

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN | John 1:4-13

4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:4-13 ESV

I. THE GOSPEL IS NEWS

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1 ESV

There are an alarming amount of religious groups that attempt to link John 1:1 to the practice of mantra. The point they make is that truest reality is essentially sound, and that we can gain access to this reality by repeating certain sacred sounds.

Official Definition of Mantra: *Just by repeating the name, that which cannot be understood will be understood, and just by repeating the name that which cannot be seen will be seen.*

Basic Interpretation of Mantra: *Mantra does not work by clarifying the meaning of certain words and explaining how the meaning of these words corresponds to reality. The purpose of mantra is not to make concepts and ideas clear, but to make concepts and ideas vanish, so that there is an immediate access to "ultimate reality".*

Mantra is the complete opposite from the goal of Christian meditation. Christian meditation seeks the experience of *knowing* God, whereas mantra meditation seeks the experience of *being* God. In order to accomplish this goal of knowing God, Christian meditation does not seek to empty the mind of rational thought, but rather to fill it with sound biblical truth.

We cannot forget the fact that the gospel is first and foremost *news*. It's about the real historic events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that actually happened.

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans 10:14-15 ESV

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16 ESV

The reason God chooses to use the gospel in this way is because he deeply desires for his Son to be glorified through our knowledge, understanding, and belief. Jesus is glorified by us knowing who he actually is and what he actually did to save us.

II. GOD INITIATES AND WE RESPOND

11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:11-13 ESV

Verse 12 clearly says that being a child of God is connected to believing, but what this verse doesn't say is how these two are connected. It does not specify which one causes which. It simply states that the two are connected. So if a person receives Christ by believing in his name, they are a child of God. However, in verse 13, we see that being born again is initiated by God's act of begetting, rather than our act of believing. Verse 13 exists to ensure that we understand that the miracle of the new birth is not caused by man, but by God.

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. *1 John 5:1 ESV*

"The combination of present tense 'believes' and perfect tense 'has been born' is important. It shows clearly that believing is the consequence, not the cause, of the new birth. Our present, continuing activity of believing is the result, and therefore, the evidence, of our past experience of new birth by which we became and remain God's children." *-John Stott*