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a resource in:

Spiritual Growth

Meditation



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Meditation

Every endeavor has basic skills that support the success of the effort. For example, tying rope-climbing knots is a basic skill for rock climbing. Study skills are rudimentary for a student. These basic skills are sometimes called disciplines. They are the practices from which success springs. The Christian life has disciplines which must be learned. The more we practice these disciplines, the more we grow and mature in them.

As followers of Jesus, we are to become more like Jesus. Spiritual disciplines are meant to help us grow in this godliness. We know this, yet often struggle to engage disciplines that position us to grow in godliness. Even when we engage these disciplines, we often feel frustrated with how difficult they are and how little they seem to change us. Take heart, if this is where you are. The fact you desire for greater fruit in your life is evidence of the Holy Spirit working in you. Sanctification is both a wonderful and challenging journey. We will have seasons of great joy and triumph and seasons of great discouragement and struggle. It is our hope these lessons on Spiritual Disciplines give you greater understanding, hope and most of all, a more fervent pursuit of God. This document gives some brief thoughts on:

1. What is Biblical Meditation?
2. Why Meditate?
3. How to Engage Biblical Meditation?

WHAT IS BIBLICAL MEDITATION?

Throughout the scriptures we are told to mediate. Yet most of us would have a difficult time defining what meditation is and what it might look like in daily life. A basic definition of mediation is to ponder or contemplate. These are both skills not widely valued in today's efficient and task-focused culture. Beyond defining meditation is the question of what to meditate on? Take a moment to consider the following verses and how they provide guidance about what to meditate on and what it might mean to meditate.

Psalms 1:2 "But his delight is in the law of the LORD ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Psalms 104:33-34 "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD."

Psalms 143:5 "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."

Psalm 1:2 encourages us to meditate on the law or the scriptures. There is a beautiful cycle in *Psalm 1* of the righteous delighting in the scriptures, pondering them and a fruitful life. Meditation as seen by *Psalms 104:33-34* and *143:5* goes beyond pondering the scriptures and encourages meditation on God. Eastern meditation focuses on emptying the mind because it believes truth is within us. Biblical meditation focuses on filling the mind because the truth is outside us. Biblical meditation is grounded in the scriptures and from the scriptures we can ponder such things as God, who He is, His attributes, what He has done and so on. Meditating on the truths contained in scripture brings clarity and complexity to our picture of God and a sense of wonder to engage the world with.

Meditating on the scriptures (*Psalms 1:2*) is like slowing down to enjoy the taste and texture of food rather than just eating because it is necessary for survival. With food we get the same nutritional nourishment from the food no matter how we ingest it. With scripture it is not so. While there is benefit from reading the scriptures without slowing down to consider the taste and texture of the passage, it will have minimal impact on our heart, mind, and life without meditation.

Meditation

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define biblical meditation?
2. What is good for the believer to meditate on?
3. What are barriers to meditating for you?
4. What do you believe it means for meditation to be grounded in the scriptures?
5. What are realistic goals for you this week regarding meditation? (duration, frequency, topics)

Scriptures to Consider: *Psalm 1, Proverbs 3:1-13, Isaiah 1:10-20, Philippians 4:8*

Further Resources:

- *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation: Find True Peace in Jesus* by Robert Morgan
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney
- *Scriptural Meditation* (ACCFS Article): www.accounseling.org/scriptural-meditation/

Meditation

WHY MEDITATE?

If meditation is defined as pondering or contemplating what is true, then the next question is why meditate? Many of us desire deeper communion with the Lord and greater wisdom to navigate the challenges that arise. Meditating on things of God is a key ingredient to this desired destination. While meditation is not an instant recipe for direction or answers, it is helpful in transforming our heart and mind to see the World as God sees it. The Scriptures are to shift our view of reality. This is often unsettling. It has been said that if you are unwilling to shift your perspective then you should not read the bible. Meditating on the scripture will impact the reader and their view of life.

In *1 Timothy 4:15* Paul writes, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” Verses 12-14 gives direction regarding what to meditate on and verse 15 gives a powerful answer to the “why meditate” question. It tells us that in meditating on truth as declared in the holy scriptures we will profit, and it will be apparent to others. How are we profited? We profit by an illuminated path and the ability to resist temptation. During difficult and prosperous times we need something to anchor us. Having truth hid in our heart and mind does just that. The scriptures become a light to our path (*Psalms 119:105*) through knowing them which comes from meditating on them. One of the ways meditating on the scriptures gives light to our path is by helping us recognize and resist temptation. (*Psalms 119:11*)

Another important reason to meditate on truth is for the purpose of magnifying in the Lord. While meditating on truth can bring conviction, direction, and transformation, it also gives way to magnifying His greatness. Take for example meditating on what Paul summarizes about Jesus in *1 Timothy 3:16*.

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Meditating on these glorious truths can confound and delight the believer for a lifetime. What we meditate on will be magnified in our heart and mind. What is magnified will have a profound impact on how we view and engage everything in life.

Perhaps the most important reason for meditating on truth is the reality that we need to be transformed. (*Romans 12:1-2*) Meditation is one way by which The Spirit accomplishes this. (*2 Corinthians 3:18*) Day-by-day contemplating the things of God so we grow in Godliness. We need to be transformed in heart, mind, and behavior. What we pay attention to has this transforming power. Apart from being transformed we will be stuck in merely viewing life through a “how does this impact me” lens. Those who are more naturally relational, or conflict-avoidant may make decisions focused on others but not from a place of Spirit-led transformation as much as from a place of avoiding discomfort or people pleasing. The converted soul has been brought from death to life, made new in and through Christ. Being adopted into God’s family is the beginning of a lifelong journey of growth. While we have been given a new heart, we have the ongoing need for sanctification. The flesh has been given a fatal blow but continues to reside and will continue to fight for authority. (*Romans 6*)

Meditation

Discussion Questions:

1. What reasons do you see for meditating on the “things of God”?
2. What do you believe *1 Timothy 4:15* teaches about the purpose of meditation?
3. Will meditation always bring a specific outcome such as delighting in the Lord?
4. What do you see as areas of your thoughts, emotions, or actions that need transforming to better align with the scriptures?
5. What will help motivate you to spend more time in meditation?

Scriptures to Consider: *1 Timothy 4:12-15, 1 Timothy 3:16, James 3:17, Joshua 1:8-9, Ephesians 4:1-16*

Further Resources:

- “Be Still and Know” Podcast Series: www.accounseling.org/be-still-know-podcast-episodes/
- *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation: Find True Peace in Jesus* by Robert Morgan

Meditation

HOW TO ENGAGE BIBLICAL MEDITATION:

Meditation is not difficult, but it is built on skills and resources that are scarce for many of us. We live in a “cliff notes” society where we want the summary rather than the full version. Our minds shift from one topic to another while we rush through the day or as we scroll social media, YouTube and other platforms to find something interesting enough to pause for longer than a moment. This is not bad in and of itself but it trains our minds to shift from one topic to another until we find something exciting enough to hold our attention. Many of us have lost our ability to keep our mind fixed on a topic because we have become so accustomed to transitioning from one thing to another.

Then when we sit down with the Bible, which was written in a very different time and culture, we can often struggle to grasp the author’s meaning and what they are seeking to share with the reader. This is not something to get frustrated with but rather something to accept and invite the Holy Spirit to guide us in the work of training our minds. One of the key skills necessary to meditate is slowing down both physically and mentally. Once we slow down we then can ponder what the scriptures are saying so we can ask ourselves questions that engage our minds in the text. For example, read *Galatians 1:6-9*:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

Once you have read these verses take a few minutes to ponder them. As you do so try to identify and write down the thoughts, emotions and questions that arise.

At a very practical level meditation requires at least four steps: 1. Notice, 2. Have curiosity, 3. Be repetitive and 4. Seek understanding. Noticing requires we first slow down which gives space for curiosity rather than jumping to “I know this” and moving on. Curiosity can be thought of as exploring. It is one thing to hike a trail as quickly as possible so you can move on to the next task, it is quite another thing to explore a trail. Exploring leads to noticing what so many others walk right pass. Exploring is not focused on efficiency or completion but on experiencing. Part of exploring is repetition as there is no way to exhaust the treasures found in the scriptures. Repetition allows for exploring questions that might never be fully answered but can bring greater understanding and appreciation for the Lord.

The how of meditation is about setting aside time and exercising mental muscles that are not always seen as priorities - muscles of slowing down, curiosity (exploring), and searching for understanding. These muscles will require we set aside time and learn to focus our minds on biblical truth so it comes alive and captures our imaginations.

Meditation

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you engage biblical meditation?
2. What are some of your favorite truths to meditate on?
3. How might you practice or strengthen the basic skills of meditation mentioned? (Slowing down, Curiosity, and Seeking Understanding) What other skills do you see as being helpful in meditation?
4. Which of the basic resources of meditation: Reading the Bible, Bible Knowledge, and Time are abundant or scarce for you? What other resources do you see as being helpful in meditation?
5. What biblical terms might you benefit from meditating on?
6. What biblical doctrine would you like to spend more time meditating on?
7. What questions do you have about meditation and who might you ask those question to?

Scriptures to Consider: *Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Deuteronomy 17:14-20, Proverbs 1, Matthew 5-7*

Further Resources:

- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney
- *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation: Find True Peace in Jesus* by Robert Morgan
- *Scriptural Meditation:* www.counseling.org/scriptural-meditation/