

Oprah's New Age Church?

first *believe* there is value in what he says. They have formed a *belief* that if they do what he suggests they can make the next step in the evolution of mankind, a step closer to the divine source. While he advocates going beyond conscious thought, everything he espouses is part of a system of belief that denies the God of the Bible and elevates man to the center of his existence.

According to Holy Scripture, belief (faith) “...*is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” (Hebrews 11:1) Verse six of this chapter explains that it is our faith that determines whether or not we are pleasing to God. We are each responsible for the evidence we pursue and believe. The apostle John said, “*Be-loved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” (1 John 4:1)

The New Age philosophy is of men, men like Eckhart Tolle who would have us replace the God of Heaven with Darwinian evolution and the truth of Almighty God with the meditations of mere men. Be wary of Tolle's “*new belief*”! Though he would have us believe it is not a belief at all, if it looks like a belief, makes pronouncements like a belief, engages like a belief, and converts like a belief, it is a belief. Strange, isn't it? The New Age philosophy is often referred to as *New Thought!*

A New Age of No Sin

New Agers have no sense of sin despite the clear statement of Paul in Romans 3:23: “...*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” There is no concept of sin in their teaching because there is no law to transgress, no God of heaven to rebel against. They hold that man's true essence is divine and without flaw. Eckhart Tolle and others speak of a return to the state of purity in which humanity began, a strange thought in view of New Age connections with the religion of evolution, a view that life as we know it began in a pool of slime and that we have been evolving ever since.

New Age teaching claims each person is in connection with the divine source and traveling toward that source even though some are farther away than others. They will not admit the existence of an absolute truth, a truth of which Jesus often spoke, or of a single way to God (John 14:6; 17:17). Each one has his own truth. Consequently, no one is wrong. Since divinity is in each person, each is god. Whatever one believes and does is okay. In time, when the time is right, each will move to the next evolutionary level, more in tune with the divinity within.

In the New Age scheme of things, anything amiss in a person's behavior is simply ignorance of one's inner divinity. Since there is no sin, there is no need of repentance or forgiveness. Jesus did not come as a Savior nor did he die for our sins. He came simply as an example of how to live peaceably with all men.

None of this is Biblical. The Bible does not mince words about sin, nor need of a Savior. The unfolding of the creation account in Genesis is hardly finished before sin rears its head in the garden. The message from beginning to the end of the Bible is a warning against sin, and the revealing of the antidote for it. John said, *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* (1 John 2:1)

Make no mistake, my friend, you and I are sinners in need of a Savior. (Romans 3:23) Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins.

New Spirituality versus the Old

In an early interview with Eckhart Tolle, Oprah introduced a book by Elizabeth Lesser in answer to a caller's question, a caller who was struggling with Tolle's teaching that any way to God is valid. Having been raised a Catholic and taught that there was only one way, she questioned. In answer, Oprah told of Lesser's

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The Seeker's Guide, which discusses what the author calls the *new* versus the *old spirituality*.¹ Oprah reported Lesser's message in her own words: "...the old way is the hierarchy has the authority. Church authorities tell you how to worship in church and how to behave outside of church. The new spirituality is that you are your own best authority as you work to know and love yourself; you discover how to live a more spiritual life. The old is God and the path to worship him have already been defined and all you need to do is follow the directions. The new is being able to listen within for your own definition of spirituality; your deeper longings are under search. And the old says exact here what Eckhart was saying. That there's only one path it's the right way and all other ways are wrong. And the spirituality says that many paths lead to spiritual freedom and peace."

Oprah said Lesser characterized the many paths to God in this way: "You have a rich array of gems from which to draw illumination. The world's religious traditional, mythology, psychology, healing methods, scientific wisdom, your own experience and that you can begin to string a necklace all your own."

Oprah concluded with, "Something in you opens up and wants, you know, feels alive and is awakened to that. ...I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity."

There are at least six glaring errors in the thinking of Oprah (and Lesser and Tolle) given above. The Bible clearly refutes each one:

1. The problem is that "church authorities tell you how to worship in church and behave outside of church." It is true of denominational church leaders, but true worship is not determined by church authorities or in the councils of men. Jesus defined it in John 4:23, 24: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth." Those whose worship is acceptable to God are those who worship from a sincere heart

¹ Lesser, Elizabeth, *The Seeker's Guide* (2000), pp. 51-52, Random House Publishing Group, New York, NY.

according to the truth of how to worship that God gave to us in the Bible through inspired writers.

2. *“You are your own best authority.”* The Bible does not agree: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”* (Proverbs 16:15) Proverbs 3:5 says, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding.”* In Proverbs 20:24, Solomon said: *“A man’s steps are of the Lord; How then can a man understand his own way?”* Jeremiah understood this, and by God’s inspiration wrote, *“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”*
3. *“Being able to listen within for your own definition of spirituality.”* That which is truly spiritual comes only from God. The apostle Paul explains: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,…”* (Ephesians 1:3) There are no spiritual blessings outside of Jesus Christ. Paul nailed it squarely in 1 Corinthians 2:13: *“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”* Man’s wisdom may define its own brand of spirituality, but it cannot properly define that spirituality that comes from above. Though many like Mss. Lesser and Winfrey and Mr. Tolle may claim they can or may profess to know how you can, it is not the spirituality for which we long. Who shall we believe, God or men? Peter answers: *“We ought to obey God rather than men.”* (Acts 5:29)
4. *“Spirituality says there are many paths that lead to spiritual freedom and peace.”* This statement misrepresents three things: true spirituality, true freedom and true peace.

Beware of every “spirituality” that comes down the pike. Paul said, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) True spirituality, that which saves us from our sins, is found only in Jesus Christ.

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True freedom is also only in Jesus Christ. He said, *"If you abide in my word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:31, 32) That freedom is achieved not by each person defining his own truth, but rather by abiding in the Lord's word, for as He said in His prayer to the Father in John 17:17, *"Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth."*

The apostle Peter understood well the source of true peace: *"Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."* (2 John 1:3) As did Paul, as he wrote, *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Thessalonians 5:23) Any offer of peace outside a saving relationship with the God of heaven through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is false!

5. *"...you can begin to string a necklace all your own."* Oprah's concept of defining your own system of spiritual belief is fundamentally based in selfishness. Her view is that spirituality is not about what God wants but about what the big I wants. Stringing a necklace all your own reminds me of a recently aired TV ad that shouts, *"I want it all! I want it ALL! And I want it NOW!"* What Bible character ever pleased God by choosing and piecing together from available beliefs and practices a philosophy unique to them? Can you imagine the apostle Paul concocting his own brand of faith from some of Judaism, a little of Christianity, a smattering of gnosticism, a pinch or two of astrology, mixed with a liberal helping of the latest physiological views from Hellenistic philosophers?

Paul was thoroughly committed to the Jewish faith. He thought in his heart of heart his understanding was right. But God showed him he was wrong. He became aware of the true way of God, not by becoming conscious of the moment,