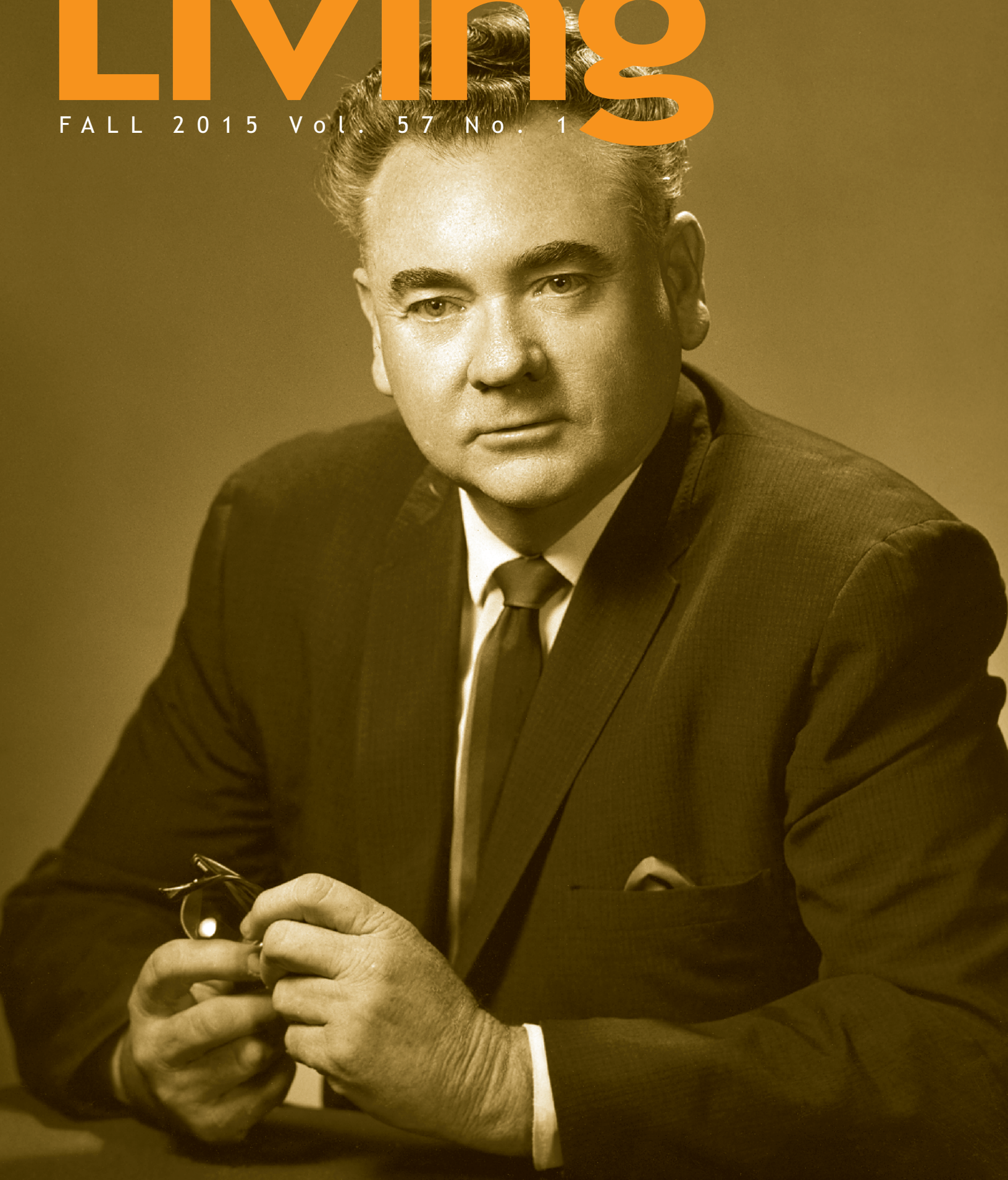


PSYCHOLOGY FOR
Living

FALL 2015 Vol. 57 No. 1



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



By Timothy Hibma, MSW

Cindy and I were introduced to you in the last issue of *Psychology for Living*, Fall 2014. At that time, the NCF Board of Directors had appointed us as interim directors while they conducted a search for a full-time president for NCF. Thank you for your prayers for the Board and us as we jointly considered the leadership needs of NCF. In March 2015, the Board appointed me as NCF President and Cindy as Vice President of Operations. We are working together as co-leaders of NCF. We are humbled to have this opportunity that allows us to bring our experiences, skills, and vision to NCF.

This year we were grieved with the passing of NCF founder, Dr. Clyde Narramore. We appreciate your prayers for our leadership of NCF as we continue to uphold Dr. Clyde's motto: "Every Person Is Worth Understanding." NCF's second president, Dr. Bruce Narramore, promoted the vision of bringing Christian psychological resources to underserved populations in the world. We are working with the Board to advance this vision. NCF will continue to: 1) offer the MK ReEntry Seminar (for **m**issionary **k**ids); 2) support and train missionaries and member care providers by offering Counseling and Member Care Seminars; 3) serve missionaries through the support of overseas counseling centers; 4) educate Asian students in professional Christian counseling; and 5) advance the integration of Christian faith and psychology.

We reside in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where our three married adult sons also live with their families, including ten of our grandchildren. Our daughter lives in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, with her husband and son. We commute to California to work at NCF headquarters monthly, unless we are traveling to NCF sites of ministry overseas in any given month.

It is our sincere hope that you will be informed and blessed by this issue of *Psychology for Living*. Cindy and I would also be pleased to correspond with you. Feel free to send us your comments and questions. We are grateful for your partnership and support of NCF.

PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING

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In Memory of

Dr. Clyde M. Narramore

by Dr. Bruce Narramore

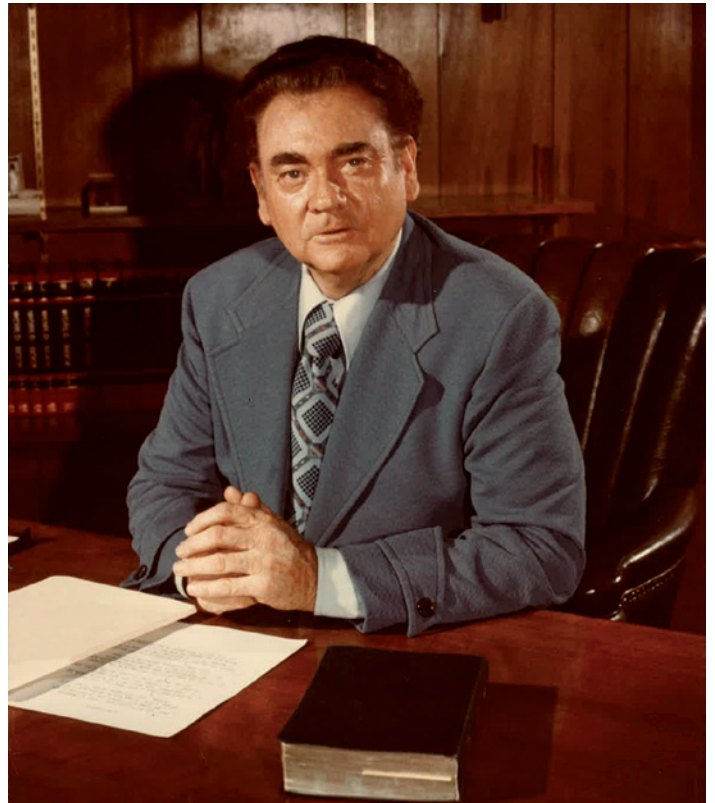
The beloved founder of Narramore Christian Foundation (NCF), Clyde Maurice Narramore, went home to be with the Lord and join his wife, Ruth, and daughter, Melodie, in heaven on July 27, 2015. Dr. Narramore passed away peacefully in his home in Pasadena, just shy of his 99th birthday.

Clyde was born on a farm in rural Arizona in 1916. He was the seventh of seven children born to Edward and Emma Narramore, pioneer settlers who moved to Arizona in the 1890s to homestead land near Gila Bend. The family later moved to Palo Verde so their children could be closer to schools. Edward passed away in the great flu epidemic of 1918 that took the lives of more than 600,000 Americans. Clyde had no recollection of his earthly father and was reared by his mother and older brothers.

Clyde was always a good student and apparently showed great potential as a public communicator at a very early age. After Clyde gave the valedictory address for his small eighth grade graduation class, the guest speaker, a Dean of the Tempe Normal School, now Arizona State University, turned to Clyde and told him that he would see that he received a scholarship if he decided to come to his institution. During high school Clyde won a state-wide speech contest, possibly presaging his eventual worldwide ministry of speaking and writing.

After graduating from Tempe Normal School, Clyde taught briefly at Bob Jones College, now Bob Jones University, and then joined the Navy during World War II. While stationed at Lido Beach, Long Island, Clyde met Ruth Elliott, his wife to be, at an evangelistic meeting led by Jack Wyrzten at the Calvary Baptist Church in downtown Manhattan. They were married in that very church in 1946.

Clyde and Ruth's marriage marked the beginning of 64 years of marriage and ministry together. A year after they married they formed an evangelistic team with Ruth and her brother Gordon Elliott providing the music and Clyde preaching. After his discharge from the Navy, Clyde completed his doctorate at Columbia University and the young couple moved to California so that Clyde could accept a position as a consulting psychologist with the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools office. In that role he performed psychological evaluations on children throughout L.A. County and consulted with parents and teachers on how best to meet their academic and social needs. Not long after settling in California, Ruth became the Organist at the Eagle Rock Baptist Church in Glendale and Clyde led music and conducted the choir.



In 1954 Clyde was encouraged to begin a radio program and was offered free time each day by a radio station owner. Not one to “look a gift horse in the mouth,” Clyde accepted the offer and he and Ruth started recording five programs a week at the dining room table of their home in Pasadena. Ruth would read a portion of a letter and Clyde would discuss the problem, looking at the physical, spiritual, and psychological aspects of each question. The program, titled “Psychology for Living,” was the very first national daily radio program offering insight and advice to listeners inquiring about emotional and relational conflicts and issues that considered the spiritual as well as the physical and psychological aspects of problems from a holistic point of view. The response to the program was so immediate and strong that Clyde and Ruth soon had to ask some volunteers from church for help answering letters and taking phone calls. Then they started adding a few part-time paid staff until they filled their entire basement, working on used card tables and borrowed chairs. Ruth

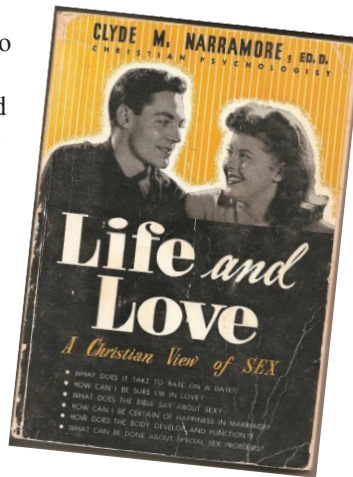
used to say her theme song in those days was “No Never Alone”!

Two years later “Psychology for Living” had become a nationally distributed program and so many people were writing and phoning for help that Clyde decided it was time to incorporate the Narramore Christian Foundation. In 1960 NCF opened the Christian Counseling Center in Pasadena, not far from the Narramore’s home. Later NCF helped open Christian counseling centers in Phoenix, Arizona, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

In 1956 Clyde published his first full-length book, *Life and Love: A Christian View of Sex and Dating*. He later published eight more full-length books and perhaps 100 shorter booklets and pamphlets. William Peterson selected *Psychology of Counseling* as the most influential Christian book published in 1960 and he included it in his “100 Christian Books that Changed the Century.”

Clyde worked closely with Ruth on all of his books as well as on their radio broadcast. Ruth was a great idea person, educator and writer in her own right, and always did the final proof texting and editing on each of Clyde’s books.

Clyde and Ruth’s daughter, Melodie Lee, was born in 1953 and their son, Kevin Dale, in 1960. Dr. Kevin Narramore and his wife Barbara, and Melodie’s son, Byron Yocum, are the only remaining living members of Clyde’s immediate family. Kevin and Barbara have been living next door to Clyde for the past several years and have been incredible caregivers and encouragers. In Clyde’s final days Kevin walked over to his dad’s home each eve-



ning and sang Clyde’s favorite Christian hymns and choruses for him.

Clyde will be deeply missed by all of us who knew and loved him, but we are so grateful that he is released from his suffering and reunited with Ruth and Melodie. This is perhaps the greatest encouragement any of us can have when we lose a loved one. We grieve, but not “as others do who have no hope” (I Thessalonians 4:13, *NRSV*).

If you or your family would like to make a donation in honor of Dr. Clyde, we suggest you consider making it to the Narramore Endowment Fund for Pastors and Missionaries. This endowment fund was established eight years ago at the death of Clyde and Ruth’s daughter, Melodie

Narramore Yocum. Clyde and Ruth were so pleased with this endowment because it enabled NCF to continue and expand NCF’s Christian counseling and training for pastors and missionaries and their families. Income from the Narramore Endowment goes primarily to the MK Reentry Seminar for sons and daughters of missionaries, and the Counseling and Member Care Seminar for missionaries, pastors, and member care providers. These were the two NCF ministries that were nearest and dearest to Clyde and Ruth’s hearts.

You can make a one-time donation, a gift of stock or property, or a gift through a will, trust, or gift annuity. You can also make your gift in memory or honor of your loved one. If you have any questions about the endowment or ways of contributing to it, please contact Craig Scoon, NCF’s Vice President of Finance, at P.O. Box 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900 or at 800-477-5893.

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Why Is It So Difficult For Me to Change?

PART THREE:

*Using Prayer and
Christian Meditation to
Change Your Brain*

*by William T. Kirwan, D. Min., Ph.D.
and Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.*

In Part I (Fall 2013)¹ and Part II (Fall 2014)² of this series, “Why Is It So Difficult For Me To Change?” we addressed several questions: Why do so many Christians struggle excessively in their Christian lives? Why do I have such a hard time forgiving people who hurt me years ago? Why do I have recurring problems in my marriage and other relationships? Why don’t I feel closer to God or sometimes feel so guilty, ashamed, anxious, or depressed?

We saw that recent scientific findings in the field of Interpersonal Neurobiology have shown that our earliest life experiences with our mothers or other primary caregivers actually impact the physical development of our brains. Traumas, abandonment, overly anxious, angry, or depressed parents, and difficulties with mother-infant bonding can actually kill off trillions of neural connections in our brains. Combined with our genetic inheritance and inborn temperaments, this loss of neural connections can predispose us to all sorts of emotional, relational, and spiritual problems in later life. These neurological structures program us to react in certain ways. This explains why many of our sinful problems and reactions are not simply a matter of our conscious choices. They are automatic responses triggered by our brains. Satan is ultimately behind all of our problems. He convinced Adam and Eve to sin, and that set in motion the generational causes of problems that now impact our brains and bind us into unhealthy patterns of thinking, feeling, and reacting.

After surveying how this process works, we looked at the fact that our emotional right brains come on line earlier than our rational left brains and are more deeply embedded. That explains why we sometimes can’t overcome our problems simply by gaining more information—even more biblical knowledge. We think, “I know God loves and forgives me,” but our emotional right brains scream out, “Oh no, He doesn’t! He couldn’t love me after what I have done!” This keeps us in bondage to our longstanding problems and emotional struggles.

We closed Part II with a discussion of how good teachers, pastors, and counselors use parables and metaphors to engage our emotional right brains, and how this type of professional counseling can help us resolve these deeply ingrained patterns and actually change our brains.

In this final article in our series we will explore how you can also use Christian meditation and prayer to change your brain and make major progress in growing in your Christian life.



Rediscovering Prayer and Meditation in the Christian Community

Prayer and meditation are well-known practices in most cultures of the world. Recent scientific findings in brain research show that they can bring about changes in our brains and physical health, as well as in our emotional and spiritual lives. They can also lessen anxiety and depression. This should come as no surprise to Christians who value the Biblical emphasis on meditation and prayer and know scriptural passages like this one written by the Apostle Paul: "...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7, English Standard Version).

There are at least twenty references in the King James version of the Bible to the practice of meditation, including the well known verse: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2, King James Version). Unfortunately, the Western emphasis on secularism, narcissism, achievement, and consumerism and the hundreds of activities competing for our attention has often caused us to forget the biblical instruction to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10, ESV). Our lives are so fast paced that if we walk into a Christian bookstore we can easily find several books on five-minute or less devotionals, written to comply with our pressured way of life. Certain monastic traditions within Catholicism and isolated emphases on meditative prayer among Protestants are the rare exceptions. Eastern religions have largely retained meditative traditions, but as we will see momentarily, these are actually quite different from biblically based prayer and meditation.

Critique of Eastern Meditation

The Eastern pattern of meditation is centered in the self. It basically does not involve anyone else, including God. Theologian

Timothy Keller (2011)³ wrote, "In Buddhism, the deepest consciousness of enlightenment is losing all sense that you are an individual self. The boundaries between you and the rest of reality disappear. The Eastern way to humility, to peace, is to actually lose the sense of an individual self" (para.14).

The goal of this type of meditation is to rid oneself of all thoughts, cognitions, and sensory input; to concentrate on rhythm, breathing, and relaxation; and to focus on pleasure, comfort, release of tension, and other self-oriented feelings. The individual attempts to become one with the universe, god (with a small *g*), and others—a state in which the boundaries between oneself and other people and things becomes less and less defined and distinct. This is called the "unitary continuum" and can include brief moments of transcending oneself and the world to arrive at a state of "absolute unity."

During this type of meditation other people and objects beyond the self are ignored which causes one area of the brain (the Attention Association Area) to direct the brain's attention to the self and to block neuron flow to a different part of the brain (the Orientation part). In doing so, the ability to be aware not only of oneself, but also the physical boundaries of one's body and of physical space and objects outside of oneself, is impeded. Thus, transcendence of self is accomplished.

One Buddhist meditator described this "state of union" as "a sense of timelessness and infinity. It feels like I am part of everyone and everything in existence." Another put it this way: "Zt! I arrived. I lost the boundary of physical body. I had my skin, of course, but I was standing in the center of the cosmos. I saw people coming toward me, but all were the same man. All were myself. I had never known the world before. I had believed that I was created; but now, I must change my opinion: I was never created; I was the cosmos; no individual existed" (reported in Hamer, p. 121)⁴.

This transcendental state is created because the meditation does not focus on specific images or objects, such as Christ, but rather on one's breathing, bodily feelings, and release of tension in different parts of the body. The goal of this state of "Absolute Unitary Being" is called Nirvana, Brahman-atman or the Tao.

Notice the blatant denial of the Creator God: "I was never created; I was the cosmos; no individual existed." This is the fundamental and tragic flaw of Eastern forms of meditation. By its very nature, Eastern meditation rules out God; meditators place themselves as part of the universe or "god." There is no God (capital *G*) because all are "gods" (small *g*).

A Biblical Perspective

Before continuing our contrast of Eastern forms of meditation with Biblically based meditation and prayer, let's briefly review the Genesis story of creation.

First, remember how clearly God is differentiated from His creation. He is the infinite Creator; we are the limited, finite creatures. We were made in His image, but we are not "gods." This flies directly in the face of Eastern mysticism.

Second, God created men and women at the apex of creation. He gave us wonderful brains with the capacity to think self-consciously and be aware of ourselves in relation to our surroundings.

We were not created to try to melt into the surrounding universe and become some vague, mystical aspect of it. We were to “have dominion over the fish of the sea...and over all the earth and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen. 1:26, ESV). Adam and Eve were told to “multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28, ESV). Far from being united into the universe as “gods,” we were distinct human beings tasked with ruling over God’s creation.

Third, when Adam and Eve sinned, the human race was thrown back onto itself to try to find its own identity and sense of selfhood, meaning, and existence. Adam and Eve hid behind fig leaves; Adam blamed God and Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. They experienced the beginning of shame, anxiety, and guilt (Gen. 3:6-19, ESV). Anxiety about death suddenly became a powerful emotion and people, now separated from God, would go to extremes to avoid or attempt to control this terrifying emotion.

Notice that Eastern mysticism with its emphasis on a state of non-being or unity with the universe is perhaps the most extreme of all methods used to avoid the anxiety of death and other problematic emotions. Bring yourself to a state of non-being and you needn’t fear death. You will exist forever as a part of the great cosmos. Eastern mysticism is actually a new psychology and serves as a defense against pain and death anxiety. One strives to avoid the reality of both one’s existence and even external reality itself. Abolishing all painful thoughts and emotions by denial and disavowal of fallen reality and replacing it with tranquility, pleasure seeking, and non-awareness of any negative emotions becomes the goal.

Meditation can be either passive or active. While Eastern mysticism emphasizes the passive and tends to minimize the active, Christian meditation emphasizes both. Consider Psalm 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God.” The Hebrew and Biblical concept of knowing as used in this verse is not an emphasis on cognitive or intellectual knowledge.

Instead, knowledge refers to something that has been actively internalized, processed, and committed to. To know God is to experience Him in one’s heart and emotions as well as in one’s mind. The psalmist calls believers to actively focus and concentrate attention on God’s character and person, and to understand Him fully, deeply, and intimately. Oneness with God or Christ is an intimate relationship that involves both active and passive meditation, but it does not call us to lose our place or our selves as separate persons in God’s universe.

As Christians focus in meditation and prayer on the cross of Jesus, for example, or God’s mercy or His character, information and energy can flow to the Orientation of Self part of the brain. This tends to fix the object of our meditation and focus in our mind, making it real and vital in our thoughts and emotions. It also intensifies the reality of the object (God) in our character and whole being.

The Essence of Meaningful Christian Meditation

The primary focus of the Christian’s meditation should be God the Father as revealed to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, in Scripture and through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. If we want to understand God, we look to Christ Himself. As the author of Hebrews put it, God “has spoken to us by his Son...He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint [perfect image] of his nature” (Heb. 1:2-3, ESV).

To meditate on God is to meditate on the person of His Son, who shows, explains, and demonstrates God’s character in His teachings, dramatic actions, and redemptive death and resurrection. It is not sufficient to meditate on the words of Scripture on a page. We are called to get beyond the written Word to an actual encounter with Christ, the living Word. He must be the ultimate focus of our meditation or contemplation. As Christ himself told us, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me” (John 15:26)...he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14, ESV).

All of Scripture testifies to the character of God, and all of the characteristics of God’s personality are contained in Christ. Specifically, we might meditate on the fact that God is personal and that through Jesus we receive his personal forgiveness, acceptance, and adoption. The list can go on and on.

To summarize up to this point, when we pray and meditate, we are to see Jesus, face to face, behind every event in the Gospels and to ask him questions like, Lord, how should I apply this teaching or action of yours to myself? How does what you said or did impact my relationship with you and our life together? The same applies to any truth in the Epistles. There is not a verse in any epistle that is without Jesus standing behind it, desiring to have us respond personally to Him. The same can be said of the Old Testament, especially the prayer book of the Psalms, for Jesus is present in every part of Old Testament history and teaching. As Catholic theologian von Balthasar (1989)⁵ put it:

The movement from the written word before me...to the living Lord seems to be difficult for many, although it is really very simple. I stand before my Lord, and he turns toward me personally. He himself is this turn-toward, inasmuch as he is the Word, the Word of the Father in all its human forms, whether speech or silence, jubilation in the Father or tears over Jerusalem, warning or consolation, a humble or a sovereign bearing. In every case he is Word, and now he is Word just for me (p. 34).

How do we apply this magnificent truth to our busy daily lives? David MacIntyre⁶ writes, “**The equipment for the inner life of prayer is simple, if not always easily secured. It consists of a quiet place, a quiet hour, and a quiet heart**” (p. 30).

*To know God is
to experience
Him in one’s
heart and
emotions as well
as in one’s mind.*



Let's take a familiar event in the life of Jesus and see how we could meditate on it in a quiet place, during a quiet hour, and with a quiet heart. Jesus was invited to the house of Simon the Pharisee to dine, that is, to have table fellowship. At the very least, Simon was apparently trying to humble Jesus and question his theology. When Jesus entered Simon's house he wasn't given any of the courtesies of mid-Eastern culture. His feet were not washed. He wasn't given olive oil, the "soap" of the day, for his face and hands. And the common greeting of a kiss, usually on the face, was absent. The hostility of Simon as a host was shocking.

A woman, known to be immoral and probably a prostitute, had heard Jesus' Kingdom message of love, forgiveness, and compassion, and repented in response to his message. Referring to her later in the story, Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much" (Luke 7:47 ESV).

In that culture, townspeople who were not invited to the meal were allowed to sit around the walls of the dining room, away from the couches where invited guests were served food. The woman, sitting against the wall, observed the rude and hostile behavior of Simon, and was deeply moved. She had with her a vial of costly perfume, a common

item of her former professional life, and went to the feet of Jesus as he reclined, kissing them, cleansing them with the perfume and her tears, and wiping his feet with her hair.

Simon was critical that Jesus allowed this demonstration to take place and declared that Jesus certainly was no "prophet." Jesus replied, confronting Simon's hostility, with a parable declaring that those forgiven of many sins love their forgiver more than those forgiven of few sins. His message showed that Simon himself, even though he is an appar-

ent law-abiding sinner, needs forgiveness more than this woman, a well-known law-breaking sinner.

With this story in mind, let's see how we might prayerfully meditate on it in a way that could impact us deeply. First, we would find a quiet place and a quiet time where we would not be interrupted and could quiet our heart. We could picture Jesus directly facing us, asking or telling us how we might respond. He might be saying, "I have also forgiven you; let overflowing love and gratitude be more real in your response to me, as it was in this woman's experience." He might be implying that we are standing in the shoes of Simon, with a negative, contemptuous attitude toward those we think are beneath us or more sinful than us. Or he might be saying, "You, like this immoral woman, are filled with guilt and shame. Even as you have accepted my atonement intellectually, please let in my total pardon and cleansing of you at a deeply personal, emotional level."

By regularly meditating like this in a quiet place during a quiet time and with a quiet heart, we can move beyond the mere words of the Bible into a deeper personal connection with Christ in the middle of the actual experiences of our lives.

Steps in Meditation

Catholic church father Ignatius Loyola proposed one Christ-centered approach to prayer that many have found helpful. It is called the Examen and follows a five-step sequence or progression for meditative prayer.

First, give thanks. Reflect on the blessings that your Heavenly Father has bestowed on you. Begin with your position and identity of being "in Christ." Focus on his death on the cross, his grace, acceptance, love, and forgiveness for you. Then remember particular blessings you have received over the last day or two, both large and small. It might be a particular event or circumstance, a relationship, or a time of rest and reflection that reminds you of the Father's care and concern for you. James Manney⁷ writes, "Gratitude is the hallmark of Ignatian spirituality" (p. 33). This echoes the Apostle Paul who continually expressed gratitude and thanks for all the circumstances he encountered, both good and bad. "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (I Thess. 5:18).

The primary focus of the Christian's meditation should be God the Father as revealed to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, in Scripture and through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Giving thanks calls us into reflection and contemplation. It pulls us into a meditative mood and way of entering into a deeper focus and concentration on the presence of Christ in our immediate experience. This

leads to **step two: asking for the Spirit of Truth**. Christians know that we are in constant need of Christ's presence. This comes to us through the work of the Holy Spirit who is called the "Spirit of truth" and whose primary work is to testify to Christ. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-14). Praying and meditating help us picture things from God's perspective.

Asking Him to aid us during a prayer time is asking Him to reveal truth to us—truth about Him and truth about ourselves. God's perspective is different than ours and we need to be aware of how we distort our own emotions, thoughts, and perceptions. Seeing the reality of our relationships, our personalities, our sins, and our self-deceptions is necessary in order to pray effectively. "When you ask [pray], you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:3, New International Version). How urgently we need Christ's Spirit to enlighten our hearts and lead our prayer and meditation to achieve the results and fulfillment that he desires for us.

Third, face reality and review. Review refers to examining the day, either behind or before us, and remembering and reliving all of its significant events and encounters and the accompanying emotions and feelings. If we follow our feelings, they will lead us to the good and the bad of the day's happenings. If we allow Christ's Spirit to guide us, we will want to carefully focus and reflect and note the significance of those emotions and the triggers that activated them: How did I act or react? What could I have done differently? How might seeing my reactions through the eyes of Jesus change my view of others or myself? We may become aware of realities about ourselves that we regret and wish we could do over. Perhaps we might feel contentment or a sense of healthy satisfaction about how we handled ourselves.

David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24, ESV). What a great model for reviewing our day! Notice that David focuses on analyzing his heart and inner emotions and motives. Notice also that he is particularly concerned that his evil, harmful, and deceitful ways be brought to the light of his awareness. Since we, like



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David and every single person since Adam and Eve, try to hide from the realities of our real selves, seeing our sins and selfishness can be both difficult and painful. **That leads to the fourth step, repentance.**

As we face the truths about ourselves, which the Lord has revealed, we become increasingly aware of how far short we fall and we more freely and naturally turn to the face of Christ in repentance. We thank him for forgiveness and for working in us "to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13, ESV). In other words, in response to knowing that Christ paid the ultimate penalty for our sins, we have both a desire to do the things he wants us to do and experience his strengthening. We are promised that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6, ESV).

Fifth, resolve. In light of the progression of God's help in raising our consciousness of

Christ's love, forgiveness, and acceptance, we gain the freedom to face the new day, assured of his presence with us in everything we do. We don't try to imitate His behavior, but rather know that He is participating with us in our hearts to implement intimacy and closeness which in turn leads to changed behavior. **Simply resolving to change our habits or behaviors won't work. God's design is that changed behavior comes from within our hearts. Once our hearts are changed in response to God's love and forgiveness, our outward actions and speech will follow.** Jesus himself put it this way: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks forth" (Matt. 12:34, ESV).

In conclusion, the Examen is one excellent way for us as Christians to meditate in a way that not only changes the neurological functioning of our brains but also deepens our relationship with Christ and brings internal changes like lessened anxiety, depression, and anger. It also helps us increasingly gain a more accurate understanding of God's perspective on our lives, our emotions, and our relationships with others.

God wants to work in every area of our lives—from our brains to our behaviors and everything in between. As Paul wrote, God wants you to experience "...Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27, ESV).

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Olive Tree Counseling Center: Beyond Our Expectations

By John Leverington, Director, Olive Tree Counseling Center

Olive Tree Counseling Center began in June 2014 with the goal of being a resource to individuals, couples, and families throughout the Eurasia region of the world. Before we even opened the doors requests were coming for help.

- “Our child is currently going through a very difficult time emotionally. Is your team available to help?”
- “I was provided your name as a potential contact to assist me in some training and refreshment needed for our workers in your area.”
- “We are currently in a great need of refreshment in our marriage and are feeling quite weary and overloaded in the work (close to burnout) and stressors of raising our children.”

Central to our vision and purpose at Olive Tree is to encourage, restore, and equip workers and local believers in the areas of spiritual, relational, emotional, and psychological health. The skills and commitment of our staff are fundamental to achieving our goal of providing quality, professional Christian counseling services. After one year of operation, the impact of our ministry in people’s lives is clear from the feedback we received:

- “Thank you for all the time and energy you gave to help me. I am very grateful for you and the time I spent in counseling. I’m thankful that I got to take time out to get help.”
- “Thank you for listening and for helping us walk through this very difficult time. As you probably could discover, this was the first time for many in the group to meet a counselor, and I know that you have had a lasting impact on our lives.”
- “I have been to a lot of workshops and until now never left one in which I was committed to using everything that was presented. I was particularly impressed with the skill and professionalism of the presenters. Their experience as they presented the practical content inspired my confidence in using the materials in our organization.



OTCC clients' 21 countries of service (in blue): USA, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq, UK, Afghanistan, Albania, Tanzania, Lebanon, Yemen, UAE, Finland, Russia, Czech Republic, Niger, Egypt, Poland, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Madagascar

- “Thank you for your ideas and hand-outs about how to assess and help someone deal with depression. As a member care worker it is great to know you are a resource in the area who understands our situation and who I can call on.”

We’ve been encouraged as we totaled the statistics for this first year of service. With an average of 2.5 full-time counseling staff available on any given month (others are still in language learning, on home assignment, or out for medical needs), we have been privileged to serve 127 individuals from 15 passport countries, 21 countries of residence, and 40 different sending organizations. In addition we have served local believers, students, and others in this community.

From the first dreams and discussions of establishing a counseling center for Christian workers in Turkey, similar to Cornerstone Counseling Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand, NCF has been involved in the development of Olive Tree Counseling Center. Dr. Bruce and Kathy Narramore served on the original founding committee and continue to provide advisory expertise. NCF board members and supporters faithfully prayed for this project and for John and Becky Leverington and others leading the planning.

Central to our vision and purpose at Olive Tree is to encourage, restore, and equip workers and local believers in the areas of spiritual, relational, emotional, and psychological health.

NCF provided strategic loans and grants to enable counselors to work at Olive Tree. Dr. Narramore continues to serve Olive Tree as a member of their Personnel Committee, helping to recruit and screen prospective clinicians. NCF hosts the Counseling and Member Care Seminar in alternate years in Antalya as a means of introducing member care providers to the staff of Olive Tree and informing them of the resources available for Kingdom workers there.

How you can join us in making a difference?

- Rejoice for what God has accomplished in this first year of operation.
- Pray for Olive Tree counselors and clients regularly—that hope, encouragement, and healing would occur for each person who comes.
- Become a financial partner through NCF to contribute toward the Olive Tree Scholarship Fund for national Christians who are unable to contribute much for counseling or contribute toward the purchase of office space for long-term stability of the counseling center.

Due to the sensitivity of the information in this article please do not display, publish, post, or e-mail this information without obtaining Olive Tree Counseling Center's prior permission by sending an e-mail to info.olivetrecounseling.org.

Continuing Education In **Counseling and Member Care**



An Intensive Seminar for Cross – Cultural Workers

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You Can Rear Confident Kids

By Bruce Narramore, Ph.D. and Patty Scott, M.A.

One afternoon Tom confided to his friend that he fears he will never get married. He runs a successful business and is respected by his peers, but inwardly feels inadequate, especially in relationships with women. When he meets a woman who interests him, Tom feels uncertain and comes across as awkward. He would like nothing better than to settle down and raise a family, but his lack of confidence prevents him from even being able to muster up the courage to ask someone on a date.

Unlike Tom, Stephen is a powerhouse who takes charge of most situations and is rather brash. People in his workplace are afraid to stand up to him or tell him, "No." He pushes his agenda and forces others to do what he wants in both the office and his personal life. Just this past year his wife asked for a separation. Stephen reluctantly agreed to go to counseling to save his marriage, and after several sessions, he disclosed that he had always felt less than others as a child. His father repeatedly compared him unfavorably to his older brother and criticized him for anything he did wrong. To compensate for his lack of confidence, Stephen learned to seek power over others. Until he got into counseling, he thought his style was working, even though many people ended up resenting him or keeping their distance. It was only when his marriage was threatened that he realized what his overly assertive style was doing to his relationships, especially with his wife and children.

Stephen and Tom both had deficits in their childhoods. Their parents had not been able to meet one of their most important God-given needs - *the need for a sense of confidence*. Confidence says, "I can do that, and I can probably handle other things too." It reflects the unfolding of our God-given abilities and potentials. Many children lacking confidence grow up suffering



Deborah Hoag Photography

from overt feelings of helplessness, weakness, and anxiety, like Tom. They are hesitant to try new things or meet new people. Fearing failure, they give up, reasoning, "If I don't take a risk, I will never fail."

Children like Stephen go to the opposite extreme, dominating others to compensate for their underlying feelings of incompetence or digging in their heels and challenging authority. They find a hundred ways to send the message, "You can't boss me around; I have my own ideas!" They may also try to prove they are powerful by bossing other children around and becoming little Napoleons. Like Stephen, this pattern of control may last well into their adult lives until they encounter some serious relational problems.

Most of us have at least a little lack of confidence, but Tom and Stephen had more than their share. Truly confident children neither withdraw and give up like Tom, nor

seek to control and dominate like Stephen. They share and get along nicely with others since they don't have anything to prove. They can lead or follow and they can voice their thoughts and feelings in their families and with their friends in cooperative ways. When these children grow up, they are able to work well on a team. If they take on management positions, they show respect for the people they supervise. When they are in social settings, they are comfortable reaching out and interacting with others. They don't waste energy second-guessing themselves all the time and have a quiet sense of security that is attractive to others.

THE EARLY YEARS

Children are born entirely helpless and dependent on others. Over the first two decades of life, they must increasingly learn to care for themselves, make decisions, and function competently in the world.

One of the greatest challenges and opportunities for parents, grandparents, and educators is to learn how we can help children develop a healthy sense of confidence and learn to express their opinions and desires without either overprotecting them, letting them run wild, or disciplining their self-expression into extinction. Children need us to set appropriate limits, but we need to be careful not to crush their God-given need to feel capable and confident in the process. Although the ideal stage to start building confidence is in the toddler years, don't worry if your children are older and you haven't done a great job helping them develop a sense of confidence yet. It isn't too late. Here are some tips that will help at any age.

CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

- ***Cherish them.*** Pay attention to them, love them and let them know how they are special in your eyes.
- ***Compliment them,*** both for their efforts and for jobs well done. Compliments and praise encourage children and let them know you are pleased with them. Don't wait for perfection. Let them know that you notice the steps they are making towards their goals. Just as marathon runners need cheers and support at various markers during their run, our children need the "You can do it!" cheers from us on the sidelines. You should be your children's best supporter.
- ***Help them develop safe and enjoyable relationships with playmates.*** Children who have good friends tend to become more confident.
- ***Avoid criticism.*** Someone has said, "It takes about 99 compliments to make up for one criticism." Think about yourself. Don't you tend to remember criticism you have received much longer than praise? Critical comments are easily embedded in the brain where they live on as judges, evaluating everything we say or do and never letting us be quite satisfied with our performance. We need to affirm our children's efforts even when they don't get something precisely "right."

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"I feel so grateful that God prepares people like you so that missionary kids who are confused and hurting, like me, are given the opportunity to experience a time of refreshment and clarification." – MK from Philippines

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- **Avoid comparison to others.** A family where everyone is valued for who they are and affirmed for their unique abilities, gifts, and personalities is a place where children are most likely to develop a healthy sense of confidence. Comparing children to each other undercuts their confidence and develops resentment towards you and their siblings.
- **Teach them new skills step by step.** Children need to learn in stages or they will become overwhelmed and frustrated. To help your children gain confidence, break tasks into bite-sized pieces and praise them step by step. That goes for everything from helping preschoolers dress themselves to helping elementary age children do chores around the house, learn a sport, or complete their homework successfully, to helping teenagers learn to drive the family car or manage their own money.
- **Give them age appropriate opportunities to develop new skills and take on more responsibility.** At each stage of development children are ready to take on more and larger tasks. When you give them responsibilities that challenge them, but are within their reach, you help your sons and daughters gain a sense of mastery that leads to increased confidence.
- **Encourage them to share their ideas and opinions.** Children of all ages need parents to value their thoughts and perspectives. Hearing them out doesn't necessarily mean we do what they want, but it does mean we take their ideas seriously and let them know we value their input.
- **Involve them in family decisions.** Children develop confidence when they know their input matters. When you are going out to eat, you can let your children give input into where you might go, what they will order, and where you will sit in the restaurant. Some families find it helpful to have a family meeting on a regular basis. During those meetings you can solicit your children's input into decisions, such as where you will go on vacation or what you will do for fun this coming weekend. You won't always do what your children suggest, but taking their ideas into account helps them feel important and builds their confidence.
- **Identify their special gifts and talents and give them opportunity to develop them.** We parents know that our children are different from one another, but sometimes we haven't thought through how that should impact our parenting.

If you have one child who is artistic, another athletic, and a third who is a deep thinker or naturally empathic, look for opportunities to validate their unique gifts. Support each of them in becoming the special persons God created them to be. As you do, they will experience the confidence that comes from doing what they are best at and enjoy the most.

- **Let them know God made them special and they can use their gifts to serve Him and others.** God gave us gifts to bless others and as we do we experience fulfillment. Your children are no different. When you help your children serve God and others, you set the tone for their future. You also help them live out the design God has for them. That gives them a sense of purpose and confidence.

A WONDERFUL DIVIDEND

Every child has a deep God-given need to feel a sense of confidence. Confidence leads to optimism about the future and enables them to reach out and try new things. It is a wonderful foundation for spiritual, emotional, and relational health. When children lack confidence they feel anxious and afraid and either get stuck there or turn to Satan's substitute of seeking power and control. Children develop confidence through trying new things and being allowed to both fail and succeed in a supportive environment.

On the road to mature confidence, most children go through some struggles and self-doubt. We need to learn to come alongside them at those times and listen and encourage them. Confident young children tend to grow up to be teens who don't cave in to peer pressure. Ultimately, they grow into adults who have a healthy sense of self and who are able to thrive in their personal and professional relationships and in their spiritual lives. What better gift can we give them?

Deborah Hoag Photography



Can Mindfulness Meditation Increase Susceptibility to False Memories?

By Dr. Bruce Narramore

In the feature article of this issue of *Psychology for Living*, Dr. Kirwan and I discussed how Christian prayer and meditation can actually change our brain's functioning and help us grow spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. We pointed out that Christian prayer and meditation differ greatly from non-Christian, Eastern forms of meditation because they focus on the person of God who is an objective reality outside of oneself. By contrast, Eastern mindfulness meditation is self-focused and the goal is often to actually lose one's sense of being an individual and become one with the universe. The result is that Christian prayer and meditation retain clear boundaries between oneself and the external world, whereas Eastern mindfulness meditation's goal is to slacken or remove those boundaries.

Now a recently published research study by Wilson, Mickes, Stolarz-Fantino, Evrard, and Fantino at the University of California at San Diego¹ raises the possibility that some Eastern mindfulness meditation, while having documented value in reducing anxiety, depression, and pain, may also lead to an increase in false memories. Since mindfulness



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meditation stresses focusing one's attention on the present moment in an accepting and non-judgmental way, the researchers decided to test their hypothesis. Could Eastern mindfulness meditation conceivable lead the meditator to be less aware of external reality and have difficulty distinguishing between an actual external stimulus and one's own internal mental processes? Could this lead to an increase in false memories (Wilson, Mickes, Stolarz-Fantino, Eyrard, & Fantino, 2015)?

The investigators conducted three studies with more than 500 university students. First, the students underwent different forms of mindfulness meditation induction and were shown lists of words. They were then asked either to recall those words or to identify the words when flashed on a computer screen. In each of the three studies, the meditators had an increase in false memories after meditating. Specifically, they identified certain words that had not actually been shown to them earlier. Participants that had not undergone the mindfulness meditation did not experience such an increase in false memories.

Smith and his colleagues (2015) concluded, "Mindful meditators were more likely to falsely recollect words not actually presented." Further, "Mindfulness meditation appears to reduce reality-monitoring accuracy. By embracing judgment-free awareness and acceptance, meditators can have greater difficulty differentiating internal and external sources of information. As a result, the same aspects of mindfulness that create countless benefits can also have the unintended negative consequence of increasing false-memory susceptibility" (p. 1572).

Psychology for Living readers, these are very interesting findings and consistent with what Dr. Kirwan and I see as the fundamental difference between Christian meditation and prayer on the one hand, and Eastern meditation on the other. When Christians pray and meditate, we are not trying to ignore external reality and open up to whatever crosses our minds in a judgment-free way. We are not one with the universe and we know it. We are praying to our Lord. He intended each of us to know the difference between what is going on inside our minds and the external world. Our relationship is with Him, not some vague notion of the cosmos. It is a shame that such an important biblical practice as prayer and meditation has sometimes been equated with the clearly non-Christian practice of Eastern meditation. We hope that our article on Christian meditation and prayer will help recapture true biblical meditation for believers."

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The Seven Verbs of Christmas

by Dr. Clyde Narramore

The Christmas Story is packed with action – both on a divine and human level. It is so spectacular, yet it identifies with the most humble.

The arrival of the Messiah was the event for which the world had been waiting ever since the first man and woman sinned in the Garden of Eden. Now, at last, Jesus Christ, the Son of the highest, was coming to earth. He was to be born as a baby, to live a sinless life, and then to die on the cross to save us from our sins!

The book of Matthew records the thrilling story of earthly kings who were wise enough to recognize His coming. Following a very special star, they journeyed from the East to find the Christ Child. In the second chapter of Matthew, verse 1, we read: “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’”

Herod covertly sent for the wise men so he could obtain more information and map out his evil strategy. His intent, of course, was to kill the child, and he didn’t care how many innocent victims he sacrificed in his effort to accomplish his evil purpose. Sadly, many people today are no better than Herod and are killing millions of babies even before they are born!

The wise men, however, didn’t fall for Herod’s scheme. They followed the star to the Christ child. In Matthew 2:11 – 12, we see what happened: “And when they had **come** into the house, they **saw** the young Child with Mary His mother, and **fell** down and **worshipped** Him. And when they had **opened** their treasures, they **presented** gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned



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in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they **departed** for their own country another way.”

Let’s think about these wonderful verbs. First they **came**. Today, people are coming and going almost continually. Airports are packed. But are those travelers coming to Jesus? Regretfully, no. But we can do our part. This Christmas season you and I can follow the pattern of the wise men. Just as they **came**, so we must **come**. The greatest step any person can ever take is the one that leads him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second verb is **saw**. How wonderful to look into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and be assured that we will spend eternity in Heaven with Him! People travel around the world to view the sights: temples, lofty buildings, altars, sacred pageantry, and the like . . . but they fail to see Christ.

The third verb is **fell**. The wise men **fell** down by the crib of the baby Jesus. This Christmas season, let us follow the example of the wise men and humble ourselves before Him.

This brings us to the fourth verb, which is the reason why the wise men **fell** before Him: they **worshipped** Him. No man stands so tall as the one who stoops to **worship** this holy, infant King. When we understand His majesty and power, we are humbled, and we bow before Him and **worship** Him.

The fifth verb is **opened**. Just as 2,000 years ago the Magi **opened** their treasures, so we, too, must do the same. When we understand Whose we are and Whom we serve, we count it a privilege to give Him ourselves and all that we hold dear. I have noticed through the years that when we really **open** our hearts to the Lord, we also **open** our pocketbooks.

The sixth verb is **presented**. The wise men **presented** Him with gifts. We have the privilege of doing the same today. Those who deeply love God are excited about giving to Him. They want to help all they can with God’s work. A person’s spirituality can often be measured by his generosity. Giving, of course, does not make us spiritual. But it’s true that when we love the Lord, we love to give, just as God gave His Son.

The seventh verb is **departed**. Just as God warned the wise men of the pitfalls of following the advice of evil Herod, so today He still warns us not to follow the directives of those who are sinful. Fortunately, the wise men believed God and obeyed by **departing** “another way.”

This is also true of us. When we give Christ the rightful place in all of our activities and thinking, we are no longer the same. We go (**depart**) another way. And just as the wise men went another way, so when we are born into God’s family, we walk in newness of life.

Have you truly experienced these meaningful *verbs* of the Wise Men? Be wise, and let them become a reality in your life this Christmas – and all through the coming year!

This article first appeared in Psychology for Living, December 1989. Today, this article speaks just as poignantly as it did in 1989.