

# Christian Man Practices Contemplative Prayer

***Practicing contemplative meditation drew this man towards the beliefs of Hinduism and other religions.***

Dear Ray Yungen and Lighthouse Friends,

My deepest thank-you for this website and the book, *A Time of Departing*. I have been a born again believer for six to seven years now and a youth leader for two. I have passionately pursued Jesus through all of them. However, not always according to truth as you will hear.

Thomas Keating's book [Open Mind, Open Heart](#) introduced me to the form of contemplative prayer called centering prayer nine months ago. I was captured by his deep insights, beautiful sounding wisdom, and impressive use of language. With hesitation, I began to practice centering prayer once or twice a day for about three months. I used the method Thomas Keating teaches by using a sacred word. This word was a symbol of my consent to (what I believed was) the Spirit of God and the Lordship of Jesus. My word was Abba. I repeated this word in silence to help me stop the normal flow of thoughts so my soul could rest in utter stillness, wide open to the presence (I perceived was God). This presence's comforting touch was beyond adequate expression at times. I was beginning to think Christians could not have this kind of deep intimacy with God apart from contemplative prayer.

My experiences with centering prayer were powerful to me, so it seemed only logical to believe this was God's blessing upon it. I mean how could it be wrong if my intent was to be with Jesus and the Father in intimacy and be formed into Christ's image. What was my fruit? Increased gentleness began to enter my life as well as more patience, yet so did more openness to what I could learn from Catholic Mystics, Hindus, and Buddhists. I definitely did not deny Jesus was the only way to the Father, but I could have easily headed down that path. I also read from Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, St. Teresa of Avila, Thomas Merton, Brennan Manning, Sue Monk Kidd and others. I was clearly being swept up into their program for spiritual formation (into Christ likeness, as I perceived).

During this time, I had been visiting Lighthouse Trails website regularly. I now see that through its messages of warning about contemplative prayer, seeds of truth were being planted in me. At the time however, I believed your apologists were missing the mark, yet I responded by seeking God for the truth, asking to be corrected and granted repentance if I was in the wrong. Then during my second time through *Open Mind, Open Heart* on page 127 I read, speaking of human nature: "This basic core of goodness is capable of unlimited development; indeed, of becoming transformed into Christ and deified."

I could no longer practice this prayer with a good conscience after reading that statement by Keating. Now about four months later I have just finished reading [A Time of Departing](#) which I received three days ago. I have gratefully accepted it's message.

I have been studying the Scriptures rigorously since stopping centering prayer and seeking to grow in hermeneutical integrity. This study prepared me to hear with a sounder mind what you had to say. There is a theological principle in Deuteronomy 12:29-32.<sup>1</sup> Please read it in context. God's word warns his people not to inquire of other religions concerning how they serve their gods and then do the same. We are not to worship the Lord our God the way other religions worship their gods because we will follow in their footsteps. Even though I was trying to connect with Jesus in centering prayer, I was using eastern religious practices not taught in Scripture, and therefore, not in conformity with the gospel of Christ. These practices were clearly leading me away from Jesus. Validation of these practices can be read into Scripture, but not understood from Scripture by the Spirit of Christ. There is so much more to my journey to a faith based upon God's Word, but for now, I want to emphasize how thankful I am for Ray Yungen and Lighthouse Trails for your defense of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah!

**Richard**  
**From the state of Florida**

<http://www.lighthouse Trails.com>