

# The Christian Pill – Can Christian Meditation Change You?

**Richard B. Sorensen, PhD Psychology**

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[richardbsorensen@gmail.com](mailto:richardbsorensen@gmail.com)

[www.richardsorensen.com](http://www.richardsorensen.com)

[www.unholygrail.net](http://www.unholygrail.net)



*You shall impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and as frontals on your forehead. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

~ Deuteronomy 11:18-20

## Introduction

Our family has a book club – we meet together every Sunday evening for dinner to review and discuss a book that one of us has chosen. Having a doctorate in psychology and being involved in counseling, for my turn I chose a book on the popular topic of meditation: *The Buddha Pill – Can Meditation Change You?* by Dr. Miguel Farias and Dr. Catherine Wikholm. This excellent book covered the topic of meditation from both a secular and a spiritual perspective (primarily Buddhism), with a focus on scientific studies that attempt to analyze the benefits as well as the drawbacks of meditation. With so many past attempts to portray meditation (as well as Buddhism) as a panacea for personal and

ultimately world peace, it was refreshing to read and discuss an honest appraisal of what meditation can do, and more importantly, what it cannot do.

The authors considered various movements in meditation such as TM (transcendental meditation), which was all the rage in the 1970's and 1980's, as well as mindfulness, Buddhist meditation, and yoga. While these practices done in a secular environment can reduce anxiety and generate feelings of peace and well-being, the effects are usually temporary ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 230](#)) and sometimes negative. In the book's conclusion seven myths about meditation are presented: ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 252-259](#))

1. Myth: Meditation produces a unique state of consciousness that we can measure scientifically.

Research on TM has debunked that claim, as well as the allegation that groups of people engaged in TM-style meditation could somehow tap into a "world spirit" that would improve society and reduce crime. ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 68-70, 85](#))

2. Myth: If everyone meditated the world would be a much better place.

"So far there is no clear scientific evidence that meditation is more effective in making us more compassionate or less aggressive than other spiritual or psychological practice." ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 254](#))

3. Myth: If you are seeking personal change and growth, meditation is as – or more efficient than – therapy or counseling.

"There is very little evidence that an eight-week mindfulness-based group program has the same benefits as conventional psychological therapy." ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 255](#))

4. Myth: Meditation can benefit everyone.

"Packaged and sold in an increasingly super-charged secularized way as a magic pill for anyone feeling the pressures and stresses of 21<sup>st</sup> century life, modern meditation is being widely touted as today's cure-all... The idea that meditation is a cure-all – and for all – lacks scientific basis." ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 256](#))

Much of this is essentially advertising hype trumpeted by sellers of meditation products or services.

5. Myth: Meditation has no adverse or negative effects. It will change you for the better and only for the better.

"For the past forty years research [on the negative effects of meditation] has been minimal compared to that looking for the benefits. This is now slowly changing with new research emerging suggesting a wide range of adverse effects, such as an increase in anxiety, stress, depression, and in the more extreme cases, psychosis and suicidal inclinations." ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 257-258](#))

6. Myth: Science has unequivocally shown how meditation can change us and why.

“There is simply no cohesive, overarching attempt to describe the various psychobiological processes that meditation sets in motion. Unless we can clearly map the effects of meditation – both positive and negative – and identify the processes underpinning the practice, our scientific understanding of meditation is precarious, and can easily lead to exaggeration and misinterpretation.” ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 258-259](#))

7. Myth: We can practice meditation as a purely scientific technique with no religious or spiritual leaning.

“Research shows that meditation leads us to become more spiritual [see below for the caveats of ‘spirituality’], and that this increase in spirituality is partly responsible for the practice’s positive effects.” ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 259](#))

## Psychology and Christianity

All of this got me thinking more deeply about meditation from a Christian perspective – how it is superficially similar but vastly different from TM, mindfulness, and Buddhism. The above book touched briefly on Christian meditation but never in detail, and this is probably because Christianity goes far beyond and is in conflict with psychology as the latter is typically conceived of. Here are some of the differences between contemporary psychology and Christianity:

- Everyone has a set of axioms – beliefs which are part of their worldview which are seldom if ever stated, but which nevertheless form a mental foundation on which everything else is constructed. One of the core axioms of contemporary psychology and therefore of most psychologists is that everyone is intrinsically good. This view came primarily from the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau who rejected Christianity and stated that evil came from society and the profit motive. He therefore believed in the concept of the “noble savage” – that primitive groups would be inherently virtuous and free from the acquisitiveness that supposedly is the source of evil.

In contrast, Christianity teaches that sinfulness (i.e., the propensity to do evil) is a human and possibly a genetic characteristic. All people therefore have a “sin nature.” Therefore evil comes within each person, and the reason that society is bad is because people are bad. This is not to say that everyone is as wicked as they could or can be, but nevertheless selfishness is endemic and evil comes from within the human heart. This can easily be observed by watching children. They may seem to be very cute and innocent, but as parents know, babies are selfish, children can do evil things, and kids must be trained to share and be considerate of others.

Rousseau lived before anthropologists completely demolished his concepts by demonstrating that people in primitive societies were and could be just as evil as everyone else. But his idea took root and a number of later thinkers and movements were based on it, as follows:

1. The “I’m OK, You’re OK” mantra. If people are intrinsically good, then guilt doesn’t really exist and is just a figment of one’s imagination. But if people are inherently sinful, then guilt is real. Much of the current impetus for meditation comes from anxiety and depression related to

guilt, but the reality of guilt means that meditation by itself will never resolve it. People typically want to escape responsibility for wrong actions and often try to suppress a guilty conscience, but guilt cannot be meditated or medicated away. It requires redress – forgiveness and making amends, so ruminating on personal wrongs can therefore create more anxiety and depression. Much of today's mental illness is caused by guilt, which when left unresolved can create the symptoms of mental illness ([Gifford, 2025](#)).

Another was of stating this is viewing bad or compulsive behavior as a medical/mental condition. We have an epidemic of “mental disease” much of which is not disease at all. The word “disease” implies that a person has a sickness which was not their fault and was an accidental consequence of life. Instead, bad behavior needs to be viewed as a personal sin pattern for which the individual is responsible. It needs to be corrected and guilt needs to be addressed as described above, rather than excused and medicated with psychotropic drugs as is typically done by psychiatrists. Greg Gifford, assistant professor of biblical counseling at The Master's University, and the author of *Lies My Therapist Told Me*, stated this in an interview:

“Americans are over-diagnosed with mental health issues to receive chemical treatments rather than taking care of the spiritual lack at the root of their problems... When you believe that everything has a natural explanation and when you have a naturalistic worldview, then you're looking for a naturalistic category to explain what's happening in your inner person. Naturalism has set the stage for us to blame things on our brain that are not truly brain issues... The mental health movement has actually confused the brain and the mind and used medical terminology to describe the immaterial mind. Our mind is not material. You can't touch it. You can't put it under a microscope. You can't study it with scientific methods because it's immaterial... As a Christian, if you're saying, 'Wait a minute, I need to go to my psychologist, my therapist, to help me with my mind,' I'm saying, no, I think you should actually go to your church, look to your pastor, and look to the means of grace that God has provided to bring about mind renewal, which is what the Bible calls it. You're going to see better results than what your psychologist was ever going to provide for you.” ([Pearce, 2025](#))

This exposes a problem with the techniques involved in mindfulness. A mindfulness counselor typically teaches patients to treat recurring troubling thoughts of guilt, anger, and other strong emotions as mental occurrences which they should simply observe and let go of. However, letting go of thoughts does not resolve the problem if the issue is actual guilt. It simply becomes a psychological mask, like putting a band-aid on cancer.

2. Karl Marx based his theories of socialism and class warfare on the idea that the proletariat (the poor or those who have less) are intrinsically good, while the bourgeois and upper classes are intrinsically evil because they are supposedly the only ones motivated by greed, which is the Rousseauian source of societal evil. In the leftist movements of today, Marx' theory has metastasized from economics into critical theory and social justice, in which people are inherently evil if they are white straight males, and inherently good if they are not. Much of psychology is unfortunately tainted with social justice and identity politics.

- Another axiom of psychology is its belief in Darwinism – that the origin of life was a lucky accident, and that humanity is the result of millions of years of evolution from pond scum. If human life was accidental, then it can presumably be re-engineered, potentially fulfilling the

egalitarian desires of feminists and transgender advocates, perhaps similar to what happens in the novel *Brave New World*. Many scientists are naturalists (i.e., they believe that only nature is real and spirituality is fictitious). But if life was created by an intelligent designer then Darwinism and naturalism are essentially flawed ([Sorensen, 2020](#)), and the characteristics of males and females are immutable due to differences in their brain wiring ([Soh, 2020](#); [Sorensen, 2024](#)). This implies that society would work better if we returned to a more rational and traditional male/female dynamic.

- From the time of its origin by William Wundt in 1879, psychology has always sought to be “scientific.” Science by its very nature is empirical, meaning that its conclusions must be based on observation and experimentation. Furthermore, experiments must be repeatable in order to be considered valid. Psychologists have therefore sought to make psychology a “hard science” like chemistry or biology, and this has been one of the main factors causing swings of psychological concepts back and forth through the years. For example, the Behaviorist movement from the 20<sup>th</sup> century understood that the only thing observable and therefore measurable about people was behavior. This emphasis led to the belief that behavior was the only significant aspect of people, which, of course, is not true. Humans can be subjected to scientific studies in limited ways, but human consciousness is beyond science and will probably never be fully explicable because we don’t yet know how the mind works.<sup>1</sup> We don’t know how meditation and thought works either because they are an activity of the human mind, and we know even less about whether people have a “soul” or a “spirit” and how they are connected to the body ([Sorensen, 2025b](#)). There is nothing wrong with using science to explore the physical aspects of people, but the spiritual aspects of humanity are also real, making Behaviorism inadequate.

Psychology can therefore never become a true science, and psychologists sometimes seem to have a need to apologize for this. Alas, psychology has to involve elements of religion because the mental and spiritual aspects of people are above and beyond what science can currently study and answer. In today’s world, religion is questioned and science is deified; both of these are unfortunate because religion addresses a reality with which we must come to grips, and science is incapable of analyzing religious issues.<sup>2</sup> Understanding that psychology must go beyond the physical to include aspects of human spirituality is therefore a strength rather than a weakness. But we must also concede that when psychology is addressing non-physical issues it can no longer be truly “scientific.”

- Naturalism rejects the existence of spirit beings (angels, demons, and God), and due to its secular focus, psychology is agnostic to spirit beings and doesn’t consider their potential impact. But from a Christian perspective, both angels and demons are real and can influence people ([Sorensen, 2025a](#)). The fact that this influence cannot be scientifically proved or disproved should not concern us because, as discussed above, spirit beings are outside the purview of science. Especially troubling, from the Christian perspective, are meditational practices where the individual is told to

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<sup>1</sup> We do know how input from our five senses are transmitted to the brain, but we don’t know how memories are organized and recalled, and we have no clue as to how consciousness works

<sup>2</sup> Einstein famously stated, “Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind.”

“think about nothing,” “open your mind,” “let your thoughts go,” and so on. This raises the possibility of demonic influence. Even worse are occultic practices done in the name of psychology such as calling on spirit guides, seances, Ouija boards, divination, remote viewing, casting circles, etc. We are often deceived by people who we can see – how much more so by spirit beings that we cannot see and who are masters of deception ([Martin, 1992](#); [Sarchie & Cool, 2001](#); [Williams, 2020](#)).

- The overarching concern of *The Buddha Pill* was finding and reviewing scientific studies that addressed the benefits and the drawbacks of meditation, seen in the following statement:

“I felt dismayed. Despite the anecdotal evidence on the merits of mindfulness meditation, and despite the hundreds of studies produced in the last twenty years, there was no robust scientific evidence that mindfulness has any substantial effect on our minds and behaviors.” ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 159](#))

The authors stated that there have been many accounts of people who were helped by yoga, TM, and/or Buddhistic meditation, and cited some of them. However, the same is true for Christianity (thousands of stories), and the effects of Christianity from a scientific and/or psychological perspective have also been studied – a few examples: ([Eifring, 2013](#)), ([Haverkamp & etal., 2025](#)), ([Whytock, 2014](#)), ([Chin & Au, 2024](#)), ([Martin, 2015](#)), ([Helminiak, 1981](#)), and ([Gnanasekar, 2024](#)). The last one concluded:

“The analysis demonstrates that Christian meditation offers not only mental and emotional well-being but also a coherent and hopeful worldview that addresses the human condition in a meaningful and transformative way.”

## Comparing Buddhism to Christianity

Some people view religion as a series of different paths to God – which path you take is less important than choosing any one of them. This goes along with the above notion that people are basically good – if we are all good children of God then we will supposedly all reach God, whatever path we take. But if we are basically sinful, if all paths don’t lead to God, and if God has told us that only one path leads to Him, what then?

It would be much more comfortable if we could “see” the path to God like a sidewalk on a street, but religion is beyond the physical and whatever we believe is always a matter of faith. This is true whether we are Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sufi, Shinto, Daoist, or Humanist/Naturalist/Atheist – whatever you believe is always a matter of personal faith. One podcaster stated, “I don’t have enough faith to be an atheist.” Therefore, the challenge is to understand the differences, decide which one makes the most sense, and start following that path. Faith in what you can’t see should always be based on what you can see.

Characteristic	Buddhism	Christianity
Nature of God	God is an impersonal force of nature. God is everything and everything is God	God is a personal triune being who is omniscient and omnipresent but is also distinct from creation
Creation	People came from another planet (the Aggañña Sutta)	God created everything including time and space (the book of Genesis)
Founder	Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), c. 400 BC	Jesus Christ, c. 3 BC – AD 30
Scriptures	Various Buddhist writings	The Bible
Afterlife	Reincarnation as a higher or lower form of animal depending on your behavior (some Buddhists reject reincarnation in favor of dissolution). Nirvana is for those who reach enlightenment – the loss of personality and absorption of oneself into the cosmic all	Heaven (being with God) for those who accept the sacrifice of Christ for their sins and follow Him, or Hell (being away from God) for those who refuse to accept Christ
Rules for Living	<p>The Eightfold Path</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Correct action</li> <li>2. Correct speech</li> <li>3. Correct livelihood</li> <li>4. Correct effort</li> <li>5. Correct mindfulness</li> <li>6. Correct concentration</li> <li>7. Correct view</li> <li>8. Correct intention</li> </ol> <p>The Four Noble Truths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The truth of suffering</li> <li>2. The truth of the cause of suffering (desire)</li> <li>3. The truth of the end of suffering (elimination of desire)</li> <li>4. The truth of the eightfold path that frees us from suffering</li> </ol>	<p>The Ten Commandments</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No other Gods</li> <li>2. No worship of idols</li> <li>3. Honor the name of God</li> <li>4. Worship God every week</li> <li>5. Honor father and mother</li> <li>6. Don't murder</li> <li>7. Don't commit adultery</li> <li>8. Don't steal</li> <li>9. Don't lie</li> <li>10. Don't covet</li> </ol> <p>Jesus' Sermon on the Mount</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blessed are those who understand their spiritual poverty</li> <li>2. Blessed are those who understand their need for God</li> <li>3. Blessed are those who are humble</li> <li>4. Blessed are those who want to do what is right</li> <li>5. Blessed are the merciful</li> <li>6. Blessed are the pure in heart</li> </ol>

		<p>7. Blessed are the peacemakers</p> <p>8. Blessed are those persecuted for the sake of Christ.</p>
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- Ethics are universal and virtually all people have a conscience, so they typically know what they are doing is right or wrong; all societies are concerned with justice. Likewise, people typically have a seemingly innate concept of a supreme being who will eventually judge them. Therefore, human religion is dharmic (i.e., works-based) where devotees must purify themselves and behave in ethical ways in order to be acceptable to the supreme being. The essence of Buddhism is a set of ethical principles (the Eightfold Path) which is somewhat similar to the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus.

However, Buddhism – like most religions – is pre-Christian,<sup>3</sup> and like the others consists of human attempts to reach God. In contrast, Christianity is God attempting to reach humanity. Christianity is also deeply concerned with ethics and behavior, but it acknowledges that people are incapable of meeting God’s standards. It is impossible for us to fully obey either the Eightfold Path or the Ten Commandments. Therefore, God Himself through Christ, the son of God, provided a sacrifice that satisfied God’s justice, and enabled sinful people to be reconciled with a holy God.

- In the context of Buddhism, God is pantheistic – everything is God and God is therefore a “force of nature.” The God of Buddhism is therefore impersonal and unconcerned with human activities. The Buddhist creation story (the Aggañña Sutta) states that the people on earth came from another planet, but how they got here and how the original planet and its people came into being is not clearly specified.

In contrast, the God of Christianity is personal. The book of Genesis starts with an account of creation and tells us that humans were made in the image of God. We therefore have many of the same characteristics as God – personality, identity, desires, will, mind, conscience, creativity, justice, empathy, and love. The question must therefore be asked, how and why would an impersonal force create personal beings with deep passions and desires?

- Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, lived sometime around 400 BC, but there is disagreement on which century he lived in. He was said to be enlightened (Buddha means “the enlightened one”) but he never claimed divinity and there are no contemporary records of his life. His teachings were passed orally, and the oldest Buddhist manuscripts are the Gandharan Buddhist texts from Pakistan which date from the first century BC to the third century AD. In other words, the oldest Buddhist texts are 300 to 700 years after the death of the founder.

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<sup>3</sup> Post-Christian religions such as Islam and Mormonism are based on Judaism and Christianity.

In contrast, the divinity of Jesus Christ is taught throughout the Bible.<sup>4</sup> All of the New Testament writing were composed within a lifetime of the death of Jesus and include first-person, eyewitness accounts. Three of the Gospels as well as most of the Apostle Paul's writings were completed within thirty years of Jesus' death. There are around 5,800 ancient copies or portions of New Testament manuscripts, so it is by far to best supported document from that era. The oldest fragment is from the Gospel of Matthew, dated to around AD 66 ([D'Ancona & Thiede, 1996](#)), and there are copies or partial copies of the New Testament that date from AD 100 to 150, which was 70 to 120 years after Christ ([Windle, 2019](#)).

- There are many Buddhist texts – the three main ones are the Pāli Canon of the Theravāda tradition, the Chinese Buddhist Canon of the East Asian tradition, and the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. They disagree with each other on a number of issues so there is no single source of authority for Buddhist doctrine – you can select whatever tradition appeals to you. This fits well with postmodern philosophy in which all “grand narratives” are rejected and truth is mutable – “you have your truth, and I have my truth.” Buddhists therefore don't proselytize and typically don't seek to convert anyone to their way of thinking, as there is no single standard of belief that everyone should accept.

In contrast, Christianity has only one text – the Bible, which consists of the Old Testament, written before Christ and prophesies his future life, death, and resurrection, and the New Testament, written after Christ, which explains his impact and how we should live. Therefore, Christianity claims to be the only truth – that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life – no one comes to God except through him.” Thus Christianity excludes and supersedes all other religions. It is also “evangelical” meaning that Jesus has provided the only way to God, so people are lost if they reject Christ – hence the efforts of Christians to reach others as commanded by Jesus (“Take the Gospel into the entire world,” Matthew 28:18-20). Christianity is therefore criticized as being “narrow” and “intolerant,” but if there is only one way to God, narrowness is a necessary requirement for reaching heaven.

Many criticize Christianity because of actions by the church, such as the Albigensian Crusade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century undertaken by the Papacy, and the Thirty Years War between Protestants and Catholics, whereas Buddhism is touted as a “religion of peace.” However, this is probably because the history of China and India where Buddhists engaged in many wars is little known in the West. Another potential surprise to westerners is that Buddhism was usually a state religion.

“The Xiongnu leader [Shi Le], and later his blood-curdling successor took Buddhism as their cult... Mass conversions, an enormous following, and the foundation of some nine hundred monasteries, nunneries, and temples are mentioned. From such dubious dealings with a secular power, Buddhism in northern China acquired a popular base... A branch of the bureaucracy took over regulation of Buddhist affairs.” ([Keay, 2009, pp. 207-208](#))

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Matthew 28:18, John 10:30, John 14:6, Isaiah 9:6, John 1:14, Romans 10:9, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:3, Revelation 1:8

“Though soon reversed, the 843-48 crackdown on the Buddhist establishment may have occasioned as much misery as the Cultural Revolution, Thousands of monasteries are said to have been destroyed, and as many as 250,000 monks and nuns defrocked, some being injured or killed in the process.” ([Keay, 2009, p. 286](#))

“What distinguished the Tangut’s Xia empire was that it employed almost exclusively Buddhist terminology and Buddhist devotional patronage to validate its authority. In effect, Tangut Buddhism was a state religion and Xia a Buddhist state.” ([Keay, 2009, p. 312](#))

“It was my fourth time in India, but the first time that the contradictions of this country were pressing in on me. Yoga, an instrument for serenity and enlightenment, was serving political purposes... When I returned to my friend’s house in Delhi, he teased me for my naivety. ‘Many of these yogis are millionaires – and the nationalism and violence, give me a break! Do you know how many wars, we, the very spiritual Indian people, have been involved in during the last fifty years?’” ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 191-193](#))

“Violence was understood [by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha] as a part of life, and there was no attempt to eradicate it entirely from the world... Buddhism came to develop its own theory of compassionate killing... If you are in a detached state of mind you can do anything, as your action will have no karmic significance. In other words, bodhisattvas [enlightened ones] are not morally responsible for their actions because they act without self-interest. The Fifth Dalai Lama used this argument to justify the actions of the Mongol king Gushri Khan who in the 1630’s and 1640’s violently unified a large portion of Tibet and converted the people to Buddhism... In May 2013 in Burma, Buddhist mobs were killing Muslims and burning mosques; one Buddhist monk, jailed for inciting religious hatred, likes to call himself ‘the Burmese Bin Laden.’ ... The idea that Buddhism, unlike other religions did not force people to convert is a myth. Just like Christianity and Islam made churches and mosques from pagan temples and fought animistic ideas as heretical, something similar happened in Buddhism... where people were subjected to brutal punishments or execution. Those acts were justified because of the spiritual status of the rulers who were recognized as living Buddhas and endowed with unbiased compassion.” ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 196-199](#))

“Brian Victoria [a Zen priest and a historian of religions] methodically reveals how warfare and killing were regarded as manifestations of Buddhist compassion, selflessness, and dedication to the Japanese emperor... ‘[The soldier] must become one with his superior. He must actually become his superior. Similarly he must become one with the order he receives. That is to say *his self must disappear*.’ Islam or Christianity’s promise of eternal life have been exchanged for the Buddhist idea that, by becoming selfless, life and death become undifferentiated. There is nothing to lose by dying on the battlefield once you realize the emptiness of the self... Enlightenment in itself is just a state of being that cannot tell right from wrong. This is not what we are used to hearing [about Buddhism] ... Perhaps meditation was never supposed to be more than a tool to help with self-knowledge and should never be divorced from a strong ethical grounding.” ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, pp. 203-209](#))

All of this makes it hard to understand statements such as that of the Dalai Lama: “meditation could eventually eradicate violence.”

- The four noble truths of Buddhism state that the core human problem is suffering, that suffering is caused by desire, that the goal is the elimination of desire, and that following the Eightfold Path is the way to eliminate desire. Enlightenment is therefore the elimination of all desire, and the afterlife destination for fully enlightened individuals is Nirvana, which involves absorption into the cosmic all and the elimination of self. People are free to accept or reject any of this teaching, but after death they may be reincarnated as an inferior creature if they lived a

bad life.<sup>5</sup> Some Buddhists don't believe in reincarnation and instead view death as the end of existence. They can also interpret the "elimination of self" in different and amorphous ways making it hard (perhaps impossible?) to clarify what this teaching means and how it should be applied, essentially allowing people to create their own meaning and their own truth.

"I was coming to the conclusion that meditation was only a process: it can sharpen attention, quiet thought and angst, increase positive emotions towards ourselves and others and, in the extreme, it can lead to a deep alteration of our identity – a kind of ecstatic annihilation of the ego. But with the wrong kind of motivation and without clear ethical rules, that very spiritual selflessness can serve all kinds of ill purposes." ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 201](#))

"Dhammasa smiled at me. 'You're asking me about enlightenment, but what is that? It's just ticking one more box; it's ideology.' Then he added, 'I'm sorry if that's not the answer you were looking for.'" ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 267](#))

"I was coming to the conclusion that meditation was only a process: it can sharpen attention, quiet thought and angst, increase positive emotions towards ourselves and others and, in the extreme, it can lead to a deep alteration of our identity – a kind of ecstatic annihilation of the ego. But with the wrong kind of motivation and without clear ethical rules, that very spiritual selflessness can serve all kinds of ill purposes." ([Farias & Wikholm, 2019, p. 201](#))

In studying Buddhism, one is reminded of Govinda, the old faithful Buddhist follower of Gautama in Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*,

"'Tell me one more word, my esteemed friend, tell me something I can conceive, something I can understand! Give me something to help me on my way, Siddhartha. My path is often hard and dark' ... 'Teachings are of no use to me, Govinda, they are nothing but words. Perhaps that is what prevents you from finding peace, perhaps there are too many words. Nirvana is not a thing; there is only the word Nirvana... Nirvana may also be a thought, but I must confess, Govinda, that I do not differentiate very much between thoughts and words. Quite frankly, I do not attach great importance to thoughts either. I attach more importance to things... If seems to me, Govinda, that love is the most important thing in the world. It may be important to great thinkers to examine the world, to explain and despise it. But I think it is only important to love the world.'" ([Hesse, 1951, pp. 146-149](#))

The question then must be asked of Buddhism, "Is there actually such a thing as truth?" In contrast, Christianity teaches that there is absolute truth which is outside of and independent from the human mind. It also teaches that love is the most important thing, but love is not in conflict with words or with thoughts – both love and mental explanations of it are necessary. The core human problem in Christianity is sin which is a condition affecting all people. Sin therefore causes suffering to oneself and others, but suffering is not necessarily endemic and is not the core problem. The judgment for sin is covered by the blood of Christ, and individuals are to follow the example of Christ in thought and behavior even though they will not be able to do so perfectly. The afterlife for Christ followers is to live with God with our identity and personality intact but in a glorified body that has as yet unknown capabilities. Those who refuse to follow Christ will also continue their existence, but away from God.

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<sup>5</sup> This is why people in India don't eat cattle, as cows may be reincarnated relatives.

Both Buddhism and Christianity are concerned with ethics and developing personal purity; in that sense they are similar. A secular individual could improve their life by practicing the ethics of either religion without becoming a Buddhist or a Christian. However, in the case of Christianity, such an individual would not receive the benefits that commitment to Christ provides – the assurance of heaven and the indwelling of God’s Spirit.

- Much of practice of meditation as described in the *The Buddha Pill* was focused on the associated physical activities – environment, bodily position, chanting, etc. But it makes sense that the personal results of meditation will to a large degree be related to the content of the meditation – what an individual is thinking about while they are meditating. You become what you think about so the content of one’s meditation is very important; the associated religion (or lack of it) supplies the content. Muslims meditating on the Quaran may well be called to violence by statements such as “Paradise lies in the shade of the sword,” so there are Islamic terrorists and suicide bombers. Buddhist meditation is preparation for entering Nirvana – to eliminate desire and ultimately eliminate self, so in TM and often in Buddhism, the meditator is chanting words such as “Ommm,” and focusing on selflessness.

In contract, Christian mediation is reading, memorizing, and thinking about passages from the Bible which cover the gamut of human experience as well as elevating us up to God. The goal of Christian meditation is to understand spiritual truths, to make us more like Christ, to live with God, and to prepare us for heaven. Rather than removing selfhood, the focus is on the transient nature of life, on living for God rather than just for self, and on the glory of God that we will eventually share.

Our initial question was “Can Christian Mediation Change You?” The answer is “yes” especially if the person gives his or her life to Christ and chooses to follow Him. Here are a few of the many verses from the Bible that are appropriate for meditation. When they are considered and absorbed, they can change a person to be more like Christ:

“The grass withers and the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever.” Isaiah 40:7-8

“Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars – the One who brings out their host by number. He calls them all by name, and because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.” Isaiah 40:26

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” John 1:12

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matthew 16:24-26

"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." Colossians 3:12

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Ephesians 4:29

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves." Philippians 2:3

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. " Romans 12:18-19

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it even entered the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-32, 37-39

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21

“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but

at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'” Revelation 21:1-3

“‘I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you of these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.’ The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires, take the water of life without cost.” Revelation 22:16-17

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