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Is Rick Warren Promoting Contemplative Prayer?

Is Rick Warren promoting contemplative spirituality (i.e., **spiritual formation**)? We believe the answer to that is a wholehearted "yes." The first clue came many years ago in Warren's first book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, where he said that the Spiritual Formation movement had a "vital message for the church," and has "given the body of Christ a wake up call" (p. 127). Since then, a repeated promotion of contemplative prayer has taken place through Rick Warren's ministries.

In an article written by Saddleback pastor, Lance Witt, titled "**Enjoying God's Presence in Solitude**," Witt says we are "designed to enjoy the presence of God, but that's easier said than done." In the article, Witt uses Thomas Merton as an example of someone who knew about solitude. But Merton's solitude was connected to his Buddhist sympathies. Merton likened contemplative prayer to an LSD trip.

Witt finishes his article with:

The goal of solitude is not so much to unplug from my crazy world, as it is to **change frequencies** so that I can hear the Father. Richard Foster has said, "Solitude doesn't give us the power to win the rat race, but to ignore it altogether."

What does Witt mean by "changing frequencies"? Several years ago, Lighthouse Trails spoke with Lance Witt, via email, and asked him if the kind of contemplative prayer he taught was a practice in which words or phrases are repeated over and over. He told us that it was indeed this type of prayer he taught. This "changing frequencies" is contemplative language and means going into an **Alpha state** of mind (an altered state of consciousness) in order to stop distractions. It's like putting the mind in neutral. Contemplatives believe this is how they can hear the voice of God.

In light of Witt's statement to us and his article, it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise to know that Rick Warren has promoted a book called *Sacred Pathways* by Gary Thomas. In Ray Yungen's new edition of ***A Time of Departing***, Yungen brings this out. He quotes Warren who says of Thomas' book: "Gary has spoken at Saddleback, and I think highly of his work ... he tells them [readers] how they can make the most of their spiritual journeys. He places an emphasis on practical spiritual exercises" (see pg.151 ATOD, 2nd ed.). Yungen then quotes from Thomas' book:

It is particularly difficult to describe this type of prayer in writing, as it is best taught in person. In general however, centering prayer works like this: Choose a word (Jesus or Father, for example) as a focus for contemplative prayer. Repeat the word silently in your mind for a set amount of time (say, twenty minutes) until your heart seems to be repeating the word by itself, just as naturally and involuntarily as breathing. (p. 152 ATOD, 2nd ed.)

It is through this twenty minute long repetition that frequencies can be changed.

This promotion of contemplative by Rick Warren is just another example of a long line of promotions of contemplative spirituality that have come through Purpose Driven. Ray Yungen wrote an entire chapter on this matter. By the time you finish reading that chapter, we think you will be convinced beyond doubt that Rick Warren is an advocate for the very spirituality that Thomas Merton claimed made him feel deeply impregnated with Sufism (Islamic mysticism). The following is another excerpt from *A Time of Departing*:

The question you may be asking right now is, "Why is Rick Warren included in a book that is covering New Age interspirituality and exposing the dangers of contemplative prayer? Are you saying that Rick Warren is heading in that direction too? Not America's pastor! Surely not." If that were the case, we'd hear about it from Christian leaders. Right? ... If

indeed Rick Warren is promoting contemplative prayer, as I believe he is, this guarantees that contemplative prayer will be promoted on an enormous scale. Through Rick Warren, Richard Foster's vision could enter fully into mainstream evangelicalism both in North America and around the world; and with the unprecedented following and support Warren has gained, we could be heading towards a crisis in the church that might possibly lead to the falling away that the Apostle Paul warns about (pp. 142-143, ATOD, 2nd ed.).

Like a volcanic mountain that has simmered silently in the background for years, building pressure and waiting to explode, so too is contemplative spirituality. As many of you have already witnessed, this mystical, dangerous belief system is now everywhere, even in the teachings and ministries of "America's pastor," who is influencing millions of people around the world.

New Agers believe that the world will be unified and brought to peace through a majority of people practicing meditation. What surprise they must be experiencing now to see so many from the Christian faith join ranks and leave behind a solid, Bible-based faith in Jesus Christ and exchange it for this new age/new spirituality.

To read "America's Pastor," chape 8 of A Time of Departing, [click here](#).

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