

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER: SEDUCING SPIRITS AND A DOCTRINE OF DEVILS

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 Republished: 04/06/06

INTRODUCTION BIBLICAL PRAYER CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER FALSE TEACHINGS UNFRUITFUL RESULTS AVOID FALSE TEACHINGS

Our pastor, David L. Brown, approached my husband Mike and me asking if I could take the time to carefully research and publish a report on Contemplative Prayer. This is the report he requested. Its purpose is to compare the Bible's model for prayer to Contemplative Prayer thus exposing the grievous errors of Contemplative Prayer. It is a condensed overview providing a springboard for further research.

INTRODUCTION

According to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, "contemplate" is defined as "to view or consider with continued attention; to study; to meditate on." ¹

"Prayer" is defined as "in worship, a solemn address to the Supreme Being, consisting of adoration, or an expression of our sense of God's glorious perfections, confession of our sins, supplication for mercy and forgiveness, intercession for blessings on others, and thanksgiving, or an expression of gratitude to God for his mercies and benefits." ²

Yet there is a type of prayer being taught today which is far from the above definitions and even further from Biblical prayer. It's known as Contemplative Prayer. Since the Bible is to be our guideline for faith and practice and since we are to use it to discern good from evil (Hebrews 5:14, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Acts 17:11), let's compare the teachings of Biblical prayer to those of Contemplative Prayer.

BIBLICAL PRAYER

According to the Bible, prayer is talking to God the Father (Philippians 4:6), through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:23), by people who are born again (John 3:7), according to the Scriptures (Micah 7:7, Psalm 4:3, 1 John 5:14,15).

The Bible is clear, the prayers of unbelievers are not heard by God. *"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."* John 9:31 *"The LORD [is] far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."* Proverbs 15:29 (Psalm 34:16, Proverbs 15:8a). Nor are prayers of disobedient born again believers heard. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear [me]:"* Psalm 66:18 (Proverbs 28:9, James 4:3, 5:16c).

God hears the prayers of repentant sinners turning to Christ as Savior (Mark 1:15), and obedient believers. *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."* 1 John 3:22 (1 John 5:14, John 15:7, Psalms 34:15, Proverbs 15:8b).

There are many examples of Old Testament believers who prayed. Just a few include: Abraham, Moses, Daniel, David as well as Elijah, Ezekial, Ezra, Nehemiah and Habakkuk. Abraham prayed for a son, he prayed for Ishmael, for Sodom, and for Abimelech, (Genesis 15-24). Daniel prayed for the Jews, (Daniel 9:3-19) and for knowledge (Daniel 2:17-23). David prayed for the Jews, for knowledge, for blessing, for help, for guidance, for grace, and for justice.

Examples in the New Testament of those who prayed include Jesus praying to God the Father at Lazarus's tomb (John 11:41-42). Jesus prayed submitting to the Father's will (Matthew 26:39-44), and he asked God to forgive those who crucified him (Luke 23:34).

The Lord Jesus Christ prayed for believers of that day (John 17:9), and future believers (John 17:20). He requested they be sanctified by the truth (John 17:17).

He instructed his disciples to pray to God the Father (Luke 11:2), specifically for the Kingdom to come, for God's will to be done, for daily food provision, for their sins to be forgiven, they would forgive others, they not be lead into temptation, and to be delivered from doing evil. His instructions to believers include to pray with humility (Luke 18:13), to pray alone (Matthew 6:6), for those who despitefully use them (Luke 6:28), that God would send people to preach the gospel (Luke 10:2), and as you pray, forgive others (Mark 11:2). Jesus promised that the Father rewards those openly who seek Him in prayer privately (Matthew 6:6).

When the Apostle Paul prayed, he prayed with understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15), and with joy (Philippians 1:4). He prayed for believers not to do evil but good (2 Corinthians 13:7), to be filled with knowledge, wisdom and understanding, (Colossians 1:9) to abound in love, understanding and all judgment (Philemon 1:9), to be without wrath and doubt in God's Word (1 Timothy 2:8), to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), to pray when afflicted (James 5:13), to pray for one another, (James 5:16) and to pray against evil, (Ephesians 6:12,18). Paul requested prayer for himself and those with him to preach the word boldly (Ephesians 6:18-19), that the word they share would do it's work, (2 Thessalonians 3:1) and that they would have a good conscience (Hebrews 13:18).

In Proverbs 2:1-11, God promises to answer prayers of believers who ask to understand His word and desire to obey it. He provides knowledge, wisdom and understanding through the words of His mouth which are written in the Bible. It states:

- ¹ *My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;*
- ² *So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;*
- ³ *Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;*
- ⁴ *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;*
- ⁵ *Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*
- ⁶ *For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*
- ⁷ *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.*
- ⁸ *He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.*
- ⁹ *Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.*
- ¹⁰ *When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;*
- ¹¹ *Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:*

An entire book of examples concerning prayer in the Bible could and perhaps should be written. This was just a sample.

Additionally, for believers who aren't able to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes according to God's will (Romans 8:26) and Jesus who is now at the right hand of the Father, intercedes for believers (Romans 8:34).

The Bible also contains several warnings concerning prayer. "*Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]*" (Matthew 6:7), do not pray self-righteously (Luke 18:11), avoid hypocritical prayer, praying to be seen of men (Matthew 6:5) or praying to show off in front of others (Luke 20:46, 47).

With these examples and instructions in mind, let's now examine Contemplative Prayer.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

In the 1970's, three mystic Roman Catholic monks, Fr. William Meninger, Fr. Basil Pennington and Abbot Thomas Keating (head monk) labeled Centering Prayer as a "method of prayer, which prepares us to receive the gift of God's presence, traditionally called contemplative prayer". It is "...the opening of mind and heart - our whole being - to God... whom we know by faith is within us... Contemplative Prayer is a prayer of silence, an experience of God's presence..."³

The Contemplative Outreach Ltd. website featuring Thomas Keating's teachings, provides further insight into the method of Contemplative Prayer and lists the guidelines to practice it. It states:

"This method of prayer is a movement *beyond* conversation with Christ to communion with Him." "The source of Centering Prayer, as in *all methods* leading to Contemplative Prayer, is the indwelling Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. " "It is also inspired by writings of major contributors to the Christian contemplative heritage including John Cassian, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Thomas Merton." *Emphasis Added*

Contemplative Prayer "Guidelines include:

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

*Thoughts *include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections.*"⁴ *Emphasis Added*

In my research, it became clear that these Roman Catholic monks were influenced by pagan Eastern Religions. "During the twenty years (1961-1981) when Keating was abbot, St. Joseph's held dialogues with Buddhist and Hindu representatives; and a Zen master gave a week-long retreat to the monks. A former Trappist monk who had become a Transcendental Meditation teacher also gave a session to the monks." 5

Not Prayer But Mystical Meditation

Contemplative Prayer is not Biblical prayer at all, rather it is a type of mystical meditation leading the mind into an altered state of consciousness. It goes *beyond* thought, providing an *experiential* union with so-called God or with nature producing body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections.

It is based on "experiences" rather than sound doctrine. "... give attendance... to doctrine." *1 Timothy 4:13*. Faith is to be based on God's word rather than experiences. "*So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" *Romans 10:17*, "*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*" *2 Corinthians 5:7*.

Contemplative Prayer is also known as centering prayer, listening prayer, breath prayer, and prayer of the heart. It is just one of many mystical practices taught within a confusing, mixed-up movement called Contemplative Spirituality.

Mystical practices are now widely embraced and taught in secular and professed Christian seminaries, colleges, universities, organizations, ministries and seminars, etc. throughout the United States. Academic promoters have introduced these practices into the fields of medicine, business and law while countless secular and Christian books, magazines, seminars, and retreats are teaching lay people how to incorporate them into their daily lives. Promoters promise physical, mental and spiritual benefits desiring to bring about positive social change.

One promoter of mystical practices, the "Center for Contemplative Mind in Society", states:

They "can play a part in the positive transformation of governments, businesses, and organizations. We are dedicated to the idea that contemplative awareness, when incorporated into contemporary life, can help produce a more just, compassionate, and reflective society." 6

The following Contemplative Practices are listed on their website:

- Movement (martial arts, dance, yoga, labyrinth walking, etc.)
 - Creation (singing, chanting, art, music, etc.)
 - Relational (dialogue, deep listening, storytelling, journaling, etc)
 - Ritual/cyclical (shabbat, vision quest, sweatlodge, alter building, ceremonies/rituals etc.)
 - Activist (work, pilgrimage, mindfulness, vigals/marches, etc.)
 - Generative (prayer, lectio divina, petitionary prayer, etc.)
 - Stillness (silence, prayer centering, insight & sitting meditation, quieting & clearing the mind)" 7
- Emphasis Added*

Stillness, listed as the last practice includes prayer centering also known as Contemplative Prayer.

Contemplative Prayer is Practiced Far and Wide

While Western religions falsely label Contemplative Prayer as "Christian" and "prayer", Eastern Pagan religions such Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufi Muslims have long practiced mystical meditation. A variety of occult and New Age devotees also practice mystical meditation styles consistent with Contemplative Prayer.

Since this method of meditation is mystical in nature, it is important that you know the definition of "**mysticism**". An on-line Occult Encyclopedia defines it as:

"A belief in or the pursuit in the unification with the One or some other principle; the immediate consciousness of God; or the direct experience of religious truth. Mysticism is nearly universal and unites most religions in the quest for divinity."

It goes on to state, "Mysticism from the East or from Western traditions relies on techniques such as:

- repetitive prayers,
- repeating over and over a word or phrase (mantras, which maybe names of deity),
- contemplations of icons or images real or imagined,
- also involved are methods of emptying the mind,
- extreme asceticism and

-in some cultures the use of hallucinogenic drugs.”

“Through these and other methods the mind goes blank or passive and one enters an altered state of consciousness. Buddhists call this state Nirvana or Satori... New Age people call it at-one-ness, etc..., Christian mystics perceive they have experienced some kind of ecstatic union with God.”⁸

“In mysticism, the altered state of consciousness may be total or partial. When partial, the state of consciousness is usually only a feeling. Most generally this feeling is one of unity with God, or the universe, or of enlightenment.” “The experience of being united with God or nature is called a mystical experience.”⁹

Philosopher W. T. Stace, “discovered seven common themes of mysticism when studying Roman Catholic, Protestant, ancient classical, Hindu, and American agnostic mystical experiences. They were (1) a unifying vision and perception of the One by the senses and through many objects; (2) the apprehension of the One as an inner life; (3) and objective and true sense of reality; (4) feelings of satisfaction, joy, and bliss; (5) a religious element that is a feeling of the holy and sacred; (6) a paradoxical feeling; (7) and inexpressible feelings.”¹⁰

Are They Experiencing God or Seducing Spirits?

Contemplative Prayer is described as “an experience of God’s presence” and “movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him” resulting in “...body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections”.¹¹

So whose “presence” are these people really experiencing? Interestingly, the Universal Gnostic Church provides some insight through their guidelines for “*Working With Your Spirit Guides*”:

“If you do not already know your spirit guides, we recommend you start speaking to them. The basic way of doing this is through meditation and listening to your intuitive insights.”

“Meditation: Meditation is a process of moving your consciousness into higher planes while remaining in the physical plane. There are several meditative techniques. The Universal Gnostic Church teaches three excellent techniques for those who want to work with their spirit guides. Essene Healing Breath Meditation, Kriya Power Meditation, and Contemplative Meditation.”

“If you already know who your spirit guides are, we recommend you work with them on a regular basis. You can do that through channeling, visualization and ritual, divination and prayer.”

”Channeling: Channeling is a process of recording or repeating out loud for others what your spirit guides tell you or show you. You can do this by writing it all down or by recording it with an electronic device. You may also do it by repeating what is said in a private session or to a large group. You may allow your spirit guides to bring other disincarnate people to deliver messages to you. When you channel, you’re working with your spirit guides.”

”Visualization and Ritual: Visualization of your spirit guides is a step toward seeing them in the physical dimension. The easiest way to learn how to visualize your spirit guides and guardian angel is through the teachings of the Magickal Order of the Golden Dawn. They teach both the skills of visualization and ritually working with your spirit guides and guardian angel.”

“Prayer. Praying with your spirit guides is an excellent way to develop a closer relationship with them. The Universal Gnostic Church recommends Intentional Prayer and Contemplative Prayer for that purpose.” Emphasis Added¹²

Regardless of what the “presence” is labeled (Spirit Guides, Guardian Angels, Jesus, God, etc.) these people are actually experiencing seducing spirits also known as demons (1 Timothy 4:1,7).

And this is all accomplished through various methods of Spiritism, also known as Necromancy.

“Spiritism or Necromancy is an occult activity grounded in the belief that through certain persons acting as mediums or channels (psychics, necromancers, channelers, etc.) the dead or the spirit world can be contacted and hidden information can be acquired from those contacted. Trances and seances are often used by the medium. The power behind this activity is demonic. This activity is forbidden by the Lord. 1 Chronicles 10:13, So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it. (1 Sam. 28:7 gives the context).”¹³

In the case of Contemplative Prayer, the individual is really acting as the channeler or necromancer communicating with demons. This is strictly forbidden in the Scriptures.

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”
Deuteronomy 18:9-12

Thus, those who practice and promote Contemplative Prayer are really an abomination unto the LORD!

Quotes from Promoters of Contemplative Practices

We “should all without shame enroll as apprentices in the school of contemplative prayer.”
—Richard Foster, Pastor and Author of the book “*Celebration of Discipline*”, p. 13, 1978 ed.

Recommends "Richard Foster's meaningful work... Celebration of Discipline...", p.15
"Discipline. This is the means for having *intimacy* with God. ... Discipline is control gained by *enforced obedience*. It is the deliberate cultivation of *inner order*.

So how are intimacy and discipline connected? ...Discipline is the means to that end.", p.21
—Chuck Swindoll, Pastor and Author of the book “*So, You Want to Be Like Christ? Eight Essentials to Get You There.*”

(Note: Understanding and obeying God’s word as well as prayer is the means for having intimacy with God. Not the “discipline” of contemplative practices providing mystical experiences.)

"Contemplative prayer is nothing other than coming into consciousness of what is already there."
—Brennan Manning, Catholic Priest and Author of the book “*Signature of Jesus*”

"Use 'breath prayers' throughout the day, as many Christians have done for centuries. You choose a brief sentence or a simple phrase that can be repeated to Jesus in one breath."
—Rick Warren, Pastor and Author of the book “*The Purpose-Driven Life*”, p. 89.

"Choose a sacred word or phrase. Consistently use the same word throughout the prayer.
Begin silently to repeat your sacred word or phrase"
—Mark Yaconelli, Youth Specialties, National Pastor's Convention

"As we find ourselves caught up in this meditation, we soon enough realize another change has occurred. We have almost effortlessly been transported over into a passive "contemplation" beyond thoughts, emotions, images, forms, or words."
—John Michael Talbot, Christian Musician

Promoters of Contemplative Practices

The following is a list of *just some* of the secular and religious promoters of Contemplative Prayer provided by the "Lighthouse Trails Research Project" ¹⁴ website:

- BAILEY, ALICE** : Founder of the Arcane School, an offshoot of Theosophy - authored several books through a "spirit guide."
BLANCHARD, KEN: Founder of Ken Blanchard Companies and "*Lead Like Jesus*" Leadership Conferences.
BROTHER LAWRENCE: (1605-1691) Carmelite layman, author of "*Practicing the Presence of God*". Believed God was in all things.
CANFIELD, JACK: Creator and author of the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series. *New Age.
CRABB, LARRY: *Christian Clinical Psychologist, author, Spiritual Director and Advisor for American Association of Christian Counselors.
EDWARDS, TILDEN: Founder of the Shalem Prayer Institute in Washington, DC
FOSTER, RICHARD: Quaker and Founder of Renovare and author of "*Celebration of Discipline*", *the General Editor of "*Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible*", and "*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*".
FOX, MATTHEW: Former Dominican priest and author of "*The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*"; developed Creation Spirituality; believes that God and Christ are in all things.
KEATING, THOMAS: Catholic monk. Co-father of the modern day Contemplative Prayer Movement.
KIMBALL, DAN: Author of "*The Emerging Church*" and a leader in the Emerging Church Movement. Promotes labyrinths and lectio divina.
MANNING, BRENNAN: Former Catholic priest, author of "*Ragamuffin Gospel*", and "*Abba's Child*".
MARX HUBBARD, BARBARA: Influential New Ager who says of Christians: "Unaware of our evolutionary potential, they [Christians] prevent the action and response needed to transcend the terrestrial phase of our existence. They would annihilate the possibility of Universal Humanity by claiming we have no right to achieve it."
MCLAREN, BRIAN: Considered the main leader of the Emerging Church Movement, *New Age Promoter, Pastor
MERTON, THOMAS: Now deceased Catholic monk *who wanted "to become as good a Buddhist as I can." (Steindl-Rast, 1969); quoted often by Richard Foster.
NOUWEN, HENRI: Deceased Catholic theologian, *Contemplative Universalist, author of "*In the Name of Jesus*" and "*The Way of the Heart*".
PECK, M. SCOTT: *Psychiatrist, Author of "*The Road Less Traveled*".
SCHULLER, ROBERT: Pastor of Crystal Cathedral and the "Hour of Power" television program. *Promotes Psychology
SANFORD, AGNES: *Author of "*Healing Light*", taught that the "Kingdom of God is within you".
SHANNON, WILLIAM: New Age biographer of Thomas Merton.
TEASDALE, WAYNE: Coined the term "interspirituality".
TERESA OF AVILA: *Catholic nun, author of "*Book of Foundations*", Quoted by Foster, Peterson.
UNDERHILL, EVELYN: *Roman Catholic, author of "*Mysticism*", wrote 39 books and over 350 articles.
WALSCH, NEAL DONALD: Author of "*Conversations with God*" and New Age leader who said, "The era of the Single Savior is over. What is needed now is joint action, combined effort, collective co-creation." p. 157
WARREN, RICK: Pastor and author of the "*Purpose-Driven Life*". *Promotes his Global P.E.A.C.E. plan involving 400,000 churches.
WILLIAMSON, MARIANNE: Contributed to making "*A Course in Miracles*" well known; currently involved with the Department of Peace.
YACONELLI, MIKE: The late founder and owner of Youth Specialties; promoted Contemplative Spirituality. [Mike passed away in 2003].
YACONELLI, MARK: Son of the late Mike Yaconelli - very active in the Contemplative Prayer Movement.
 *Extra notes added by author.

Additional Promoters

- BLACKABY, HENRY**: Author of "*Experiencing God*" workbook and seminars. Taught among SBC and Roman Catholics. Promoted by Rick Warren.
HYBELS, BILL: Pastor of Willowcreek Community Church, Hosts conferences with Contemplative Speakers such as Larry Crabb and Brian McLaren. Hosted "*Lead Like Jesus*" 2004 Conference with Ken Blanchard.
JEREMIAH, DAVID: Pastor of "Turning Point Ministries", Author of "*Life Wide Open*", Speaker at Ken Blanchard's "Lead Like Jesus Seminars" and America Association of Christian Counselors.
LUCADO, MAX: Author and Founder of UpWords. Speaker on an instructional DVD on Contemplative Prayer, titled "Be Still" which includes Richard Foster.
MONK KID, SUE: Mystic Author of "*God's Joyful Surprise*" a spiritual memoir describing her advent into contemplative Christian spirituality and "*When the Heart Waits*".
MOORE, BETH: Founder of Living Proof Ministries for women. Speaker on an instructional DVD on Contemplative Prayer, titled "Be Still" which includes Richard Foster.
NEE, WATCHMAN: Mystic Author of "*The Spiritual Man*".
ORTBERG, JOHN: Author of "*Closer Than You Think*", 2005 favorably quotes contemplatives.
PETERSON, EUGENE: Author of "*The Message*" bible translation and the book "*The Contemplative Pastor*". Endorses Foster.
SENGE, PETER: Buddhist, Author and Founder of Society for Organizational Learning. New Age.
SMITH, MICHAEL W.: Christian Musician. Promoter of Brennan Manning's book "*Above All*".
STANLEY, CHARLES: SBC Evangelical Pastor, Author "*How to Listen to God*". Espouses the belief that God continues to speak to man today *outside* of His Word. In the 9/93 *In Touch* magazine, Stanley quotes favorably from mystic Richard Foster's book "*The Celebration of Discipline*" (9/22).
STANLEY, ANDY: Pastor. Spoke at Ken Blanchard's "*Lead Like Jesus*" Conference in October, 2005.
SWINDOLL, CHUCK: Evangelical Pastor of "Insight for Living", author of "*So, You Want to Be Like Christ? Eight Essentials to Get You There.*" (A book on the solitude and silence of Contemplative Prayer.)
TALBOT, JOHN MICHAEL: Christian Musician. Practices Tai Chi and Yoga. Writes on "Christian Meditation".

Christian College Promoters

Many Christian Colleges promote Contemplative Spirituality. They include Wheaton College Graduate School, Biola University, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. For a complete list, visit the “Lighthouse Trails Research Project” website. ¹⁵

Promoted through Church and Ministry Programs

Programs promoting Contemplative Practices include: Alpha Courses, Taizé, Lectio Divina, The Labyrinth (prayer walk), Renovaré, Guided Imagery, Walk to Emmaus, Cursillo, Centering Prayer, Ignatian Awareness Examen, The Jesus Prayer, and The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. ¹⁶ Ministries include: Youth Specialities, Youth for Christ, Nav Press, Church Growth Institute and Awana Clubs. ¹⁷

Promoted through the Emerging Church Movement

Another whole paper could be written on the Emerging Church movement lead by Brian McLaren. In my research, I’ve discovered this movement is fueled by those who are tired of the Mega churches and desire to experience “so-called” God in a fresh and new way. Much of the movement includes Contemplative Practices. Interestingly, Rick Warren is excited about such a movement. ¹⁸

The Goal

One of the goals mentioned earlier is to bring about social change. Yet in reality, it is contributing to a universal spirituality (religious or irreligious) apart from the Bible.

Ray Yungen, author of “A Time of Departing” states “...contemplative prayer also stands on the threshold of exploding worldwide. Dr. Larry Crabb, spiritual director for the 50,000 member American Association of Christian Counselors, has written the foreword to a recent book ³⁷ that expounds on the future of spiritual direction in the evangelical church. The authors the book promotes are... Nouwen, Merton, Foster, Keating, Pennington, etc. ...With that in mind, Dr. Crabb predicted: “The spiritual climate is ripe. Jesus seekers across the world are being prepared to abandon the old way of the written code for the new way of the Spirit.” ¹⁹ *Emphasis added.*

When Clinical Psychologist, Larry Crabb advocates not walking in “old way of the written code”, he means abandoning a careful, obedient walk of faith according to all of God’s word. The “new way of the Spirit” means utilizing Contemplative Practices to experience God. The Bible says, “*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where [is] the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk [therein].*”

Contemplative Outreach Ltd. states (of the false church), “For the Church's first sixteen centuries Contemplative Prayer was the goal of Christian spirituality. After the Reformation, this living tradition was virtually lost. Today, with cross-cultural dialogue and historical research, the recovery of the Christian contemplative heritage has begun. The method of Centering Prayer, in the tradition of *Lectio Divina* (praying the scriptures) is contributing to this renewal.” ²⁰ *Lectio Divina* is a mantra whereby a single phrase or word of scripture is repeated over and over; leading to an “experiential” union with “so-called” God. It’s a vain repetition strictly forbidden in the Bible.

The goal of the true Biblical church is the Great Commission given to believers by Jesus Christ - not Contemplative Prayer. “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.*” *Matthew 28:19-20*

Promoters of Contemplative Practices are not teaching the commands of Jesus Christ.

FALSE TEACHINGS

After comparing Scriptures pertaining to Biblical prayer to the teachings of Contemplative Prayer, **the error is glaring.** None of these contemplative practices are advocated in Scripture. When anyone chooses not to abide by sound doctrine, the result is a faulty faith based on experiences or fables instead of the sure Word of God. Scripture states, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*” *2 Timothy 4:3,4*

Listen to this observation by David W. Cloud: “The mystical “spirituality” that is so popular in evangelical and charismatic circles today is a yearning for an experiential relationship with God that downplays the role of faith and Scripture and that exalts “transcendental” experiences that lift the individual from the earthly mundane into a higher “spiritual” plane. Biblical prayer is talking with God; mystical spirituality prayer is meditation and “centering” and other such things. Biblical Christianity is a patient walk of faith; mystical spirituality is more a flight of fancy. Biblical study is analyzing and meditating upon the literal truth of the Scripture; mystical spirituality focuses on a “deeper meaning”; it is more allegorical and “transcendental” than literal.”²¹

True faith can only come by the hearing of the Word of God. “*So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”. *Romans 10:17* The mind of the believer is then to be transformed by the Word of God which reveals God’s will for the believer. “*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” *Romans 12:2* All of the mind is to be used to love God according to His Word. “*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” *Matthew 22:37*

Believers are to have a sound mind. “*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*” *2 Timothy 1:7*. **A mind in an altered state of consciousness inviting demon activity is anything but a sound mind. It is entertaining a seducing spirit masquerading as an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14.** Every thought of the believer is to be brought to the obedience of Christ rather than influenced by demons, our own flesh or the world. “*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*” *2 Corinthians 10:5*.

UNFRUITFUL RESULTS

Contemplative Practices are infiltrating evangelical and fundamental churches which is contributing to the unbiblical Ecumenical movement already underway. This is due to Pastors ignoring sound doctrine and allowing false teachings.

Ecumenicalism (also known as Interdenominationism, Interfaith, and Interspiritualism) is a movement toward a worldwide false church consisting of religions (including false, apostate Christians) joining together by:

1. Agreeing on a portion of biblical doctrines or as they often state “core teachings,”
2. Ignoring the remaining biblical doctrines and
3. Promoting false doctrines. (Psychology, Evolution, Contemplative Practices etc.)

It is a religious unity movement falsely promoted in the name of God’s love yet it is not based on the full counsel of God. This false Ecumenical unity causes great confusion and error to those not well grounded in God’s Word.

In Richard Foster's book “Streams of Living Water”, he says the following with regard to his vision for "a great gathering of the people of God: "I see a Catholic monk from the hills of Kentucky standing alongside a Baptist evangelist ... I see a people".²²

"Contemplative consciousness," says [Thomas] Merton, is "a trans-cultural, trans-religious, trans-formed consciousness ... it can shine through this or that system, religious or irreligious"²³

So what does the Bible have to say when it comes to dealing with false teachings? God commands true believers to “*...come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” *2 Corinthians 6:17*.

Contemplative Prayer appears to be paving the way to the False Prophet's One World Religious system mentioned in Revelations 17 and 18. Revelation 18:4, though specifically referring to the time when the Antichrist rules on earth, offers good advice for believers to follow today in the matter of demonic teachings such as Contemplative Prayer -- “*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*”

AVOID FALSE TEACHINGS

“*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself [rather] unto godliness.*” *1 Timothy 4:1, 7*

First, if you are not born again according to the Word of God, I would invite you to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Second, to protect yourself from seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, use the King James Version of the Bible. Despite numerous myths, thorough research reveals the KJV is the most accurate English word for word translation. It includes all of the words; no verses or portions of verses are missing. The Bible says “every word” of God is important (*Proverbs 14:15, Proverbs 30:5, Matthew 4:4*). Modern counterfeit bibles including “The Message” by Eugene Peterson and “Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible”, have replaced God’s words with New Age terminology further deceiving unsuspecting readers.

Dave Hunt expresses his concern. “Many Christian leaders promote wicked Bible versions such as Eugene Peterson’s The Message (NavPress, 1993: see TBC Oct ’95) that pervert God’s Word. Men like Peterson have no conscience about changing what God says, replacing His words with their own. Peterson is praised for this perversion by many Christian leaders such as J.I. Packer, Warren Wiersbe, Jack W. Hayford, and Richard Foster, founder of the Renovare Movement and General Editor of the “Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible” (Harper San Francisco, 2005”.²⁴

Third, study the Scriptures in their context and define the words using a *Strong’s* Concordance. False teachings are typically based on Scriptures, or portions of verses, taught outside of the context they were written. Satan misquoted God’s Word to Jesus himself. Yet, Jesus defeated Satan by quoting Scripture accurately.

Fourth, have faith in what God teaches you in His Word and obey it. Satan is great at leading people to doubt God’s Word. Remember, the old Serpent deceived Eve, leading her first to doubt His Word, then deny God’s Word, which lead to her deifying herself – she chose her own way instead of God’s way. (Genesis 3:1,4,5)

Fifth, before you choose to read any literature, research the authors’ beliefs and practices. Understand their definitions for terms and compare them to scripture. Also, learn who they endorse and associate with.

Sixth, if you realize you have accepted a false teaching, confess it as sin, repent and obey the scriptures. The Scripture promises “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” James 4:7

Seventh, earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 1:3), by warning others of false teachings. ²*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove (convict), rebuke (admonish), exhort (instruct) with all long suffering and doctrine.* 2 Timothy 4:2

Eighth, practice biblical separation from those who will not repent of false teachings. “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*” 2 Timothy 2:15-18

ENDNOTES:

1 Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, <http://www.cbtministries.org/resources/webster1828.htm>

2 Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, <http://www.cbtministries.org/resources/webster1828.htm>

3 Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/cntrgpryr.htm#Centering%20Prayer>

4 Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/methodcp.htm>

5 Catholic Answers, “The Danger of Contemplative Prayer” by By Rev. John D. Dreher, <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1997/9711fea1.asp>

6 The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, <http://www.contemplativemind.org/about/faq.html>

7 The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree.html>

8 Mystical Deception Files by Noah Dove, <http://www.dtl.org/cults/article/mystical.htm>

9 The Mystica Mythical-Folk, Occult Encyclopedia, http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/a/altered_states_of_consciousness.html

10 The Mystica Mythical-Folk, Occult Encyclopedia, <http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/m/mysticism.html>

11 Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/methodcp.htm>

12 Universal Gnostic Church, <http://universalignostic.com/guides/>

13 Logos Resource Pages, "Primer For Recognizing Occult Practices",
http://www.logosresourcepages.org/Occult/occult_primer.htm

14 Lighthouse Trails Research Project, <http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/glossarynames.htm>

15 Lighthouse Trails Research Project, <http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/Colleges.htm>

16 The Berean Call, <http://www.thebereancall.org/Newsletters/2000+Newsletters/4493.aspx>

17 Lighthouse Trails Research Project, <http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/awanas.htm>

18 Lighthouse Trails Research Project, <http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/emergingchurch.htm>

19 A Time of Departing by Ray Yungen, p.137; 37 -David G. Benner, Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2002, p.9

20 Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/cntrgprvr.htm>

21 Way of Life, David Cloud, <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/eugenepeterson-the-message.html>

22 Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, article titled "Richard Foster"
<http://www.cccu.org/chem/profileID.69/profile.asp>

23 "Thoughts on the East" p.34 by Thomas Merton

24 Dave Hunt, The Berean Call, August 2005 Newsletter,
<http://www.thebereancall.org/Newsletters/2005+Newsletters/107940.aspx>

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