

Biblical Meditation

Key Scripture:

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3 (see also Jer. 17:7-8)

Today’s Portion for the Journey:

Meditation is the devotional practice in which we carefully ponder the words of a verse or verses with an open, listening heart and allow the Holy Spirit to take the written word and apply it as living word to our innermost being. Campbell McAlpine, pastor who taught so many around the world how to meditate on the Word defined it this way: “Meditation is the practice of pondering, considering, and reflection on verses of scripture in total dependence on the Holy Spirit to give revelation of truth and meaning, and by obedient response and reception of that word, having it imparted to the inner being. The importation of such truth brings life and light to the meditator, as a result of coming with the attitude of humility, trust and obedience. Meditation is inwardly receiving truth. It is feeding on Christ, living Bread and living Word. The word meditate is taken from the Latin root word, *medicalus*, from which we get our word ‘medicine’, and medicine, we know, never does any good in the bottle, it has to be taken internally, normally three times a day!”¹

Some have described it as the “digestive faculty of the soul.” Jeremiah wrote, “Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” Jer. 15:16; John 6:63

In the Word, many who had the closest relationship with the LORD spoke of meditating in the Word.

- David was a man after God’s own heart. He began the Psalms by lauding the blessing that comes from meditating on God’s Word. He made frequent references to meditating on God’s Word and the delight he found in God’s Word. Ps. 1; Ps. 27:1-6; Ps. 119
- Joshua, of whom it is said never left the tent of meeting with the LORD was instructed to meditate on God’s Word day and night along with the promise that it would give him success wherever he went. (Acts 13:22; Josh. 1:7,8)
- Daniel, who clearly defined God’s principles for a strong people and church, who made and changed history, stated, “The people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits...and they that have understanding among the people shall instruct many.” Daniel 11:32, 33

Biblical Meditation is not associated at all with eastern mysticism or transcendental! These are counterfeits and diametrically different to the type of meditation described in the Word of God. Eastern meditation stresses the need to become detached from reality, empty the mind, and open

¹ Campbell McAlpine, *The Practice Of Biblical Meditation* Sovereign World Ltd (May 1, 2002) p.80

oneself up to the “cosmic consciousness.” God’s way of meditation requires us to be mentally alert, wide awake and listening to the LORD, discerning and testing the spirits. In Biblical Meditation, we are actively involved - spiritually, mentally and physically - in the process of receiving and understanding His Word implanted into our hearts.

Meditation on God’s Word is a vital part of developing a close relationship with the LORD. We can listen to the Word; memorize the Word, read the Word; sing the Word; or write the Word. We can take any - or all - of these varied processes and incorporate Biblical Meditation into them. We may be led to look up the meanings of words in a dictionary or Strong’s Concordance, or examine cross references or follow a specific topic into other verses. It is as we meditate on God’s Word, it becomes the Living Word. The result is impartation of Divine Truth which comes to us as rhema. It should always bring a response on our part back to God. Psalm 63:5-8

The purpose of meditation is always to seek the Lord and to hear what He is speaking to our hearts. We don’t meditate to gain head knowledge about the Bible but to know the LORD and understand His Word and His ways. The result of this time spent diligently seeking the LORD in His Word is the impartation of Divine Truth. The Word becomes rhema which is the living word implanted in our spirits. Rhema truth is given to each of us personally and will speak to us concerning the LORD’s heart. This understanding will guide us in a more fully developed prayer life. It is also powerful weaponry for intercession on behalf of those for whom we are praying.

Anyone can meditate upon the Word of God. One of the truly beautiful things about Biblical Meditation is that you don’t need to be a Bible scholar, teacher or theologian - or even an adult - to meditate upon the Word. It is good to teach your children to meditate on the Word of God from an early age. They will see incredible truths that will strengthen their faith; and seeing God speak to them personally will encourage you as their parent.

Digging Deeper in the Word

HEBREW AND GREEK DEFINITIONS OF MEDITATION: (see Ps 27:1-6)

1. Suah: The first usage of the word ‘meditate’ in our English Bibles is found in Gen. 24:26. “And Isaac went out to meditate and bow down [in prayer] in the open country in the evening.” The Hebrew word for ‘meditate’ is used only in this passage. It is translated from the word ‘suah’ (Strong’s #7742). The word means, ‘to meditate, to muse pensively [with serious thoughtfulness]; a contemplation [in which the act of the mind is directed with consideration and attention, to keep at the forefront of one’s mind.] The context of this passage provides rich food for meditation. Isaac had just come from the well of Beer-lahai-roi [A well to the Living One Who sees me], ...as he meditated, it is said he looked up and saw camels approaching. The camels bearing his bride!
2. The most common Hebrew word for meditate in the Old Testament is “Haga” (Strong’s #1901), this word is defined as “ponder, study, to muse, to speak, to praise, to whisper.” It describes both the cooing of a dove and the growling of a lion that has trapped its prey. Thus inherent in the idea of meditation is both the dove-like heart that quiets itself before the Lord to seek understanding, and the lion-like hunger that will not let go until you have feasted upon the full contents of the word. Ps. 1:2; Josh. 1:7; Ps. 63:6; 77:12; 143:5 (There

are additional Hebrew words translated “meditation” that are derived from this primitive root that carry similar meanings.)

3. In Psalm 27:4, David said, *“One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, and [insistently] require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to behold and gaze upon the beauty [the sweet attractiveness and the delightful loveliness] of the Lord and to meditate, consider, and inquire in His temple.”* (AMP) The Hebrew word for ‘meditate’ used in this passage is “Baqar” (Strong’s #1239) which means ‘to plough, to break forth, i.e. inspect, admire, care for, consider, make inquiry, make diligent search, or seek out in order to care for.’ This word comes from the root concept of dividing or separating for the purpose of understanding or discerning between. This definition contains many of the characteristics we seek to employ when we meditate on a particular passage of scripture. It speaks of a hungry heart that is willing to dig deeply to seek out the richness of the treasure in God’s Word. Ps. 27:4; Ezek. 34:11-12
4. Psalm 119:97,99 use the Hebrew word “siha’ (Strong’s #7881). This word means to meditate with the idea of reflection and devotion, it is used to describe pious meditation for the purpose of prayer. In current usage, pious carries a rather negative connotation. Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines it as, “Godly; reverencing and honoring the Supreme Being in heart and in the practice of the duties he has enjoined; having due veneration and affection for the character of God, and habitually obeying his commands; religious; devoted to the service of God; applied to persons.”
5. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul directed Timothy to “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.” 1 Tim 4:15 -16

The Greek word for meditate is “meletao” (Strong’s #3191) in this verse means ‘to take care for, to revolve or resolve in the mind’ and it comes from a root which reveals a very important aspect of Biblical Meditation. This word means literally ‘it matters’ or ‘to be of great interest or concern’.

Paul instructed Timothy to “give himself wholly and completely, to immerse himself in the Word and to continue in the teachings of God. If you will meditate upon the word “continue” you will find that it means to remain, persevere, abide, or tarry. This word comes from a root which means to stay in a given place, state or expectancy. It speaks of an abiding, enduring, dwelling in which we stand or tarry before the Lord in His Word.

In conclusion, as we look at the definitions of the words used in the Hebrew and Greek for “meditates or meditation” we see the many facets that paint a picture of true Biblical Meditation.

THE BENEFITS OF BIBLICAL MEDITATION: God promises great rewards to those who meditate in His Word. He promises to make our way fruitful and give us success wherever we go. He says those who meditate in His Word will be like a tree planted by streams of living water, yielding fruit and making all their ways prosper. Ps. 19:14; Ps. 49:3; Ps. 63:5-6; Ps. 77:12; Ps. 104:14; Ps. 119:23, 48, 78, 97, 99; Ps. 143:5; 1 Tim. 4:15.

1. We learn to listen and to hear His voice. One of the keys to listening and hearing God's Word is to listen with an attitude of obedience. When we meditate on the Word it needs to be with a heart that is willing to apply the word in our lives and in prayer!

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." This verse is called the "SHEMA" and formed the basic confession of faith in Judaism. It was recited as a prayer morning and night, calling the people to uncompromising worship of God alone, and a total love commitment. This verse really calls us back to the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus (2 Cor. 11:3) and to return to our first love relationship with the Lord. Shema is the Hebrew word for "hear." It means to hear intelligently with the implication of attentiveness and obedience, to carefully and diligently consider or hearken to the words which are spoken. Biblical Meditation which is a very practical tool to help us learn to listen to His voice and to understand the things that are on His heart to pray.

2. To draw close to the Lord in intimate communion and develop relationship with Him. It is through our times of meditation in God's Word that we are brought into communion with Him and He brings us into His secret counsel. He shares with us things that we can know in no other way and teaches us how to pray according to His will, His plans and His purposes. We begin to receive His perspective on situations rather than our own. It is through meditation that He takes His desires and makes them our desires, to bring us into agreement with His word and His ways.

3. Meditation allows us to receive spiritual nutrition and fresh revelation from the Lord. He provides us with manna that fresh every day, new and life-changing. "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat...gather it every man according to his eating...he that gathered much had nothing over, he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating." Exodus 16:15-18

Jesus calls to us, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." Rev. 3:20-23

If you look up the word "sup" in this scripture, you will find that it is to dine with or take the principal evening meal or feast. The evening meal was the most important meal of the day. It was time of nourishment but more importantly a time of friendship and fellowship. This meal was customarily taken in a very leisurely manner with the members of the family sitting or lying around a low table. We see this meal greatly exemplified in Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples. It is a time to be fed of His Spirit and enjoy our friendship with Him.

4. Our firm root in the LORD is established in this place of quiet before the Lord as we draw near in times of meditation in His word and in fellowship with Him. This is the place of perfect security and trust no matter what is happening in the world around us. It is vital that we hear and respond to His warnings and to receive the provision that He has made for us in these last days. The Word of God is that firm foundation which cannot be shaken. Heb. 12:26-29; Matt 7:24-27; Matt. 13:6,21

5. Meditation teaches us how to pray and provides us with strategies for intercession. Through meditation on the Word the Lord shows us the things that are on His heart and guides our prayers. He teaches us how to pray strategically. In Ephesians 6:17 we are instructed to "take up...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The word used for "word" in this passage is "rhema", which is the word of God spoken or revealed to us by His Spirit. Rev. 1:16; Hebrews 4:12

6. Meditation prepares our hearts for prayer and shows us how to pray. It equips us for spiritual warfare. *“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counselors there is safety.” (KJV) The Holy Spirit is our Counselor into the things pertaining to God.*” Prov. 24:6 The Hebrew words used in the phrase “make war” implies a “well thought out plan,” carefully constructed, involving careful preparation in order to accomplish the purposes intended. Thus, when moving in spiritual warfare we desire to seek the Lord and meditate upon His Word, to pray according to His plan; for that will bring His results and victory. Ps. 119:98 (Amp)

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MEDITATION:

1. Draw near to God: Set apart a time to be alone with the Lord. Jesus often withdrew to a solitary place for a time of fellowship with God. James 4:8; Heb. 4:16; 7:25; 10:22

2. When we approach the LORD, we come into the glorious light of the Lord. His light reveals and exposes sin. In our flesh, we want to shrink back from the light, but God calls us to boldly approach His throne of grace, so we can find help in time of trouble. Ask Him to examine our hearts to see if there be anything that would hinder our prayers. Confess and repent for any sin that He reveals. Luke 1:79, Acts 26:18; John 3:19-21, 8:12; Rom 13:12; Eph. 1:18; 5:8-14; 1 John 1:7

3. Ask God for His Spirit of wisdom and revelation. As you begin your time of meditation you can join David in praying, “Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies...give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments...order my steps in Thy Word. That which I see not, teach me...and write Thy word upon my heart that I might not sin against Thee.” Come to Him with a sense of your total and complete dependence upon His Spirit. Pray for the leading of the Spirit, against your own ideas, and any outside interference and receive His leading by faith. Prov. 2:4-5; Ps. 119:11, 36, 73, 133; Job 34:32; Prov. 7:3; James 4:8; James 1:5; Jer 33:3; John 6:63

4. Come with a heart that is actively seeking Him and delights in the presence of Lord and in His Word. Rejoice and welcome His Spirit in your midst. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and enter His courts with praise!! Jer 15:16; Isa 26:8-9; Prov 2:1-5; 1 Chr. 16:27; Ps. 16:11; Ps. 21:6; Acts 2:28; Gal. 5:22 (Amp); Jude 1:24

5. Trust and expect Him to speak to you. When beginning to meditate, do not be afraid you will “do it” wrong or not hear the LORD. By being obedient to do it, you will find the LORD speaking more and more clearly as you continue to return to the Word in your quiet time with the LORD. Dt. 33:3, John 10:27; Heb. 11:6; John 15:15

6. Ask the Lord to help you select a portion of scripture for you meditation. We do not want to lean on our own understanding but to allow His Spirit to teach and guide us. It is best to take only a verse or small passage as your selection for meditation. Remember, you are not looking for quantity but depth or quality of understanding. Some suggestions include:

- **While reading the Word of God, a verse or verses may become alive to you and you find a desire to meditate on those verses in order to linger and go deeper.** The idea is to have a watchful readiness to tarry over a verse and to plumb its depths.
- **Systematically meditate through a book or chapter of the Bible, taking one or two verses a day.**

- **Word Studies:** Choose a topic that is pertinent to something you are facing in your life or have a desire to study. e.g. Fear, thanksgiving, courage
- **Names and character traits of God:** God has given us His Covenant names by which we can know Him. Meditation on these names promises that we will be strong and do mighty exploits. It deepens our trust in the Lord and releases praise and worship. Ps. 18 (...the LORD is my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, etc.)
- **Prayers recorded in the Bible:** Prayers recorded in the scriptures have the same power they had in the day they were first spoken! We can learn how to pray by studying the prayers of our LORD and His saints. Matt. 6:9-13; John 17; Rom. 15:5-6; Rom. 15:13; Eph. 1:15-21; Eph. 3:14-21; Eph. 6: 18-20; Phil. 1:3-4; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-14; 1 Thes. 2:11-13; 1 Thes. 5:23-24; 2 Thes. 1:11-12; 2 Thes. 2:16-17; 2 Thes. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:13-16; Philemon 1:4-6

7. Reflect deeply upon this scripture. Be open to what the Lord wants to show you and where He wants to lead you. In the Psalms you will frequently see the word “Selah” at the end of a passage. This means to pause and quietly think about that or ponder it in your heart.

There are different ways in which you may work through a meditation process. Some ideas are:

- You can read the passage aloud (or if you are in a group, take turns reading the verse.) Read it again to yourself until one part (word, theme, verse) begins to draw your attention.
- While examining the passage or chapter, look for key words such as: action words, nouns, and repeated words or phrases. In addition to the words, allow yourself to be challenged by the descriptions, analogies or imagery the passage is presenting. For example, reference to God as a Shepherd, a Great Light, King, or Lamb.
- Be sure to examine each word or verse in the context of the surrounding verses. Be careful when meditating upon a verse not to take it out of context with the rest of the passage or other portions of scripture.
- Look up the verse in different versions or translations of the Bible. You can make your own amplified meaning of the verse by combining the words used in various translations.
- Seek to understand the meaning of the words being examined through use of a concordance or dictionary. A Strong’s Concordance, Vine’s Expository, or a Hebrew-Greek Lexicon will allow you to understand the meaning of the word in the original Greek or Hebrew. Remember that the Old Testament is Hebrew and the New Testament is Greek.
- Most study Bibles have cross references in the margins beside each verse. Cross references often expand and provide deeper understanding to the verse at hand.
- Use a concordance to make a list of the verses where this particular word appears. Look up each verse and meditate upon it according to the leading of the Lord.

8. Write down what you are learning as you meditate. It is helpful to divide your paper into 3 columns (1) the verse or passage; (2) meditation notes; (3) prayers/responses to God. Record what

you have learned regarding the topic under study. Keep a notebook or journal with your meditation notes, revelations and directions the Lord gives to you. Write down the definitions you looked up if they deepened your understanding. These notes will become a treasured wealth of insights, directions to help you live and pray more effectively. Hab. 2:1-3

Verse	Prayer Notes	Response to the LORD

9. If you are meditating in a group, you can now take turns sharing what the LORD has shown each of you. Biblical Meditation is a valuable tool to use in a prayer group. As we corporately wait upon the Lord and seek His direction for prayer through His Word we are brought into unity. The Lord gives each person a portion and as we put our “pieces” together we get a revelation of His heart for prayer. When we share the insight we have received in meditation, certain points may be emphasized over and over. These are the “themes” that are most important for the purpose of prayer. The beauty of meditation is that each person receives something that is valuable regardless of our maturity in the Lord or experience in prayer. It just takes a heart that is teachable and willing to listen. Each person can be responsible to turn their particular revealed portion of the meditation into prayer. Our prayers become prayers of faith when we pray the revealed word of God.

10. Respond in prayer to what the LORD has shown you. As we meditate, this precious time of nearness to the Lord will always bring forth a response to Him in adoration, worship, repentance, or intercession. Campbell McAlpine taught that as we meditate, we take breathe in the Word, but as we pray it out, it is released by His Spirit into our heart and lives. In a group, each person is responsible to discharge in prayer what the Lord showed them. As a group, we agree in unity with others as they pray out their revelation. As we pray, we allow the LORD to develop and expand the meditation as we pray with one another.

11. Continue to mull over what you received in your precious time of meditation and allow the LORD to continue to speak to you. Often the LORD will give you increased understanding of the verse as you go about your day and in the days ahead. One can see why meditation is compared to “rumination” which carries the idea of a cow chewing her cud, to turn something over and over in your mind, gaining more essential nutrients each time.

EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL MEDITATION:

As I taught my four-year-old daughter to meditate, I was amazed at the depth of understanding of God's Word that she was acquiring. For those of you who have children, I found that it worked well to select a verse for her. We then talked together about what the verse meant. We discussed the meanings and often looked up words she didn't understand in the dictionary. When we finished this I would read the verse to her again and say, now what is God telling you from this verse, or what does this verse mean to you now? After she told me this, I would then ask her, what would you like to say to God about this? I wrote down her notes and prayers, now she is beginning to want to write part of her notes herself.

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart."

That means: "Obey him and trust Him and be gentle and kind. Delight means to love you. Delight means happy that will never end. Delight means to enjoy God, to be happy about God, to take great pleasure in God."

Prayer: God, I do enjoy You. I love you and I do take pleasure to know You. I love and worship you. I don't want to make any other gods to worship. It is the desire of my heart to go to heaven and be in the home You make for me. I want to have love, joy, kindness, peace, gentleness, self-control, patience, goodness and faith. I love you, Jesus, from Alissa.

"Turn away from evil."

That means don't do any evil stuff like call names or say I don't love you, or I hate you. No more evil. God help me to be good. God help me turn away from evil and love one another as myself. I love you Holy God. God, I love You. I love you very much."

*"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord,
my [firm, impenetrable] Rock and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14 (AMP)*