

The just released iFollow Discipleship Resource has been made globally available via the Internet and according to the NAD is "designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God." In addition to being released on the web www.ifollowdiscipleship.org, it has also been released in the 18th volume of the Pastor's DVD. The home page banner states: "Finally: a discipleship training resource that pastors can really trust." I wish this material was trustworthy but as you will see, there is serious error promoted in the lesson on mediation. I've underlined the faulty premise found within this lesson upon which all modern Contemplative Christian Meditation is founded: <http://www.ifollowdiscipleship.org/index.php?id=83&lessonID=57>

"At this point you may begin to think how strange it is that the Hebrew words for "meditate" seem to include so much sound. We know that non-Christian meditation often includes sounds, chants, and mantras. It brings to mind a completely different passage—**or is it so different?** There is a text about "wizards that peep and mutter." (KJV) The text is Isaiah 8:19. Here it is, from the New American Standard Bible: "And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God?" If you look in the lexicon to find out what word is translated "mutter," you will discover, perhaps to your astonishment, that it is *hagah*—same word, same form, same tense as "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night." (Joshua 1:8, emphasis supplied.) The same word as "in His law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:2, emphasis supplied.) The same word as "I meditate on Thee in the night watches." (Psalm 63:6, emphasis supplied) and many more! **Clearly, the action the wizards were performing was not wrong—in fact, we are commanded to do it.** What then made them wrong? Let's go back to Isaiah 8. "Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn." (Verses 19-20) "No light in them." (KJV) **These wizards and mediums are using a God-given form of communication** to consult, not the dead, of course, but the devil. . . . Is any of this still going on in this enlightened age? Today it comes as part of the broad category labeled "New Age." The principle is crystal clear. **Meditation connects you with somebody. You might want to be certain with whom you are connecting!** Every one of the above texts commands that we are to meditate upon God, His law (the Bible) and His works. To be afraid to do that is like being afraid to use the telephone in case you might get a wrong number. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8) It's a promise." (pages 3, 4)

This lesson develops the thought that the techniques used in Christian Meditation are one and the same as the techniques used in New Age/Eastern Mystical Meditation. This lesson contends that the primary difference between Christian and Eastern meditation is who the meditator is trying to connect with. I strongly contend that if we use New Age/Eastern mystical techniques of meditation in our attempt to connect with God, we will instead connect with fallen angels clothed in garments of light no matter what our prayers for protection or what our sincere intentions might have been. In harmony with this false premise, iFollow promotes the following techniques in this lesson:

"One of the easiest ways to practice this "stillness" is to pay attention to your breathing. Don't make any effort to change how you breathe. Just notice when you are breathing in and when you are breathing out. At first, you will find yourself distracted from your breath by your thoughts. When you realize that you are not paying attention to your breath, just notice this and **go back to focusing on your breathing.**" (page 2)

"You have already asked the Lord to clear your mind of the cluttered, worried, and (let's face it) self-centered thoughts that usually live there. But you'll find it's not as easy as you wish to cooperate with Him. Your mind is so used to scrambling, on six levels, at ninety miles an hour, (remember the "chatter"?) that **it takes practice to shift into neutral.** An almost universal complaint of beginners at meditation is, "I can't do it. My mind just wanders!" (page 6)

"Apparently in Bible times, people meditated out loud. So you could say, or **murmur, or whisper one of the names of God.** Or you could sing. It is well known that music goes to the heart as nothing else can do. If you're

a visual person, gaze at a lake or stream, **or a lit candle**. The important thing is to think of something that will help you to concentrate on Him. **Not on thoughts about Him or to Him or from Him, not yet, but just on Him**. This is where the breathing exercise above can come in. You can concentrate on your breathing going in and out. When intruding thoughts come in, (and they will), **calmly and patiently turn your mind back to its focal point.**" (page7)

These practices that iFollow are promoting savor of self-hypnosis. Notice the stages of self-hypnosis listed at this website: <http://www.asiaone.com/Health/Alternative%2BMedicine/New%2BAge/Story/A1Story20081014-93720.html>

"There are several stages in self-hypnosis. The first is to get yourself into the trance state by creating a focus of attention. You can stare into the flickering of a candle flame, or a black dot on a white background, until the eyes tire. A more common method is to be seated comfortably with eyes closed, and concentrate on the breathing. . . . During this stage, your awareness would slowly drift away from external influences and distractions towards a more internal awareness. The next stage is to deepen the trance by becoming more relaxed."

"In dealing with the science of mind cure (hypnosis), you have been eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God has forbidden you to touch. . . . Cut away from yourselves everything that savors of hypnotism, the science by which satanic agencies work."--Letter 20, 1902 (2SM, p. 350).

We cannot take something that has an intrinsically false foundation such as Contemplative Christian Meditation with its focus on breathing, staring at a candle, repeating a phrase or the name of Jesus, all for the purpose of bringing the mind into an neutral state, and believe that God will connect with us through this approach because we are praying that He will just as we cannot pray over a Ouija Board and expect that God will spell out the answers to our questions. God will not work in partnership with Satan. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 ". . . for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"

Here are the websites iFollow recommends in this lesson. At these sites you will find the ancient mystical contemplative spiritual practices taught "that savors of hypnotism, the science by which satanic agencies work".

Websites

All About God Ministries is a nondenominational information service on basic Christianity. It includes material on Christian meditation under its "Discipleship" section: www.allaboutgod.com

John Mark Ministries is a nondenominational counseling ministry for Christian clergy who are struggling with burnout. Included on its website is practical information about meditation: jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/13763.htm

Renovare is a Christian parachurch organization that provides resources related to spiritual disciplines: www.renovare.org/

Rhonda Jones is a Christian author (not an Adventist) who publishes a website focused on the topic of Bible-based meditation: www.thechristianmeditator.com

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