central focus of religion is spirituality, and the essence of spirituality is God or the Supreme Being or the Source or The All That Is.

#### **Spirituality then is**

- Beyond all religions yet containing all religions
- Beyond all science yet containing all science
- Beyond all philosophy yet containing all philosophy [2]



As we become more connected to our spiritual self, aggressive fighting and trying to control others is reduced within us, allowing a more peaceful acceptance of life as a whole. Consequently, we may begin to feel that every image of divine expression is just one more aspect of our own sense of Source, a manifestation of the Universe, our wholeness and the unity within us.

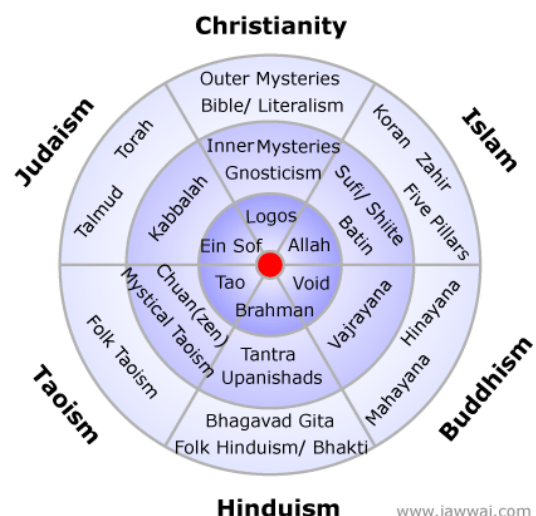
Respecting other religious views doesn't mean that we have to agree with their traditions, or for that matter, not even with our own traditions. This goes for any spiritual thoughts we may encounter along our path. We all think we have the right answers, sometimes we do, sometimes, not so much. That said, it's great to think differently, seeing perspectives from other angles enlightens us. What a boring place the world would be if we were all exactly alike, and we wouldn't grow much without a symbolic mirror to project from. Diversity then is the most important treasure of humanity. Diversity is the mainstay of human evolution, and as my mother reminded me frequently, viva la difference! We are all uniquely seeing the world through a set of imaginary filters that are based on our early beliefs about the world. Clearing those filters of old programming allows us to experience life better; for our highest good. We each believe we have life down to a fine science that works, and it does for some, just not for

everyone. As we move along our path, we are drawn to that which creates the passion to impel us towards our core purpose. Eventually, as our awareness grows, it will illuminate us with the light of a thousand candles, compelling us forward into unity with our hearts desires.

For some there is just a knowing that may include the "Dark Night" of the soul, which refers to the typical mid-life crisis, especially among individuals who have achieved a sense of stability and prosperity in the world. They have met their material goals and still haven't found inner satisfaction. The pursuit of ego gratification is no longer enough and then one encounters an existential meaninglessness, which is very often a yearning for Spirit, a greater sense of wholeness, and interconnection with the eternal, universal principle. This dissatisfaction and yearning can also occur at adolescence or actually anytime. The call to our inner destiny can be abrupt, suddenly compelled to a moment of enlightenment or a transpersonal state of being.

**Transpersonal States of Being** Some lump all spiritual transformational tendencies into categories, such as metaphysics. This is a traditional branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world that encompasses it, although the term is not easily defined. Traditionally, metaphysics attempts to answer two basic questions in the broadest possible terms: Ultimately, what *is there*? What *is it like*? Metaphysics is the study of transcendence or a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses. So, one of the many subgroups of metaphysics is the Afterlife, but another could be logic and mathematics. [3]

### All World Religion is One Religion



Whatever way the call to rise above the everyday expression of faith-based life, we have only to look with intention to know. Then wait for an answer, listen for the faint message that may come as what seems like an inner thought of our own, an insight brought to us in some magical moment of enlightenment, it will come if the intent is clear and pure of heart. Our gift in return is a reconnection to the core light that is the spark of Source, which has always been there for us. We are the depth of Spirit that drives us to the inner life. The spark that is the infinite glow within us. The manifestation of what some traditions call all that's holy, referring to those things external to us.

Holiness is an obsolete term, in that we are all holy in the presence of the Universe. When we step over the threshold of the door to infinity, we become One with our own true legacy. We are the incomplete elements of Source, made whole within Its Light, thus holy. Holiness is our birthright as we enter the physical world; and our legacy at the end of our journey. As we move along our path, it is good to stop and honor this part of who we are, to bow in awareness for our many gifts in this life. Feel the beauty of all that you are, pulsing through you, reaching a crescendo that fires the imagination. Let your power out to do good things for yourself and

others. Live your energy in ways that creates a peace of knowing that you are living to your highest Self. The power to create movement in your life is within you, never forget this gift that is your heritage. You are the purpose that you seek: the witness, the observer, and the mirror. Let yourself unfold and transcended your limitless self.

Shirley Ryan, PhD, CCHt is a practicing hypnotherapist and spiritual mentor. See more at <http://www.shirleyryan.net>

### **Notes & References**

1. Janis, Sharon, Article: *Exploring the Meaning of Spirituality* from *Spirituality For Dummies*, 2nd Edition
2. Janis, Sharon, Article: *Exploring the Meaning of Spirituality* from *Spirituality For Dummies*, 2nd Edition
3. Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics>; Metaphysics is a traditional branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world that encompasses it, although the term is not easily defined. Traditionally, metaphysics attempts to answer two basic questions in the broadest possible terms: Ultimately, what *is there*? What *is it like*? There are two kinds of metaphysics: General metaphysics (universal); and Special metaphysics (particular).
  - General metaphysics is the study of ultimate reality as in the big picture of reality and is done empirically by most contemporary philosophers. This is not necessarily the study of any afterlife or upper reality; that subject is a matter of special metaphysics.
  - Special metaphysics has potentially an infinite number of sub branches, each studying one particular subject. One such subject may be ghosts and spirits but most contemporary philosophers don't take this particular subject matter seriously. Topics that are taken seriously are philosophy of mind and psychology, personal identity, and aesthetics. Unlike physics which studies concrete objects, metaphysics studies abstract objects like mathematics, logic etc.