

# Spirituality & Religion

Culture, Spirituality, & Religion

Should Christians be more spiritual? More religious?

Prayer

# Review

# Would you rather say:

- “I go to church every Sunday.”
- “I tithe, giving a tenth of my earnings to the church.”
- “I’m on half of the ministry teams at my church.  
I’m at church all the time!”

OR

- “I pray all the time.”
- “I read my Bible and have a rich devotional life.”
- “I seek out God in nature, yoga, and in meditation. I’m interested in trying alternative spiritual practices.”

In the eyes of many, these questions aren't just a game of "Would you rather." They're battle lines between:

"I'm religious"      AND      "I'm spiritual,"

For many people,  
this is a strict *either/or*.

# Religious

- “I go to church every Sunday.”
- “I tithe, giving a tenth of my earnings to the church.”
- “I’m on half of the ministry teams at my church.  
I’m at church all the time!”
- “I almost never pray or read my Bible. I just don’t have time.”
- “When I leave church, I seldom think or talk about my faith.”
- “I try to keep my emotions out of my faith.”

OR

# Spiritual

- “I pray all the time.”
- “I read my Bible and have a rich devotional life.”
- “I seek out God in nature, yoga, and in meditation. I’m interested in trying alternative spiritual practices.”
- “I almost never go to church. Church is full of hypocrites.”
- “The Bible is one among many true sources of religious knowledge.”
- “I try to avoid tainting my faith with rules, dogmas, and politics.”

*% who identify as ...*

## A quarter of Americans now see themselves as spiritual but not religious

Note: Respondents were asked separate questions about whether they consider themselves to be “a religious person” and whether they consider themselves to be “a spiritual person.” The “spiritual but not religious” category includes those who responded affirmatively to the question about being a spiritual person and also responded that they do not consider themselves to be a religious person. Statistically significant changes are indicated in **bold**. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017.

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Religious and spiritual



**Spiritual but not religious**



Neither religious nor spiritual



Religious but not spiritual



2012 2017

# Discussion

- How do you describe your religious beliefs on social media?
- Do you ever post religious content on social media? Why or why not?



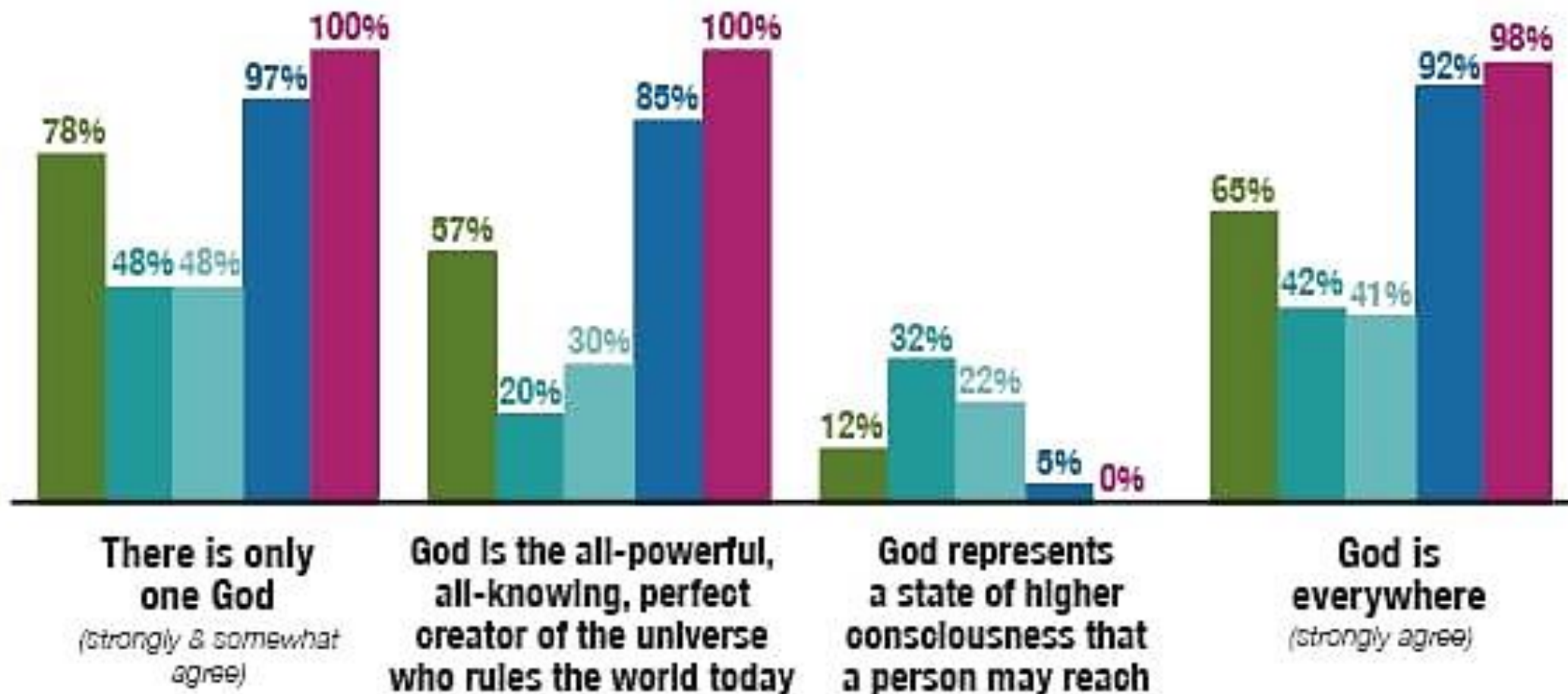
# Spiritual But Not Religious (SBNR)

- Based on a 2017 Barna study, of those who claim to be SBNR,
  - ~59% claim no religious affiliation (SBNR #1)
    - atheist (6%), agnostic (20%), or unaffiliated (33%).
  - ~41% claim a faith community (SBNR #2)
    - Protestant (22%), Catholic (15%), Jewish (2%), Buddhist (2%), or other (1%).
- Not the same group as those who would say, “I love Jesus but not the church.”
- SBNR = 8% of the population
- Love Jesus but not the Church = 8% of the population
- Combined = 11% of the population

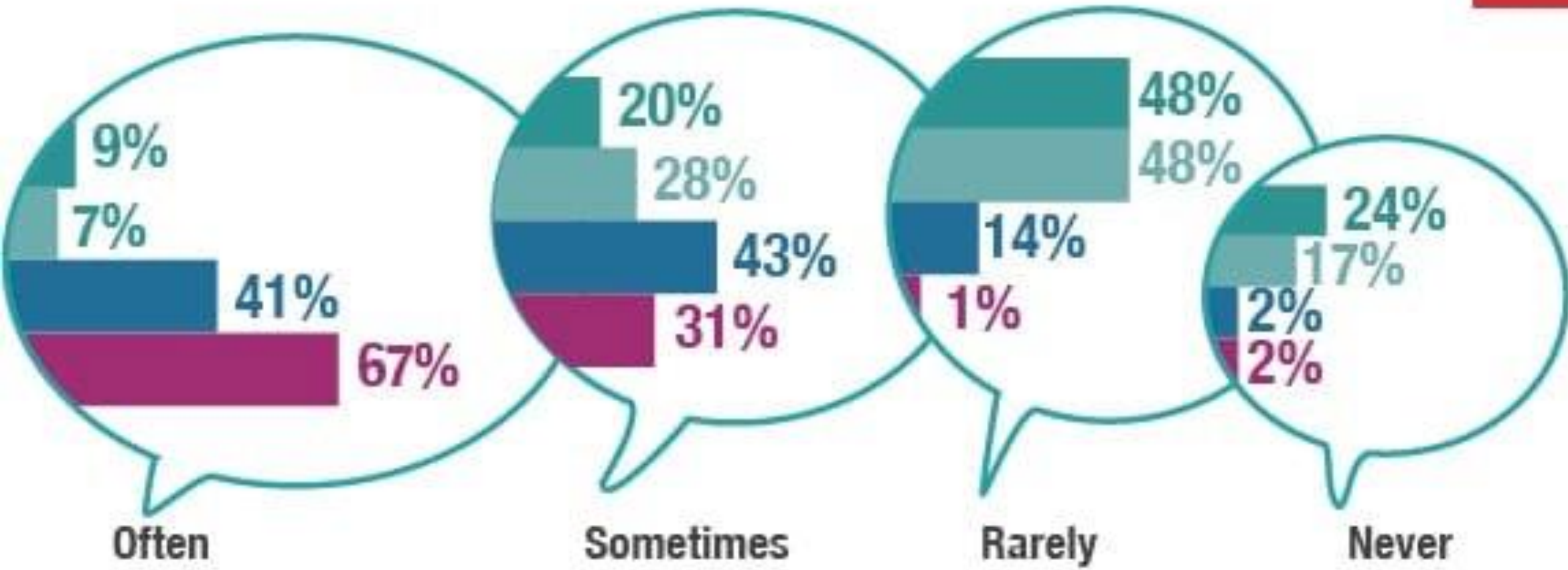
# Beliefs About God

Barna

● All Adults ● SBNR #1 ● SBNR #2 ● Practicing Christians ● Evangelicals



# How Often Do You Talk With Your Friends About Spiritual Matters?



● SBNR #1   ● SBNR #2   ● Practicing Christians   ● Evangelicals

## The Religious Typology: The highly religious, nonreligious and in between

Highly religious  
39%

**17** **Sunday Stalwarts:** Religious traditionalists actively involved with their faith and engaged in their congregations

**12** **God-and-Country Believers:** Socially and politically conservative, most likely to view immigrants as hurting American culture

**11** **Diversely Devout:** Traditionally religious, but majorities also believe in psychics, reincarnation, and that spiritual energy can be located in physical objects

Somewhat religious  
32%

**15** **Spiritually Awake:** Few practice religion in traditional ways, but most believe in heaven and hell, and subscribe to New Age beliefs

Non-religious  
29%

**12** **Religion Resisters:** Most think organized religion does more harm than good; politically liberal and Democratic

**17** **Solidly Secular:** Hold virtually no religious beliefs and reject New Age beliefs

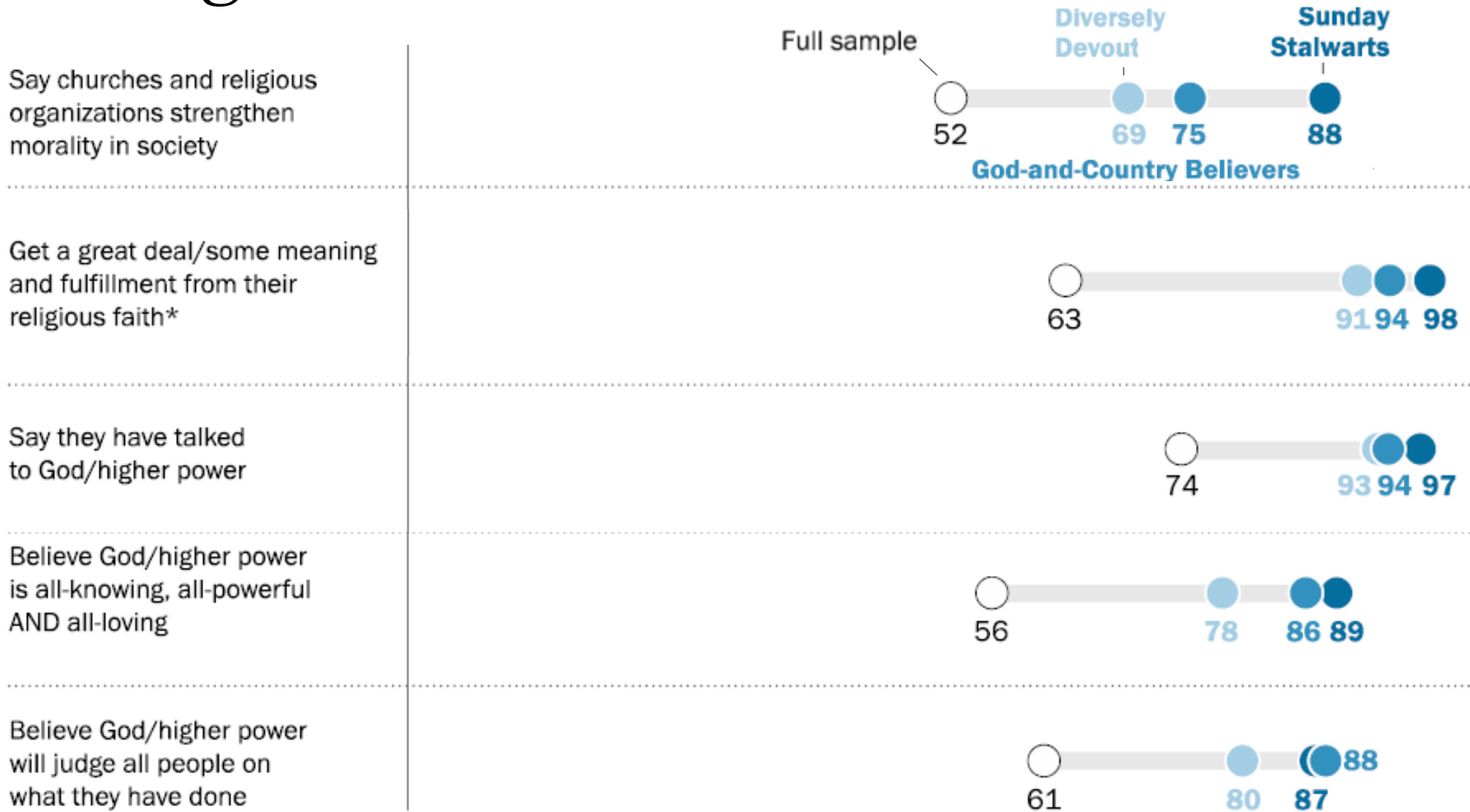
Somewhat religious  
32%

**17** **Relaxed Religious:** Say it's not necessary to believe in God to be a moral person. Religion is important to them, but few engage in traditional practices

Source: Survey conducted Dec. 4-18, 2017, among U.S. adults. "The Religious Typology"

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# “Religious” is self-identified...



# Discussion

- Do you think it's a problem to be religious but not spiritual?

I'd like to argue:  
It shouldn't be an  
either/or

# Let's look at Scripture

“The Letter kills, but the Spirit gives Life.”

- 2 Corinthians 3:6b



Religion may not sound *fun*, but

1. God wants no division,
2. We need other Christians,
3. Christians are still sinners, &
4. Sin tends to divide us.

Therefore, we need rules and methods of *reconciliation*.

Therefore, we need *religion*.

# This is why Jesus says in Matthew 18:

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.  
<sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.  
<sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.  
<sup>18</sup> Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.  
<sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.  
<sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

• Matthew 18:15-20

# Jesus isn't taking sides, however.

<sup>23</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup> You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

-Matthew 23:23-24

# Paul explicitly interprets this problem *through the Spirit*.

<sup>23</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup> You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

-Matthew 23:23-24

<sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

-2 Corinthians 3:5-6

# Jesus never gives doubt. The Spirit *and* the Law are important:

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will obey my commandments. <sup>16</sup> I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper who will be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> That helper is the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it doesn’t see or know him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be in you.

-John 14:15-17

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

-Matthew 5:17-18

# Jesus lived this out, too!

- Jesus constantly sought solitude for prayer.
- But Jesus constantly taught crowds of people.
- Jesus perfectly kept the law.
- But also rejected many “laws” of the Pharisees and Scribes.
- And Jesus died fulfilling the law.
- And Jesus says the he *must* ascend into heaven *so that we can receive the Spirit*.

It was  
*never an either/or*  
for Jesus.

*Body of Christ,*  
you who are *blessed*  
with the *Spirit,*  
embrace this *identity.*  
Strive to be *both*  
*Spiritual & Religious.*