

"A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to His Presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality."

A. W. TOZER

MEDITATION

Desire	to more deeply gaze on God through the written Word and the created order
Definition	Meditation is a long, ardent gaze at God, his work and his Word. Slowing down and giving one's undivided attention to God lies at the core of Christian mediation.
Scripture	<p>"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)</p> <p>"If I'm sleepless at midnight, I spend the hours in grateful reflection." (Psalm 63:6 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"I'll ponder all the things you've accomplished, and give a long, loving look at your acts." (Psalm 77:12 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)</p>
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading creation as "a most elegant book, wherein, all creatures great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God" (Belgic Confession) • mulling over, chewing on and ruminating over God's Word and its application • meditating on people; seeing them as God sees them and expressing delight in them as he does • paying attention to God with your body by slowing down, relaxing and breathing deeply • meditating on Jesus and on Scripture
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing sight for the interior things of God in the natural and external world • seeing beyond a first glance and first impression to the heart of God • developing depth of insight • developing a love for gazing on God • experiencing calmness, serenity and quietness stemming from an awareness of the nearness of God

MEDITATION

MEDITATION IS NOT SIMPLY a discipline of Eastern religions and New Age gurus. Meditation rests at the core of Judeo-Christian spirituality; it's an invitation to apprehend God. In *The Pursuit of God* A. W. Tozer writes, "God dwells in His creation and is everywhere indivisibly present in all His works." And Psalm 139:7 asserts, "Where can I go from your Spirit? / Where can I flee from your presence?" God is near. In the words of C. S. Lewis in his *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*: "God walks everywhere incognito." Clues to his presence can be found in creation, in history, in human beings, in worship and in Scripture. But we must stop and pay attention. Meditation runs counter to our busy culture, where speed reading, first impressions and skimming are as deep as we go. In meditation we gaze at something or someone long and longingly. We seek the treasure and truth of what we see. Just as moving a prism reveals different bands of color, meditation allows God to shine his truth and light into our hearts.

Meditation is not about emptying the mind so there is nothing there. Christian meditation opens us to the mind of God and to his world and presence in the world. As we enter times of mediation, it is important to let go of our preoccupations so we can focus our minds and become present to God. Our minds are naturally designed to make associations and follow tangents. Meditation is a way we train the mind to stay put so it can explore appropriate associations. Simple physical exercises like stretching, sitting comfortably and breathing deeply can help us pay attention, listen deeply and even curb our distractibility. These exercises are not an end in themselves. They simply seek to put body, mind and spirit on the same page so we can better pay attention to God and treasure what he reveals.

To meditate on Scripture choose a verse, chapter or book of the Bible. Don't hurry. Listen to the Scripture. Write down your questions. Use your imagination. You may wish to memorize a short part of the text to keep it clearly before you. Like a cow chewing the cud, keep returning to your text with your mind and heart. When you are distracted, gently return to your text. Express once again your desire to pay attention. The impact of meditating on Scripture can show up later in our interactions with others. (See "Devotional Reading," "Praying Scripture" and "Memorization.")

To meditate on God's good creation, attend to what God has made. Open yourself to the beauty around you and drink deeply. Let the Spirit move you into praise. Meditation on creation is meant to lead us into the arms of our Creator. (See "Care of the Earth" and "*Visio Divina*.")

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you characterize your ability to pay attention?
2. When do you find it easiest to focus your mind or heart?
3. How might the tendency to do everything quickly affect your ability to meditate?
4. What is your gut reaction to the word *meditation*?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Prepare yourself to meditate on Scripture by choosing a comfortable and quiet place. Do not rush. Stretch, arrange your chair, take off your shoes. Sit in a position that you can maintain without effort or attention. Place yourself in the presence of God. Release your anxieties and to-do list to the Lord. Ask him to open your heart to his Word.

Read Psalm 139, Psalm 86, Psalm 42 or another short passage from Scripture.

Take your time, and when a word “lights up” for you stop and attend. Let the word or phrase roam around in your mind and heart. What do you hear? What feelings do you notice in yourself? Write down any questions that surface. You can attend to these at another time.

- When your mind wanders, gently bring it back and continue your meditation. Do not feel you have to finish anything. Take your word with you.
 - Begin again tomorrow with the same passage.
2. Take a walk in nature, meditating on the handiwork of God. The lilies of the field and the birds of the air spoke to Jesus of God’s care (Matthew 6:26-31). How does God speak to you in his creation?
 3. Meditate on the news. How is God speaking to you through current events? Is he inviting you to see the world through his eyes in some new way? Is he inviting you into prayer in a new way?
 4. Meditate on the great truths of the faith using the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed or a confession of faith. Spend time deeply entering into the words and their meaning. • The following is a quote from the Heidelberg Confession of Faith and is a lovely truth for meditation:
 Question: What is your only comfort in life and in death?
 Answer: That I belong body and soul, in life and death, not to myself, but to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who at the cost of his own blood has freely paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil.
 5. Meditate on the work of God in the lives of individuals throughout the ages. Listen to what they can teach you and how they can shape you.

RESOURCES ON MEDITATION

The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed

Devotional Classics by Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith

Meditation and Communion with God: Contemplating Scripture in an Age of Distraction by John Jefferson Davis