

Priscilla Shirer & Women's Bible "Mis-studies": When Your Church Doesn't Care About Your Soul (Or The Scripture)

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As fall arrives and moves into winter, and with school back in session, women's groups at churches are revving up for "Bible studies." If they are Southern Baptist, or are otherwise prone to utilize the spiritually dangerous wares from Lifeway, one of the prevalent "teachers" being promoted is Priscilla Shirer.

This is a reminder about the danger of Shirer. It does not take much discernment to recognize her as a false teacher with toxic teaching. If Christ's presentation of the antithetical "two paths" is correct (Matthew 7:13) – and, OF COURSE, it is – Shirer's anti-orthodox, anti-Biblical teaching falls on that undesirable, though emotionally appealing, wide path. She promotes a contemplative, emotions-based, mystical form of faith that is completely foreign to "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

If you are in a church that will, this fall, promote Shirer's curricula for women's "Bible" studies, know this: it is evidence that the pastor and leadership of that church do not practice Biblically-commanded discernment. (1 John 4:1, Philippians 1:9-10, Colossians 2:8, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, Romans 12:2, Romans 16:17-18) They are not "contending" for the "sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3) of the faith.

(Indeed, ask yourself the question, what wolves – if any – is my pastor warning me against? It's a critical part of his role as a shepherd, but one that is virtually absent in the modern evangelical church. Most prefer, it seems, to keep you engaged with popular falseness, rather than edified and challenged by clear Scriptural truth.)

They are yielding, rather, to the popular embrace that bestselling authors tend to garner. But "best" doesn't mean it is "best" for edifying your soul, "best" for teaching sound Biblical truth, or "best" for providing valid Scriptural encouragement. It's "best" because it's selling. Popularity, however, is no gauge for soundness. Jesus, you may recall,

was not a particularly popular fellow when He trod the dusty trails of 1st century Galilee.

In 2009, LifeWay Press, the publishing and retail arm affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, published Shirer's booklet, *Is That You God? A Taste of Discerning The Voice of God*. It should not require a pastor, or a Bible-imbibing believer, to go much farther than the introduction of this booklet to recognize the spiritual peril Shirer represents. While not negating Scripture, what Shirer does is a common enough practice acceptable in charismatic, prosperity gospel circles, but is thoroughly disdained by orthodox, Biblical Christianity. She promotes extra-biblical revelation.

“Before you read any further, let me assure you of an important point. To not speak contradicts God's nature. The second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, is called the Word (see John 1:1). That designation stands at odds with silence. God loved you enough to die for you; He loves you enough to communicate with you. The Lord and and will speak to you if you've placed your faith in Jesus. First, however, you must expect and anticipate that the divine voice of God can ring in your ears and heart.”
Priscilla Shirer

While her premise seems innocuously agreeable – disregarding the hint of the dangerous “God is love and nothing else” theology – Shirer goes beyond the bounds of Scripture by emphasizing that God will speak to you personally, privately, and specifically. But there is no Scripture that teaches this mystical “it's all about me” mode of divine interaction.

“Throughout this booklet we will focus on the Holy Spirit's role in tuning our spiritual ears to the sound of God's voice.” Priscilla Shirer

Here is the first evidence that Shirer is serving up wide-path teaching. (Matthew 7:13) Nowhere does Scripture instruct, compel, or defend the need for a believer to “focus on the Holy Spirit.” In fact, from the highly recommended Strange Fire conference, John MacArthur made the following point:

“Show me a person obsessed with the Holy Spirit, and I'll show you a person not filled with the Holy Spirit.” John MacArthur

The Holy Spirit never points a believer to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always points the believer to Jesus in the Word.

“I don’t know about you, but I want God’s specific revelation to flow through my heart to impact my choices and path. When I say I want to hear from God, I mean that I need to know what job He wants me to take. I need to know what spouse He wants me to marry. I need to know whether He’s calling me into fulltime ministry or if He wants me to stay on my full-time, corporate job. I need to know if I’m supposed to buy this house or that one. I need to know if I’m supposed to live in Chicago or Dallas. I need specifics. I’m looking for details.” Priscilla Shirer

Now ...right this moment ... you or I can randomly turn on “Christian” television and probably quickly find cosmetically-gifted, finely dressed charlatans proclaiming – with specificity – the “word of the Lord.” A poor fellow in Detroit with a cyst on his left lower lung will be healed. The Lord told the charlatan, you see. It’s common enough that this nonsense sadly passes as “Christianity.” But it’s also clear enough to be easily recognized – by the authentic believer – as diabolical. God does not work this way. Neither does He operate as Shirer suggests, with “specific revelation” to guide her. It’s wide path charlatanry that sounds appealing ... and sells ... to the undiscerning.

Shirer continues building her case for private revelation by reminding readers that “fifteen times the New Testament records, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:9).’ While she does not say these verses mean the physical ear, but refer rather “to a spiritual ear,” she twists these words of Christ to imply that each believer has a mystical, inner ability to hear God speak. We just need to “lean in and listen.”

This is Scripture-twisting deception. Christ’s references to “hearing” or “seeing” refer not to apprehending the personal revelation of God’s voice, but the personal understanding of God’s message in His Word. Christ Himself used parables so that “seeing they may not perceive.” (Mark 4:12) Meaning – understanding what Scripture means by what it says – is revealed to the believer. Paul speaks about the prevalence of “zeal” without understanding. “For I bear witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” (Romans 10:2) And guess

where you get that “knowledge?” Right. Scripture. Zeal? Worthless without it.

“When you become a Christian, you receive the supernatural ability to hear God’s guidance and specific direction for your life.” Priscilla Shirer

You shouldn’t need fireworks, warning tocsins or “danger ahead” alarms going off to catch the extra-biblical emphasis of Shirer in this statement. Clearly, if your pastor and church tolerate someone who touts this as complicit with Christian faith, you have evidence that reliance on Scripture as the supreme authority for the believer is a secondary concern. “Examine yourself, to see if you are in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5) would be the appropriate response.

Shirer completes her introduction with a soothing, almost-sounds-Biblical appeal.

“I live in awe that the God of the universe wants to talk to me, but I am so glad He does! As we study the Holy Spirit’s awesome role in connecting our ears to God’s heart, lay aside the doubts. Let go of your fears. Quiet your mind. Hush. Our Shepherd calls...” Priscilla Shirer

Tah-dah. There you have, in a nutshell, Shirer’s summary statement of her heresy-rich teaching. It’s called contemplative prayer and it is an ever-increasingly popular false form of faith. In order to engage in this, Shirer encourages readers to “lay aside the doubts,” which, of course, means lay aside the Bible.

“Quiet your mind. Hush.” Why? Because, unlike what Scripture actually teaches – a renewed mind (Romans 12:2) engaged with the revealed truth of God within His Word– Shirer teaches a disengaged mind, one turned inward towards self rather than outwards towards God and His Word. This is mysticism. It is not Christian. It is not Biblical. It is not orthodox. And ... it is not “narrow path.”

As though Shirer’s preference for extra-biblical heresy wasn’t evident enough from her introduction, a few pages into chapter one, she removes any doubt by glowingly citing perhaps the preeminent proponent of contemplative spirituality.

“But, as author Dallas Willard said, “Far be it from me to deny that spectacular experiences occur or that they are, sometimes at least, given by God.” Priscilla Shirer

Like Shirer, Dallas Willard is a wolf. His works emphasize contemplative prayer, subjective spiritualism, and techniques drawn from paganism, Roman Catholicism, eastern philosophy, and new age methodologies. Slathered with ill-used Scripture, these techniques have become “Christianized” and are increasingly accepted as correct disciplines for the Christian faith. While they are not remotely Christian teachings, they have deceived many ... all the while the enemy laughs at the lack of discernment.

But Shirer confirms her alignment with Willard’s false teaching:

“I believe as he, however, that “the still small voice— or the interior or inner voice, as it is also called—is the preferred and most valuable form of individualized communication for God’s purposes.” -Priscilla Shirer

Uh, nope. No. This is pure pagan mysticism. God has spoken in His Word and, apart from it, not in your head or your heart. In response to Shirer’s emphasis on her spiritual “inner voice” – one that is completely absent in the teaching of Scripture (Paul instructed Timothy to “preach the word,” not to share what his inner, spiritual ear was hearing) – and her eagerness to abandon Scripture as sufficient, consider this observation from a giant of answered prayer from the halls of faithful Christendom.

“The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions.” -George Mueller

Nowhere does Scripture teach that the believer should go outside of Scripture for faithful guidance from God. One of the reasons we have “hidden your Word in my heart” (Psalm 119:11) is because the Holy Spirit uses that Word to bolster us in moments of temptation and to encourage us in moments of doubt. God has clearly, definitively, and sufficiently revealed His truth to us in His Word.

Scripture itself is replete with self-proclaiming evidence of its own sufficiency. (See a helpful list below.) While every believer is familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16 reminding us of the “God-breathed” authority of Scripture, we often miss less obvious assurances of its sufficiency. Consider Christ’s well-known words from Matthew 4:4 ...

But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

What believers often miss is the little word “every” from this verse. “Every word” serves as the spiritual sustenance from which our life of faith is nourished. And “every word” is found exclusively IN the Word, the Bible. It is a certainty that neither Shirer nor any authentic believer has fully comprehended “every word” that has come from “the mouth of God” in Holy Scripture. And it is an equal certainty that no other “words” are forthcoming from the mystical experiences Shirer promotes.

“Contrary to what many are teaching today, there is no need for additional revelations, visions, words of prophecy, or insights from modern psychology. In contrast to the theories of men, God’s Word is true and absolutely comprehensive. Rather than seeking something more than God’s glorious revelation, Christians need only to study and obey what they already have. Scripture is sufficient.” -John MacArthur

The current appeal for mystical, spiritualized, esoteric faith is perhaps unparalleled in Christian history. But its eager reception by undiscerning churches, pastors, and lay leaders poses authentic jeopardy for the believer. While the authentic believer is assured of salvation, the remaining option for the enemy is to thwart, frustrate, and nullify our effectiveness. If our faith is wrecked (1 Timothy 1:19) and we become useless to the Lord through the embrace of unsound teaching, the enemy has shut down a believer who should be a valiant voice for truth in an otherwise darkening world. The teaching of contemplative spirituality, as Shirer promotes, is a powerful, popular, diabolical weapon to frustrate authentic Biblical faith.

Chasing a mystical voice, rather than relying on God's revelation in Scripture, is a maneuver that can quickly mitigate the faithfulness of an authentic believer. As Voddie Baucham quipped, "The Lord told me so' is no substitute for "the Bible says." Indeed, the apostle Peter reminds us that we need nothing else because we have that "knowledge of him who called us." (2 Peter 1:3-4)

This fall and winter, you might be able to gauge the concern for the edification of your soul by your church and its leadership by the Bible studies it will offer to you. If Priscilla Shirer is among them, know this ... you're being given a clue that it disregards discernment and implicitly supports extra-biblical revelation. It willingly embraces teaching not founded on the "knowledge of him who called us" as revealed to us in the Word. In fact, it will be tolerating something quite contrary to that Word.

Though such "woman" pleasing curricula may be acceptable to undiscerning churches, the question is, is it acceptable to you?

Please, don't be misled by "mis-studies" from dangerous teachers that serve to scratch itching ears. (2 Timothy 4:3) Instead, be a disciple ... "abide in my Word." (John 8:31)