

Christians and the New Age by Dr Gareth Leyshon

What's the New Age all about?

Do you want to know what's going to happen to you in the future? Do you want power over someone else – to harm an enemy, heal a friend, or win over your beloved? Do you want to connect with the spirit world, and be a healed and wholesome person? Chances are, anything offering these which you see on the high street, in the newspapers, or on the net, is a 'New Age' practice. The New Age is not one organised movement or conspiracy; it's a new acceptable culture, one in which people feel open to spiritual things, and in which 'anything goes'. To give just a few examples, horoscopes, tarot cards, ouija boards, reiki therapy, spell kits and eastern meditation centres could all be labelled 'New Age'.

Should Christians be involved?

Becoming a Christian means making a commitment to Jesus Christ – an exclusive commitment, in which you promise that He is the only source of spiritual power which you will turn to. Having faith in Jesus means trusting Him with your future, without trying to get a 'sneak preview' from any kind of fortune-telling. It doesn't matter whether a particular New Age technique truly works or is a load of invented baloney – anything which invites you to peek into the future, or claims to use power from a source other than Jesus, is an invitation to betray Him. And because Christians have a duty to help other people come to know Jesus, it's important not to even give the impression that you are willing to turn to these other powers: Saint Paul knew that eating meat which had been sacrificed in pagan Roman temples wouldn't harm him, but he wouldn't do it in case people claimed that Paul worshipped other gods as well as Jesus.

What about non-Christians?

God's desire is that everyone on earth should come to know and love and worship His Son, Jesus Christ. Turning to other spiritual powers is wrong for everyone, not just Christians. But if you love Jesus and are worried about friends who don't know Him, but who are involved in New Age stuff, it's probably not helpful to try to get them to stop what they are doing: they would call you a Christian killjoy. Instead, find some way to introduce them to Jesus first – then, once they have fallen in love with Him, you can lead them to see that they can't be Christians while still turning to the New Age.

Aren't some New Age practices truly harmless?

Yes. Some ideas and therapies that people call 'New Age' have no special problems for Christians. Caring for the environment, for instance, or using herbal medicines, are good things in themselves. It's only where they get wrapped up in spiritual beliefs that they end up off-limits for Christians. But any practice that calls on other spiritual powers, even for the purpose of healing people, is not something Christians can get involved in. Instead, turn to Jesus at one of the many kinds of prayer service – sacramental, Eucharistic, charismatic – where Christians pray for healing.

I've been involved – what should I do?

Simply find a holy priest and make a confession. Jesus is longing to forgive you for turning to other powers, all you have to do ask. If you have been using New Age objects – tarot cards, ouija boards, spell books, etc. – destroy them as a sign of turning fully to Jesus, and to keep yourself from temptation. Rejoice that Jesus has called you to a faithful and exclusive relationship with Himself.