

## I Don't Fit in Your Religious Box

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I got an email recently asking me to take a survey about religious and cultural views. I thought okay why not? It was multiple choice and only allowed one answer per question. It started with age, gender, location, but then got right to the nitty gritty. "Which of these statements best describes your view of God?" My answer would have been: NONE, but that was not a choice they gave me.

Surveys such as these are useless and counter-productive. After trying a few

more questions I realized that all of my answers did not fit into the choices they gave me, so I quit the survey. Who can answer this survey? Only people who fit into their pre-defined religious and cultural boxes, therefore the survey can not produce accurate data.

### Do you want to live in a box?



My mind is free and unlimited by anyone's concepts. My mind can travel the globe, go into outer space or the depths of the earth. My mind can experience heaven or hell and it will not waver because I know the cause and core of life is the heart of God. My mind and my life does not need anyone else's definitions, and that includes the naysayers definitions of religion.

That's a box too you know. This popular saying I often see shared on Facebook goes something like this; "religion is belief in someone else's experience, spirituality is having your own experience." (Chopra) Sorry Deepak but that's also putting people in a box – the spirituality vs religion box. They don't have to be two separate things.

Everyone's personal spiritual beliefs are cultivated over time through a variety of experiences and influences including: family upbringing, culture, ethnicity, education, personal searching and spiritual experience, religious practice, personality, relationships, rebellion, life experience ... you get the picture. The religious naysayers are mostly people who had a bad experience with religion or the religion they grew up with was not a good fit for them, or they feel people need to be liberated from limiting beliefs. But that doesn't mean religion is bad, and it certainly doesn't mean that religion is not spiritual. Some of the most enlightened people who have ever existed followed a particular set of doctrines or religious practice.

“I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit.” - Khalil Gibran

So let's just end the illusion of the “religion vs spirituality” box. Let's also end the “conservative vs liberal” debate so we can see what real answers might be there. Let's climb out of our boxes and move forward together with respect for the incredible wealth and variety of experience and knowledge that exists in this time period we are living in.

### **Stop giving religion a bad rap**

We are spiritual beings developing our hearts through this physical lifetime. Some people like to say that religion has caused all the worlds problems and that it was created by man and not God. But I say that God created man/woman in His/Her image, as sons and daughters and as co-creators. We were given dominion over all things because we have the ability to embody the divine nature of the creator, which is love. We created “religion” as an expression of love and filial piety toward our “Heavenly Parent”, and as a means to develop to our full potential. The history of religion can be seen as the growing pains of humanity.



*An immature knife user*

Religion is neither good or bad, it's a tool that can be used either way just like a knife. What makes the knife good or bad is the intention of the person holding it and their actions. A knife can help create a delicious meal or it can kill a person, but the knife doesn't make that decision. The person wanting to use the knife needs to learn when and how to use it skillfully for a good purpose.

An organization is neither good or bad, it's just a system for getting things done. People do good things and bad things, people love or hate, people act in ways that can benefit the greater good, or not. But the good news is that people can change, learn from their mistakes and do better next time. We can also learn to forgive, let go and move on.

We learn as individuals but we can also learn as a group, a family or even several generations together. Maybe even God and the angels learn and grow as we do.

### **Learn to Love Everything and Everyone**

That's the real task of life isn't it? Day in and day out what are the most important things you can practice in life? Be grateful for your life (expresses love toward the creator), love others (as well as yourself), and manifest the goodness that comes from within through the personality and abilities you were born with. Easier said than done; it takes practice. Learning and internal growth, that's what life is all about. Life is a religious practice in love, for the growth of your eternal spirit.