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Meditation & the Christian

Question:

Should or can Christians practice a kind of popular mystical meditation or visualisation or TM to relax or empty our minds to relieve stress today?

Response:

That is a good question. We noted an increasing number of Christians are interested in a kind of Eastern meditation techniques (a kind of TM or Transcendental Meditation practiced in the past) in an effort to deepen or to grow their "spiritual lives." **Some Christian organisations are even offering yoga or mindfulness classes and transcendental meditation classes, for relaxation or stress relieving and many schools are keen to give it a try and experiment with the latest spiritual fads from the East.**

The Bible does speak about meditation. In the Psalms, David sings of his love of meditating on the Law of God day and night (Psa 1;1-2, 119:97.). **The biblical concept of meditation has a basis and is not without reference to thought and content.** The Lord in Joshua 1:8 gives us an important advice , '*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*' **It is always directed at and by the Word of God (i.e. scripturally sanctioned trend of thought and not aimlessness or nothingness.) It is not secular or any other form of mystical meditation or a chanting or a mantra that we repeat over and over against to gain inner peace or our own salvation for this is none.**

It is fundamentally different from Eastern meditation, which sets the emptying of the mind as its goal (i.e. nirvana) which is never taught in the bible at all. The Eastern concept of emptying the mind is contrary to the biblical teaching of filling or renewing the mind with the Word of God (Rom 12:2).

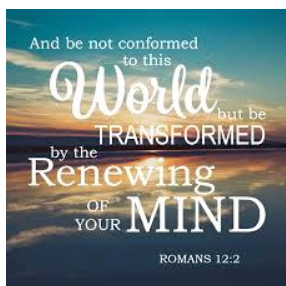
Beware of the latest New Age mysticism that has affected some people and even Christians are not spared.



The younger generation are more susceptible as they seek tranquillity in vaping, substance abuse, heavy music, and even meditation gardens. Spas, yoga, reiki classes and other transcendental meditation techniques. What the Beatles brought back from India in new age practices to the US in the 1970s had spread from the East to the West since and to many in Asia too. But Paul warns in Phil 4:8 which says, *'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'*

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PHILIPPIANS 4:8

Some approach meditation through so-called Christian activity like the ancient ritual of centering and medieval chants and contemplative prayer, or even the popular mindfulness approach; while others develop their own style, whether it is patterned after the breathing techniques and other practices like visualisation and prime your mind by the notorious New Age motivational gurus, like Anthony Robbins and Deepak Chopra. Some are taught to sit still, usually focusing on a mantra or on their breathing, that one can even clear one mind while walking around, tending a garden or through movement-based activities, such as *tai chi* or *chi kong* techniques. There is a proper place for exercise, but all these have a religious background, and we need to prudent not to participate in these practices.



The biblical concept of meditation on the Word of God does not involve an emptying of the mind which is dangerous. Rom 12:1-2 says, *'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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.'*

We may clear our minds of ungodly and unbiblical thoughts, of evil cravings and desires for sin. But that must involve a filling to the same mind with the word of God. **It involves a mind in which unbiblical thoughts are replaced by the truth of Scripture, not a blank slate of meditation that revolves around self.** Psa 19:14 says, *'Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.'* There is an acceptable and unacceptable meditation to God, and we need to know the difference.

King David's practice of meditation did not revolve around David or nature or a self-visualisation, nor did David try to empty his mind into nothingness. He

wanted to draw near to God and to hear and learn the word from God, and he knew he would hear from God in the study of the law and respond with obedience and repentance. He studied the scriptures in order to purge, sanctify and cleanse his mind of wrong thoughts and hence to have them replaced with right thoughts and patterns of thinking prescribed in the word of God (Psa 26:2, 7:9,139:23, 16:7,119.18).

Our lives should be lived to the glory of God and not for self. There are many who want to get rid of stress that is rooted in worldliness and the cares of this world. But getting rid of this worry or anxiety is not a matter of psychological self-help therapy, but of bible-based spiritual discipline and theology thru the work of the holy Spirit to have our minds transformed by the Word of God over a period of time.

We live in a world so shaped by psychological or therapeutic concerns that most people doubt if God is able to deal with them in their stress, distress, haunting thoughts and their cluttered minds. An attempt to empty the mind might well be an effort to listen to the self or manmade therapy when we should seek to learn and hear from God the Creator first.

Beyond this, we should also ask the question if the mind can ever be empty by human effort without harm. Ancient hermits try to do so by living in caves and running away from the world and some have been mentally affected and suffered from other kinds of mental or psychological ailments. When we attempt to “empty” the mind in this way, we may just shut ourselves in the depravity of our sovereign self. What is true biblical meditation? Isa 26:3-4 says, *‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (focused or meditated) on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.’*



Conclusion

Paul in 2Cor 10:5 says, *‘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.’* **For Christians, a kind of secular or mystical meditation or visualisation can be a grave spiritual danger, and certainly not a biblically sanctioned means to a sound mind and holiness or spiritual growth. Rather we should be disciplined to meditate upon the Word of God as part of our regular and consistent spiritual practice in our daily Quiet Time and fervent prayer.** It is not the quest for an empty mind, but to a sound mind constantly directed by God through Scripture and prayers and guided by the leading of the holy Spirit of God and not man or self or any other being. Hope this helps.

Jack Sin

Memory Verse

1Thes 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Pastor brings us God's Word this morning on "**An Important Apocalyptic Warning (1Thes 5:1-11)**", continuing the new quarterly series on "**Sacred Meditations on Christ and the Coming of the Anti-Christ (1 & 2 Thess)**".
3. Next Sunday, Dr Andy McIntosh will bring us God's Word on "**Divine Imperatives to All Christians (1Thes 5:12-28)**".
4. Sunday School classes after the worship service are:
 - Walk through the Old Testament (Pastor)
 - Studies in Job (Dr Kwong Leen)
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on New Testament Foundations and the Psalms. **[Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode: 218178]**.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. **[Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode: 625551]**.
7. SHBPC **Annual Congregation Meeting cum Election** will be held on **Sun 31 Aug 2025** after the worship service. Nomination for office-bearers are open till 17 Aug. Forms are available from Dn Yue Kay. All members are to pray and attend.
8. The **All Asian Creation Conference "Teaching Genesis 1-11 History & Science" 22 & 23 Aug** at the Salvation Army Hall (Upper Bukit Timah). Keynote speakers: **Dr Don Batten** (CMI), **Rev Dr Jack Sin** (Sovereign Hope BPC), **Dr Andy McIntosh** (University of Leeds), **Dr Mona Bias** (East Asia School of Theology). Other session speakers from Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan, United Kingdom and USA. Register directly on the website www.creation.com/aacc.
9. Pray for:
 - **Church ACM cum Elections on 31 Aug**
 - **Joseph & Rachel**: GPS Outreach at Ang Mo Kio
 - **Lily Almon**: Singapore Citizenship Application
 - **Travel**: Ps Babu [22-25/8, Singapore], **Dr Sam** [26/8, Wenzhou],
 - **Medical**: **Pit Yuen** [Radiotherapy from 19/8], **Agnes' Parents** [health & salvation], **Mrs Philip Heng** [stroke recovery]
10. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**Kindly indicate "**Church Building Fund**" if you would like to designate towards this cause.