

What is Biblical Meditation?

“Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word. It is that simple.”

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

- The LORD’s Desire to Speak with Us Personally & Individually

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

My Sheep “Know My Voice” & “Hear My Voice”

John 10:4-5, 14, 16

4"When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5"A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." 14"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me...16"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

- Biblical Words for Meditation

Hebrew

hâgâh
šîychâh
higgâyôn
šîyach

To murmur; to converse with oneself, and hence aloud; speak; talk; babbling; communication; mutter; growl; roar; mourn; i.e. musical notation; ponder; reflection; devotion..."

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance

Greek

meletaō

“To take care of, revolve in the mind, imagine..."

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance

What connotations do these Hebrew and Greek Words Suggest about Meditation?

- **More Than Hearing, Reading, or Studying**

Meditation goes beyond hearing, reading, studying, and even memorizing as a means of taking in God's Word. A simple analogy would be a cup of tea. In this analogy your mind is the cup of hot water and the tea bag represents your intake of Scripture. Hearing God's Word is like one dip of the tea bag into the cup. Some of the tea's flavor is absorbed by the water, but not as much as would occur with a more thorough soaking of the bag. Reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word are like additional plunges of the tea bag into the cup. The more frequently the tea enters the water, the more permeating its effect. Meditation, however, is like immersing the bag completely and letting it steep until all the rich tea flavor has been extracted and the hot water is thoroughly tintured reddish brown. Meditation on Scripture is letting the Bible brew in the brain. Thus we might say that as the tea colors the water, meditation likewise "colors" our thinking. When we meditate on Scripture it colors our thinking about God, about God's ways and His world, and about ourselves. Similarly, as the tea bag flavors the water, so through meditation we consistently "taste" or experience the reality taught in the text. The information on the page becomes experience in our hearts and minds and lives. Reading the Bible tells the believer, for example, of God's love. Meditation is more likely to convince him or her of it personally and, in biblically appropriate ways, to cause a person to feel loved by God.

Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*

- **Study is about intellectually mastering a concept or idea. It is an intellectual process. There is real danger in your faith being predominantly intellectual or academic (study-focused).**

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent (not "Study") to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (KJV mistranslates)

Eccl. 12:12

My son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and **excessive study is wearying to the body.**

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and **do not lean on your own understanding.**

1 Cor. 8:1-3

...We all have knowledge. **Knowledge makes *one* conceited**, but love edifies *people*. **If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;** but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

1 Cor. 2:13-16

When we tell you these things, **we do not use words that come from human wisdom.** Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. ¹⁴ **But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths** from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things...¹⁶ For, "Who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?" **But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.**

The danger of systematizing divine facts is that a man can understand without the help of the Holy Spirit. It is only the immature Christian who demands always to have intellectually satisfying conclusions.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*

- **Meditation carries with it a deeper, intimate, experiential, relational interaction – dependent on God’s Spirit to reveal truth to us.**
 - Listening to God’s Word
 - Reflecting on God’s Word
 - Rehearsing God’s Deeds
 - Ruminating on God’s Law

- **Meditation culminates not in just knowledge, but in a change of heart and behavior. Praise gratitude, repentance, and obedience are results of meditation as an encounter with the Living Word.**

- **Biblical Precedent for Meditation**

Those who walked through the pages of the Bible knew the ways of meditation. “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening” (**Gen. 24:63**). “I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night” (**Ps. 63:6**). The Psalms virtually sing of the meditations of the people of God upon the law of God: “My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate upon thy promise” (**Ps. 119:148**). The psalm that introduces the entire Psalter calls all people to emulate the “blessed man” whose “delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (**Ps. 1:2**). The old priest Eli knew how to listen to God and helped the young boy Samuel know the word of the Lord (**1 Sam. 3:1–18**). Elijah spent many a day and night in the wilderness learning to discern the “still small voice of Yahweh” (**1 Kings 19:9–18**). Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up” and heard his voice saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (**Isa. 6:1–8**). Jeremiah discovered the word of God to be “a burning fire shut up in my bones” (**Jer. 20:9**). And on march the witnesses. **These were people who were close to the heart of God. God spoke to them not because they had special abilities, but because they were willing to listen.**

Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline

John 5:19,30

The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise...I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge...

John 14:10

The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works

Meditation creates an emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to build His inner sanctuary in our hearts. From there He guides, directs, encourages, and renews.

Questions to Process for Next Time

1. What do you see as the spiritual value, purpose and goals of meditation for the Christian?
2. Based on Biblical precedence, what do you think might be included in the mechanics of practicing meditation? How does method, place, time, or posture have anything to do with successful meditation?
3. How does Biblical Meditation differ from Eastern or New Age Meditation?
4. How might imagination be used appropriately and effectively in meditation?