

RETHINKING CHURCH

SESSION 10 | AUGUST 6, 2017 | MYSTICISM IN THE CHURCH

WHAT IS MYSTICISM?

- A large portion of preaching and worship today is the propagation of mysticism.
- “The belief that union with or absorption into the Deity, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender” (the Oxford Dictionary).
- The belief that you can understand God directly by praying and meditating, or the practice of doing this. (Macmillan Dictionary)
- *Meditation* is any form of a family of practices in which practitioners train their minds or self-induce a mode of consciousness to realize some benefit. Meditation is generally an inwardly oriented, personal practice, which individuals do by themselves. Prayer beads or other ritual objects are commonly used during meditation. (*Wikipedia*)

MYSTICISM AND ITS PROBLEM

- Mysticism looks something like these common instructions given from Christian pastors and teachers –
 - Close your Bible and just ask God to give a special word to you personally.
 - Empty your mind of clutter so that the Spirit can give you a special word from God tonight.
 - Take a pen and write down what God is telling you, so that you can pass that word to others.
 - Be still and quiet, and the next word that comes into your mind will be a word from God.
 - Read very little of your Bible tomorrow, because God has a special word for you that I don't want you to miss.
 - Don't bring your Bible this Sunday, we are going to just sit silently and hear God speak.
- The problem of mysticism:
 - The church has grown to value the practice of coming to “understand God” through prayer and meditation.
 - Such practice depends on the whims of the mind, emotion, and thought disposition. (Eph. 4:14-15)
 - Such a practice opens the mind to Satanic influence. (1 Peter 5:8, 2 Cor. 11:14)
 - Such a practice removes Christians from legitimate study of the real Word from God. (2 Tim. 2:2, 15)

- Where will you find mysticism promoted in its clearest form?
 - Women’s Bible Studies (Priscilla Shirer, Beth Moore)
 - Devotional books (“Jesus Calling” by Sarah Young)
 - Lectio Divina (such as at the Passion Conference for College Students, led by Beth Moore, John Piper, and others.)
 - *Lectio Divina* is Latin for "divine reading," "spiritual reading," or "holy reading" and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and to provide special spiritual insights. (GotAnswers.org)
 - Any book, course, or study on “Spiritual Disciplines.”
 - Contemplative Prayer
 - Do you long for depth and authenticity in your relationship with God? Do you want purpose and daily direction but can't seem to find the "right" prayer to receive it? "If prayer has 'stopped working' for you or if you want to know the reality of God, I invite you now to explore contemplative prayer and the lifestyle that allows you to experience God's presence," says Jan Johnson, author of *When the Soul Listens*. *When the Soul Listens* will guide you away from formulas and step-by-step plans toward true contemplative prayer. Learn to find rest and guidance in God, opening yourself to God's presence and direction through this practical approach. If you are disillusioned, searching for something that makes sense, or experiencing spiritual dryness, *When the Soul Listens* offers a clear path to a fulfilling connection with God and helps you allow God to work change in your life through prayer. Isn't that what you want? (Lifeway – “When the Soul Listens”)

A BIBLICAL ANSWER TO MYSTICISM

- Hosea 4:6
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Psalm 19:7-14