

# The Tennessee Tribune

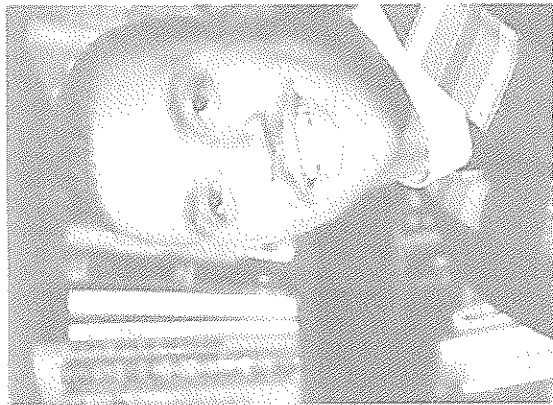
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## Healing on the Sabbath: The Difference between Religion and Spirituality

*A Commentary by Jason Curry*



Religion and spirituality are two separate, but often overlapping, ideas. I have come to understand and appreciate the value of both of them. The bible helps to distinguish the difference between religion and spirituality through the words and deeds of Jesus the Christ. Mark tells the story of how Jesus was criticized by the teachers of Jewish law (i.e., the Pharisees) because he allowed the disciples to pick corn on the Sabbath; a scared and significant day according to Jewish law and culture. Jesus knew that this day was significant to the Pharisees, and that it was unlawful to perform certain acts on the Sabbath. Nevertheless, he said: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27)." Jesus went on to say: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17)." The Pharisees were concerned about establishing righteousness through obedience to the law; however, Jesus was

concerned about discussing, embodying, demonstrating and teaching about righteousness through a new relationship with God. Indeed, it is through our relationship with God that we can continue to find meaning, guidance and inspiration to face another day's journey. It is also through this relationship that we are able to recognize and celebrate the difference between a necessary religion and an authentic spirituality.

Religion is primarily preoccupied with rules and rituals (e.g., going to church and bible study every week). Spirituality is concerned with having a right relationship with God as demonstrated through our attitude and behavior whether we are at church or home. Religion is often concerned with doctrine and dogma (e.g., the rules that govern a particular church or denomination). Spirituality seeks to promote and embrace agape love through the church universal (e.g., the

teaching of Jesus Christ) wherever that church that may be found. Religion is concerned with the appearance of symbols (e.g., the cross), buildings, apparel (choir robes) and programs. Spirituality seeks to embrace the meaning of these symbols (e.g., being grateful for the price that Jesus paid on the cross) and strives to glorify God with or without these material items. Religion speaks of the realities of a spiritual and existential "hell." Spirituality is always concerned with the ideas of healing, helping and holiness through Jesus Christ. Religion often concerns the practical matters of the here and now (e.g., tithes and offerings). Spirituality concerns being spiritually connected with God now, henceforth and forevermore (Matthew 28:19-20). We need the rules of religion (i.e., the law), as well as a relationship with God provided by spirituality. Let us live in such a way that religion and spirituality continue to complement one another. Amen.

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