

Rick Warren's Daniel Plan – The New Age/Eastern Meditation Doctors Behind the Saddleback Health

Rick Warren's Daniel Plan

By Warren B. Smith

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.—(2 Corinthians 2:11)

Who would have believed it? Occult/New Age doctors being invited into the church to teach Christians how to be healthy? On January 15, 2011 a fifty-two week health and wellness program—the Daniel Plan—was initiated at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church. More than six thousand people attended the well promoted and carefully staged event. Warren took the opportunity to announce that his own personal goal was to lose 90 pounds in 2011. The Daniel Plan website states that “the Daniel Plan envisions starting a movement so the result is better physical and spiritual health for current and future generations.”¹ It describes how Rick Warren “recruited three best-selling authors” to create and oversee the Daniel Plan Curriculum—Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Daniel Amen, and Dr. Mark Hyman.² Although these three physicians are all involved with New Age teachings, they describe themselves respectively as a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew.

On their church's Daniel Plan website, Saddleback pastor Brandon Cox tried to defend Rick Warren's indefensible decision to recruit three New Age doctors to implement a Christian health and wellness program. In his “Pastoral Response” to the question “Why did Saddleback Church choose to use these Doctors who have been linked to other beliefs?,” Cox wrote:

“Pastor Rick knows each of these Doctors personally and has the utmost trust in their ability to advise us about matters related to physical health.” In a statement reminiscent of Little Red Riding Hood's “grandmother,” Cox goes on to state: “These Doctors are helping us as friends, but are in no way advising our church on spiritual matters.”³

By repeating and emphasizing the term “physical health” three times in the response, Saddleback was obviously trying to distance itself from Oz, Amen, and Hyman's New Age beliefs. But the “we're only using them for physical health purposes” defense was not convincing. All three physicians are alternative medicine/holistic health practitioners who teach the indivisibility

of “mind, body, spirit” in achieving optimum well-being. In other words, their New Age spiritual beliefs are necessarily embedded in their medical practice, their best-selling books, and their public appearances.

Dr. Mehmet Oz

Dr. Oz is the cardiovascular surgeon who was featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show for five years before gaining his own popular daytime TV show. He also has a daily talk show on Oprah & Friends satellite radio and writes columns for several magazines including Oprah’s O Magazine. Operating out of Columbia University’s Presbyterian Hospital, Dr. Oz is like a modern-day shaman as he mixes traditional medicine with a wide variety of occult/New Age practices. In *The Way of the Shaman*, a “foremost resource and reference on shamanism,” Michael Harner—an anthropologist who “has practiced shamanism and shamanic healing” for several decades⁴—gives the following definition of a shaman:

A shaman is a man or woman who enters an altered state of consciousness—at will—to contact and utilize an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power, and to help other persons. The shaman has at least one, and usually more, “spirits” in his personal service.⁵

The following is a sampling of what Dr. Oz subtly, and not so subtly, incorporates into his medical practice and into his life. For instance, Dr. Oz’s prominent endorsement is displayed on the front cover of self-described psychic Ainslie MacLeod’s book *The Instruction: Living the Life Your Soul Intended*. Juxtaposing the phrase “spiritual well-being” with the word “purpose,” Oz writes:

I recommend this book to those who seek greater spiritual well-being and a better understanding of their life’s purpose.⁶

In Oz’s endorsement of another Ainslie MacLeod book, *The Transformation: Healing Your Past Lives to Realize Your Soul’s Potential*, Dr. Oz makes it clear that his approach to physical health is inextricably bound up with his beliefs regarding spiritual health. They cannot be neatly separated out as Rick Warren’s Saddleback staff would have everyone believe. Dr. Oz’s front cover endorsement states:

Ainslie MacLeod is at the frontier of exploration into the soul and its profound influence on our physical selves.⁷

In *The Transformation*, MacLeod’s spirit guides tell MacLeod’s readers “that we are standing on the brink of the greatest leap in human consciousness in 55,000 years.”⁸ Later, in a psychic reading that MacLeod gives to one of his clients, his spirit guides refer his client to Dr. Daniel Amen for help.⁹ Amen, of course being one of the other two Daniel Plan physicians. In *The Instruction*, among other things, MacLeod teaches readers how to meditate and contact spirit guides. In fact, spirit guides are referred to a whopping 175 times in the book—40 times before you even get to Chapter One. In his introduction, MacLeod describes how the skeptic in him used to read a book like his and think—“Who died and made this guy an expert?” In his own case, MacLeod said the answer was his spirit guides—one of them being his deceased Uncle John.¹⁰

Dr. Oz’s New Age affinity for psychics, spirit guides, past lives, and contacting the dead was showcased on his March 15, 2011 program—just two months after the launch of the Daniel Plan—titled, “Psychic Mediums: Are they the New Therapists?” The promo on his website read: “Can talking to lost loved ones heal your grief? Hear why psychic John Edward believes you can talk to the dead.”¹¹

On a January 6, 2010 Dr. Oz Show, Dr. Oz revealed what he believed to be “the most important alternative medicine treatment” for his viewers in that coming year. His #1 “Oz’s Order” was to “Try Reiki”¹²—an occult bodywork practice that incorporates the channeled guidance of spirit guides. Dr. Oz was reported in one press release as stating: “Reiki is one of my favorites, we’ve been using it for years in the Oz family, and we swear by it.”¹³

On a video on Dr. Oz’s website, New Age leader Deepak Chopra teaches viewers how to meditate.¹⁴ Chopra’s 2009 book *Reinventing the Body, Resurrecting the Soul* features Dr. Oz’s back cover endorsement.¹⁵ Dr. Oz is a personal practitioner of Transcendental Meditation,¹⁶ which was founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. He has also practiced Yoga for over twenty years¹⁷ and is devoted to the New Age teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg—teachings that resonate with the mystical Sufi branch of the Muslim faith that he and his wife most identify with.¹⁸

Dr. Oz wrote the Foreword to *US*—a New Age book written by his wife Lisa, who is a Reiki Master¹⁹—a book that opens with a quote on oneness by New Age patriarch Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In his Foreword, Oz

credits his wife's spiritual influence while also mentioning that a number of years ago he "matriculated at Oprah University."²⁰ Dr. Oz endangers those who put their trust in him by interjecting his occult/New Age beliefs into his medical practice.

Presumably, the "Open Heart meditation" given to Ainslie MacLeod by his spirit guides²¹ is not used by Dr. Oz before he does open heart surgery. One thing is for spiritual sure, Dr. Oz may be a skilled cardiovascular surgeon, but spiritually he is overlooking one of the most important aspects of the heart. God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, warns, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Multiple references in the Bible also warn about the extremely dangerous and deceptive nature of "familiar" and "seducing" spirits that Dr. Oz is in the process of normalizing through his extreme influence in the world and now in the church (see Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 1 Timothy 4:1, etc.).

Dr. Daniel Amen

Dr. Amen is a child and adolescent psychiatrist, best-selling author, and medical director of the Amen Clinics for Behavioral Medicine. In his book *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*, he encourages readers to "Learn and use self-hypnosis and meditation on a daily basis."²² In *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body*, Amen, a self-professed Christian, specifically recommends a Hindu Kundalini form of meditation called Kirtan Kriya. He instructs his readers to chant "sa ta na ma" repeatedly while simultaneously doing repetitive finger movements.²³ In a New Age world that says "everything happens for a reason" and "there are no accidents," the first five letters of this Hindu meditation spell the name of Satan. The last three letters just so happen to be the abbreviated letters of the American Medical Association (AMA). Is this pure coincidence, some kind of cosmic joke, or spiritual mockery?

In his book *The Brain in Love* (formerly titled *Sex on the Brain*), Dr. Amen recommends tantric sex to his readers. He writes that tantra "is a term applied to several schools of Hindu yoga in which sex is worshipped."²⁴ He states that "[s]ome tantra yoga teachers recommend meditative practices that also share elements with Kundalini yoga, where subtle streams of energy are raised in the body by means of posture, breath control, and movements."²⁵ He later adds:

After you have agreed to safe boundaries, you can take sex to a new level by investing in a few books or magazines. I write for Men's Health magazine and it is always filled with great sex tips for couples. Cosmopolitan and other magazines have playful ideas as well. Books on tantric sex or role-playing games can also be fun."²⁶

Dr. Amen's fascination with tantric sex and Kundalini yoga is very similar to the teachings of Indian gurus like Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and Swami Baba Muktananda. Dr. Amen's New Age sympathies are also evident in his willingness to write the Foreword to author Lucinda Bassett's *The Solution*. In her book, Bassett quotes New Age leaders Marianne Williamson, Eckhart Tolle, the Dalai Lama, Neale Donald Walsch, and others. She describes Walsch as "a spiritual messenger whose best-selling books and lectures profoundly touch the world."²⁷

Dr. Mark Hyman

Dr. Hyman is the chairman of the Institute of Functional Medicine and author of the best-selling book *The UltraMind Solution*. With its front cover endorsement by Dr. Mehmet Oz, *The UltraMind Solution* offers practical medical advice while at the same time recommending a number of New Age resources to his readers. For example, he recommends the website of New Age author and guided imagery proponent Belleruth Naparstek.²⁸ Her books and materials are designed to help people meditate, become more psychic, and connect with spirit guides. Her website describes how her materials are used worldwide by patients, hospitals, HMO's, government agencies, etc. Dr. Hyman and New Age leader Dr. Bernie Siegel are listed as two of Naparstek's "contributing health and mind-body health practitioners."²⁹ Siegel, of course being the New Age leader Rick Warren used to introduce the idea of hope and purpose in *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Like Dr. Oz and Dr. Amen, Dr. Hyman recommends meditation and yoga to his readers.³⁰

Dr. Hyman endorsed a New Age book titled *Power Up Your Brain—The Neuroscience of Enlightenment*. It is co-authored by shaman/medium Alberto Villoldo and neurologist David Perlmutter. The Foreword from the publisher states:

And now two men, two seers—a shaman and a scientist—are combining their experiences and expertise to explore the totality that includes all of the spirit world and all of the scientific world—as One.³¹

David Perlmutter writes:

For it had become clear to us that access to the Great Spirit or Divine Energy—that natural force which is called by so many names—is available to all. In a sense we are all shamans, and the most advanced teachings in cellular biology are validating lifestyle activities that for centuries, have been paving the way to enlightenment through meditative practices not just for the chosen few but for all who care to learn. Our collaboration explores the implications of this not only for individuals but for all of humanity.³²

Villoldo—who spoke at a 2011 Palm Springs Prophets Conference with New Age leader Barbara Marx Hubbard³³— writes:

During my years studying with the shamans, I learned about their belief in the Divine Mother, which we each have the potential to discover in nature. This was not the bearded old man whose image I had come to associate with “God.” Rather, this was a force that infused all creation, a sea of energy and consciousness that we all swim in and are part of. I came to understand that our Western notions of the divine are perhaps a masculine version of this life force that infuses every cell in our bodies, that animates all living beings, and that even fuels stars.³⁴

Power Up Your Brain includes a chapter recommending various “Shamanic Exercises” that include an invocation to the “Great Serpent.”³⁵ Dr. Hyman’s back cover endorsement of this book sits alongside New Age leaders Bernie Siegel and Greg Braden.

In his endorsement, Hyman betrays his belief in shamanism and the inextricable New Age link between physical and spiritual health. He writes:

The shaman and physician for millennia were the same person until the 19th century when they were split apart in the name of science. Now through the lens of 21st-century science, Villoldo and Perlmutter bring them back together, illuminating the web that links together our physical and metaphysical energy. For anyone feeling a loss of energy of body or soul, *Power Up Your Brain* is your guide to restoration and rejuvenation of your deepest energies.

Also referring to “restoration” in *The UltraMind Solution*, Dr. Hyman lists three New Age centers in his “Resources” section. Under the heading of “Restorative and Educational Retreats,” he recommends the Omega

Institute, the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, and the Shambhala Mountain Center.³⁶ Ainslie MacLeod—the Dr. Oz endorsed psychic—is a “faculty member” at both the Kripalu Center and the Omega Institute.³⁷ The Omega Institute offers a number of workshops led by key New Age leaders like Neale Donald Walsch, Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, and Alberto Villoldo. Classes such as “Conversations with God,” “Contacting the Spirit World,” “How Shamans Dream the World into Being,” and “Bootcamp for Goddesses,” are readily available to those following Dr. Hyman’s advice.³⁸ And at the Dr. Hyman endorsed Kripalu Center, New Age leader Deepak Chopra offers a workshop on his Dr. Oz endorsed book, *Reinventing the Body, Resurrecting the Soul*. In case people can’t make it to Saddleback Church, Dr. Daniel Amen also teaches a workshop at Kripalu.

Key Scriptures Regarding Rick Warren’s Daniel Plan

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. —(2 Corinthians 6:14)

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. —(Ephesians 5:11)

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils. —(1 Corinthians 10:21)

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way. —(Romans 14:13)

Shepherding the Church into a New Age/New Spirituality

In the 1990s, a well-known Christian leader rightly warned that alternative medicine and holistic health can provide an easy entryway for deceptive New Age teachings. He further warned that changing your diet can also end up changing your worldview. In other words, sometimes losing weight can also mean losing your soul. Speaking from his leadership role with the Christian Medical Association, Dr. David Stevens also urges great discretion regarding alternative health practitioners. He states: “Not only do we have to make a choice; we also have to evaluate the trustworthiness of each messenger and the validity of the message.”³⁹

The Christian Handbook to Alternative Medicine also warns, “Consider carefully not only the therapy but also the character and worldview of those offering the treatment.”⁴⁰ Thus, it is definitely “buyer beware” when it comes to mixed-bag physicians like Oz, Amen, and Hyman. But that doesn’t seem to matter to Rick Warren as he openly aligns himself with these New Age doctors and promises to make their joint Daniel Plan a worldwide phenomenon. Instead of sounding a warning trumpet and protecting the church from three New Age physicians, Warren praises them and trumpets his ungodly alliance with them.

One can only wonder if the prophet Daniel’s vision of the end days included a look at Rick Warren’s Daniel Plan—a compromised pastor and three New Age doctors with their psychics, spirit guides, tantric sex, necromancy, Yoga, Reiki, Transcendental and Kundalini “sa ta na ma” meditations and more—all in Daniel’s name. If so, it is no wonder the Bible records that he “fainted” and became “sick” for a number of days (Daniel 8:27).

It doesn’t make any difference in God’s scheme of things if Rick Warren stands slim and trim in front of an adoring church audience after losing 90 pounds. What may be remembered is that in the midst of all the self-congratulatory statistics and frenzied media hoopla, a finger suddenly appeared on the wall behind Rick Warren and wrote the following:

Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. —(Daniel 5:27)

To order copies of *Rick Warren’s Daniel Plan*, [click here](#).

Endnotes

1. *Week 11: Re-Focusing The Daniel Plan* (<http://danielplan.com/blogs/dp/dp-week-11-re-focusing-the-daniel-plan>).
2. *The Daniel Plan: What Makes it Different?* (<http://www.saddleback.com/thedanielplan/healthyhabits/whatsdifferent>).
3. Pastoral Response, Brandon Cox, Saddleback Church (<http://www.danielplan.com/toolsandresources/pastoralresponse>).
4. Michael Harner, Ph.D., *The Way of the Shaman* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980, 1990), back cover.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
6. Ainslie MacLeod, *The Instruction: Living the Life Your Soul Intended* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2007, 2009), front cover.
7. Ainslie MacLeod, *The Transformation: Healing Your Past Lives to*

- Realize Your Soul's Potential* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2010), front cover.
8. Ibid., front flap.
 9. Ibid., pp. 243-244.
 10. Ainslie MacLeod, *The Instruction*, op. cit., pp. 9, 12.
 11. "Psychic Mediums: Are they the New Therapists?," The Dr. Oz Show, aired 3/15/11 (<http://www.doctoroz.com/videos/are-psychicsnew-therapists-pt-1>).
 12. "'Try Reiki,' Dr. Oz Tells Millions on TV," 1/9/10, *The Reiki Digest* (<http://reikidigest.blogspot.com/2010/01/try-reiki-dr-oz-tells-millions-on-tv.html>).
 13. "Dr. Mehmet Oz Declares Reiki as His #1 Alternative Medicine Secret," 1/9/2010, Bio-Medicine (<http://news.bio-medicine.org/?q=medicine-news-1/dr-mehmet-oz-declares-reiki-as-his-231-alternative-medicine-secret-64270>).
 14. "Meditation Techniques Demonstrated by Deepak Chopra," The Dr. Oz Show, added to videos on 2/25/10, (<http://www.doctoroz.com/videos/deepak-chopra-meditation>).
 15. Deepak Chopra, *Reinventing the Body, Resurrecting the Soul: How to Create a New You* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, a division of Random House, Inc., 2009).
 16. *AARP The Magazine*, May/June 2010 issue, p. 82.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Lisa Oz, *US: Transforming Ourselves and the Relationships That Matter Most* (New York, NY: Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2010), p. 179.
 19. "'Try Reiki,' Dr. Oz Tells Millions on TV," op. cit.
 20. Lisa Oz, *US*, op. cit., p. x.
 21. Ainslie MacLeod, *The Instruction*, op. cit., p. 17.
 22. Daniel G. Amen, M.D., *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life* (New York, NY: Times Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1998), p. 302.
 23. Daniel G. Amen, M.D., *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, a division of Random House, Inc., 2010), p. 223.
 24. Daniel G. Amen, M.D., *The Brain in Love* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, a division of Random House, Inc., 2007), p. 144.
 25. Ibid., p. 145.
 26. Ibid., p. 148.
 27. Lucinda Bassett, *The Solution: Conquer Your Fear, Control Your Future* (New York, NY: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2011), p. 146.

28. Mark Hyman M.D., *The UltraMind Solution* (New York, NY: Scribner, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2009), p. 402. (Belleruth Naparstek's website recommended by Dr. Hyman: <http://www.healthjourneys.com>).
29. Our Practitioner Bios, Health Journeys (http://www.healthjourneys.com/practitioner_bios.asp).
30. Mark Hyman, *The UltraMind Solution*, op. cit., p. 384.
31. David Perlmutter, M.D., F.A.C.N., Alberto Villoldo, Ph.D., *Power Up Your Brain: The Neuroscience of Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Hay House, Inc., 2011), p. xiv.
32. Ibid., p. xviii.
33. The Prophets Conference (<http://www.greatmystery.org>).
34. David Perlmutter, Alberto Villoldo, *Power Up Your Brain*, op. cit., p. xxi.
35. Ibid., p. 154.
36. Mark Hyman, *The UltraMind Solution*, op. cit., p. 403.
37. Ainslie MacLeod, *The Transformation*, op. cit., About the Author, p. 327.
38. Omega Institute (<http://www.eomega.org>).
39. Donald O'Mathuna, Ph.D. and Walt Larimore, M.D., *Alternative Medicine: The Christian Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001, 2007), p. 9.
40. Ibid., p. 123.

Pastor Rick Warren's life has always been an open book. He spread the word about how to live a Christ-centered life in his best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Over the years, he and his wife, Kay, have shared heartbreaking experiences, including her battle with breast cancer and, more recently, the death of their son, Matthew. Now, in his new book, Warren, 59, founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, is trying to help people heal their health. Warren was inspired to create the plan after he baptized more than 800 people one day in November 2010. After lowering more than 145,000 pounds of weight into the water, Warren says he thought, "Wow! Everybody's fat!" Rick Warren clearly yoked with New Age Proponent Dr. Mark Hyman. 1 Kings 12:28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. Now in order to really get a feel for what the Daniel Plan was about I went on the website to read the materials and watch the videos offered. Most of it is very straightforward health advice. None of the above pagan/New Age practices were mentioned in anything that I viewed on Warren's Saddleback Church website. Again, Rick Warren's endorsement of doctors who use these spiritually dangerous methods is just error on his part. Rick Warren is the founder and senior pastor of Saddleback Church, an evangelical megachurch located in Lake Forest, California, currently the eighth-largest church in the United States. His book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, spawned a series of conferences on Christian ministry and evangelism. He is perhaps best known for the subsequent devotional, *The Purpose Driven Life*, which has sold over 30 million copies. New Age proponent Leonard Sweet, who calls himself an emergent church leader, trained many of Warren's church leaders and pastors at the 2008 Saddleback Small Groups Conference. Uses The Message paraphrase of the Bible for much of his writings.