

The Difference between Spirituality and Religion

Although the words *religion* and *spirituality* are sometimes used interchangeably, they really indicate two different aspects of the human experience.

- *Spirituality* is the wellspring of divinity that pulsates, dances, and flows as the source and essence of every soul. Spirituality relates mainly to your personal search and connection with the divine, as you look beyond outer appearances to find deeper significance and meaning.
- *Religion* is most often used to describe an organized group or culture that has been sparked by the fire of a spiritual or divine soul. Religions often act with a mission and intention of presenting specific teachings and doctrines while nurturing and propagating a particular way of life.

There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.

—George Bernard Shaw

Different religions can look quite unlike one another. Some participants bow to colorful statues of deities, some listen to inspired sermons while dressed in their Sunday finery, and others set out their prayer rugs five times a day to bow their heads to the ground. Regardless of these different outer forms of worship, the kernel of religion is spirituality – the relationship between the individual soul and divine universal spirit.

Here are some more ways to distinguish spirituality from religion:

- Spirituality is the mystical face of religion.
- Spirituality is being guided from within, while religion is being guided outwardly.
- Spirituality is the pearl within the shell of religion.
- Spirituality is the banana, while religion is the banana skin. Respect the banana skin, but eat the banana!.

Don't Forget

Religion and spirituality can blend together beautifully.

Thou shalt nots

One way to describe the difference between religion and spirituality is to say that religion is about being outwardly guided, while spirituality is being inwardly guided. Here's a small sampling of the many prohibitions dictated by various religious traditions as part of their outer guidance:

- Thou shalt not kill any living thing (Buddhism)
- Thou shalt not eat pork (Judaism, Islam)
- Thou shalt not cut your hair (Sikhism)
- Thou shalt not disturb birds and other animals (Taoism)
- Thou shalt not commit adultery (Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and pretty much every religion)
- Thou shalt not wear head coverings in a house of worship if you are a male (Christianity)
- Thou shalt not go bareheaded into a house of worship if you are a male (Judaism, Sikhism)
- Thou shalt not point the bottoms of your feet toward an altar (Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism)

Spirituality is:

- Beyond religion, yet contains all religions
- Beyond science, yet contains all science
- Beyond philosophy, yet contains all philosophy