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## What is spirituality?

Hello again! Laurence Lephord is my name and I am going to introduce to you a concept of spirituality in this video. I was trained as a pastoral carer, worked as a volunteer in two hospitals and was then involved in research for some 10 years in three universities. This centred on spirituality, firstly in men with advanced prostate cancer and then in older people. I am now back in the coal face as a volunteer in an aged care home in Toowoomba, Queensland.

As pastoral visitors (or spiritual carers) we focus on what is central to a person – their spirituality.

You will see in the Handbook a number of definitions of spirituality but the simplest involves what is central to the person's life, what lifts them to a higher plane. A New Zealand colleague once put it simply as "What makes them tick". This is very important because as people get older, they invariably become ill (and, of course this can happen to younger people and children). So, while the body starts to wear out, what is always present is their spirit – what is of absolute importance to them.

In this video, I'm going to refer to the [diagram Connect-Explore or ESWOP \("Exploring Spirituality With Older People"\)](#). It's around page 22 or so in the Handbook, or it's in the paper about spirituality a link to which can be found in the resources page on the website.

A key element of this model (diagram) is that spirituality involves **Connection**. It is not OUR spirituality unless we have a connection with someone or something. When you look at the model you will see that **elements** of spirituality can be **People, Creativity, Something Higher and Self**. But the important aspect of these elements is that we can be connected to them. We can connect with other people, we can connect with art and music, or sport, we can connect with God or nature and we can connect with ourselves. (This last element might raise your eyebrows a bit – how on earth can we connect with ourselves – you ask? Be patient, all will be revealed!) And the last important aspect is that our connections must lead to something higher in our life. **Our spirituality transcends or lifts above the everyday aspects of our life**. A couple of quick examples – Beethoven's spirituality was music. That was central to his life. There is little indication that he was lifted up by God nature. He certainly had difficulties with people Music and creativity were central to his life and lifted him above the mundane. Another less lofty example I became aware of was when I was addressing a group of men (and their wives) on spirituality when you have prostate cancer. At a slight pause in my presentation, one fellow blurted out, "My spirituality is on the golf course of a Sat'dy arvo!"

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The point he was making was that golf on Saturdays was central to his life – it was what made him tick! While I may not think this is uplifting, that’s not the point. From the people we are visiting, it’s not my or your spirituality that is important in a conversation but the other person’s.

**The remainder of this video is in two parts.** In the first part I’ll explain the model (diagram) in a general sense and in the second part, I’ll refer specifically to spirituality that might be in Christadelphians and Christians generally.

**So, Part (1). In a general sense.** The four components can have a spiritual part of any and every one’s life. In essence, it is the relative emphasis we place on each component that makes up a person’s inner being. For example, ‘John’ may be a very keen gardener (**something higher**) that consumes most of his time. He may take an interest in sport (**creativity**). He spends a lot of time with his family (**people**) but he does not believe in God (**part of something higher**). John does not think much about his life from a personal perspective (**self**). Mary, on the other hand, spends most of her time with her grandchildren (**people**), does flower arranging (**creative**), spends time bushwalking (**nature**) and is on her church’s ladies’ auxiliary. (Be careful here – does this mean she has a close, religious relationship with God or is it more a connection with people?) She does not think too much about herself and her life’s purpose (**self**).

#### **Part 2 – God-centred spirituality.**

One of the aspects in the model is the connection a person may have with something or someone higher. **This is where the spirituality of a Christian is centred.** It is not uncommon for people using this or a similar model to indicate on a place on a line between the element and the centre of the model that indicates the intensity of the connection. The number 9 out of a possibility of 10 would indicate on the Something Higher element that the person feels a very strong intensity of connection. If there were similar lines between other elements and the centre the numbers may not be so great. For example, there might be a 5 People line, 2 on Creativity, 6 on self. This sort of profile would suggest that the person feels a great connection with God (if they indicate that God is the Higher being) but little connection with anything else except themselves. And, it is important to understand here that it is **the person with whom you are interacting that decides** where they are on the various lines between the element and the centre of their being. As friends or pastoral visitors, we cannot possibly make an accurate assessment of the person’s position on the lines. We

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are there to help them explore their inner being for themselves. We try to help them reflect so that their spirituality is strengthened.

Now what about this **Connection with self**? This is an important aspect of spirituality. How do we connect with our self? We do this when we **reflect** on our life and what is important in it. For example, if I am the person in the example above, while I might be satisfied with my connection to God, I reflect that I am not fulfilling a Christ-like existence if my relationship with people is very low. Part of Christian love is to interact well with others. In my self-connection, then I would explore ways in which I can explore that connection with other people. If I did it every now and again, maybe my estimate in 6 months would be 5 on the People centre connection. If I made a constant effort over that six months, maybe I could say that I went up to a 7 connection with People. As a general principle in our life, our reflecting on ourself is important for spiritual improvement. (The Apostle Paul said **“Let a man examine himself”** This, of course, applies to ladies as well!)

Now the last aspect of the Model – ultimately, the concept of spirituality should lead us to a **peace of mind**. In exploring spirituality with the people we visit using this model might help them to achieve that peace of mind. I use this model very frequently in my conversations with other people. After preliminary conversation, I will usually ask “What would you say is the most important aspect of your life?” The answers vary but with older people especially, they will often say, “Oh, my family is very important to me.” Using the **LACE** communication this provides an opportunity to explore the central element of their life more fully.

**And to conclude** - You will notice in the Model that **transcendence** permeates all elements of spirituality. A deep spirituality has to have a sense of the sacred – something set apart from the normal. In the case of many people this is family or creativity and sport, and nature. In the case of the Christian spirituality is centred on God and Jesus. In the case of the Apostle Paul, his prayer for Christians was that God, according to the riches of his glory ... may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit **in your inner being**” (Ephesians 3:16).

Laurence Lephert

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