

Some Christians object to meditation because it uses the imagination. It is wiser, however, to give our imagination to God to be retrained by Him than to withhold it. The process of spiritual formation allows every part of our being to be embraced and schooled by God, and the imagination needs retraining as much as anything else. If we ignore our imagination, it finds entertainment of its own. When activated by the images and truths of Scripture, the imagination enables the penetrating Word of God to become active in our lives.

Others are suspicious of meditation and contemplation because they are often practiced in nonChristian world religions. But the fact that others use these God-ordained practices does not ban them for use by those who follow Jesus Christ. Mahatma Gandhi prayed a great deal and frequently quoted Jesus, as does the Dalai Lama today. Yet we do not give up praying or reading the Gospels because these leaders of other faiths practice these disciplines. As believers in Christ, we do not use the techniques of contemplation in the same way that practitioners of Eastern religions use them. Our goals are different. In Eastern religions, the goal of contemplation is to reach a place of nothingness. As Christians, our goal is to empty ourselves by meeting with God and allowing His image, heart, mind, and will to fill us. "For the Easterner the goal is to reach *nirvana*, which means 'where there is no wind'—no disturbance of the soul. For the Christian, the wind and fire of the Spirit is vital, even when it blows harshly. The Eastern practitioner moves from meditation into contemplation, into self-annihilation, into death, in order to be freed from the 'intolerable wheel of life.' As Christians we move—rather, *we are moved*—into death [to self] in order to be discovered, to be loved into truer life by our Maker."¹⁶

Jan Johnson, *When the Soul Listens*,
(Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1999) 59-60.