

Address: 160 Paya Lebar Road, Orion@Paya Lebar #04-06, Singapore 409022
Sun Worship Service: 10am, Sun School: 11.45am, Wed Prayer Meeting: 8pm
Website: www.sovereignhopebpc.org
Rev Dr Jack Sin: 91160948 (hp) / jacksin710@gmail.com
Elder Loke Tat Luen: tiloke822@gmail.com

Meditation & the Christian

Question: Should or can Christians practice a kind of secular or mystical meditation to relax or empty our minds to relieve stress today?

Answer: That is a good question. Lately, we noted an increasing interest in a kind of Eastern meditation techniques and in an effort to deepen or to grow their "spiritual lives." Some churches are even offering yoga classes and transcendental meditation classes, hypnosis, or stillness, silence or sanctum retreats or mantras and medieval chants retreats 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 119:97). The biblical concept of meditation has a sound basis and is not without reference to thought and content founded on the infallible word of God. Joshua 1:8 says, *'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, hypnotic or frivolous meditation or a medieval chanting or a repeat of a mantra that we repeat over and over against to gain inner peace for our own salvation when there 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 spiritual concept of emptying the mind is contrary to the biblical teaching of filling or renewing the mind with the Word of God and be filled with divine scriptural truths (Rom 12:2, Jer 15:16, Psa 119:97).

Beware of the latest New Age mysticism that has affected some people and even Christians are not spared. The gullible generation of adherents are susceptible as they seek tranquility in meditation gardens. Spas, yoga, tarot cards, reiki classes and other



transcendental meditation techniques and what the Beatles brought back the new age practices of mantras to the US in the 1970s had spread since to many in the west. Philippians 4:8 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.'*

Some approach meditation through so-called Christian activity like the ancient ritual of centering, so-called contemplative mystical prayer; while others develop their own style, whether it is patterned after the breathing techniques of popular New Age guru writer, Deepak Chopra or Anthony Robbins. 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 repetitive movement-based activities, that often have religious connotations. All these we are to be vigilant against and examine it from a biblical foundation.

The biblical concept of meditation on the Word of God does not involve an emptying of the mind which can be dangerous as the evil one can fill it with something else. Romans 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 can clear our minds of ungodly and unbiblical thoughts, of evil cravings and desires for sin but with the help of the Spirit and the Word of God. 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. Psalm 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 and discern the difference. King David's meditation and Solomon did not revolve around nature, inanimate objects or self, 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. 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 (Phil 4:8).

Our lives should be lived to the glory of God and not for self or vain glory. There are many who want to get rid of stress that is often rooted in our obsession with worldliness

or wealth or the excessive cares of this world. (Mt 13:22,23) But getting rid of this worry or anxiety is not a matter of man centred-therapy or waking in mental labyrinth which is getting popular is questionable , rather we should seek Bible-based spiritual discipline thru the work of the Holy Spirit to have our minds transformed by the Word of God over a period of time as we seek Christ humbly and confess and repent of our sins.

We live in a world often shaped by different therapeutic concerns for our ailments that even Christians prefer this to God s help in their stress, distress, haunting thoughts and their cluttered minds. An attempt to empty the mind might make us vulnerable to listen instead to our depraved self or the evil one who deceive us when we should seek the word of God instead.



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 deranged 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? Isaiah

26:3-4 says, *‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.’*

Paul in 2 Corinthians 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 hypnotic, or mystical meditation can be a grave spiritual danger, and certainly not a biblically sanctioned means to the fear of God in holiness or spiritual growth. Rather we should meditate upon the Word of God (Psa 1 and Jos 1:8) as part of our regular and consistent spiritual discipline in our daily Quiet Time and fervent prayer and repentance.** It is not the quest for an empty mind In nirvana, but a sound and disciplined mind constantly directed at Christ through the reading of holy Scripture and much prayers and guided discernment by the leading of the Holy Spirit of God.

Hope this helps.



Jack Sin

Wednesday Prayer Meeting (12 July 2023)
“Divine Counsel for a Distressed Soul”
1 Kings 19:1-18

Pastor Jack welcomed the 14 attendees. They are Deacon Yue Kay, members & regular friends and 5 overseas brethren, namely, Pastor Babu from NCBPCI, Bangalore, India, sister Hla Pui & Benjamin Chui from Myanmar and John & Lily Almon from the Philippines.

We opened the Prayer Meeting with the hymn, “Near to the Heart of God”. This hymn reminds us to draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings. Thereafter, Pastor Jack led us through a word of Opening Prayer. Next, we took turns to read God’s Word from 1 Kings 19:1-18 before Pastor Jack expounded on it.

3 Salient Points to Consider.

C) Conflict & An Emotional Response (v1-3)

1 Kings 19 presents a different aspect of the brave prophet Elijah who defeated the false prophets of Baal at Mt Carmel. It can also a true reflection of some of us today. We are subjected to the vulnerabilities of the flesh and temptations of the evil one over our thoughts, emotions and infirmities and some may need external help.

Jezebel (King Ahad’s wife) promised a death threat to kill Elijah after she was told of what he had done to the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (v2).

We may not experience receiving severe death threats, but some of us if not all go through in life some difficult circumstances like bereavement, afflictions of the body, loss of a job or income and so forth... mentally, spiritually, physically and financially. These can be perceived threats to our lives, our security, stability and even the serenity of our souls.

Elijah, upon receiving a tip-off that he will be targeted by Jezebel to be killed, ran over 160km for his life from Mount Carmel into the wilderness, Beersheba (v3).

B) Contemplation of Death & Suicide (v4-8)

In v4, Elijah, being a man of God, made this shocking / surprising statement: “O LORD, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.”

Is it God’s will for us to commit suicide?

NO! It is never God’s will for us to commit suicide. God does not need us to help Him to take us home; He is absolutely capable of doing it without us. Inclusive in the 6th Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, is committing suicide (self-murder).

The Bible recorded the following 6 people who committed suicide. There was no concrete evidence that all of them were saved in the first place. (even for Saul himself it is questionable).

C) Abimelech (Judges 9:54)

- ii) Saul who asked his armour bearer to kill him) 1 Sam 31:4
- iii) Saul's armour bearer 1Sam31:5
- iv) Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23)
- v) Zimri (1 Kings 16:18)
- vi) Judas Iscariot Mt 27:5

For those who are redeemed, there should never come a time in our life for us to take our lives for his grace is sufficient for us. Even as believers, we can be tempted to say we want to die, but it is not edifying to say it. However, we are not to trivialise such a statement. It takes a lot of courage to take one's own life. In other words, it is more frightening to live on than to die.

So, why do people commit suicide? What are the causes? Consider the following:

1. Depression (A major reason that ended the lives of Rick Warren's son, Coco Lee, Robin Williams and many more).
2. Grief (It can send someone to the point of despair.)
3. Isolation (During the CV-19 pandemic, many were traumatised by the mandatory quarantine measure!)
4. Chronic illness (ie cancer)
5. Alcoholism & Drugs (and vaping)
6. Domestic / Relationship Difficulties
7. Financial Difficulties ie in debt)
8. Bullying (in person or even online & cyberbullying)

C) Counsel by God for a Distressed Soul (v9-18)

Before you give any counsel to the depressed, it is a good practice to allow the person to verbalise/express his/her thoughts/feelings/plan why he or she wanted to commit suicide. Just like God who spends time listening to us, we should too. It is wise to ask him/her good questions like: What happened? Is there anything you want to share about the incident? It is also advisable to feed him/her, let him/her sleep/rest first. There is no need to counsel immediately (v5 & 6).

Elijah's statement about him being the only one standing against Baal is not accurate (see v18). Need to correct wrong ideas in their minds (v11-13), especially when God is not in them or misunderstood. A suicidal person may get the facts/information wrong about life and death and the consequences of suicide. Do not use a harsh/condemning tone of voice but as questions and be patient and gracious and gentle.

God did not speak through the natural elements. Natural things of the world cannot help us (v11-13, reference to the 3 elements – wind, earth & fire). Only God can save us, and He uses His Word to change our hearts and minds.

God was very wise/prudent in counselling Elijah who was mentally and physically exhaustive after the long run. God allowed him to rest, eat, share and counselled him in a short way and gently corrected his defective thought that he was the only one to

go against Baal. Sometimes professional counselling or medical assistance is necessary together with spiritual guidance and counselling.

Conclusion

For Elijah, his greatest need is spiritual besides his physical needs. He needs the presence, power and the grace and mercy of God. Every one of us has his/her fair share of problems to bear and our needs (physical, mental & spiritual) to be met on this earthly journey but nothing is beyond what God can do for us if we turn to him. Humble yourself and seek the Lord for His counsel and His word and prayer and see the Pastor if needed.

If you are still a non-believer or someone who is desperate and need help, do come to seek and to know Christ as your Lord and God personally. God is all you need with sincere confession of sins and repentance.

Han Kin Kheng

LORD'S DAY PROGRAMME FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023
DISCOVERING AND APPLYING THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES
- STUDIES IN THE EPISTLES OF 1, 2 AND 3 JOHN

AUGUST

6/8 Warning to Falsehood & Deception (1 John 4:1-6)
13/8* The Supreme Love of God & Our Response (1 John 4:7-21)
20/8 The Victory of Faith over the World (1 John 5:1-9)
27/8 Knowing God & the Practice of Prayer (1 John 5:10-21)

SEPTEMBER

3/9 Walking in Love & Truth (2 John 1-6)
10/9* The Doctrine of Christ & Biblical Separation (2 John 7-13)
17/9 A Case Study of 3 Characters (3 John 1-12)
24/9 **GOSPEL SUNDAY:**
In Search of Peace with God (Rom 5:1-8)

Church Family Day 9 Aug 2023 @Rifle Range Nature Park



Memory Verse

1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Lord's Day Sunday 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 "***The Supreme Love of God & Our Response (1 John 4:7-21)***", continuing the quarterly series on "Discovering and Applying the Johannine Epistles – Studies in the Book of 1, 2 and 3 John".
3. Pastor will preach next Sunday on "***The Victory of Faith Over the World (1 John 5:1-9)***".
4. Sunday School classes will follow the after the worship service:
 - Westminster Confession of Faith – Pastor
 - Studies in 2 Chronicles – Dn 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 Basic Theology, and the Parables of Jesus. Join us for a time of profitable learning. [Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode:625551]
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:218178]
7. Church **Annual Congregation Meeting cum Elections** will be held on **Sunday 27 Aug 2023, 12 noon** after the worship service. **Church members to note and attend.** Nomination forms for the positions of Pastor, Elder and Deacon are available from Dn Yue Kay till 20 Aug 2023.
8. We need willing hands and hearts to assist in the weekly cleaning of the premises. Do let Dn Yue Kay if you are available to serve in this area.
9. 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.
