

# Christianity and Hypnobabies?

**Q) I am considering using Hypnobabies for my baby's birth.** I have been fascinated with your program and how wonderful it seems. I am a little uneasy with the thought of being in an altered state. As a Christian, I am not sure if there would be any aspect of being altered that would be a conflict with my beliefs. I just have a slight uneasy feeling about my mind being hypnotized. It's possible that I don't understand hypnosis completely. Thank you.

**A) This is actually quite an intelligent question, and it does come up from time to time here at Hypnobabies!**

It is important to remember that hypnosis is a state of mind that we are all already in many times a day, so it's a very natural thing in our lives and is not an "altered state". We are automatically in hypnosis when driving, swimming, doing other sports, sitting in church or a lecture, reading, watching television or movies or on the computer (a screen of any kind) and when waking up or going to sleep. In Hypnobabies we are simply guiding that process in a very positive way to create an easy, fear-free comfortable childbirth experience.

Since our program is designed for women of every faith and belief system to use, it contains no "new-age" content. Many of our Hypnobabies moms are Christian and have had wonderful success with Hypnobabies while incorporating their beliefs into our hypnosis scripts and practice as well as adding prayer into the actual hypnosis when giving birth. We have come to realize that that women know what they need and will find it in Hypnobabies, adapting it perfectly and serenely to their own religious or non-religious belief systems. They always do.

Below are testimonials from Christian mothers who have used Hypnobabies for their own births, as well as articles written by Christian hypnotherapists.

## Comments from some of our Christian Hypno-Moms about their experiences with Hypnobabies:

**From Crystal in Washington:** As a Christian, using Hypnobabies was the most natural thing in the world for me. The slowing of brain waves that occurs with deep relaxation and hypnosis is the same state that occurs when we pray. That to me says that there is no conflict between hypnosis and Christianity, because God would not leave me vulnerable when praying, when praying is something I do so often!

Since you are always aware while in hypnosis, only thoughts that you desire will be accepted, you are always in complete control of your mind, just as you are when praying.

While some segments of Christianity feel that pain is still a necessary part of childbirth, others feel that since Christ died for our sins, we are no longer required to experience pain during birth. Since the vast majority of women choose some form of anesthesia, and most churches support them in this, hypnotic anesthesia is no more in conflict with our theology than an epidural.

In short, I can find no theological reason not to use Hypnobabies.

My reason for using Hypnobabies?

After two hospital births with epidurals that didn't work (and boy do I wish they did!) I used Hypnobabies for my 3rd birth. It worked so well I didn't know it was my birthing time until my water broke! My son was born in the car! My last Hypno-baby was born at home, painlessly, and joyously. For us, Hypnobabies was successful beyond our wildest dreams.

**From Kristin in Oregon:** I feel that my Christian beliefs are completely in line with what I learned with Hypnobabies. Nothing in the Hypnobabies program challenges or undermines my faith; in contrast, it has actually strengthened my belief in God's amazing power and the absolute miracle of how He created women's bodies, pregnancy, birth, and babies. I have found that learning eyes-open childbirth hypnosis is VERY useful for quieting my mind, and I now find it easier to pray and meditate, now that I've learned how to turn off my busy mind! I now often use my hypnosis to help me get quiet in my mind and my body, and then am able to pray with fewer distractions of physical discomfort or mental distraction.

In addition to the wonderful Hypnobabies pregnancy affirmations CD I listened to daily, I also added my own Christian affirmations, such as:

- The God who created this amazing world also made my body.
- God designed my body perfectly to give birth.
- I trust my body, my baby, and my birth to my loving Heavenly Father.
- I can rest safely in God's keeping power.
- God knit my baby together in my womb, and knows my baby by name already.
- My child is precious to the Lord.
- I commit my birthing to my loving God.

**From Emily in Washington:** As a Christian, I believe that hypnosis is a wonderful tool given to us by God, that has gotten a bad rap from people who have misrepresented it and/or misunderstood it. All hypnosis is self-hypnosis. No one will be exerting mind control over you to get you to do evil things. Some people are concerned that being in hypnosis opens up the subconscious mind to demonic spiritual control or influence. In fact, while in hypnosis you are in complete control of the experience. No one can cause you to act in a way that conflicts with your core beliefs or values. Choosing to enter hypnosis does not remove the covering of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe that as a Christian you are protected from all evil and the devil cannot lay claim to your mind even in a relaxed state. I can say wholeheartedly that my God is much bigger than that!

There may be a few hypnotists and/or hypnotherapists that incorporate occult practices into their scripts but I can guarantee you that this is NOT the case with Hypnobabies and is completely separate from the art and practice of hypnosis. I have listened to (and used!) all of the Hypnobabies scripts myself and they are spiritually neutral. There is no mention of chakras, past life regression, remote viewing, leaving your body or any other similar thing. They also very rarely, if ever, mention "trance" as sometimes people have a negative reaction to that word. The founder of Hypnobabies has worked diligently to ensure that Hypnobabies is based on medical hypno-anesthesia techniques without all the extra spiritual froofroo. These are the same techniques patients use to undergo major surgery when they are allergic to anesthesia. If you are still skeptical I encourage you to listen to the Hypnobabies "Relax Me!" script online to get a better idea what learning Hypnobabies will be like.

## Christianity and Hypnosis

by Janet Field, CHt, HCHI

A significant percentage of my Hypnobabies students are Christian - as am I! The way many of my Christian students choose to use hypnosis is to add to the more general birth-related suggestions given in class by using the scripture verses which mean the most to them and are deeply encouraging for them. During pregnancy and birth both partners find this extremely comforting and a very valuable assistance to a peaceful birth.

Because of the nature of hypnosis, women are in a deeply relaxed state when their partners read the scriptures to them. In this relaxed state, the subconscious mind imprints those words of scripture deeply and directly and responds to and acts on the encouragement - even in the face of possibly difficult circumstances.

For my Christian students, prayer usually becomes an integral part of the birth process, just as prayer is an integral part of their lives. The only difference is that, with the relaxation of hypnosis, prayers are taken in much, much more deeply and the heart responds to them that much more deeply.

Occasionally someone has expressed concern to me that hypnosis would leave them open to “evil” forces. Let me assure you - when *you* are using hypnosis, *you* are the one in control. You are simply relaxed. I say “when *you* are using hypnosis” because all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. Nobody does it “to you”. You are always in full control of your own thoughts and actions. In fact, I let people know at the beginning of a hypnosis/relaxation session that, at any time, they can bring themselves back to their full awareness - much the way you would open your eyes and discontinue a prayer or meditation if you needed your attention on a suddenly pressing matter at hand.

Dr. Larry Nims, a PhD psychologist with over 30 years’ clinical experience, works with clients using hypnosis. Dr. Nims’ works and articles about forgiveness are for a general audience, yet one can see the Lord’s hand in Dr. Nims’ work. Following is a paragraph from Dr. Nims. Through his words, I find one very positive description of the way some Christians use hypnosis for themselves.

“At the end of each hypnosis counseling session with all of my Christian clients, I ask them to say a prayer. The prayer focuses on the negative attitudes and actions that were involved in each of the problems that were treated in the session, and it invites the Lord to occupy these places and be the Lord of them. I always encourage Christians to use this prayer every time they use hypnosis on their own or in my office.”

Before and during my own work with students and clients, I like to stop and call on God in prayer, asking that I be used as an instrument of His healing love.

A simple search of the web will provide an abundance of additional information on Christianity and hypnosis.

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### HYPNOSIS AND PASTORAL HYPNOTHERAPY

The Rev. Dr. Prentice Kinser III, B.A., M.B.A., M.Div., D.Min., CPC, NBCCH, is Executive Director and Pastoral Counselor for the Blue Ridge Pastoral Counseling Centers, Inc. (BRPCC), is an ordained minister (Episcopal priest), has received a Doctor of Ministry degree in pastoral counseling and psychotherapy, is certified as a Pastoral Counselor and Fellow of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, is an Adjunct Faculty member at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, and is a National Board Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist, a Certified Trainer of Clinical Hypnotherapy, a husband, a father of three children, and a grandfather of three grandchildren.

Dr. Kinser leads Vestry retreats, spiritual growth classes, stop smoking, weight loss, and performance enhancement programs.

*All of these positive benefits can be used to greatly enhance spiritual practices, deepen meditation and prayer, control stress, assist in physical, spiritual and emotional healing, and, in general, assist individuals to find greater wholeness and happiness in life.*

"Hypnosis and Pastoral Hypnotherapy" is a portion of Dr. Prentice Kinser, III's doctoral thesis presented in June, 1997 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Many psychological and physical factors, acting reciprocally through the image-producing faculties of the mind induce the perceptual response called hypnosis.

The capacity to enter into hypnosis is as natural a phenomenon as sleep, but it is distinctly different from sleep. Hypnosis has been described as "a state of consciousness involving an extension of concentration combined with a susceptibility to suggestion occurring during physiological relaxation."<sup>(1)</sup> Another definition I find useful is: "Hypnosis is a process which produces relaxation, distraction of the conscious mind, heightened suggestibility and increased awareness, allowing access to the subconscious mind, through the imagination. It also produces the ability to experience thoughts and images as real."<sup>(2)</sup>

My own approach to hypnosis, pastoral hypnotherapy, and treatment comes out of my training and experience in using the therapeutic insights and writings of Milton H. Erickson, M.D. (1901-1980). From that perspective, hypnosis can be seen as an altered psychological state "generally characterized by certain physiological attributes (e.g., relaxed muscle tone, reduced blood pressure, slowed breath rate), by an enhanced receptivity to suggestion, and by an increased access to unconscious feelings, ideas, and memories (Erickson, 1989)."<sup>(3)</sup>

It is important to remember that hypnosis does not have to involve the stereotypic rituals of swinging pendulums, watches or crystal balls, or that it is a fixed internal state. "Clinical" hypnosis and "pastoral" hypnotherapy do imply a clinical or pastoral setting, with the focus more on the process of communication and therapeutic outcome, rather than on the hypnotic state involved.

Clearly, hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness, i.e., it is different from normal waking consciousness. However, it is believed that all people go in and out of hypnosis on a regular basis.

Many people have experienced a type of hypnotic state while driving a car and become unconscious of the fact that they are still driving. As they come out of the hypnotic state, they suddenly realize they do not remember what has happened for the past several minutes. It is as though an unconscious part of the mind was able to drive the car, avoid danger, speed up and slow down as necessary, while the conscious mind went off on a brief vacation thinking about something else. A hypnotic state may be experienced in the movies or while watching TV when people become so involved that they actually cry about a picture that has been projected onto a screen. At one level of their minds they know the picture is fiction. On another level, their minds move voluntarily into the imagination in which there is a suspension of reality testing and an acceptance of what is happening on the screen as real.

Likewise, when people experience hypnosis, they often simply allow their bodies to relax and their minds to focus attention on the words they hear, and the various images they may represent in their minds. As Erickson observed, this is not hypersuggestible mind control but a very natural process that allows clients to more easily reach goals or objectives they have chosen for themselves. With proper motivation, the client moves naturally and easily into a comfortable hypnotic state. This is a safe process in the hands of a trained Hypnotherapist.

In summary, hypnosis, when utilized by trained and competent practitioners, can be a natural, comfortable and helpful process of communication, during which clients and/or parishioners may experience increased attention to suggestions, profound concentration, heightened recall of memories and access to state-dependent memories, greater image-producing abilities, and increased ability to form new habit patterns.

#### Footnotes:

1. David Fox, "Mind/Body, Brain/Soul: Halakhic Explorations of Hypnotic Trance Phenomena," Journal of Psychology and Judaism, Vol. 16, No.2 (Summer 1992), p. 97.

2. A.M. Krasner, The Wizard Within (Santa Ana: American Board of Hypnotherapy Press, 1991), p.2.

3. John H. Edgette, Psy.D., and Janet Sasson Edgette, Psy. D., The Handbook of Hypnotic Phenomena in Psychotherapy (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1995), pp. 3-4.

4. Edgette and Edgette, p. 4, quoting J.K. Zeig "Therapeutic patterns of Ericksonian influence on communication" in J. K. Zeig (Ed) The Evolution of Psychotherapy (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc, 1987) pp. 392-412).