

Letter to the Editor: Tens of Thousands Introduced to Contemplative Advocates Gungor and David Crowder at Greg Laurie's Harvest Crusade

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Lighthouse Trails
Editors

To Lighthouse Trails:

Did you see where Greg Laurie had Gungor performing at [his crusade this past weekend](#)? I didn't see it, I only read that they were performing on Saturday night. Then Sunday night, 2000+ churches ([many] Calvary Chapels, I'm assuming) were broadcasting the crusade in their churches. _____

Our Comments: This is another strong indicator that mainstream evangelical Christianity is going contemplative. In this particular case, tens of thousands of people were introduced to contemplative advocates Michael Gungor and David Crowder.

Regarding the connection between the band Gungor and Calvary Chapel, in June 2011 Lighthouse Trails wrote an article titled "[Another Calvary Chapel Hosts a Gungor Concert](#)". The article pointed out that Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale and Calvary Chapel St. Petersburg (both in Florida) had hosted events with Michael Gungor's band.

As shown in that article, Gungor is an advocate for contemplative prayer. The article stated:

"[O]n the Gungor website blog, Michael Gungor (head of the band) is giving [detailed information](#) on how to practice contemplative meditation in a three part article. We think it is necessary to take a closer examination of this three part article written by Michael Gungor. We hope this will help skeptical readers who think perhaps Lighthouse Trails is being too critical of Calvary Chapel to better understand our concerns.

"[In the first part](#) of Michael Gungor's article, he explains to his readers that he went on a "spiritual pilgrimage" in September 2010 that incorporated a week to Italy and a week to Spain. Gungor states: "The first week was a week of silence and meditation at a spiritual retreat that I found by googling 'best spiritual retreats in the world.'" He said that he went on this pilgrimage because he was "on the brink" and "didn't really know what [he] believed in." Gungor began his journey with a trip to the Vatican where he heard the Pope speak: "not a bad way to start out my spiritual journey. Made me want to be Catholic actually." After this, Gungor caught a flight to Assisi and on the flight he "listened to a couple Rob Bell sermons on [his] ipod." Gungor explains that the retreat was "a cross religious retreat, so they had statues of Mary in the room next to a Buddha next to a Hindu something or other." Part of the week of silence included times called "prayer movements," where participants "slowly wav[ed] [their] arms around, turning in circles and kneeling in the grass . . . It was a lot of 'now the river that gave us everything is taking everything back' kind of stuff." Gungor writes in his journal at the retreat:

Peace. We just came back from our first prayer movement meditation, and I feel so close to God right now. So close that "You" almost feels funny. I get why one might say close to everything. I was going to say some sort of defensive, fearful statement clarifying that I'm not talking about pantheism. But I don't need to be afraid.

God is beautiful.

Light and essence and love of the purest kind. God is something to be experienced not to "believe" in? God is too big to be believed in or not believed in. God is. Am I? Today, yes.

[In part 2](#) of Gungor's article, he does what most emerging figures do – he de-emphasizes beliefs and doctrine, calling evangelism a “pyramid scheme” and says in many ways he agrees with the “new atheists.” He says he doesn't “believe in the old guy in the sky,” talking about God, adding:

To me, God is the basic Reality of the universe. God is what is. That's how Moses wrote that God introduced Himself, isn't it? “I am that I am.”

God is.

Whatever is, that is God.

“Gungor tells his readers that “encountering” God is more important than beliefs and doctrine. In [part 3](#) of his article, he teaches how to “encounter” God, through meditation. “Assisi helped me discover a new discipline for me that I can't believe I had gone so long without. Meditation.” He adds:

I had tried meditating a handful of times before, but it never really did that much for me. So I stopped. But in Assisi, we would get up every morning and meditate with each other for an hour. Then we'd do a movement meditation, then we'd go and meditate on our own for most of the day, and then we'd get together at night one more time and meditate for another half hour before going to bed. That's a lot of meditation.

And I finally got it. Now I understand why people from pretty much all religions do this.

“Gungor isn't talking about biblical meditation where one ponders on and thinks about the Word of God. That is not something “all religions do.” He is talking about eastern-style meditation where either the breath (or something else) is focused upon or a word or phrase is repeated.

“A de-emphasis in doctrine and beliefs is very common among those who practice contemplative meditation. Why is this? Because the meditator is going into altered states of consciousness during meditation, he is entering into what we believe are demonic realms (that's a hard thing to hear for someone who is practicing contemplative). The result of ongoing meditation is spiritual deception. After awhile a meditator begins to see himself as connected to everything and everyone. He also begins to believe that God is *ineverything* and everyone. Eventually, for the Christian who practices meditation, the doctrines of Christianity begin to grow dim and become less important than how he once may have viewed them. And once these doctrines diminish, even the doctrine of the atonement can take on new meaning (e.g. how could a loving God send His son to a violent death for the sins of others?). We believe this is the spirituality that many of these young people like Michael Gungor and [Ann Voskamp](#) could end having if they continue on this contemplative path.

“And that is why we hold Calvary Chapel and other denominations responsible for what they are doing. As Christian leaders, they do not have the right to promote people with these views, because such promotion only propagates the deception. The Bible says so – not us. Calvary Chapel claims to be a Bible-centered organization with mature Christian pastors who adhere to the Gospel; but a lot of misrepresentation is going on these days. There are many well-meaning Christians who attend Calvary Chapels, and we are sure there are Calvary Chapel pastors who would never consider having Gungor do a concert at their church. But two of their large churches *are* doing that, and a mixed message is being sent out from Calvary Chapel.

“Just as with other denominations, pastors (and congregants) within the Calvary Chapel movement have a responsibility to speak up against serious compromises within their organization, especially if those compromises

are ones that represent “another gospel” and “another Jesus” as does the contemplative prayer movement and the emerging church movement. If a pastor cannot speak up, then according to Scripture, he should separate himself (come out from among them) and by thus doing so, protect his flock and the message of the Cross.”

David Crowder, another invited band to the Crusade, is also a contemplative advocate. Crowder is author of [Praise Habit: Finding God in Sunsets and Sushi](#), where he encourages the practice of [lectio divina](#) and references and quotes contemplative/emerging figure Walter Brueggemann a number of times. It is Brueggemann who endorsed the back cover (along with Brian McLaren) of Alan Jones atonement denying book, *Reimagining Christianity*.

Some may say that Greg Laurie's Harvest Crusade leads many people to Christ so introducing new converts to contemplative musicians should be overlooked. But the contemplative “Christ” is not the Christ of the Bible (as Lighthouse Trails has shown over and over this past decade); thus, how can pointing people to a false Christ ever be justified? While intentions may be good, that doesn't negate the results of doing the wrong thing; and while top names like Gungor and David Crowder may draw the crowds, the fact is, including contemplative advocates in an evangelistic outreach makes no sense and can ultimately lead new converts down the wrong path.

Related:

[New Book and Upcoming Conference Bring More Confusion Out of Calvary Chapel Movement](#)

[Evangelical Leaders Continue to Share Platforms with Emerging/New Spirituality Teachers](#)

[Part 2: The Facts Behind My Departure from Calvary Chapel – by Roger Oakland](#)

[Christian Leaders Remain Silent on Warning of Apostasy in the Church – Attempt to Discredit Contenders of the Faith](#)

[“Death by Church” – Emergent New Paradigm Pastor to Speak at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa](#)