

The Subtle Deception of “Contemplative Prayer”

A Biblical analysis of the “Be Still” doctrine

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“I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

Colossians 2:4-10 NIV

“After this manner therefore pray ye ...” Matthew 6:9a KJV

Foreword

When I was a young boy growing up in East Texas, my dad asked me from time to time to help him work on his vehicles. My job sometimes meant that I should hand him tools while he was under the car. Sometimes I had to run into the house to get a hand-cleaning rag or go out to the workshop to get another tool or an oil pan. But usually, my responsibility was to hold the flashlight, since my dad usually did his work in the failing light of the evening or after dark, when he had finished with supper.

This task of simply holding the flashlight while my dad tinkered on the vehicle turned out to be an important job. I didn't necessarily understand what all he was doing, nor did I comprehend fully why he was doing it. All I understood was the simple job he gave me to help in his efforts. So I held the flashlight, and I directed its beam toward whatever area he told me. I just had to concentrate on obedience and endurance. In the end, the job was finished, and the car was fixed. And I helped.

At this point in life, I have discovered that after all this time, I am still doing basically nothing more than holding the flashlight. My heavenly Father has given me this one, primary, simple task. But the flashlight I'm now holding is the light of His Holy Scripture. I'm not shining it on an exhaust manifold or a distributor cap any more. I'm now directing His beam of light on the needs of the church. I still don't fully understand my Father's purposes, nor do I really comprehend either the intricacies of the problem that needs fixing or the process He is undergoing to fix it. I don't even fully understand the light itself, nor do I realize how His flashlight really works. I'm just holding the light for Him. I'm just trying to do my one little job.

Undertaking the writing of this book is another task God has given me at this point in life, a task which amounts to nothing more than holding His Holy flashlight. Although I sometimes tire of just standing or crouching there, and I endure the pain and uncertainty of the process, and although I do not fully understand why He wants me to shine the light in this or that particular direction, I do it nonetheless, just because I respect Him – just because He tells me to do this.

I hope the light of His Holy Word will be directed to the right places, to bring clarity in the areas which God wants to illuminate. I hope that my small efforts will be used by Him to do the spiritual repairs He wants to accomplish because of His love for the church. That's my hope in doing this one small, simple task.

Mark Jones

Introduction

True and authentic prayer is the act of talking with God on His terms. It is a practice, a discipline, a commandment, and a tremendous privilege that God has given His children as the primary means of communicating with Him. He has already revealed to mankind the conditions and the means whereby we can converse with our Creator. He has shown us these means of communicating directly with Him in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible.

We cannot presume to commune with God on our own terms. He is loving, but He is also unchanging and supremely holy. We have the great privilege of talking with Him on the basis of the bond of salvation and discipleship He offers to us through Christ, and only on the basis of this right relationship. We must talk with Him within the guidelines of the principles He has shown us, and only in this manner. God does not give us the option of choosing our own way of approaching Him. We must respect His holiness, authority and sovereignty. God invites us to draw near to Him, and as His children, we can approach Him just as we are and at any time. But we come only on His terms, not ours. He provides no other option.

Christ revealed to us the specific principles that our prayers must conform to. More importantly, He provided the only way whereby we can be reconciled to God so that we can have eternal life and know Him personally. We can then experience fellowship with Him through the intimate and daily act of prayer. Only through Christ can we approach “Our Father”. Only His principles for prayer are acceptable to Him. He will permit no other condition for our spiritual life, and He will accept no foreign forms of prayer.

This book talks about the manner and forms of prayer found in the Bible, and it contrasts His standards with a specific, man-made tradition that is opposed to His commandment. This man-made tradition is known as “contemplative prayer”. The reader who is concerned about fundamental and objective truth, and who is therefore interested in what God has revealed about prayer in the Bible, should be concerned about the differences between the Scriptural model for prayer and the particular human method of meditation known as “contemplative prayer”.

In the teachings of contemplative prayer, I hear a questioning of God’s authority as expressed in His Word. I hear a questioning of His character through the suggestion that He did not reveal fundamental, important truths to us in the Bible, which are now supposedly being taught by these enlightened church leaders. I hear a sweet, subtle, and attractive voice that urges us to open our minds to supposedly “larger” truths and not remain so dogmatically restricted to obsolete doctrine. I hear a siren call toward ecumenical openness and doctrinal compromise, presumably so that we do not drive away those who do not share all aspects of our own fundamental faith. I hear the same serpent’s voice in the teachings of contemplative prayer that I see recorded in the book of Genesis. He is saying, “Did God really mean this? He’s really depriving you of something wonderful and new that you need to know.” Such evil implications make the

“spiritual hair on the back of my neck” stand up and pay attention. In light of Scripture and more complete knowledge of the topic, I have definitely detected an “appearance of evil” in these teachings and have come to hate them. I will therefore continue to urge other Christians to avoid them and treat them as a satanic attack on them and on the church. The fundamental nature of this spiritual attack from Satan is to distract attention away from Christ’s own teachings about prayer and direct their attention and trust instead toward traditional and mystical teachings of men. The implications of a displacement of trust in the Scriptures regarding any aspect of Biblical teaching are broad and serious. They must therefore be treated seriously, and we must persist in this spiritual warfare by opposing such false teachings.

The overall purpose of this book is to attempt to demolish the validity of the teachings of “contemplative prayer” by contrasting it with the standards for prayer found in Holy Scripture. The specific form of “contemplative prayer” I will carefully examine and refute is the form taught in the recent 20th Century Fox DVD release entitled “Be Still”.

In the process of writing this book, I have been convicted many times of my own failures in prayer, either when I try to pray with selfish motives or when I don’t try to pray at all. Both are equally wrong, and I publicly hold up my hand before both God and you and plead “guilty.” Thankfully, God is merciful and loving, and He patiently continues to forgive and invites us to draw near to Him.

I sincerely hope you seriously and prayerfully consider all the information presented here in light of the truth God has already revealed in His Word. And as a result, I hope you will show respect for His authority and obey His commandments about prayer instead of respecting the traditions of men.

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Acts 17:11 NIV

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The Reemergence of “Contemplative Prayer”

In recent years, there has been a noticeably growing and persistent interest among the Protestant evangelical community in the centuries-old practice of “contemplative prayer”, sometimes known as “contemplative meditation” or “centering prayer”. This concept of prayer was introduced centuries ago by Catholic mystics such as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Ávila, and others. Its mystical, meditative practices continue in the Catholic Church today, although many Catholics do not observe them or are even not aware of these teachings.

The broader interest in contemplative prayer that has extended to the modern Protestant church has resulted in large part from its public endorsement by popular Christian teachers, including Max Lucado, Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Beth Moore, and Priscilla Shirer. These leaders’ independent works, in conjunction with their very conspicuous involvement in the DVD from 20th Century Fox entitled “Be Still”¹, have attracted Protestant church members and leaders alike into exploring this presumably alternate form of “Christian” prayer. The historical, detailed Catholic Church tradition of “contemplative prayer” has been repackaged in the “Be Still” DVD into a simplified, more generally acceptable form, clearly crafted to appeal to a non-Catholic audience.

It is very important for the reader to know that “contemplative prayer” is not a general term that can be understood only from the obvious meanings of its words. Rather, the term “contemplative prayer” refers to a very detailed set of specific teachings on mystical meditation which has been practiced, taught, and documented over a period of hundreds of years within the Catholic Church. Do not believe that “contemplative prayer” can be understood by just thinking about its general wording.

It must be clearly stated from the outset that “contemplative prayer” is actually a form of mystical, subjective, and personal meditation which stands in stark contrast to the principles of Christ’s own model of prayer, as recorded in Holy Scripture in the synoptic Gospels.

The Commandment of Christ

The growing interest among the Protestant community in this form of contemplative meditation should be of particular concern to Bible-believing Christians. *It must be clearly stated from the outset that “contemplative prayer” is actually a form of mystical, subjective, and personal meditation which stands in stark contrast to the principles of Christ’s own model of prayer, as recorded in Holy Scripture in the synoptic Gospels.* Refer to the following passage for an example of Christ’s own model of prayer, which is commonly referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer”:

¹ For more details, see the section at the end of this chapter entitled “Other details on the ‘Be Still’ DVD”

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”

Matthew 6:9-13 KJV

Although this commandment from Christ has come to be known as “The Lord’s Prayer”, it would be more correct to refer to it as “The Christian Believer’s Prayer”. In this Scripture, as in other parallel Biblical references, Jesus clearly and authoritatively directed His disciples, and therefore all Christian believers, to pray in this manner (i.e., according to these principles). He directly and authoritatively provided the boundaries within which God’s children should pray. It is also important to note that His model for prayer was provided only to followers of Christ.

Various Forms of Biblical Prayer

In studying the Bible, we are able to see that all forms of prayer illustrated throughout the Scriptures, which are shown within the Biblical text to be approved by God, all fit within the model for prayer from Christ recorded in Matthew 6 and in other parallel Gospel references. Various forms of prayer for the common believer found in the Bible include:

- Praising God and striving for His glory
- Reverencing God’s supreme holiness
- Thanking God
- Seeking for God’s direction and fulfillment of His will
- Petitioning God for our needs
- Expressing sorrow and seeking for God’s comfort
- Interceding to God on behalf of others (representing them before Him)
- Struggling with and judging sin and evil
- Repenting from our own sin
- Seeking forgiveness from God for ourselves or asking for God’s mercy toward others
- Humbling ourselves before God
- Crying out to God for help or rescue in times of trouble
- Petitioning God for justice
- Asking for God’s protection from sin or dangerous circumstances
- Struggling with God about our life questions
- Offering promises or vows to God
- Imploring God to reveal and defeat evil
- Quiet meditation on Scripture and thus listening to God from His Word (this will later be shown to not be similar to “contemplative prayer”)

Christ’s own commandment allows for broad latitude in individual types of prayer and authentic Scriptural meditation. But all Christian prayer must fit within His parameters.

In keeping with the authority of Christ’s commandment to pray in a certain manner, we must recognize that all forms of Christian prayer acceptable to God should conform to one or more principles of Christ’s Gospel model for prayer and cannot add to or contradict these guidelines. *However, Scripture also shows clearly that all prayers do not have to reflect every aspect of this model each time they are uttered.* Even so, all forms of God-accepted prayer must conform to Jesus’ principles. Christ did not allow for exceptions. Later examples and details of “The Lord’s Prayer” given in this study will show that all forms of Christian prayer, regardless of method or context, fit within the principles of Christ’s commandment for prayer as recorded in the Gospels.

In keeping with the authority of Christ’s commandment to pray in a certain manner, we must recognize that all forms of Christian prayer acceptable to God should conform to one or more principles of Christ’s Gospel model for prayer and cannot add to or contradict these guidelines.

But contemplative prayer is presented as an “enlightened” and different form of prayer, although it does not conform to Jesus’ specific guidelines and it significantly departs from the principles of prayer recorded in Scripture.

In His own instructions, Jesus did not allow for other principles of prayer that did not fit within the guidelines of His commandment. *But contemplative prayer is presented as an “enlightened” and different form of prayer, although it does not conform to Jesus’ specific guidelines and it significantly departs from the principles of prayer recorded in Scripture.* Christ’s commandment on prayer incorporates awe and respect for God’s supreme holiness, praise from man to God, seeking for His will, pleading and humility, repentance from sin, self-judgment and honesty, petitioning God about our needs, and yearning for Him personally. In contrast, contemplative prayer represents the absence of all these things in a truly Biblical form and even represents the absence of active thought itself. Its guidelines rather focus on our self-centered desire for personal peace and on a priority of obtaining personal, special revelation from God. There is no agreement between the principles of true Scriptural prayer and the guidelines of “contemplative prayer” – they are fundamentally opposed and cannot be reconciled.

Christ’s Commandment vs. Contemplative Prayer

Compare Christ’s Biblical model for prayer with that of contemplative prayer (contemplative meditation, centering prayer), as shown in the following descriptions:

Father Meninger

“In 1974, Father William Meninger, a Trappist monk and retreat master at St. Josephs Abbey in Spencer, Mass. found a dusty little book in the abbey library, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. As he read it he was delighted to discover that this anonymous 14th

century book presented contemplative meditation as a teachable, spiritual process enabling the ordinary person to enter and receive a direct experience of union with God.”

Contemplative Prayer for Everyone²

Fr. Thomas Keating

“Centering Prayer is a method of prayer that comes out of the Christian tradition, principally *The Cloud of Unknowing*, by an anonymous fourteenth-century author, and St. John of the Cross. It brings us into the presence of God and thus fosters the contemplative attitudes of listening and receptivity. It is not contemplation in the strict sense, which in Catholic tradition has always been regarded as a pure gift of the Spirit, but rather it is a preparation for contemplation by reducing the obstacles caused by the hyperactivity of our minds and of our lives.”

“The historical roots of Centering Prayer reach back to St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, where I was abbot from 1961 to 1981. This was during the time of the first wave of the renewal of religious life after the Second Vatican Council, when many questions were raised for the first time and interreligious dialogue was encouraged by the Holy See. Several of us at Spencer became acquainted with groups from other spiritual traditions who resided in our area. *We invited several spiritual teachers from the Eastern religions as well as some ecumenically skilled Catholic theologians to visit and speak with us.* Fr. Thomas Merton was still alive at this time and writing extensively about his researches and exchanges in interreligious dialogue. He was one of the most articulate pioneers from the Christian side in the dialogue among the world religions.”

“In a similar spirit we entertained a Zen master who wished to visit our monastery. We invited him to speak to the community and later to give a sesshin (a week-long intensive retreat). For nine years after that, he held sesshins once or twice a year at a nearby retreat house. During those years I had the privilege of making several sesshins with him. On the occasion of his first sesshin held in our monastery, he put on the Cistercian habit and ate with us in the refectory. We have a picture of him on his seventieth birthday eating a piece of cake while sitting in the half lotus posture.”

Fr. Thomas Keating, “The Origins of Centering Prayer”³ [emphasis added]

Pastor Gary Gilley

“So exactly what is it? It begins with detachment. Richard Foster, in his original 1978 edition of *Celebration of Discipline* wrote, “Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it” (p. 15). Fill it with what? In Eastern religions a person empties his mind in order to become one with the universe (or the Cosmic Mind). *In Christian mysticism one empties the mind in order to become one with God,*

² <http://www.contemplativeprayer.net/FRL.html>

³ <http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy01a.htm>

who is found by the way, in ourselves (it is important to keep in mind Meister Eckhart’s divine spark found within the soul of each human being). *Foster quotes a number of mystics to describe this experience.* For example there is Russian mystic Theophan the Recluse who said, “To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all seeing, within you.”

“The constant theme of the mystic is that union with God is possible through contemplative prayer, and that union with God is found within us. St. Teresa of Ávila states, “As I could not make reflection with my understanding I contrived to picture Christ within me.” She is quoted as also saying, “Settle yourself in solitude and you will come upon Him in yourself.” Such statements show why the mystics were accused of pantheism. Silence is a noted feature of contemplation. Catherine de Haecck Doherty writes, “All in me is silent and... I am immersed in the silence of God.” Francis de Dales notes, “*by means of imagination we confine our mind within the mystery on which we meditate.*”

The constant theme of the mystic is that union with God is possible through contemplative prayer, and that union with God is found within us.

...“by means of imagination we confine our mind within the mystery on which we meditate.” Imagination is highly important to the mystics. As Teresa informs us, this is not an endeavor that comes from their understanding. Mystics are hung out in thin air, so to speak, and must make contact with God through imagination rather than through the rational use of their minds.

Imagination is highly important to the mystics. As Teresa informs us, this is not an endeavor that comes from their understanding. Mystics are hung out in thin air, so to speak, and must make contact with God through imagination rather than through the rational use of their minds. The power of such experience becomes evident as Foster tells us, “We are to live in a perpetual, inward, listening silence so that God is the source of our words and actions. “

“So, through contemplative prayer the person is to empty his mind (detach) then fill it with imaginative experiences with Christ (attach) who we will find in the silence of our souls, resulting in God becoming the source of our words and actions. Sounds attractive to many, even if no such teaching is found in Scripture.”

Pastor Gary Gilley, “Mysticism”⁴ [emphasis added]

⁴ <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/writings/23-doctrine/547-mysticism-part-3>

Joel Goldsmith

"Prayer is the Word of God which comes to you when you are silent enough, still enough and expectant to receive it."

Infinite Way Prayer⁵

Wikipedia Definition

“In Christian mysticism, **Contemplative prayer** can refer to:

- repetitive chanting, breathing in a controlled manner or silent concentration to quiet the thoughts and feelings and commune with a spirit that some believe to be God.
- infused contemplation, for many writers, including St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, the sole sense of the term;
- acquired contemplation, also known as "Prayer of Simplicity"; or
- Centering prayer, which is sometimes called contemplative prayer, although "It is not contemplation in the strict sense, which in Catholic tradition has always been regarded as a pure gift of the Spirit, but rather it is a preparation for contemplation."

"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"

Wikipedia “Contemplative Prayer”⁶

Many more references can be cited which speak in more detail on the origin and the true meaning of contemplative prayer. *But even a preliminary study of the historical Catholic practice of “contemplative prayer” shows that it is a mystical, subjective, and man-made form of meditative contemplation that is not supported by the principles of prayer found in the Bible.* This teaching specifically stands in sharp contrast to the model known as the “Lord’s Prayer”, which actively engages the mind and often involves spiritual and mental struggle, petitioning, honesty with God, and even self-judgment.

But even a preliminary study of the historical Catholic practice of “contemplative prayer” shows that it is a mystical, subjective, and man-made form of meditative contemplation that is not supported by the principles of prayer found in the Bible. This teaching specifically stands in sharp contrast to the model known as the “Lord’s Prayer” ...

Christ’s guidelines for prayer are a mentally and spiritually challenging, God-centered expression of authentic communion with The Creator. Jesus explicitly gave this model to Christians as the overall manner in which they should pray as a regular practice and discipline. We can even see from Scripture that His own prayers fit within His model,

⁵ <http://www.theunofficialinfinite.com/prayer.html>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemplative_prayer

which will be illustrated later in this book. According to Scriptural record, Jesus did not permit, provide, or practice different forms of prayer that did not fit within His principles. So why should Christians?

A careful study through the Bible on the general issue of prayer shows that “The Lord’s Prayer” reveals tremendous and fundamental truth about the nature of God and mankind’s relationship with Him. Such a study also shows that prayer approved by God always conforms to Christ’s principles. We will engage in this more detailed study in the next chapter. A proper reading and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures indicates that Christ’s model for prayer and other Biblical examples of God-accepted prayer certainly do not share the fundamental aspects of contemplative prayer.

Scriptural guidelines for prayer do not allow for repetitive chanting, emptying of our minds, centering contemplation, seeking personal peace as a primary goal, or mystically “hearing from God” as a result of our own quiet solitude and mind-clearing mantras to get us into a listening attitude to be able to presumably obtain Divine revelation or some sort of mystical union with God. But the teachings of “contemplative prayer” require all of these practices. Contemplative prayer is therefore dramatically different from true Biblical prayer. It certainly does not conform to Jesus’ instructions for prayer to the Christian, in both its principles and its methods.

Although the contemplative community translates the term Lectio Divina as “Divine Reading”; this is not a literal Latin translation. A more accurate term might be “Reading by Divination”. The root words show that the more literal translation of the term refers to a mystical divination or prediction of what to read.

Digging Deeper – The Tradition and Instruction of Lectio Divina

A core practice of contemplative prayer is spelled out in the traditional Catholic guidelines for meditation known as “Lectio Divina”. The discipline of Lectio Divina is taught in a simplified form in the “Be Still” DVD. The Latin word “lectio” means “selection, picking out / reading, perusal”. The Latin word “divina” is defined as “prediction, divination”. Although the contemplative community translates the term Lectio Divina as “Divine Reading”; this is not a literal Latin translation. A more accurate term might be “Reading by Divination”. The root words show that the more literal translation of the term refers to a mystical divination or prediction of what to read. The discipline of Lectio Divina instructs the meditator to be inspired or motivated directly by God about what to read, and the reading that follows is intended to take them deeper into a state of contemplative stillness, presumably to hear directly from God even further. We will observe this mysterious process in more detail later.

Among the other methods of Lectio Divina are its requirements for “stillness” (emptying the mind) and for repetition of certain sacred words or phrases from the Scripture. The importance of repeating words or phrases as part of this meditative teaching is reflected in the following directive:

NEXT TAKE the word or phrase into yourself. *Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself*, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of “distractions.” Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina -- The Practice of Lectio Divina⁷ [emphasis added]

Compare the word or phrase repetition required by the Lectio Divina practices with Christ’s own instructions:

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Matthew 6:7,8 NIV

We will later examine in more detail Lectio Divina’s use of repetition as a necessary part of its proscribed form of meditation as the path to Divine enlightenment.

But up front, it is clear that contemplative prayer, through its employment of rote word or phrase

repetition, is more similar to the prayers of “pagans”, those who do not know the Savior. The repeating of words or phrases as a means of contacting God is at odds with Christ’s instructions against the use of “many words”. On this point, if one objects to the comparison of the Matthew 6:7,8 reference to the guidelines of Lectio Divina, they must show examples from Scripture where God instructs believers to use such repetition. If a proponent of Christian mystical meditation says that “such repetition is not trying to get God to hear us, but rather it is needed to get us into a meditative mindset and into a receptive, listening state”, they must support this position with clear statements from the Bible to have a legitimate Scriptural objection. But they are not able to support such an argument, since these practices of prayer cannot be found anywhere in the Bible. Rather, Christ explicitly warned against such vain and useless repetition. *Holy Scripture clearly shows that God has very different ideas about how we can hear from Him.*

Holy Scripture clearly shows that God has very different ideas about how we can hear from Him.

The “Be Still” DVD’s distortion of the Biblical message

The DVD attempts to warp the Biblical message about prayer right out of the starting gate. In the first scene of the first chapter, the mayhem of urban city life and the temptations of advertisements barrage the viewer with a clutter of noise and with images of various kinds of stressful daily activity. In the second scene, a setting of still tranquility supposedly relieves this stress. At the beginning of this more peaceful scene,

⁷ <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>

the video attempts to use a Scripture excerpt to support its quiet, listening state of contemplative and mind-emptying meditation:

“Be still, and know that I am God ...”

Psalms 46:10a NIV

It is worthwhile to pay special attention to the way we quote this verse, since our technique is significant. First, we identified it as an “excerpt” before we quoted it. We also used ellipses (...) at the end to indicate that the verse continues past what is quoted. The verse number cited is “10a”, not “10”, which indicates that the excerpt was at the beginning of the verse. We followed the reference with a translation-name acronym; in this case, “NIV” indicated the quote was taken from the New International Version. The referencing technique itself suggests to the reader that the quote is incomplete and that they need to examine the verse further. In this case, our specific form of verse referencing suggests that the reader should open their Bible and review the full Scripture context for themselves to properly understand the verse excerpt’s meaning.

Contrast our quoting technique with the more attractive, simpler method employed in the “Be Still” DVD to quote this same verse excerpt:

Be still and
know that I am God
- Psalm 46:10

The video’s clean, attractive, and simplistic presentation of this Scripture implies that the entire verse is being quoted. The text of the quote appears in front of its tranquil background, and the quote remains on the screen in a readable form for six seconds before it beautifully and peacefully dissolves into another scene. That’s it. That’s how much truth you’re going to understand about this Scripture from the video.

Such a presentation technique is a seemingly small but yet a very significant form of deception. The visual format of the “Be Still” DVD in this example relies on both the ignorance and the lack of interest of the viewer about this verse in order to put forth an implied message which Scripture does not say at all.

Such a presentation technique is a seemingly small but yet a very significant form of deception. The visual format of the “Be Still” DVD in this example relies on both the ignorance and the lack of interest of the viewer about this verse in order to put forth an implied message which Scripture does not say at all. The video begins twisting the Scripture immediately through its subtle visual methods, even before it says anything about “being still”.

The DVD’s simple and clean text-quoting method grossly misrepresents this verse by implying that it is an entire verse, therefore suggesting that it is a standalone thought perhaps not needing any further explanation. This is sloppy theological presentation at best, although it is certainly prettier and is more pleasing to view. But it is reasonable to

understand that such misrepresentation is actually intentional. Assuming the intent of subtle deception is shown to be justified in this case, since the verse is never explained and since the implied message of their quote turns out to be one of the many false theological foundations of the DVD’s teachings.

The DVD’s subtle technique of hiding interpretation clues from the audience, distracting them with visually attractive presentations, and quickly moving on without proper explanation, all attempt to hide the true meaning of the Scripture from someone who will not look it up for themselves. **Such clever deception is a common tactic among “verse-twisters”. They obviously rely on the old adage, “A sucker is born every minute.”** This teaching and its methods simply assume that the viewer will accept the message without the need for further examination.

The DVD’s gross misrepresentation of Scripture becomes more obvious upon closer inspection. The teaching of contemplative prayer in this video misuses and twists the meaning of this snippet of Scripture by taking it completely out of context and quoting it only partially to supposedly support its doctrinal teachings, which will be seen later in clearer detail. The more complete context of this particular verse excerpt is actually:

“Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah* Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. **“Be still, and know that I am God;** I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*
Psalms 46:6-11 NIV [emphasis added]

Reading the more complete context of this Scripture actually shows that God is placing the emphasis on our need to trust in Him in the midst of even global catastrophe. He is exalted above all huge and threatening circumstances, and we should calmly rely upon Him regardless, simply because the “Lord Almighty is with us”. The actual Scriptural context shows that this instruction from the Bible for us to “Be still” is certainly not intended as a general guideline and mindset for discipline in regular prayer so that believers can get into a receptive and listening attitude toward God. Rather, it is clearly an encouragement for us to trust in the Lord Almighty, who is greater even than the tremendous circumstances of world-wide or national turmoil, One Who exerts His supreme authority over the earth. We are therefore reminded to trust in Him.

Notice the obvious difference between the literal Scriptural message of Psalms 46:10a and the implication of the “Be Still” doctrine when it abuses this text to make its own point. The Bible states, “Be still, and **know that I am God ...**”. But the “Be Still” DVD’s implied teaching on this verse excerpt is that the Bible is instead saying, “Be still, so you can experience peace and can then personally hear from God and become mystically ‘one’ with Him”. Such blatant retranslation and perversion of Holy Scripture cannot be justified or accepted.

This twisting and misuse of Scripture is repeated in many other ways in the teachings of contemplative prayer, as shown later in the DVD. The purpose of this Scriptural distortion clearly seems to be intended to appeal to the viewer’s desires, even their need to serve Christ, by relying on their ignorance of the Bible so they will believe and obey this teaching’s message.

This twisting and misuse of Scripture is repeated in many other ways in the teachings of contemplative prayer, as shown later in the DVD. The purpose of this scriptural distortion clearly seems to be aimed at appealing to individual followers’ desire to serve Christ by relying on their ignorance of the Bible so they will believe and obey this teaching’s message.

Violation of The Greatest Commandment

The contemplative prayer principle of “silence” (emptying of the mind) as a condition to obtain personal peace and to hear from God is opposed to a fundamental commandment of God, which Christ identifies as the “greatest commandment”, as shown in the following Scripture:

“One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and **with all your mind.**’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:35-40 NIV [emphasis added]

Christ’s commandment to love God with all our mind has some basic implications, notably, that we should think and involve active mental activity in our interactions with God. According to Christ’s own model for prayer, our mental processes need to be actively involved in the act of loving God through praying. So any spiritual instruction that encourages us to “empty our mind”, to put ourselves into a state of meditative tranquility and mental emptiness during prayer, and which does not involve active thinking, is opposed to a fundamental teaching of Christ, one which He believes is so important as to call it “the greatest commandment”.

The Danger of the “Be Still” doctrine

Much of this book will deal with the specific form of contemplative prayer presented in the “Be Still” DVD. This particular form of contemplative prayer has been essentially packaged within a Christian wrapper through the misuse of various Bible excerpts and through the endorsement of the prominent Protestant leaders featured in the video. Since the comprehensive subjects of contemplative prayer and Christian mysticism are well beyond the scope of this writing, we will instead focus on the teachings of this specific method of prayer, the ‘subset’ of contemplative prayer that is presented in the video. The “Be Still” teachings are tailored to appeal to Protestant Christians, and they are presented in the DVD as a basic truth, belief, and practice, presumably important for every believer. Therefore, the “Be Still” method will be treated here as a fundamental doctrine. It will therefore be called the “Be Still” doctrine throughout the remainder of this writing.

The primary, underlying danger of the “Be Still” doctrine lies in the fact that it attempts to undermine the authority of the Bible. Its misuse and twisting of Scripture, its focus on an interest in a personal, mystical experience with God, and its appeals to the self-centered desire for personal peace distract the Christian from their primary responsibility of knowing and obeying Christ’s commandments. While the “Be Still” doctrine attempts to appeal to our supposed love for God, and therefore our desire to experience His presence and know Him intimately, *it actually prevents such intimate knowledge of God by contradicting His Word and distracting the Christian from the true “path to enlightenment and purpose.”* Jesus spoke authoritatively about the true path to personal fulfillment and enlightenment when He said:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. **Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.** He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him **and show myself to him.**”

John 14:15-21 NIV [emphasis added]

So if we are truly acting out of a love for Christ, we will obey His commandments. And as a result of our obedience, He will reveal Himself to us. An intimate knowledge of Christ is the true enlightenment all humans were designed to experience. *The pattern of obedience to God’s Word, which should be the primary expression of the Christian’s love for God, is the true path to enlightenment, according to Jesus.* Christ’s standards for experiencing the presence of God and the knowledge of Him stand in bold contrast to the trivial, man-made, extra-Biblical, and mystical guidelines of Lectio Divina and contemplative prayer.

The pattern of obedience to God’s Word, which should be the primary expression of the Christian’s love for God, is the true path to enlightenment, according to Jesus.

If our real desire is to be “enlightened” about truth from God, why don’t we seek such enlightenment from the objective and absolutely reliable source He has already provided us, namely, from the Bible? Why should we listen to and obey anyone but God? As the Scripture says:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
Psalms 119:105 KJV

The Real Heresy Underlying the “Be Still” doctrine

The “Be Still” doctrine’s teachings are so clearly opposed to the teachings of Scripture as to be eligible to be labeled as “heresy”. The word “heresy” is a very strong word in religious circles. Let’s look at the definition of the word⁸:

1. opinion or doctrine at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine, esp. of a church or religious system.
2. the maintaining of such an opinion or doctrine.
3. Roman Catholic Church. the willful and persistent rejection of any writing of faith by a baptized member of the church.
4. any belief or theory that is strongly at variance with established beliefs, customs, etc.

The orthodox, Biblical doctrine of Christian prayer is authoritatively based on Christ’s model for prayer, as shown in the Gospels, cited earlier in this writing. *Therefore, any promotion of an alternate form or set of principles for prayer not found in the Bible should be regarded as heresy, as it is certainly a belief which is at variance with established Biblical teaching.*

Christians are to regard the Bible as God’s specific and exclusive revelation of absolute truth and their only objective guide for life. They are therefore responsible to understand that any alternate teachings which are either directly opposed to Biblical truth, are significantly different, or which presume to give additional revelation that cannot be supported by Scripture, are to be completely rejected and regarded as wholly unacceptable. As the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

Christians are to regard the Bible as God’s specific and exclusive revelation of absolute truth and their only objective guide for life

... Neither “contemplative prayer” nor the recent Protestant expression of it, herein labeled as the “Be Still” doctrine, have their roots in orthodox Scripture.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 NLT

Neither “contemplative prayer” nor the recent Protestant expression of it, herein labeled as the “Be Still” doctrine, have their roots in orthodox Scripture. Rather, these doctrines have their origins in traditional Catholic mysticism, and they are clearly at variance with Scripture regarding the Bible’s direction to the Christian about the practice and the manner of their individual prayer. The “Be Still” doctrine therefore sets itself up against

⁸ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/heresy?qsrc=2888>

the standard of God’s Word *by supposedly revealing deep and mystical truths about personal peace and contact with God that the Bible itself does not reveal.*

Presuming to reveal and pursue deep, hidden truths not readily seen from God’s own explicit revelations in the Bible and through nature is actually an occult practice, by mere virtue of the actual meaning of the word “occult”. Let’s look at the definition of the adjective “occult”⁹:

1. of or pertaining to magic, astrology, or any system claiming use or knowledge of secret or supernatural powers or agencies.
- 2. beyond the range of ordinary knowledge or understanding; mysterious.**
- 3. secret; disclosed or communicated only to the initiated.**
4. hidden from view.
5. (in early science)
 - a. not apparent on mere inspection but discoverable by experimentation.**
 - b. of a nature not understood, as physical qualities.
 - c. dealing with such qualities; experimental: occult science.
6. Medicine/Medical. present in amounts too small to be visible: a chemical test to detect occult blood in the stool. **[emphasis added]**

The “Be Still” doctrine’s teachings, which are in addition to and are clearly contrary to Holy Scripture, are an example of occult teachings in that they presume to reveal hidden, spiritual truth applicable to mankind that has not already been revealed by God. They must therefore be regarded as heresy and must be treated as such. These doctrines must be rejected entirely by the Bible-believing Christian who has a desire to obey only God’s Word. An important question for the Christian to ask themselves might be, “Should I believe in the subjective, personal experiences of others, or should I follow what Christ clearly commanded as recorded in the Bible?”

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The subtle lie of the “Be Still” doctrine is a heresy since it attempts to supersede the authority of God’s Holy Word through its independent teachings on prayer. It is subtle because it uses attractive imagery and messages that only appeal to the viewer’s desire for personal peace and supernatural enlightenment. It is subtle because it seems to use Scripture references to support its message. It is subtle because it attempts to garner trust from the viewer by presenting its teachings through the mouths of respected and admired Protestant leaders. *But most important, its deception is a subtle lie because it cleverly distracts from the authority of the Bible by drawing attention away from the*

⁹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/occult>

commandments of Christ and instead appealing to our self-centered feelings and desires. It attempts to undermine and effectively replace a portion of Holy Scripture which is clearly given as a basic commandment. This teaching is heretical, and it should be rejected as such.

The “Be Still” doctrine appeals to people’s inherent desire for peace, it promises personal contact with God, and it does so by presenting its message within a very attractive and supposedly credible package, especially coming from trusted church leaders and popular authors. But Bible believers should look past the beautiful

Christians should therefore make the effort to properly discriminate between their trust in human teachers and their trust in God’s Word.

trappings of the message and see the deceptive heresy that underlies it. They should step back from the attractive appeals of the DVD by understanding the doctrine’s actual message and contrasting it with the objective truths found in the Holy Scriptures. *Christians should therefore make the effort to properly discriminate between their trust in human teachers and their trust in God’s Word.*

The “Be Still” doctrine’s motivation to pray

When you first insert the “Be Still” DVD, you will be presented with the main menu, which has as its backdrop a beautiful, tranquil pond scene surrounded by trees. When you play the first chapter, you are shown the title, “Contemplative Prayer – The Divine Romance between Man and God.” The video’s peaceful visual backdrop, its soothing background music, and its title all paint the philosophical background and set the foundation for the entire doctrine – the attainment of personal peace based on the assumption that you love God and want to draw near to Him, that your personal desire for peace should be a primary motivation to pray, and that you can use the proscribed methods to place yourself into the correctly receptive spiritual and mental condition presumably required to hear from God personally. But desiring personal peace or special revelation from God as a primary reason to pray is contrary to what the Bible says about what should motivate Christians.

It is important to step back and ask the question, “Why should we want to pray?” According to the “Be Still” doctrine, we want to pray because we desire relief from our stress and we supposedly want to hear from God directly. But the Bible tells us something different about what should fundamentally motivate our relationship with God. Consider the following few Scriptures that speak to the issue of what our core desires and motivators should be as followers of Christ:

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

1 John 4:10 NIV

“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory

that has overcome the world, even our faith.”

1 John 5:3,4 NIV

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.”

2 John 1:6 NIV

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

John 13:34 NASB

“In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”

1 John 4:17-19 NIV

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

John 14:21 NIV

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Philippians 3:10,11 NIV

“Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'”

Matthew 25:34-40 NIV

An extraordinary number of Scriptures were quoted on this point, but it is necessary, since the issue of our motivation toward God is absolutely fundamental to the issue of why we should pray. We should want to commune with God and draw near to Him because we love Him, and we love Him because He first loved us and give Himself up as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. We should want to talk with God because He is truly our Father, who has adopted us as His children through the saving work of Christ. We should desire to obey His commandments because we now belong to Him and have been made heirs of Christ through His redemptive work of salvation. We should want to know Him intimately because we love Him. We should seek for His approval and for His presence because we love Him.

The basic motivation of love for God and for others, which should be the driving force for prayer in the Christian, is very different from the reasons the “Be Still” doctrine gives as motives for prayer. This false doctrine instead tells us that we should pray because we want to escape from the pressures and stresses of our daily lives.

It further instructs us to desire a mystical, personal revelation of God for ourselves, not the revelation He has already given us through the Holy Scriptures. *The basic motivator of contemplative prayer is a self-centered love of us, not a love for God.*

The basic motivator of contemplative prayer is a self-centered love of us, not a love for God.

The Non-Biblical liberality of the “Be Still” doctrine

There is no clear exclusion in the “Be Still” doctrine of any other faith or belief system. It will supposedly work for anyone. A complete analysis shows that the message of this video is actually that Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, agnostics, New-Agers, or practically anyone else can presumably obtain the personal tranquility and Divine communion promised by this doctrinal teaching, if they are willing to accept its conditions and follow its practices.

However, the overall message of the Bible, especially the message of the New Testament, is that only through a personal faith in Christ, based on obedience to the complete Gospel message of salvation and discipleship, can you actually encounter God, be reconciled to Him, and have an intimate relationship with The Creator, including the ongoing relationship of prayer. This exclusive condition of intimacy and reconciliation with God is most clearly illustrated in Christ’s own words:

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

John 14:6 NIV

By obviously omitting the Scriptural requirement of either a personal, obedient relationship with Christ or the command to follow Christ’s specific guidelines for prayer as found in the Bible, the “Be Still” doctrine essentially offers an alternate and non-Biblical form of contact with God, which is implied to be available to anyone who is

willing to simply follow the doctrine’s guidelines. *This openness, complete liberality, and lack of exclusivity is another example of the fundamental heresy of the “Be Still” doctrine, since it is opposed to the clearly exclusive Biblical requirements of Christ Himself.*

Any “spiritual” contact or special revelation one may experience during these mystical meditative sessions could even represent visitations from other, non-Godly spiritual forces. Certain psychological or paranormal occurrences have been documented as a result of this form of meditation, such as the “Kundalini Arousal”¹⁰ – this particular phenomenon and other strange consequences have even been warned against by the mystical meditative community itself.

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Avoiding any Appearance or Form of Evil

All Christian believers are directed by the Scripture to flee all appearance (form or kind) of evil, as shown in the following passage, cited in multiple authorized translations:

“Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22 NKJV

“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22 NIV

“But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22 NASB

So how does the Bible define “evil”? The word “evil” in this passage is the Greek adjective “poneros” (pronounced pon-ay-ros’), which means:

1. hurtful (in effect or influence)
2. calamitous
3. diseased (especially, culpable) – i.e. derelict, vicious, facinorous, mischief, malice, or guilt
4. the devil, or sinners
5. bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked¹¹

To further understand the use of the term “evil” in this Scripture, let’s look at a few other passages that use this same Greek word “poneros”:

¹⁰ <http://kundalini.se/eng/natverk.html>, <http://www.thesoulsjourney.com/kundalini.html>, and other sources

¹¹ Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance – Greek Dictionary of the New Testament

“Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

Matthew 5:37 NIV

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Matthew 6:23 KJV

“He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'.”

Mark 7:20-23 NIV

“The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.”

John 7:7 NIV

“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.”

Acts 19:11, 12 NIV

Christians should understand that they should abstain from or avoid everything that has an appearance or form of evil, that is, anything that seems to be opposed to God's stated will, His revealed truth, or is at variance with His holy character.

“One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.”

Acts 19:15, 16 NIV

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Galatians 1:3-5 NIV

Other Biblical passages that use this same root meaning for “evil” help to clarify what the term means when it is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:22. *Christians should understand that they should abstain from or avoid everything that has an appearance or form of evil, that is, anything that seems to be opposed to God's stated will, His revealed truth, or is at variance with His holy character.* He has revealed His unchanging and holy character through His Son Jesus, through His explicit revelation in the Bible, and through the record of nature.

The only objective measurement available to mankind to judge between good and evil is the standard of Holy Scripture. Therefore, the Christian must only use the standard of the Bible to make judgments about what is good and what is evil. If a

spiritual teaching is found, upon close inspection, to be significantly contrary to Scripture, it should be regarded as evil. The Bible believer should therefore abstain from or avoid it entirely. Since the teachings of contemplative prayer, and the related “Be Still” doctrine, are clearly not rooted in Scripture and are at variance with Christ’s principles for prayer, these teachings must be regarded as a form or appearance of evil, and they must therefore be avoided entirely.

Because of the “Be Still” doctrine’s subtle use of peaceful imagery, its appeals to people’s desire for tranquility and relief from stress, its references to partial excerpts of Scripture, and its message being delivered by trusted Christian leaders, the believer’s discernment of the evil heresy of its message is especially challenging. It is therefore harder for the typical Christian to perceive that this teaching is fundamentally wrong, since its evil message is obscured by the teaching’s subtly attractive and deceptive techniques, especially since it strongly appeals to people’s natural desire for personal peace. But a careful inspection of its teachings and a proper contrast with applicable Scripture reveals the heresy of the “Be Still” doctrine more clearly.

A Demolition Effort – Opposing This Heretical Doctrine

These false and dangerous teachings must be opposed. They must even be “demolished”, which is the purpose of this study. The following Scripture supports such a demolition effort:

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NIV

It is necessary in considering the heresy of the “Be Still” doctrine to remember the Bible’s description of how Satan presents himself, and therefore how he often succeeds in deceiving mankind:

“And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 NIV

Religious Leaders’ Participation in This Deception

We will later see in this study the full extent of the “Be Still” doctrine’s gross and blatant mishandling of Scripture. Such misuse of the Bible does not show this doctrine to be a part of God’s revealed truth and therefore does not justify its acceptance by Christians.

Rather, its mishandling of Scripture is yet another clear indication that this false doctrine is nothing more than a traditional teaching of men. Christ condemned the religious leaders of His day for just such a practice, when He said:

“... ‘Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.’

Mark 7:6b-8 NIV

Some religious leaders are endorsing this heretical, non-Biblical practice through either their active promotion or their passive tolerance of “contemplative prayer”. This mystical form of meditative prayer, upon closer inspection, is shown to be nothing more than a teaching that originates from the personal experiences and traditions of religious mystics. Many local churches are either actively espousing or are passively permitting these non-Scriptural practices, possibly even within a church in your own community. Based on the standards and requirements of God’s Word, these false teachings must be condemned, as they only stem from human traditions and mystical teachings and do not have their root in sound Biblical doctrine. Remember again Paul’s strong statements to the Colossian church:

Some religious leaders are endorsing this heretical, non-Biblical practice through either their active promotion or their passive tolerance of “contemplative prayer”.

Christians should question and examine any popular teachers or church leaders who support or tolerate this heretical doctrine.

“I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. **See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.** For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

Colossians 2:4-10 NIV [emphasis added]

Christians should question and examine any popular teachers or church leaders who support or tolerate this heretical doctrine. They must not be receptive to this doctrine, and they must not turn a blind eye to this evil principle by ignoring it, supposedly because they do not want to be labeled as “judgmental” or overly critical. Christians must instead defend the faith by adamantly standing up for and obeying Biblical truth, as the following Scripture directs them:

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”

Jude 1:3,4 NIV

The teachings of contemplative prayer are “immoral” in the sense that they are opposed to what Christ commanded as the right practices and set of principles for the Christian believer. *But most importantly, these teachings deny Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Lord by attempting to supersede His commandments on prayer.*

But most importantly, these teachings deny Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Lord by attempting to supersede His commandments on prayer.

Beware of the Yeast

Christ explicitly warned His followers about false teachers when He said:

“When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.” Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? **But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**” Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Matthew 16:5-12 NIV [emphasis added]

The Apostle Paul repeated Christ’s warning, in the following Scripture:

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”** I am confident in the

Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.”

Galatians 5:7-10 NIV [emphasis added]

In the conclusion of this book, we will further explore the need for extreme caution in our listening to modern teachers that mix Biblical truth with heretical error, which Jesus described as “yeast”. But suffice it to say that the best directive is summed up in one word: “Beware”.

The Great Commission – Christ’s Final Commandment to Believers

To give an overall perspective on the individual Christian’s responsibility toward Christ in all these matters, we must remember the following Scriptural commandment, which is part of Jesus’ “last words” to His disciples, and therefore to all Christian believers, before His ascension into heaven:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

Matthew 28:18-20 NIV [emphasis added]

A fundamental and indispensable part of Christ’s commandments to Christian believers is His teaching on prayer. Therefore, if Christians are to fulfill His “great commission” for evangelism and discipleship, they should obey and teach the commandments of Christ regarding the Biblical principles, the regular practice, and the authentic Christian discipline of prayer. They must not respect, tolerate, or teach the traditions of men, such as those embodied in the “Be Still” doctrine of contemplative prayer.

If it is not Biblical teaching, what does the “Be Still” doctrine resemble?

The practices of contemplative prayer, specifically those of the “Be Still” doctrine, most closely resemble the meditative methods of Eastern religions and New Age beliefs. All of these involve the invocation of a mental state of stillness, introspection, emptying the mind, assumption of peaceful physical postures or surroundings, and a repetition of “sacred” words or phrases in order to get the meditator into a mental state of tranquility, presumably to then be receptive to mystical truth or divine revelation or be elevated to a “higher state of consciousness”. *A study of transcendental meditation, Buddhist meditation, Hindu prayer, and contemplative prayer reveals that all these teachings share these common elements of practice and that they have these similarities for the same reasons.*

Since the “Be Still” doctrine of contemplative prayer most closely resembles these mystical, non-Christian practices and stands in stark contrast to Christ’s own model for prayer, why should the Bible believer be interested in these meditative techniques? This

is the question the reader must answer for themselves.

Every Christian believer has a personal responsibility from God to undergo a thorough examination of the Scriptures on these matters. As the Bible directs all believers to do, they must individually examine and test all these teachings, to see if they are truly from God, as shown in the following Scriptures:

Every Christian believer has a personal responsibility from God to undergo a thorough examination of the Scriptures on these matters.

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”

1 Thes 5:19-22 NIV

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Acts 17:11 NIV

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.”

Phil 4:8 NIV

Our natural state as humans regarding our relationship with God

The implication of the “Be Still” DVD subtitle, “The Divine Romance between Man and God”, raises an important question: do we as humans inherently desire a loving and intimate relationship with God (i.e. a “romance”)? And if we desire such a loving relationship with God, do we have this desire for “divine” reasons? The video subtitle implicitly suggests that humans inherently want to love God and intimately commune with Him. And by calling this form of prayer a “Divine Romance between Man and God”, the subtitle further suggests that our desires for praying are so pure as to even be called “Divine”. But what does the Bible say about our natural, spiritual condition as humans? Consider the following few Scriptures that speak clearly on the issue of our natural, human inclinations toward God:

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 53:6 NIV

“What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Romans 3:9-18 NIV

“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...”

Romans 3:23 NIV

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 5:6-8 NIV

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

Ephesians 2:1-3 NIV

These and many other Scriptures make clear that the natural state of mankind is one of unrighteousness, rebellion, and hatred toward God. Our natural spiritual condition is one of complete unacceptability, sin and separation from Him. We have no inherent goodness, nor do we have any innate motivation within ourselves to truly seek after God. There is nothing inherently noble about our natural spiritual condition, and unless we have been regenerated through the saving work of Christ, we are God’s enemies and will remain separated from Him.

Welcome Everyone with Open Arms?

At this point, one might fairly ask, “Since this DVD is directed toward Christians, isn’t it valid to assume Christians might have some sort of ‘divine’ romantic inclinations toward God?” But one can readily see from a complete review of the video’s message that there is no clear requirement given of the “Be Still” participant to be a born-again Christian. The video’s misuse of small snippets of Bible verses and its omission of Christ’s clear and exclusive Gospel message do not make this assumption of true belief in Christ. The DVD does not give this as a clear requirement or prerequisite for prayer. *Although the message of the “Be Still” doctrine is obviously crafted to attract Christians, its message is essentially open to everyone – all who are willing to receive it, regardless of their beliefs.* There is no obvious exclusion. In its omission of the Gospel’s clear and exclusive requirements for relationship with God, the DVD’s overall message suggests instead that if the viewer is able to accept the “Be Still” doctrine of contemplative prayer along with its Christian decor, they will supposedly receive the benefits of personal peace and hearing from God that it promises, regardless of their prior beliefs or spiritual condition.

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Other details on the “Be Still” DVD

The following information provides more detail on the “Be Still” production and the people and companies behind the scenes.

Movie profile

Internet Movie Database (IMDb) – <http://www.imdb.com> (search for “Be Still”)

Official movie website

“Be Still” - <http://www.bestillprayer.com>

Production company

Be Still LLC

Amy Reinhold, Owner

Building 5, Suite 2212

3000 W. Olympic Blvd

Santa Monica, CA 90404

Production team: Written, directed, and produced by Amy Reinhold, Judge Reinhold, and David Kirkpatrick; Executive producer Martha Cotton

Amy Reinhold

IMDb at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2050921>

Judge Reinhold

Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judge_Reinhold

IMDb at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001662>

Official website at <http://www.judgereinhold.net>

Biography at <http://www.filmreference.com/film/75/Judge-Reinhold.html>

David Kirkpatrick

IMDb at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0456712>

Biography at <http://www.filmreference.com/film/85/David-Kirkpatrick.html>

Resume at <http://www.plymouthrockstudios.com/team/index.html>

Martha Cotton

IMDb at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0183117>

Resume at <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/5/938/264>

20th Century Fox website for religious titles

“FOXFAITH” – <http://www.foxfaith.com>

Background information on the major teachers featured in “Be Still”

More detail about the major Christian teachers featured in the “Be Still” DVD can be found at the following sources:

Beth Moore

Living Proof Ministries – <http://www.lproof.org>

Books -

http://books.google.com/books?as_auth=Beth+Moore&source=an&ei=ImfNSbbjMJLhtg esrJ3VCQ&sa=X&oi=book_group&resnum=6&ct=title&cad=author-navigational

Wikipedia reference - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beth_Moore

An Objective Critique of Beth Moore -

<http://theworldfrommywindow.blogspot.com/2007/12/objective-critique-of-beth-moore.html>

Who is Beth Moore and what does she teach? – Tony Capoccia -

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/tonyqa/tc05-187.htm>

Richard Foster

Renovare - <http://www.renovare.org>

QuakerInfo.com - <http://www.quakerinfo.com/foster.shtml>

Wikipedia reference - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Foster_\(religion\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Foster_(religion))

Richard Foster – Leading Millions Astray through Contemplative Spirituality -

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/richardfoster.htm>

Renovare & Christian Mystic Quaker ... -

http://www.cephasministry.com/new_age_richard_foster.html

Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard website - <http://www.dwillard.org>

Books - <http://www.dallaswillard.com>

Wikipedia reference - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dallas_Willard

Dallas Willard — Promoting Contemplative Prayer and Mysticism Through Spiritual

Formation - <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/dallaswillard.htm>

Max Lucado

UpWords website - <http://maxlucado.com>

Wikipedia reference - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Lucado

General Teachings/Activities -

<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/lucado/lucado.htm>