

Contemplative Prayer

by Stephen Ing

What is it, where does it originate,
and what are the potential dangers
associated with it?

Types of prayer

- **Verbal prayer** – is probably the one most think of when we speak of prayer. It is verbalizing our thoughts, praises and requests to God.
- **Meditative prayer** – is what is most often referred to when the word “meditate” is used in the Bible. It is the use of our thoughts and imagination and generally the left side of our brain to think about God and the Bible.
- **Contemplative prayer** – closely related to and sometimes used interchangeably with **centering prayer**, has stages, in the last of which we are supposedly wholly one with God. It begins with silencing the left side of the brain and is often achieved through repetition of a phrase or word. It is said to be a supernatural gift, the ultimate goal or end of the journey in terms of our communication and relationship with God.

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

Verbal prayer

- This is what Jesus taught his disciples in the Lord's Prayer
 - [Matthew 6:19-13](#)
 - [Luke 11:1-4](#)
- So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [Luke 11:9 NASB](#)
- In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed in anguish that He would not have to drink the cup. [Matthew 26:36-44](#)
- David said, "Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth." [Psalm 54:2 NASB](#)
- Jacob prayed for mercy and protection from Esau in [Genesis 32:9-12](#)
- In [Daniel 9](#), he prayed for forgiveness for Israel as he asked God to remember His promise to bring them home after seventy years in Babylon

Meditative prayer

- The word “meditate” is the translation from five different Hebrew words, found a total of 15 times in the NASB
 - 7742 [שׁוּת, sü'·akh] To meditate, muse, commune, speak
 - [Genesis 24:63 NASB](#) “Isaac went out to the **meditate** in the field ...”
 - 1897 [הִגָּה, hä·gä´] to moan, growl, utter, muse, mutter, meditate, devise, plot, speak
 - [Joshua 1:8 NASB](#) “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night ...”
 - [Psalm 63:6 NASB](#) “When I remember You on my bed, I **meditate** on You in the night watches”
 - [Psalm 77:12 NASB](#) “I will **meditate** on all Your work And muse on Your deeds.”
 - [Psalm 143:5 NASB](#) “I remember the days of old; I **meditate** on all Your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands.”
 - [Isaiah 33:18 NASB](#) “Your heart will **meditate** on terror: “Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?”

- 559 [אָמַר, ä·mar'] to say, speak, utter
 - [Psalm 4:4 NASB](#) “Tremble, and do not sin; **Meditate** in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.”
- 1239 [בָּקַר, bä·kar] to seek, enquire, consider
 - [Psalm 27:4 NASB](#) “One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to **meditate** in His temple.”
- 7878 [שָׁאָה, sē'·akh] to put forth, mediate, muse, commune, speak, complain, ponder, sing
 - [Psalm 77:6 NASB](#) “I will remember my song in the night; I will **meditate** with my heart, And my spirit ponders:”
 - [Psalm 119:15 NASB](#) “I will **meditate** on Your precepts And regard Your ways.”
 - [Psalm 119:27 NASB](#) “Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will **meditate** on Your wonders.”
 - [Psalm 119:48 NASB](#) “And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will **meditate** on Your statutes.”
 - [Psalm 119:78 NASB](#) “May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; But I shall **meditate** on Your precepts.”
 - [Psalm 119:148 NASB](#) “My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may **meditate** on Your word.”
 - [Psalm 145:5 NASB](#) “On the glorious splendor of Your majesty And on Your wonderful works, I will **meditate**.”

Ellen White quote

“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”

[White, Ellen G, Desire of Ages, p83;

<http://egwtext.whiteestate.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=DA&lang=en&collection=2§ion=all&pagenumber=83&QUERY=DA+83>]

Contemplative prayer

- There are other terms or phrases that are either synonymous or closely related
 - Centering prayer
 - Jesus prayer
 - Breath prayer
 - The silence
 - The quiet
 - The stillness

Contemplative prayer

- Saint Teresa of Avila described four degrees or stages of mystical union:
 - incomplete mystical union, or the prayer of quiet or supernatural recollection, when the action of God is not strong enough to prevent distractions, and the imagination still retains a certain liberty;
 - full or semi-ecstatic union, when the strength of the divine action keeps the person fully occupied but the senses continue to act, so that by making an effort, the person can cease from prayer;
 - ecstatic union, or ecstasy, when communications with the external world are severed or nearly so, and one can no longer at will move from that state; and
 - transforming or deifying union, or spiritual marriage (properly) of the soul with God.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemplative_prayer#Stages_of_infused_contemplative_prayer]

Centering prayer

“Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.”

[<http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/category/category/centering-prayer>]

- Basil Pennington, one of the best known proponents of the centering prayer technique, has delineated the guidelines for centering prayer:
 - Sit comfortably with your eyes closed, relax, and quiet yourself. Be in love and faith to God.
 - Choose a sacred word that best supports your sincere intention to be in the Lord's presence and open to His divine action within you (i.e. "Jesus", "Lord," "God," "Savior," "Abba," "Divine," "Shalom," "Spirit," "Love," etc.).
 - Let that word be gently present as your symbol of your sincere intention to be in the Lord's presence and open to His divine action within you. (Thomas Keating advises that the word remain unspoken.)
 - Whenever you become aware of anything (thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, associations, etc.), simply return to your sacred word, your anchor.
- Ideally, the prayer will reach the point where the person is not engaged in their thoughts as they arrive on their stream of consciousness. This is the "unknowing" referenced in the 14th century book.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centering_prayer#Practice]

Differences between meditative and contemplative prayer

- In discursive meditation, mind and imagination and other faculties are actively employed in an effort to understand our relationship with God. In contemplative prayer, this activity is curtailed, so that contemplation has been described as "a gaze of faith", "a silent love".
- [John of the Cross](#) described the difference between discursive meditation and contemplation by saying: "The difference between these two conditions of the soul is like the difference between working, and enjoyment of the fruit of our work; between receiving a gift, and profiting by it; between the toil of travelling and the rest of our journey's end".
- There is no clear-cut boundary between Christian meditation and Christian contemplation, and they sometimes overlap. Meditation serves as a foundation on which the contemplative life stands, the practice by which someone begins the state of contemplation.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_contemplation#Christian_meditation_and_Christian_contemplation]

Contemplative prayer in the emerging Church

- I would like to take a moment to mention the growth of contemplative spirituality in the emerging church
- It is a concept that is being taught and embraced across protestant denominations as well as non denominational mega churches
- It is being taught along with the larger category of Spiritual Formation which encompasses the following
 - Becoming a disciple
 - Becoming more like Jesus
 - Praying to be empowered by the Holy Spirit
 - Studying scripture
 - Confessing our sins
 - Worshipping God

- These all sound like things we should be striving for
- They sound like essential components of a meaningful Christian experience and relationship with Jesus that we should all be seeking
- As Seventh-Day Adventists we have been poking our heads up and noticing what is going on around us and some have decided that this is what has been missing from their relationship with God
- Some see it as a way for us to be more united with our fellow Protestant Christians in our common goals of spreading Jesus to the world

But let's look at this at a more personal level

- How many of us as Christians have been told we need to have a personal relationship with God?
- How many of us have been Christians for most or all of our lives, but still feel like we are just going through the motions or have even giving up trying because it seems so meaningless?
- Many of us are searching for the emotional component of that Christian experience, or relationship with Jesus
- To some this contemplative spirituality, especially with the fruit it seems to be bearing, sounds like the answer to a more meaningful, vibrant, living connection with God

Head vs. Heart

- When you think of relationships, especially those between a man and a woman, you naturally think of the emotions and feelings
- We are told that God wants to have a relationship with us and I think that is what many of us are wanting as well
- But should we expect the same type of relationship with God that we have with people?
- Some people seem to have it and I think it causes those who don't to wonder why their relationship with God doesn't have that emotional component
- I think the emotional component of this relationship is what many people are searching for

My experience

- From the time I was a child, I was taught by my parents to spend time everyday with God
 - I read something spiritual and prayed every day
 - Honestly it didn't seem meaningful, but I continued doing it every day because I wanted that relationship
 - I hoped that if I continued doing it long enough, I would come to enjoy it and not just be putting in the time
 - Through all this time I read the Bible from cover to cover many times, the New Testament more times, and the Gospels even more times
 - I read EGW's Conflict of the Ages series multiple times and the Desire of Ages and Great Controversy many times
- I still could not find that emotional component of a relationship with Jesus

- I used to envy the emotional relationship that I saw some people having with Jesus
- I used to wonder if I was doing something wrong, but I continued putting in usually half an hour a day reading something and praying
- I used to tell my kids that as a rule of thumb, they should try to make the length of their devotional time with God a minute per day for each year of their age, but even then I struggled to put in half an hour myself and I was definitely older than 30
- Finally I stumbled across something that worked for me

What worked for me

- What I stumbled across was a technique of study for my devotional time that made it so that 45 minutes or an hour would fly by and I would have to stop myself because I had to get on with my day
- Before I tell you what it is, I want you to know that this is not a recipe for everyone, just as other people's techniques didn't work for me
- I also want you to know that I still don't have the warm fuzzy feelings about my relationship with God, and I don't mean that in a denigrating way at all
- What I mean for you to hear is that based on the way God made you, I think there is a way for you to have a meaningful relationship with God

- What I had been doing for most of my life was just reading
- But you see I have a problem – I can read a whole page and when I reach the end of the page, not have the slightest clue what I just read
- What I decided to do to help me with this was to read something and then write it down in my own words
- I happen to write much better on a computer than on paper, so now my morning devotional time occurred there
- I paraphrased the books of Daniel and Revelation and the Desire of Ages
- When I was going through Daniel and Revelation, I incorporated one more element, research, which came naturally at the computer

Getting back on track

Now that we've taken this little detour about my personal experience, I want to dig a little deeper into what I believe this contemplative, centering prayer really is

Modern contemplative prayer

“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.

This form of meditation, recently known as 'Centering Prayer' (from a text of Thomas Merton) can be traced from and through the earliest centuries of Christianity. The Centering Prayer centers one on God.”

[<http://www.contemplativeprayer.net/>]

“The *Cloud* was written, not in Latin but in Middle English - which means that it was intended primarily for laymen rather than for priests and monks. Father Meninger saw that it was a simple book on the ultimate subject, with only 75 brief chapters.

He quickly began teaching contemplative prayer according to *The Cloud of Unknowing* at the Abbey Retreat House. One year later his workshop was taken up by his Abbot, Thomas Keating, and Basil Pennington, both of whom had been looking for a teachable form of Christian contemplative meditation to offset the movement of young Catholics toward Eastern meditation techniques.”

[<http://www.contemplativeprayer.net/>]

Goal according to Father Thomas Keating

Probably the most revered leader of the Christian Contemplative movement summarized the journey this way
“The beginning of the spiritual journey is the realization, not just the information, but the real interior conviction that there is a higher power or God.

Or to make it as easy as possible for everybody that there is an Other, capital O

Second step, to try to become the Other, still a capital O

And finally the realization that there is no Other

You and the Other are One, always have been always will be

You just think that you aren't”

[\[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd2LPjpd9As&feature=related\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd2LPjpd9As&feature=related)

Do meditation and centering prayer have anything in common?

- When speaking of meditation, we often think of Eastern meditation as taught by Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism
- But even in our secular culture today, meditation has been embraced by some for relaxation, and behavioral psychology [\[http://www.news-medical.net/health/Western-Meditation.aspx\]](http://www.news-medical.net/health/Western-Meditation.aspx)
- Meditation has been used by athletes to help them focus and improve performance
- The question is whether meditation for whatever reason or through whatever discipline ends up in the same state of mind?

Is mediation a spiritual or physiological state?

- First of all I believe that there is an end goal or stage for most meditation
- I also believe it takes technique, instruction and practice and that many do not reach this final stage
- I believe the final stage is a physiological state but based on what people who have been there describe, I believe it to be a very spiritual experience
- I believe there are many approaches or paths one can take to this final stage of mediation

The brain during deep meditation

Newberg found that certain areas of the brain were altered during deep meditation. Predictably, these included areas in the front of the brain that are involved in concentration. But Newberg also found decreased activity in the parietal lobe, one of the parts of the brain that helps orient a person in three-dimensional space.

- "When people have spiritual experiences they feel they become one with the universe and lose their sense of self," he said.
- "We think that may be because of what is happening in that area , if you block that area you lose that boundary between the self and the rest of the world. In doing so you ultimately wind up in a universal state."

[http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/ciencia_brain01.htm]

Induced meditative state

Michael Persinger, a professor of neuroscience at *Laurentian University* in Sudbury, Ontario, has been conducting experiments that fit a set of magnets to a helmet-like device. Persinger runs what amounts to a weak electromagnetic signal around the skulls of volunteers.

Four in five people, he said, report a "mystical experience, the feeling that there is a sentient being or entity standing behind or near" them. Some weep, some feel *God* has touched them, others become frightened and talk of demons and evil spirits.

"That's in the laboratory," said Persinger. "They know they are in the laboratory. Can you imagine what would happen if that happened late at night in a pew or mosque or synagogue?"

[http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/ciencia_brain01.htm]

Experiences during meditation

- The top of your head may become numb or experience a tingling sensation.
- Sometimes your skin feels silky smooth and sensitive. Any touch to it is pleasurable.
- Your body may feel as if it is expanding and opening up, especially in the area of your head.
- You may feel sensations in your groin area or spine. Sometimes it is as if energy is being pumped from the base of your spine and out of your head.
- If you focus on a specific area of your body, you may feel a vibration or tingling in that area.

- If you are seated in a sitting position, you may spontaneously begin sitting straighter, as if an outside force is pulling you up by your head.
- Your breathing cycle may become deeper, longer, or stop without your feeling any deprivation
- You may experience a lightening of the field of vision to the point of it becoming white, even with your eyes closed.
- You may see what appears to be a falling snow.
- You may be 'spacey' after a period of meditation. You can find it difficult to focus on daily life, or to do any disciplined thinking
- You may experience an intense state of euphoria and contentment. "God is in his heaven and all is right with the world."
- You may feel energized. If it is bedtime, you can have trouble getting to sleep and find that you awaken after each dream cycle.

- The veil between sleeping and waking consciousness thins. Dreams are easier to remember, and easier to understand. Lucid dreaming becomes more frequent.
- Your need for sleep may decrease.
- Your appetite may decrease, or increase.
- You may experience hot flashes (even if you are a young man).
- You may hear strange sounds that don't happen physically. There may be a buzzing, droning, or thunder.
- You may feel a vibration in your body, especially your head. If you've ever been shocked, it feels like that but without the pain. The vibration may feel like it is a low frequency or a high frequency.

[\[http://www.shardsofconsciousness.com/experiences-during-meditation\]](http://www.shardsofconsciousness.com/experiences-during-meditation)

Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor

In her now famous TED talk titled “Stroke of insight,” Dr. Taylor described her personal experience when a blood clot on the left side of her brain put her in a state that I believe people enter when through meditation they quiet the left side of their brains.

“I realized that I could no longer define the boundaries of my body, I can’t define where I begin and where I end, cause the atoms and molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall...”

“Because I could no longer detect the boundaries of my body, I felt enormous and expansive, I felt at one with all the energy that was and it was beautiful there”

http://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html

I believe

- “Meditation” takes an individual to a state of mind where the left half of the brain is quiet
- I believe most religious forms (East, West, Spiritualist, New Age) of meditation or whatever they choose to call it do the same
- I believe meditation and hypnosis which are used in secular applications take advantage of the same physiological state of mind

Rick Howard believes

“I would like to take the liberty at this point to explain to the reader that it is when a person enters this silence that they are entering a place where the powers of evil angels can create whatever illusion they desire.

If a person is practicing Hinduism, they may experience during this demonically controlled moment their favorite Hindu guru, levitating over the river Ganges.

The spirit medium will believe they are in contact with some spirit of a dead person, when they are really communicating with a fallen angel, a demon impersonating the one who passed away.

A psychic enters that corridor of the mind when reading the mind of a subject. He will be given a thought by a demon, who gives the same thought to the one whose mind supposedly is being read. When the psychic reveals the thought, it appears as if they have read the mind of the subject, when in reality the thought was injected into their minds by a fallen angel.

Finally the modern-day Christian, upon entering the silence, will believe they have come into the presence of God, when in reality they are under the control of the same demons as the psychics, spirit mediums, and ancient mystics of the church, those of any religion or group that relies on supernatural experiences as evidence of their contact with God”

[Howard, Rick, *The Omega Rebellion*, USA, 2010, p51.1]

What is really is

“What makes this deception so treacherous is that Satan has designed and initiated the entire process, and that the mystical place called the silence is the same as the trance of psychics or spirit mediums, occultists, and magicians; it is the same as the samadhi of the Hindu yogi, the trance of the hypnotist, or mental realms of the two great literary mystics of the eighteenth century, Emerson and Thoreau. They are all the same thing! It is a place in the mind where normal thought processes cease, hence, the quiet place, or silence. This altered state is necessary to have the supernatural experience sought after by all the mystics down through the ages. It is also necessary to hear “Jesus” voice speak to us and to have the mystical experience of those practicing spiritual formation today.” [Howard, p121.3]

“I know these things because I have been there. I was there during the time I practiced meditation under the tutorship of a “spirit medium.” I was there during the time I practiced meditation, learning to use supernatural and psychic powers in the mind-control courses I took. I was there when I was possessed by a spirit preparing to do automatic writing. I was there at a séance when communicating with a spirit. I was there when paralyzed and ceased to breathe, meditating and engulfed in flames emanating from a picture of my guru, the great Hindu master Sri Chinmoy, spiritual leader of the United Nations in the 1970s.” [Howard, p121.4]

Hypnosis [newscientist.com]

Hypnosis significantly affects the activity in a part of the brain responsible for detecting and responding to errors, says John Gruzelier, a psychologist at Imperial College in London. Using functional brain imaging, he also found that hypnosis affects an area that controls higher level executive functions.

"This explains why, under hypnosis, people can do outrageous things that ordinarily they wouldn't dream of doing," says Gruzelier, who presented his study at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Festival in Exeter, UK.

[<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn6385>]

Hypnosis [webmd.com]

“During hypnosis, the conscious part of the brain is temporarily tuned out as the person focuses on relaxation and lets go of distracting thoughts. The American Society of Clinical Hypnotists likens hypnosis to using a magnifying glass to focus the rays of the sun and make them more powerful. When our minds are concentrated and focused, we are able to use them more powerfully.

When hypnotized, a person may experience physiologic changes, such as a slowing of the pulse and respiration, and an increase in alpha brain waves. The person may also become more open to specific suggestions and goals, such as reducing pain. In the post-suggestion phase, the therapist reinforces continued use of the new behavior.”

[<http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/hypnosis-meditation-and-relaxation-for-pain-treatment>]

Are hypnosis and mediation the same

“Both a hypnosis session and a meditation session might lead you to a relaxing guided visualization on a calming tranquil beach, but a hypnosis session will then use this state of mind to suggest therapeutic change to the subconscious mind. Someone meditating will receive their benefit purely from the stillness of mind and the relaxation they experience. This stillness of mind can lead to enlightenment and self improvement by improving the mind in a more general way.”

[\[http://www.hypnobusters.com/articles/arehypnosisandmeditationthesame.html\]](http://www.hypnobusters.com/articles/arehypnosisandmeditationthesame.html)

Ellen White warnings on hypnotism

“Men and women are not to study the science of how to take captive the minds of those who associate with them. This is the science that Satan teaches. We are to resist everything of the kind. We are not to tamper with mesmerism and hypnotism—the science of the one who lost his first estate and was cast out of the heavenly courts.”

[Mind, Character, and Personality Volume 2, p173;

<http://egwtext.whiteestate.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=2MCP&lang=en&collection=2§ion=all&pagenumber=713&QUERY=hypnosis&resultId=8>]

“The theory of mind controlling mind was originated by Satan, to introduce himself as the chief worker, to put human philosophy where divine philosophy should be. Of all the errors that are finding acceptance among professedly Christian people, none is a more dangerous deception, none more certain to separate man from God, than is this. Innocent though it may appear, if exercised upon patients it will tend to their destruction, not to their restoration. It opens a door through which Satan will enter to take possession both of the mind that is given up to be controlled by another, and of the mind that controls.”

[Ministry of Healing, p243;

<http://egwtext.whiteestate.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=MH&lang=en&pagenumber=243>]

Deception

"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."

Matthew 24:24

I used to read this and wonder what the deception would be that could be good enough to if possible deceive the elect.

Who are the elect, and how could they be deceived?

- Could they be the pastors, teachers, elders and leaders of the church?
- You would think they are people who have studied the Bible?
- You would think they would recognize a false Christ right?
- Well, Satan has been around a while and has been perfecting his deception
- He's not going to come to us as a red skinned demon with a pitchfork, horns and a tail
- He's not going to just come out and tell us to break God's law

What scared me

- To me, the realization of what I believe this contemplative prayer to be really be scared me
- I realized that a person searching for a more meaningful Christian life, might see this as the answer that they've been searching for
- After all it has been neatly tucked in with a broader package of things that all of us as Christians should be striving for
- But when you think about it, isn't this what you would expect from a deception, a tiny bit of error tucked in with a whole bunch of truth?

- It began to dawn on me that as more and more people participate in these practices, Satan's army could be growing
- He could eventually appear to all of them in their trance and they will believe they are seeing their guru, their god, their master, even Jesus
- Then when he appears in person as I believe the Bible says he will, and performs miracles, all these people who have seen him and recognize him will flock to him and follow his orders
- It is even possible that they will receive orders from him when in they are in a hypnotic state making them even more open to his suggestions

What to look out for

- Unfortunately we are past being able to accept what comes from our own SDA church sources as safe along these lines
- There is a book that has been published by our own publishing house called “Hunger: satisfying the longing of your soul” by a, former President of Walla Walla University and currently a professor for the doctor of ministry program at Andrews University
- I believe this book teaches using contemplative prayer as we have just described it
[\[http://spiritualformationsda.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/hunger-critique3.pdf\]](http://spiritualformationsda.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/hunger-critique3.pdf)
- I also believe there are other teachers, pastors, and leaders in our universities, churches and organization who are promoting these ideas

Names of some of the leaders

- If someone were to list some of these authors as their favorites, I would be cautious
 - William Menninger
 - Thomas Keating
 - Basil Pennington
 - Richard Foster
 - Henri Nouwen
 - Thomas Merton
 - Dallas Willard
 - Leonard Sweet
 - Tony Compolo
- This is by no means an exhaustive list of known authors, leaders, and teachers in the field
- I am not saying that everything they teach is bad or dangerous
- There are many other names of people who have been disciplined by the primary leaders of this movement

Concluding

- I don't want anyone to believe what I have said without investigating it themselves
- I believe that there are many people and techniques that have been called out because of name association
 - I don't think that all of them are bad but I would recommend caution
 - Just because it comes from an SDA source, such as a book, teacher, pastor, or church administrator, doesn't mean it's safe
- It is up to us to use our brains and to exercise our free will to choose between what we consider right and wrong

- Backup material

Related techniques

- Finally I want to mention that there are related prayer techniques that while they could be used innocently in and of themselves have often been used as avenues to centering prayer
- An example of this is prayer stations

Earliest references

- Some of the earliest references to meditation are found in the [Hindu Vedas](#). [A *clinical guide to the treatment of human stress response* by George S. Everly, Jeffrey M. Lating 2002 [ISBN 0-306-46620-1](#) page 199]
- Around the 6th to 5th centuries BCE, other forms of meditation developed in [Taoist](#) China and [Buddhist](#) India. [A *clinical guide to the treatment of human stress response* by George S. Everly, Jeffrey M. Lating 2002 [ISBN 0-306-46620-1](#) page 199]
- By the time Buddhism was spreading in China, the [Vimalakirti Sutra](#) which dates to 100 CE included a number of passages on meditation, clearly pointing to [Zen](#).
[*Zen Buddhism : a History: India and China* by Heinrich Dummlin, James W. Heisig, Paul F. Knitter 2005 [ISBN 0-941532-89-5](#) pages 50]
- Down through time many other written references to meditation exist and most have some connection with religion.

[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation#History>]

Brain activity during meditation

There are four categories of these brainwaves. They range from the high amplitude, low frequency delta to the low amplitude, high frequency beta. Men, women and children of all ages experience the same characteristic brainwaves. They are consistent across cultures and country boundaries.

During meditation brain waves alter.

- **BETA** - 13-30 cycles per second - awaking awareness, extroversion, concentration, logical thinking - active conversation. A debater would be in high beta. A person making a speech, or a teacher, or a talk show host would all be in beta when they are engaged in their work.
- **ALPHA** - 7-13 cycles per second - relaxation times, non-arousal, meditation, hypnosis
- **THETA** - 4-7 cycles per second - day dreaming, dreaming, creativity, meditation, paranormal phenomena, out of body experiences, ESP, shamanic journeys.
 - A person who is driving on a freeway, and discovers that they can't recall the last five miles, is often in a *theta state* - induced by the process of freeway driving. This can also occur in the shower or tub or even while shaving or brushing your hair. It is a state where tasks become so automatic that you can mentally disengage from them. The ideation that can take place during the theta state is often free flow and occurs without censorship or guilt. It is typically a very positive mental state.
- **DELTA** - 1.5-4 or less cycles per second - deep dreamless sleep

[http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/ciencia_brain01.htm]

Where did it come from?

“Seeds of what would become known as contemplation were sown early in the Christian era. The first appearance of something approximating contemplative prayer arises in the 4th century writings of the monk [St. John Cassian](#), who wrote of a practice he learned from the [Desert Fathers](#) (specifically from Isaac). Cassian's writings remained influential until the medieval era, when monastic practice shifted from a mystical orientation to [Scholasticism](#).”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centering_prayer]

“The Trappist monk and influential writer [Thomas Merton](#) was strongly influenced by [Buddhist](#) meditation, particularly as found in [Zen](#) — he was a lifetime friend of Buddhist meditation master and Vietnamese monk and peace activist [Thich Nhat Hanh](#), praised Chogyam Trungpa who founded Shambhala Buddhism in the United States and was also an acquaintance of the current [Dalai Lama](#).”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centering_prayer]

“Cistercian monk Father Thomas Keating, a founder of Centering Prayer, was abbot all through the 60s and 70s at St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. This area is thick with religious retreat centers, including the well-known Theravada Buddhist center, Insight Meditation Society. Fr. Keating tells of meeting many young people, some who stumbled on St. Joseph’s by accident, many of them born Catholic, who had turned to Eastern practices for contemplative work. He found many of them had no knowledge of the contemplative traditions within Christianity and set out to present those practices in a more accessible way. The result was the practice now called Centering Prayer.”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centering_prayer]