

## Insight & Rest through Meditation

*What's your first thought when you hear the word **meditation**?*

*Meditation* is not a sleepy, meaningless practice that we mindlessly practice. Marinating in God's Word, rehearsing His truth over and over in our mind, ruminating on and responding to it. This is called meditation. This ushers us more deeply into God's presence.

Through meditation, our relational God invites us in close in silence and solitude before Him, with our hearts open and our Bibles spread wide as a healthy soil for growth. This cultivates wonder as we explore meaning. Blasé Pascal, the great Christian mathematician said,

"All of man's troubles stem from his inability to sit quietly alone in a room."

How many of you take significant time each week to be still before the Lord to think His thoughts? LifeChange occurs as we think deeply on what God is stirring within us, rather than passing over it quickly to move on to more information.

"*Come on, me meditate!*" you may exclaim.

Yes, you! Although please demystify meditation from its hyper-sanctified ideas. Each and every one of us can do this. Think back to the last time you worried. You *can* worry, right?

Well, if you know how to worry, you have already developed the necessary mental skills to meditate. ***Simply change the object of your focus!***

*Worry is sponsored by fear of the future and meditation is supported by faith in the living God.*

Take 3-minutes now. Set your alarm, then forget time for 3-minutes. Just sit still, with the other electronics off. Focus your mind with a will-thought on what you are learning about God Himself from your current study. The Bible calls this "*meditating on Scripture.*" Scriptural meditation (in contrast to other meditation) *fills* our minds with God-Reality.

*However, taking regularly to meditate also slows down our racing thoughts.*

Our Western upbringing honors and promotes left-hemisphere, linear thinking. This is not wrong, only partial. In order to tap into the full range of possibilities, consciously slow down your racing thoughts. Tap more into the reflective, intuitive right-hemisphere of your brain. God promises rich blessings as we meditate.

The essence of all that we have been doing together in one sense is learning to think more deeply on God's Love-Letter and then His will. Meditation enhances this process since God has promised to richly bless meditation. This is meditation and God richly blesses meditation. Prayerful meditation on the Word of God means to turn truth over in our minds repeatedly. Ruminant like a cow chews its cud. Marinate in the truth. Talk to God about it. Visualize what it would have been like if we had been there, using solid Bible background information as fuel for your sanctified imagination.

Joshua, when he was one of God's up-and-coming leaders, provides a great pattern.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth;  
meditate on it day and night,  
so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.  
Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:8).

- Spend time in God's Word.
- Meditate on God's Word often.
- This leads to a ready obedience.

- Obedience makes me spiritually prosperous and successful, in the fullest NT sense of these words. Limiting this promise to physical wealth is far too limiting for a God like we serve.

The first Psalm amplifies on this with rich word-pictures of a harvest.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and  
on his law he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit...  
Whatever he does prospers (Psalm 1:2-3).

Meditating in God's Word always brings prosperity, when we define prosperity in terms of what really counts. As we engage with Scripture, our primary aim is not to accumulate knowledge (although we will). Our heart's desire is that everything we do in word and deed will be pleasing in the sight of our Family-of-Three, God the Father, Son and Spirit. Our prayer is...

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer (Ps 19:114).

Prayerful reflection and meditation on the Word of God means to turn truth over in our minds repeatedly. Meditation also gives us perspective and discernment, or spiritual eyes. Ruminating. Marinate in the truth. Chew on a passage of Scripture like a cow chews its cud. Visualize what it would have been like if we had been there (use solid background information as fuel for your sanctified imagination). Place yourself in the story as if you were there.

*Most of us worry in living color with emotions, smells, sights and sounds, right? So why not also in our meditation?*

When we love something, we give our all to it. "Law" in Psalm 119 is one of ten synonyms for God's Word.

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long (Ps 119:97).

Some today fear using imagination in Bible study because of abuses. Rather than discard the God-given study tool of our imagination, ground our sanctified imagination in the text and background material. This then provides a proper scope for meditation to tap into the lives of the original hearers. Now we experience what they thought and valued, felt and did at that time in order to release His life in us now. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us to understand and to impact our lives with His truth.

"This book contains: the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. [The Bible] contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here heaven is open, and the gates of hell disclosed" (Source Unknown).

To meditate rightly, though, we must heed Jesus' gentle call from loneliness to solitude with Him. The fear of being left alone petrifies people and causes us to shy away from meditating quietly, blocking out the world of noise and bustle. And loneliness can grip us even in the midst of noise and bustle. For instance, I still vividly remember my loneliness as my mom and dad drove off after dropping me at college for my freshman year. However,...

"Our fear of being alone drives us to noise and crowds. We keep up a constant stream of words even if they are inane. [However,] loneliness or clatter are not our only

alternatives. We can cultivate an inner solitude and silence that sets us free from loneliness and fear. Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment.”<sup>1</sup>

“*Inner fulfillment*” drives out aloneness because we are “alone” with the Father, Son and Spirit. As we grow in knowing and loving the relational Trinity, we experience far more of the inner circle of friendship with the Father, Son and Spirit. Now we are free to experience the silence of the stillness before the God who created us for intimacy. Silence is waiting on God to engage our heart through His Word and His presence. Solitude before God seeks to re-create the listening ears of the heart burning after Jesus.

*Can such startling changes happen to me that the Bible promises?*

Let’s say for instance that a person is nearsighted, and his enclave of people knows nothing about glasses. As his friends describe the breathtaking scenery, the multi-colored sights and sharp forms, he translates those words into what he has experienced. At times, he may wonder why his friends exaggerate so much in what they see compared to what he sees, but he quickly buries those thoughts.

One day, a traveling optometrist comes to town and fits him for prescription lens. When this man puts on the glasses, he is shocked. Overwhelmed. Spellbound by the colors and hues and sharply defined shapes. The colors and shapes have not changed. *His perspective has*. It’s similar with the long-range change that happens as we take time to meditate. Our lens or worldview changes.

God designed meditation to significantly alter our spiritual worldview or mental map of how we see. Now we are free to experience the silence in stillness before the God who created us for intimacy. Silence is actively waiting on Jesus to engage our heart through His Word and His presence. Solitude before God seeks to re-create the listening ear of the heart burning after Jesus.

“Christ is the grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, health to the soul, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you here in this life, will be opened at the judgment, and is established forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its contents” (Source Unknown).

God promises rich blessings as we *meditate* on His timeless Word. In order to meditate day and night, though, it’s helpful to have memorized some key Scripture. Memorization prepares for meditation because now we can meditate at night laying with our eyes closed on our bed or during the day as we have small slices of time. LifeChange accelerates and deepens through meditation.

*How is your pattern of memorizing key Scripture verses?*

Wherever we are engaging Scripture now, use this to begin to add the skill of memorization in order to meditate day and night on Reality. Then wherever we go during our busy day, we carry a portable sanctuary with us in our hearts since we are His temple. Scatter quick times of turning to Him into the common and routine of your day. Prepare for this by memorizing key verses.

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:11).

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), p. 96. This classic on spiritual disciplines is a must read at some time in your early years of growth. It presents spiritual disciplines within a healthy framework of a joyful passion for Jesus.