

MEDITATION

DEFINITION

Meditation is the discipline of soaking in God's Word. It is slowly and intentionally reflecting on the truth of Scripture. To meditate, pray for God to help you, read the passage, and deeply reflect on the passage. Write the Scripture down, read it repeatedly, or recite it out loud, all while considering its truth and the character of the one who wrote it. When you find your mind wandering, draw it back to God and his Word.

SIGNIFICANCE IN SCRIPTURE

The practice of meditation goes back to the Old Testament. God instructs Joshua to "meditate" on his word day and night in Joshua 1:8. This Hebrew word means to "muse," "utter," or "speak." Go a little further and Psalm 1:1-3 speaks of a man who meditates or dwells on God's word. It says he is "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season." In both these instances in Scripture, the result of meditation was "prospering." This is not necessarily a material success, but one that comes of aligning yourself with God's law and plan.

Other significant Old Testament occurrences of meditation in Scripture include Psalm 63:5-6, "My soul will be satisfied with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night." and Psalm 145:5, "On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and your wonderous works, I will meditate. The topic of meditation in the Old Testament God's word, character, and works.

In the New Testament, meditation is alluded to in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." and Colossians 3:2, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." It is a practice of deeply thinking on the things and character of God.

J.I Packer says this about meditation in his book *Knowing God*:

"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 communication with God."

Knowing God (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 1973), 23.

BENEFITS

Many Christians today have hesitations around meditation due to the influence of Eastern religions. However, the difference in Christian meditation and Eastern meditation practices is simple: The east tells you to empty your mind while God tells you to fill it with his truth. It is not a practice to discard or ignore, but rather one that can give depth to your relationship with Jesus. Here are just a few of the benefits of practicing meditation:

- *Obedience.* Psalm 119:11 says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."
- *Wisdom.* Psalm 119:97-98 says, "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me."
- *Delight in God.* Psalm 1:2 says, "but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

ENCOURAGEMENT

- Focus on God (his character, his word, his works), not yourself.
- Eliminate distractions physically. Choose a quiet place and make sure you are alone.

- Eliminate distractions mentally. Turn off technology and put your phone away. If needed, keep a small note pad close by to write down anything that might be taking your attention away from the Lord.

HOW TO PRACTICE MEDITATION

There are many ways to meditate on God and his word. If you have never done this before, try starting with the following steps.

1. Consider your posture. Sit, or even kneel. Choose a position that is not distracting.
2. Quiet your mind and take a few deep breaths.
3. Ask God to help you in your meditation (Psalm 119:18).
4. Dwell on a chosen Scripture.
 - Try breaking the passage up and thinking about each phrase individually.
 - If you find yourself easily distracted, speak out loud.
 - As you think on God's word, consider what you are learning and how it might apply to your life.
5. Thank God for the Scriptures.

EXAMPLE

Today I sat down to meditate on God's Word. Before beginning I put my phone in the other room and found a quiet, comfortable spot to sit. I began with a prayer, asking God to calm my mind and help it to focus on him and his word. Then, I opened my Bible to Acts 2:22-24:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."

I read this slowly, over and over again until the words felt familiar. Then I began to dwell on each phrase. The first one that stuck out to me was "hear these words." I knew that when the disciples first spoke these words they were speaking to crowds of unbelievers, and yet I felt like God wanted me to hear from him today too. Then I moved on to "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God..." I began thinking about the unjust nature of the death of Jesus, the crucifixion. And yet, Scripture says it was part of God's plan. I was reminded that God didn't mess up. He didn't make a mistake that needed a remedy. No, it was planned this way from the beginning. It helped me see God always has a plan, even when the days seem dark and it feels like he is far away. I thought about my life today, looking very different from what I thought it would. I wanted the American dream- a husband and a couple kids. Instead, I am single and working in corporate America. Yet, God is helping me to surrender my dreams to better love his. This is part of his plan...the same plan that took Jesus to the cross so that we could be restored in relationship with him. God is a good father who has a good plan, even when we might think otherwise. These thoughts bubbled up great gratitude for God, so I spent the last few minutes of my meditation time thanking God for all he has done in my life.

SOURCES

<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/biblical-meditation/>

Dictionary of Bible Themes, Martin Manser

Desiring God (Article: When My Heart Is Cold, Scott Hubbard)

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us