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Foundations- Session 1

Evangelical Spirituality vs. Sacramental Spirituality

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Course Overview

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- ▶ Dimensions / tensions within Christian spirituality...
 - ▶ Knowing vs. not being able to know God
 - ▶ Engagement vs. disengagement with the world
 - ▶ Structure vs. freedom
- ▶ Some tensions reflect different personalities and present an opportunity to grow, while some things can be unhelpful (or even harmful)

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6 Sessions (dates on the term card)

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- ▶ Evangelical spirituality vs. sacramental and traditional spirituality
- ▶ Asceticism vs. Abundance
- ▶ Icons, Incense, and the Imagination
- ▶ Mystical vs. Faithful
- ▶ Communal vs. Individual
- ▶ In the world vs. Out of the world

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Goals for the Course

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- ▶ In this course we will explore different ways of thinking about spirituality.
- ▶ Variety- I hope the variety of what we look at will encourage you as you come to better understand different parts of the church.
- ▶ Spiritual Growth- I also hope that some of the things that we look at will enrich your own walk with God.

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Evangelical spirituality (Bible-based) vs. sacramental and traditional

▶ Psalm 63:1- O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry weary land where there is no water.

▶ Steal

▶ Sift

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What is Spirituality?

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- ▶ Scope-
- ▶ Goals-
- ▶ Resources-
- ▶ Method / Means-

- ▶ Groups- Why do you think there is a growing interest in spirituality in western culture?

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What is Spirituality? (existing views)

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- ▶ The perspective of modernity: the material world is all there is
- ▶ The unfulfilled cry of the human spirit: God set “eternity in our hearts” (Eccl. 3:11)
- ▶ Spirituality is in and (organized) religion is out
- ▶ on one hand there are many Christians who don't like the word spirituality... On the other hand there are many people who like the word spirituality but don't like the word Christian.
- ▶ What then, do we mean by spirituality?

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What is Spirituality? (existing views)

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- ▶ Generic Spirituality: Encountering the transcendent and being personally transformed by it
- ▶ Distinctively Christian Spirituality: Encountering the living God, and being renewed in Christ-likeness
 - ▶ Christian Spirituality is Holistic: Living all of life before God
 - ▶ Christian Spirituality is focused on the transforming presence and power of the Holy Spirit (For me, a basic definition of Christian spirituality must include walking in the spirit)

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Sacred Pathways 9

- ▶ Chapter headings from part two of Gary Thomas' Sacred Pathways
- ▶ The naturalist: loving God out-of-doors
- ▶ The sensate: loving God with the senses
- ▶ The traditionalist: loving God through ritual and symbol
- ▶ The ascetic: loving God in solitude and simplicity
- ▶ The activist: loving God through confrontation
- ▶ The caregiver: loving God by loving others
- ▶ The enthusiast: loving God with mystery and celebration
- ▶ The contemplative: loving God through adoration
- ▶ The intellectual: loving God with the mind

Sacramental and Traditional 10

- ▶ Early church focused on worship and communion
- ▶ C.S. Lewis and tradition
- ▶ Church of England- merging of existing strands of Christianity
- ▶ Value of what one generation can pass down to another- surely some of the sacramental and traditional has actually come to us from the early church
- ▶ Some 'liturgies' in the new testament
- ▶ Rich resource of the Prayer Book, liturgies, and hymns

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Evangelical Spirituality

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- ▶ Evangelical is a broad term. If someone told you they were an evangelical... what would that mean to you? What things might you still disagree on?
- ▶ Core emphases of evangelical faith according to Scorgie Glen (author of Dictionary of Christian Spirituality): finality of Christ, centrality of the cross, authority of Scripture, necessity of conversion, assurance of salvation, priesthood of all believers, dependence on the spirit, commitment to mission, the call to holiness

The Development of Evangelical Spirituality

- ▶ Reformation roots
- ▶ Bible centered approach to Christian faith
- ▶ Good news message to tell
- ▶ Often includes a passion for 'real Christianity'

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The Development of Evangelical Spirituality

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- ▶ History- Calvin vs. Luther vs. Anabaptists- interesting to compare to today
- ▶ Pre-reformation spiritual resources often handled with suspicion by Evangelicals
- ▶ Solo-scriptura (scripture over tradition, reason, experience)
- ▶ The cross and grace imparted there
- ▶ Individual Liberty- to read the Bible, and from authority structures

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The Development of Evangelical Spirituality (some groups to know about)

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- ▶ Pietism- spirituality of the heart- saving faith and assurance are divine gifts, genuine religion is heart felt, focus on small groups
- ▶ Puritanism
- ▶ Wesleyan and Holiness Traditions
- ▶ Revivalism and the Role of Crisis
- ▶ Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal

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Features of Evangelical Spirituality (hard to generalise) 15

- ▶ Populist and Accessible in Form (Evangelicals are plain folk intuitively suspicious of elitism)
- ▶ A Quest for Real Spirituality (and Corresponding Impatience with Formalities): Value Ascribed to the Authentic Core of the Christian Life
- ▶ Rooted in a Devotional Reading of Scripture
- ▶ Experiential in Character (Especially in Initial Conversion)
- ▶ Assured of Grace and Compelled by Gratitude
- ▶ Supernatural in Worldview: Belief that Prayer Changes Things
- ▶ Evangelistic and Activist

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Distinct Evangelical Spiritual Practices

- ▶ Bible Reading
- ▶ Prayer
- ▶ Worship
- ▶ Testimony
- ▶ Bible Memorisation
- ▶ Tithing
- ▶ What else might you add?

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Challenges for Evangelical Spirituality

- ▶ Vulnerability to (Shallow) Activism
- ▶ The So-Called “Sanctification Gap”
- ▶ Relative Indifference toward Ecclesiology and Tradition
- ▶ Potential for Cultural Compromise
