



## **Meditating on God's Word**

### **Thoughts from Noted Christian Leaders**

Someone once said that 1 in 100 Christians read Scripture regularly; 1 in 1000 memorize Scripture; but only 1 in 10,000 meditate!

*"Meditation is the grand means of our growth in grace; without it, prayer itself is an empty service."* — Charles Simeon

*"Meditation keeps out Satan. It increases knowledge, it inflames love, it works patience, it promotes prayer, it evidences sincerity."* — Philip Henry

*"Victorious Christians are people who know the promises of God, because they spend time meditating on God's Word (Josh 1:8); they believe the promises of God, because the Word of God generates faith in their hearts (Ro 10:17); and they reckon on these promises and obey what God tells them to do. To 'reckon' means to count as true in your life what God says about you in His Word."* — Warren Wiersbe

*"The inward meditation [of God's Word] is the thing that makes the soul rich towards God. This is the godly man's occupation. Put the spice into the mortar by reading, beat it with the pestle of meditation—so shall the sweet perfume be exhaled."* — Spurgeon

*"Read the Bible carefully, and then meditate and meditate and meditate."* — Spurgeon

The Puritan writer Thomas Brooks offers an excellent description of Biblical meditation:

*"Remember that it is not hasty reading—but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths, which makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee which gathers honey (cp Ps 19:10-note; Ps 119:103-note)—but her abiding for a time on the flower which draws out the sweet. It is not he who reads most, but he who meditates most—who will prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest and strongest Christian."*

John Piper explains that meditation on the Word is difficult if one does not first memorize it and that, *"The depth and solidity and certainty of your walk with God and your communion with God will rise and fall with whether God's own written Word is the warp and woof of the fabric of your fellowship."* — John Piper

*"Our lives are unbelievably distracted. We are experts at multi-tasking, surfing, and skimming, but it is harder than ever to meditate. Therefore, it is imperative to intentionally cultivate meditation on God's Word. But how? If possible, find a consistent time, place, and plan. Then read slowly and carefully. Reread and reread. Read out*

*loud (which is implied in the Hebrew word for meditation in Psalm 1:2). Read prayerfully. Read with a pen in hand. Memorize texts that you read.” — PreceptAustin*

*Henry Blackaby writes, "Scripture is wonderful, if you meditate on it. Our problem is we read without meditation. Your life will never be anchored like a tree without meditation (cp Ps 1:2-3). Some say, 'I've read through the Bible at least once every year.' Well, that's wonderful, but your life will not be anchored by a river of living water until you stop and meditate on God's Word. It's the one who meditates on God's Word day and night who becomes like a tree planted by the rivers of water. So, you really need to know what meditating is. Now, in our generation, we talk about transcendental meditation. On television we can see the stereotypical meditator, eyes closed, mumbling the same phrase over and over. That's not biblical meditation at all."*

*"Reading either Scripture or Christian books, apart from meditation, does little good. It is much the same as not digesting what you eat--this only starves the soul. How many read the Bible thus!" — Unknown*

There are probably many answers to this question, but the following quote from Spurgeon suggests one of his "secrets":

*"I quarry out the Truth when I read, but I smelt the ore and get the pure gold out of it when I meditate!... For lack of meditation the Truth of God runs by us and we miss and lose it. Our treacherous memory is like a sieve—and what we hear and what we read runs through it and leaves but little behind—and that little is often unprofitable to us by reason of our lack of diligence to get thoroughly at it. I often find it very profitable to get a text as a sweet morsel under my tongue in the morning and to keep the flavor of it, if I can, in my mouth all day!"*

Spurgeon: Morning & Evening, October 12 *"I will meditate in thy precepts."*

*Psalm 119:15: "There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech. We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on his Word spiritual strength for labour in his service. We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. Truth is something like the cluster of the vine: if we would have wine from it, we must bruise it; we must press and squeeze it many times. The bruiser's feet must come down joyfully upon the bunches, or else the juice will not flow; and they must well tread the grapes, or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted. So we must, by meditation, tread the clusters of truth, if we would get the wine of consolation therefrom. Our bodies are not supported by merely taking food into the mouth, but the process which really supplies the muscle, and the nerve, and the sinew, and the bone, is the process of digestion. It is by digestion that the outward food becomes assimilated with the inner life. Our souls are not nourished merely by listening awhile to this, and then to that, and then to the other part of divine truth. Hearing, reading, marking, and*

*learning, all require inwardly digesting to complete their usefulness, and the inward digesting of the truth lies for the most part in meditating upon it. Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make but slow advances in the divine life? Because they neglect their closets, and do not thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it; they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord, and be this our resolve this morning, 'I will meditate in thy precepts.'"*

Beware of meditation that ends in pious words without pious practices (cf., Jas 1:22-note). True meditation fuels God honoring moral actions. A changed attitude toward God and fellow man should be the result, including things like a changed work habit, a changed relationship to one's spouse or family, in short—a changed life! Anything less means your "meditation" is little more than "pious platitudes"

*"Continual meditation on the Word is not ineffectual...God, by one and another promise, establishes our faith."* — John Calvin

If God's Word is not the desire and delight of your heart, plead with Him until He grants your request (1 Thess 5:17) so that your soul might cultivate an appetite for the pure milk of His Word (1 Pet 2:2). If you pray this with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 24:4-note), you can be assured God will answer it affirmatively for it is in accordance with His good and perfect will (1 Jn 5:14, 15, Mt 7:7). Will you dare to pray this prayer? Will you dare not pray this prayer!

What is biblical meditation?

*"Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God... It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God."* — J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

Source: [http://www.preceptaustin.org/a\\_primer\\_on\\_meditation](http://www.preceptaustin.org/a_primer_on_meditation); go there for more helpful material



## Biblical Meditation vs. Eastern Meditation

Thirdly, though the one word “meditation” is used, the actual spiritual discipline which is called meditation is not identical in all religions. There is, however, a distinct similarity in meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism on the one hand, and in Judaism and Christianity on the other. The simplest way to highlight the difference is to say that for the one meditation is an inner journey to find the centre of one’s being, while for the other it is the concentration of the mind/heart upon an external Revelation. For the one revelation/insight/illumination occurs when the inmost self (which is also the ultimate Self, the one final Reality) is reached by the journey into the soul, while for the other it comes as a result of the encounter with God in and through his objective Revelation to which Holy Scripture witnesses.

In both Judaism and Christianity meditation is always paying attention to, and responding in mind, heart and will, to the God who has made and makes himself known. For the Jew it is pre-eminently his revelation in the Law; for the Christian it is pre-eminently his revelation in Jesus, the Word Incarnate. In this sense meditation is upon that which is external to oneself – even though the believer is to receive the word of God into heart/mind and cherish it. For Christians, the Word made flesh upon which meditation is centered (through the witness to him of the New Testament) is at the right hand of the Father in heaven; yet, and here is the key to Christian talk of the interior life, Jesus is present in the soul in and through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Meditation is, then, for Jews and Christians thinking about, reflecting upon, considering, taking to heart, reading slowly and carefully, prayerfully taking in, and humbly receiving into mind, heart and will that which God has revealed. For the Christian meditating Christianly is being guided and inspired by the indwelling Spirit of Christ in the consideration of God's revelation.

Of course in Hinduism and Buddhism there is both the reading and study of holy books – though this is normally only for the minority. However, meditation refers to the use of specific techniques to cause the mind/heart to look and journey inwards to find the key to existence deep within one’s own self, for there is no “God” to be discovered elsewhere. The methods taught and used have been developed over the centuries in the context of certain religious beliefs and to achieve certain spiritual ends.

**Rev. Dr. Peter Toon, *Meditating as a Christian*, (London: HarperCollins, 1991), p.18-19 practice**



## A Method for Meditation Using Only the Bible

To prevent the possibility of being led astray by a keen imagination, an adventurous mind and a restless heart, we need to be aware of who we are and to whom we belong as we read and consider God's Word. To prevent other distractions, choose a time of day when you are fresh and alert, and find a quiet, comfortable place where you will not be interrupted for fifteen to thirty minutes as you meditate.

**(a)** Sit in a comfortable chair with sound support for your back, or sit on the floor with your back against the wall.

Recall God's presence in the world and in and with you; remember that you are what you are by the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Especially recall that you are baptized into Christ and his Church and that you have received basic teaching about God and his Gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray God to help you in this meditation to draw near to him and to receive help, inspiration and insight from his great provision.

**(b)** Read the passage of Scripture carefully, using your imagination to picture the scene (where applicable) that is being described.

**(c)** Read the shorter section chosen for meditation slowly and aloud, using your imagination both to picture the scene and to see the resurrected Lord Jesus alongside you, listening to you as you read. Read it again, pausing after every phrase in order to receive its full meaning and flavour.

**(d)** Engage in conversation with God, responding to what you have understood and seen in this passage. Tell him what you believe you see and what you find difficult to understand; share with him the feelings and intentions that arise in your heart; ask him to help you see more, trust, obey and love him more.

**(e)** Conclude

**(i)** By thanking him for his Word and his grace

**(ii)** By taking a theme or phrase or sentence from your meditation as a word to hold on to throughout the day

**(iii)** By making resolutions to put into practice what you have come to see is God's will for your life.

Adapted from Rev. Dr. Peter Toon, *Meditating Upon God's Word*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), p53-54



## Lectio Divina (Modified Version)

The Benedictine Christians of the sixth century introduced a form of meditation and prayer called *lectio divina*. They used a pattern composed of several steps that allowed them to focus on a particular text, to think about it from various angles, to pray and to try to become aware of what God revealed to them through that passage. Use this modified form of *lectio divina* to absorb the important teachings that Jesus gave to Thomas in John 14:1-7

### **Silencio (Silence)**

Take time to be silent: prepare to communicate with God as he expresses himself to you in this passage of Scripture. After a period of quiet, ask God's help as you enter this session of meditative prayer.

### **Lectio (Read)**

Read John 14:1-7 aloud several times slowly. Allow its words and meanings to sink into your soul.

### **Meditatio (Meditate)**

Meditation is like chewing. It is slow and thorough. Write notes about what you see in this passage. Make connections between the various sections. Ask yourself, "What do these words from God say?" "What do they mean?" Place who you are and what you do next to this passage and ask God to examine you. Continue to write your findings.

### **Oratio (Prayer)**

Pray using the passage as an outline for your prayer. Read the passage phrase-by-phrase, responding to God after each.

### **Contemplatio (Contemplation)**

Wait in stillness once more. Ask that God bring to your mind any areas of your life that you need to shape more closely to his design as revealed in this passage. Contemplate God's love and power as it is revealed here.

### **Incarnatio (Live It Out)**

What precisely ought you to be believing, thinking and doing as a result of this passage? Make notes about how you hope to bring these words from Jesus into your current practice.

Source: *Never Beyond Hope*, pp. 134-135, J.I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, InterVarsity Press, 2000