

# What Is Meditation?

By Jessica Smith



Two antithetical definitions of meditation are being increasingly confused as the same term in today's society. It is important this confusion be cleared, as one leads to a path of Biblical understanding, and the other leads to pagan spiritualism. The difference may be illustrated in the following two examples. See if you can pick out which is which.

**Example 1:** One man sits cross-legged. The sun rose twenty minutes ago, casting a soft glow through the dancing smoke of incense, but he didn't notice. His glazed eyes have been vacantly cast toward the floor for over an hour. His upper body rocks ever-so slightly in rhythm with the mantra he softly repeats. This little prayer invites and invokes the deity or "energy" associated with the chanted sounds to help him deepen his practice. Invoking deities or "energies" can be done many ways, not just through chanting. Sometimes he practices yoga, sometimes holds an image of a teacher in his mind. Every

once in a while, he even uses hallucinogenic drugs that seem to “open” him to energies that help him reach deep esoteric levels. These are some, but not all the ways he practices meditation to get closer to the final goal: To obtain absolute knowledge and freedom by uniting with the divine consciousness.

**Example 2:** Another man sits at his kitchen table. It is early and out the window the sun just begins to warm soft gold on the horizon. The man prays to the Lord, asking for wisdom as he seeks his word. He opens the Bible and studies a passage. He thinks about the passage, and what the Lord is saying to him through it. What does it mean? How does this apply to my life, he ponders. He memorizes a verse from the passage that he particularly likes. Throughout the day, he tries to remember the scripture, tries to log it into long-term memory. He loves the way the verse reminds him of the message he learned earlier that morning. Later that afternoon, he finds himself in a stressful situation, and the verse immediately pops to mind. It brings him immediate peace and clarity at a time that would have otherwise brought discomfort and confusion. Silently, he praises the Lord for his goodness and the richness of his word. His lips form into a little smile as he thinks about the scripture that says the Lord’s word is a lamp unto his feet. He gets it—the word really does light up the right way to go. He loves meditating on the word of the Lord. It brings him closer to his ultimate goal: To worship Jesus with his thoughts, attitudes, actions, words, and life.

### **One Word, Two Meanings: Empty vs Fill**

How can two such different practices be called by the same name? These practices are as antithetical as the opposing spiritual sides they represent: one practice rooted in Biblical meaning, and the other rooted in Buddhism, Hinduism, and other New Age traditions. It is important that this misconception be cleared.

### **The Misconception of Open-Minded “Mindfulness”**

Usually if someone vacantly chants a couple syllables over and over or sits cross-legged and practices breathing exercises in front of a Buddha statue, we can pretty readily deduce that they are practicing the non-Biblical form of meditation. But the problem is, the beginning steps to this type of meditation is exactly what we are seeing all over talk shows and health magazines—the kind promoting “stress relief” or “relaxation” with simple exercises such as “focusing on the breath” or “holding the image of something that elicits peace.” Sometimes it is called “mindful” meditation (emphasizing the focus on one’s surroundings, a sensation, a scent, etc.), and sometimes it is called “open-mind” meditation (emphasizing the focus of practice that is to let go of all thoughts). They are the same type of practice.

This is also not the Biblical kind. It is very much the intro lessons of the pagan practice designed to open oneself to the spiritual realm.

This is not a spiritually neutral path, as is being increasingly propagated. That is a lie to attract more people. The “non-spiritual” exercises are implemented only as long as it takes for the practitioner to become receptive to the idea of the next steps, which may include chanting, and/or other spiritually opening practices. Practitioners are often not even told they are engaging in spiritually opening practices in these next stages. Classes are often told the sounds of chants are simply vibrations resonating peace in the body or something as such. That is also not true. Every sound, from “Om” to entire phrases are representative of very real, very specific deities, and the act of chanting is an act of invocation. Other meditative practices that open the practitioner to the spiritual realm are also often masked as non-spiritual practices.

I am certainly not saying that one should not take time to relax and sit quietly and breathe. All of these things are quite healthy things to do. But it is important to understand the difference between relaxing quietly, Biblical meditation, and “Mindfulness” techniques that are the deceptive beginning stages of a path antithetical to the Bible. It is important to understand because even beginning steps move us in a direction. Author and Associate Professor of Religion at Indiana University, Candy Gunther Brown warns of this tendency specifically within the context of yoga and other spiritually rooted practices:

*“There’s also evidence that practicing something connected with religion can actually change people’s beliefs. Christians, in particular, tend to think a person’s intent determines whether something is religious. They don’t realize that active participation can actually change someone’s intent. Over time, people who start off attracted to an alternative practice because there’s a perceived health benefit start to embrace the religious ideas underneath these practices” (Christianity Today, November 2013).*

Understand the difference:

### **1. THE LORD’S INSTRUCTION: Meditation = Filling the Mind**

What it is:

The Lord’s instruction regarding meditation is to always be **filling** the mind with thoughts of him (\*see attached list of Bible verses referencing “meditate” and “meditation”). The idea is that we love the Lord so much we think about him all the time, that we constantly seek his will and delight in thinking about his word, his instructions, and the awesome things he has done in the past and continues to do all the time.

Goal and Effect:

The goal is to strengthen us in our relationship with the Lord and encourage us to delight in him, to worship him with our thoughts and quiet prayers. This practice results in wisdom to know how to handle situations the Lord's way because we carry his word so readily in our heart. The effect is a life filled with joy as we are constantly reminded that we have a mighty Father who loves us beyond comprehension. The effect is peace that passes understanding as we remember to trust in every situation, however difficult it may be, because it is ready in our mind that our Lord is powerful, mighty, in control, and that he is allowing us to experience whatever is happening for our own good in some way even if we can't fathom what that may be (Romans 8:28). The effect is real peace caused by faith. For faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

## **2. EASTERN/NEW AGE INSTRUCTION: Meditation = Emptying the Mind**

What it is:

In direct opposition is the Eastern spiritual tradition of meditation, which instructs **emptying** the mind of thought to open one's mind to the spiritual realm and ultimately reach a state of merging and oneness with the ultimate consciousness. This technique is often called "mindfulness" or "open-mind" meditation.

This approach is widely masked today at retreat centers around the world to be a non-spiritual practice. This is a lie. It is the beginning stages of a very spiritual practice. The goal is to get people hooked to the "peaceful" effects so that they return and deepen and deepen their practice until they are practicing techniques that open them spiritually through thought, intent, yoga, or mantra practice. Do not be deceived. This is a very real, very deceptive spiritual practice.

There are many different ways to meditate in this way, to bring about this "open mind" state. The most popular instruction we hear about on this path is to sit quietly and focus on something like the breath or an object or a spiritual teacher (another place we are told we can plug Jesus in, or Buddha, or anyone else). But this is just one approach. Another is engaging other parts of the body, such as rotating prayer beads. Yoga is a meditation practice that engages not just the hands, but the entire body. Repeating mantras, or chanting, incorporates the voice. Some traditions incorporate drug use to aid in reaching meditative states. These varying techniques are also combined with one another. They are all aimed to lead deeper down a path to open oneself to the spiritual realm. When the practitioner opens, the spiritual realm is invited.

Some try to compare the Eastern practice of mantra repetition (repeatedly saying or chanting a sound, word, or phrase) with the Bible's instruction to go over scriptures in the mind. But these are very opposite practices. Biblical meditation is to think about the meaning and application to our lives as much as we can throughout our days. Mantra is repeating the same sound, word, or phrase over and over. No thought. No attachment. Jesus even warns us specifically against praying vain repetitions like those who followed other spiritual traditions (Matthew 6:7). If one takes the time to look at the context of scriptures, it becomes clear that these are two contrary and opposite practices. One being instruction from the Lord to **think** about him and his goodness as a way to stay steadfast in his ways, the other instruction from a pagan practice designed to **let go of thoughts** and **empty** the mind of thought and emotions in an effort to become open.

Goal and Effect:

Open to what? Eventually, one discovers that the goal is to become open to energies, spirits, powers, and to become one with their idea of god. The goal of the eastern definition of meditation is to reach a state of "open mind" so that one can be a receiver from the spiritual realm. It was the first thing I was instructed to practice and develop in order to become a medium, to open myself with and communicate with spirits. I was taught (mindfulness, open-mind approach) meditation practice must be developed in order to open oneself to and communicate with the spiritual realm.

In this version of meditation, whatever meditative approach is engaged, the goal aims to quiet, still, and open the mind, to invite in the energy, or spirit (these words "energy" and "spirit" may be used interchangeably within the context of spiritual practices), associated with the practice to assist on this path of "truth" to ultimate consciousness.

This type of meditation seems to have "good" results as one deepens their practice. Results begin with feelings of peace, then deepens to trance-like states of deep euphoria, and deepens further the more one practices or unites with whatever is invoked to create this state of openness. The peaceful sensations and experiences are not a physiological reaction to breathing or focusing. It is a **spiritual** practice, and that state is the result of being affected by a **spirit**.

### **So . . . What's Really Going On?**

I am certainly not trying to alarm anyone who has felt relaxed by taking deep breaths. The Lord gifted us breathing. He gifted us the ability to take deep breaths. This calms our bodies and relaxes us. Satan doesn't get to

claim breathing. But he tries to counterfeit it. He uses these techniques to create a path that takes the natural calming results the Lord created in breathing and uses that to set the foundation for a practice that acts to open people to deceiving spirits. The problem is, when practicing focused meditation, it is difficult to discern where the harmless relaxing begins and when the spiritual realm becomes involved.

The deeper one settles into these practices, the line begins to fade between relaxation, feelings of peace and love, esoteric experiences, and visions, powers, etc. It is a slippery slope. The problem is, the spirits causing these effects from these "Mindfulness" practices are **not on the side of the Lord**, no matter how good or peaceful or full of love or light or warm-fuzzies one may feel. It is deception. The ultimate goal is that the practitioner reaches a total, trancelike stillness in which the consciousness reaches ultimate "truth" and "enlightenment"—and yokes with ultimate consciousness. But what the practitioner is unaware of (just like I for so many years) is that these practices aimed to "open oneself" actually **are** opening oneself—to the spiritual realm. It is an ancient pagan practice aimed to open and invite in spirits of darkness and bondage—That whole Satan masquerades as angels of light thing (2 Corinthians 11:14) happens to not be figurative language.

And just as Satan convinced Eve that eating the fruit the Lord forbade would lead to real knowledge and freedom from the limitations the Lord had set, so too is this ultimate goal deceptive. As with anything Satan tries to use for his purposes, the reality of the ultimate goal of this "opening the mind" approach to meditation is to keep the practitioner from trusting in the Lord, keep them from knowing him, and keep them from being saved by him. The Bible says Satan comes to kill, steal, and destroy. This practice is from him.

As much of a stretch as this may seem to those of you who practice your relaxation or stress-relief breathing exercises you saw being promoted by the popular doctor on television, it is my obligation to warn you that this is not the meditation of the Bible, it is the beginning stages of the Eastern, pagan definition—the very real, very spiritually dangerous practice.

Satan is the master of deception. He began to sway Eve by asking if God **really** said not to eat from the tree. They both knew full well what the Lord had said, that he had forbidden it, just like if you pick up the Bible and read what the Lord says, you will discover full well what he says on this issue. But Satan plants seeds of doubt, points out that the fruit is harmless, lies that you will not surely die if you eat of it. And Eve started believing him, seduced by wanting more "knowledge," as we today may be seduced by wanting more "knowledge," more "peace," "stress-relief," from the

busyness of life by looking places outside of the Bible, outside of turning to God for knowledge, peace, and stress-relief. This practice is aimed to separate us from God.

It is important to note that the tree in the garden was not evil. It was a tree the Lord created, and called it the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Just like anything the Lord creates, the object itself is not evil. Sitting quietly is not evil, neither is breathing or relaxing in a cross-legged position—nor is stretching or holding our body in certain ways to exercise. But are we doing them under the name of a practice that will actually steer ourselves or others away from Christ? Are we doing these in such a way that we seek to find something we could be finding by simply spending time reading God’s word or spending time with him in prayer?

### **The Word, Faith, and Prayer—He is our Peace**

I urge you to please not turn to these pagan practices in search of peace. The Lord loves us more than we can imagine and wants an intimate relationship with us, wants us to turn to **him** to find peace. He tells us in his word, in his sweet letter to us, that he wants us to do this by practicing faith even when we don’t agree or understand (Proverbs 3:5-8, James 1:5-8, Hebrews 11:1-40). He wants us to do this by praying to and praising him, by reading his word, by thinking about his word; not by following a practice originated to commune with false gods, with demons (Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Psalm 95:2, James 5:13-14, Deuteronomy 13:30, Deuteronomy 12:2-4—and these are just the beginning, there are too many references on this subject to list in this paper, \*also see [attached list of “meditation” verses](#)).

The Lord gives us his instructions not because he is mean and wants to keep us from peace and further knowledge, but because he sees and knows more than we can wrap our minds around and wants to keep us from death. We have to suck up our pride that we know better and trust him. He is the creator of all that ever was and loves us beyond comprehension. He won’t forbid something unless it is harmful to us. We are his people. We have to trust him and obey him—this is where true peace is found.

### **Look to the Lord . . .**

If you are struggling with what to think about these issues, I ask that you don’t just listen to me, but that you take it up with the Lord. I ask that you honestly seek his heart on the issue and ask him with sincerity what he would have you do. I encourage you to look up scriptures. [Attached](#), you will find a list of every Greek and Hebrew word and definition used for the terms “meditate” and “meditation” in the Bible, as well as the verses in which they

are found in the King James Version (KJV). I encourage you to look each of these up in the Bible for yourself and read the surrounding chapters to really get to the depths of what is being communicated in the Lord's meditation instruction.

I ask for the sake of yourself and others that you follow what the Lord speaks to you. Eve's choice to disobey God's command and seek real "truth" in her own way did not only affect her.

If you or anyone you know are involved in yoga, meditation practices, reiki, energy healing, or other new-age practices, you may be interested in reading and/or sharing the [testimony](#) of what I was involved with and how the Lord saved me from it, revealing the truth of the forces behind the esoteric energies.

**"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." Colossians 2:8**