

May 2016

# Trumpet Call

Effective Christian action for Truth, Justice and Righteousness

## Mindfulness

### Not just a Battle for the Mind



This is the first of a series of Trumpet Calls on this subject. There is now a recognisably aggressive campaign to introduce and promote the Buddhist practice of Mindfulness into all spheres of our national life. Of particular concern is its use and promotion in primary schools and all levels of education, often without parents being made fully aware of all the available evidence.

Mindfulness promotes a world view and philosophy that is profoundly at odds with the revelation of scripture and the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. It is in complete conflict with our Nation's Judaeo-Christian foundations and heritage. Jesus embraced our humanity, shared in our suffering and bore our sin. Buddhist Mindfulness denies all three of these truths and instead promotes increased awareness of oneself as a way to detach from any form of suffering. Sin has no place within Mindfulness and it avoids entirely any sense of responsibility for one's actions.

The Maranatha briefing document on Mindfulness can be downloaded free from the 'Know' section of the new Maranatha website, or obtained from the Maranatha office at 50p + p&p.

## FACTS

- **A clear agenda.** There has been a concerted, sustained, highly-funded campaign to promote the Buddhist mediation technique of Mindfulness throughout the UK. It is being widely promulgated across business, government, health, sport, the workplace and education. *"Our long-term vision is of the UK as a group of mindful nations"* (Mindful Nation report by the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group, October 2015)
- **Policy setting.** Two proponents of Mindfulness founded 'The Mindfulness Initiative' in 2013. Parliamentarians were lobbied and 115 MPs and Peers, with a similar number of staff, completed an 8-week Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy course. The Mindfulness Initiative then supported Parliamentarians in the setting up of the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG). This produced a report, in October 2015, with the stated aim of *"influencing party manifestos.... hoping to influence the incoming government."* *"So far as I know, no other legislative assembly in the world is giving this kind of attention to the potential benefits of Mindfulness."* (Vishvapani Blomfield, WiseAttention.)
- **Finance and funding.** Mindfulness is big business. The Headspace app, launched by a former Buddhist monk, is worth £25 million. Substantial national and local public funds have already been used to teach and promote mindfulness; more is sought.
- **Truth is compromised.** Proponents assert that mindfulness is successful in combating the effects of ever-increasingly stressful lifestyles and family breakdown, and in treating diverse mental health problems. These claims are said to be backed by scientific evidence, including a recommendation by NICE (National Institute of Clinical Excellence). The recommendation by NICE is limited to the specific instance of possible help in the prevention of recurrent depression. There is little long-term clinical evidence. Whilst it is acknowledged that Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism, it is promoted as a spiritually neutral technique.
- **A specifically Buddhist spiritual exercise.** Mindfulness is rooted in the Buddhist religion, in particular Zen Buddhism, and occult experience. *"Buddha taught about controlling the mind"*

**2,500 years ago. Through meditation practice we control our mind.”** (Gen Kelsang Sangye, Dorjehang Buddhist Centre, London, promoting Mindfulness in Schools).

Right Mindfulness is a central component of the Buddhist eight-fold path. **“When Right Mindfulness is present, the Four Noble Truths and the other elements of the Eightfold Path are also present.... Right Mindfulness is traditionally the seventh part of the Eightfold Path of Buddhism ... each part of the path supports the other seven parts, and so they should be thought of as connected in a circle or woven into a web”.** (Zen Teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching).

- **Children are being targeted.** Mindfulness is being actively promoted throughout our schools. It appears in the PSHE and Enrichment curriculum, drop-in sessions and clubs, in both primary and secondary schools often without fully informed parental consent. Students are encouraged to practice it at home. **“My passion is to get this on the National Curriculum. I’ve been working on this for ten years.”** (Richard Burnett, Mindfulness in schools Project).
- **Professional concern.** Mindfulness is hailed by some as helping students cope with fear and anxiety, enabling them to be calmer, to concentrate and improve performance. But professionals and academics are raising serious concerns about both the practice and the whole premise of the need to introduce any such ‘therapies’ on a large scale. **“There is a fantasy that somehow we live in an unusually difficult world; It isn’t a new condition. Instead of dealing with these existential problems in a mature kind of a way we look for these quick fix therapeutic solutions”.** (Frank Furedi, Sociologist. Kent University). It does not equip children to engage with and resolve issues or conflicts with others. **“What Mindfulness does is it distracts people from the real problems they face. The real question is how you integrate into your life ways of intelligently coping with issues rather than simply ignoring them and allowing them to store up.”** (Frank Furedi)
- **Evidence that Mindfulness could be harmful.** Increasingly, concerns have been reported of the negative and even dangerous impact of Mindfulness upon the emotional and mental health of adults and children, including some of the most vulnerable children in our society. Unwelcome memories of childhood trauma have re-surfaced in some and panic attacks have been induced in others. **“Children are the most vulnerable and are totally unable to critique or assess such ideas; for that reason, they make the best targets.”** (Former astrologer, New Age/Buddhist practitioner Marcia Montenegro).

## **PRAY:**

- For greater awareness and understanding of the true nature of Mindfulness, particularly within the Church.
- For an awakening to the truth about the spiritual realities and consequences of Mindfulness for individuals and for our nation.
- For Politicians, education, crime and healthcare professionals - that they may recognise and accept these concerns and look elsewhere for solutions.
- For children and vulnerable adults to be deterred and protected from any attempts to promote this technique.
- For those engaging in Mindfulness, especially children, to have an encounter with the living Christ Jesus and His Spirit.
- That the Church will rise to this challenge by making opportunities available for people to discover the reality of Jesus as Healer and Prince of Peace.

## **ACT: Our first step is to gather information, NOT to campaign.**

- Find out more about Mindfulness, its true nature and origins. Download and read our briefing paper.
- Find out whether schools local to you are using Mindfulness for children or staff. If so, politely approach the Head Teacher and ask if you may see any material that they are using.
- Research the availability of Mindfulness in your area, including within the Health Service.
- Contact Linda Corrigan at the Maranatha office if you feel called to be part of a ‘strategy group’ to pray and plan our next steps.