

Biblical Christian Meditation

James B. Jordan, “The modern tendency is to read the Bible only to find out what it says to men as individuals. The Scripture is consulted only to find out what the Bible says to *me*, about *me*, for *me*, and so forth. Clearly there is nothing wrong with this in itself, but it produces a warped view of the Bible if this is the *only* way it is read. The Bible, God's written revelation, speaks not only about individual matters, but also about social and cosmic (creational) matters as well. This is because the Bible, while it is *man-oriented*, is *God-centered*.”

Rousas J. Rushdoony, “Too often, the modern theologian and churchman goes to the Bible seeking *insight*, *not orders* ... when I go to the Bible I must go to hear God's marching orders for my life. I cannot treat the Bible as a devotional manual designed to give me peace of mind or a 'higher plane' of living; it is a command book which can disturb my peace with its orders, and it tells me that I can only find peace in obeying the Almighty. The Bible is not an inspirational book for my personal edification, nor a book of beautiful thoughts and insights for my pleasure. It is the word of the sovereign and Almighty God; I must hear and obey, I must believe and be faithful, *because God requires it*. I am His property, and His absolute possession. There can be nothing better than that.”

When we come to Christ, we come with all the thoughts that have been passed on to us from our parents, grandparents, friends, and teachers. We also bring all the ideas about life that we have formed over the years. Worse yet, we bring all the teaching that we have received concerning God and Christianity that was probably taught us by the representatives of a dead religion; humanistic wolves in sheep's clothing. Many of these thoughts and ideas are simply not true, a distorted view of life put together by someone who was a fallen human being.

When the Gospel is presented to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, we believe with our hearts, the true center of our persons; i.e., our spirits. It is here that the light dawns and we commit ourselves to Him.

In that moment we are pardoned, declared the righteousness of God, and made a member of Father's family. We know this in our hearts! The apostle John writes in fact that we know that we know! Those who are born again have the witness within. But, our heads do not know the implications and consequences of the new birth immediately. We have a witness at spirit level, but our minds have not yet logically understood both the implications and the ramifications of the new birth.

Into the midst of all the thoughts that we had decided were the true facts of life and the absolute to build our lives around has now come a new set of facts the Bible.

In Romans 12:2, Paul commands us to “... be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...” He had just given a lengthy exposition of the finished work of Christ and how that has brought us through death to our old selves to new life in Christ. But having told us what has happened and shown us what is, he is saying that this will work out in a transformed lifestyle *only if* the mind is renewed. We must learn to think what our hearts already know, for it is our thoughts that produce our lifestyles. What we are in our thoughts today, we will be in our lifestyles tomorrow.

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As we learn to do this, we live in an agonizing tension. The Spirit is urging us in one direction, and our minds in another telling us to live the way we have been taught through the years.

The new birth is a miraculous, instantaneous translation; by God's grace, we have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. But, our minds have been trained in the world of darkness. It takes time to adjust to the new life in Christ and to learn how to respond to all the problems of life out of Christ's word, instead of the word of darkness. We need new software for the computers of our minds that matches the new life that is ours in Christ. In this period of time we feel like two people. We are not two people, but one new man in Christ, learning to shuck off the old and live in the new.

How do we do this? By filling our minds with God's Word, replacing our old thoughts with His living thoughts letting His Word take over and control us. As we immerse our minds in God's Word, we begin to think of God as He really is and of who we really are in Christ. We exchange the false wisdom of the world for the true wisdom that is in Christ.

God has addressed Himself to our minds and reason in the Bible. Although He is eternally and infinitely beyond our finite minds, He has entered into us by the Holy Spirit and speaks to us in our finite language in order that we may understand His eternal truth and live.

Like a mother talking to her child in baby talk, so the infinite God has spoken to us in the language of a particular people, in a certain historical situation with all its limitations. In speaking to that people, He speaks to us now. He did not reveal all the truth that there is, but He did reveal everything that we need to know for this life. In the words of Cornelius Van Til, "The Bible is the authoritative word on every aspect of our lives, because it speaks to every aspect of our lives."

What the Bible calls renewing the mind is bringing our thoughts into submission to that revealed Word of God that we might walk in true wisdom. In this kind of meditation we move beyond only experiencing the reality of God's presence to understand what He has told us about Himself, his creation, history, and our life with Him in Christ, and bring our entire lives into submission to that revelation. It is what the Scripture means when it speaks of loving God with all our mind, as well as our hearts.

When Israel was delivered by the power of God and the shed blood of the substitute lamb, they were cut off from Egypt. They passed through death to Egypt in the Red Sea baptism, sang the song of deliverance over the enemies in the morning, and walked through the wilderness under the cover and direction of the cloud of God's glory. But whenever there was pressure or trouble, they reacted like Egyptians; Egyptian wisdom was still in their minds.

What is meditation?

Expanded meaning of Hebrew/Greek:

- *Meditation*: describes the revolving around and around in the mind something of great importance. It is a turning the subject over and over until one is talking or murmuring to oneself about it.
- *Ponder*: To weigh something in the mind until all barriers that stand in the way of understanding it fully have been removed. The word is used to describe the rolling or

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flattening of bumpy ground to make it into a roadway.

- *Consider: to see, understand by looking long at a problem. To return again and again to the subject. To note carefully, to fully observe, to behold, and, in beholding, discover.*

Summary of the meanings of the word "meditation" - to mutter, to imagine, to mourn, to roar, to speak, to study, to talk, to utter, to bow down, to muse, to commune, to pray, to speak, to be careful, to devise, to make a solemn sound.

"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 communion with God. Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God, and to let His truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart. It is a matter of talking to oneself about God and oneself; it is, indeed, often a matter of arguing with oneself, reasoning oneself out of moods of doubt and unbelief into a clear apprehension of God's power and grace. Its effect is ever to humble us, as we contemplate God's greatness and glory, and our own littleness and sinfulness, and to encourage and reassure us - comfort us - as we contemplate the unsearchable riches of divine mercy displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ" (James I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 18-19).

Egypt was in their lifestyle, their understanding of themselves and their universe. After the deliverance from Egypt there followed the long process of getting Egyptian thinking out of their minds. God spoke His Word to them at Sinai. Biblical law is a self disclosure of God, the true nature of dominion living on earth, and His way of salvation.

Moses wrote the law down. The people were commanded to read it, memorize it, turn it over in their minds continually, and make it the subject of their conversations. cf. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 with Psalm 1.

Along with the Word spoken to them at Sinai, God added to it the book of beginnings, Genesis, in which was the account of the universe and of man, his nature, dominion calling, fall into sin, and the announcement of God's salvation received by faith in Him. Egyptian thinking was taken out of them as they opened their minds to receive the Word of God.

Israel was to be a nation of listeners, tuned to the voice of their Creator, Redeemer, and Sovereign King. They were to walk to the command of His Word, strangers in a world that followed the voice of their lusts, whose wisdom was the guesswork of their darkened minds, listeners to the voices of innumerable devils. As they obeyed the voice of the Living God, they would become like a light to the nations. See Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

We who have come into Christ from the Egypt of the world must now be wholly transformed by replacing the foolishness of the wisdom of the world with God's wisdom that centers in Christ.

What is the object of meditation?

- The Bible (Joshua 1:8; I Timothy 4:15; Psalm 1:2; 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148). The

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“mantra” of the Christian is 66 books long. The Word of the Living God is the prime object of meditation. It is these truths that are revolved in the mind, gazed at until understood and seen. It is in dialog with Scripture that old worldly wisdom ideas are dispelled and replaced with God’s wisdom (Romans 12:1-2). The meditator ends up talking to himself in God’s presence - murmuring with pleasure the words of God. All other objects of mediation are considered in the light of the Bible.

- The Works of God (Psalm 8:3; 77:12; 104; 111:2; 143:5; 105:5; 19:1-3; Proverbs 6:6-8; Genesis 15:5; Luke 2:19). The works of God in creation take on a new meaning as they are considered in the light of who the Creator is. Every part of creation becomes a window that shows us some facet of God’s glory and purpose. We are to consider, not only His creative works, but all His providential deeds in history, His plan of salvation, all His acts of kindness in our lives. Note Romans 11:33-36.
- The Character and Attributes of God (Psalm 63:6; 104:34). Who is your God? The Bible is the self disclosure of God to man. At the heart of all the world’s problems is an insufficient knowledge of who God is. To meditate upon God’s attributes puts all of life in perspective, reduces our problems to size and gives us content-filled worship.
- Our own life (Proverbs 4:26; 5:6). We are to weigh the path we are treading. We do not drift in the darkness but consciously walk in the light. All that we see must be applied to our lives - all decisions, goals pondered in the light of God’s word.

Meditation as the Bible defines it may be understood as the focusing of my mind upon one object: the mind of God which He has put into my earth language, the Bible. It is holding that Word in my mind to be illumined and explained by the Spirit who dwells within me. It is rolling that Word around, allowing it to invade all my logic and reasoning, destroying the old way of thinking, producing a new view of life under God. It is total commitment to *practice* the new lifestyle, aligning my total self to His truth.

Meditation is waiting before the Word of God until it is *heard* with the ears within, and to go on to practice it until the whole lifestyle radiates God's thoughts. This is understood as a twenty-four hour involvement of the mind with God's Word. Study Joshua 1:8.

But how does the written Word of God speak to me? How does the Holy Spirit illumine it, causing it to become embedded in my mind and lifestyle? Renewing the mind falls into approximately four categories:

1. Stillness.
2. Listening to God in His Word.
3. Contemplation.
4. Action.

1. Stillness

Our society is noise-oriented. The man of modernity wants to be amused (opposite of muse; another word for meditation) and entertained. One weapon of the world is the noise and amusement that stops us from communing with God in silence.

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In coming to Christ we must learn to be still in a world of chaos. Study Psalm 46.

How can we be still to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit above all other voices?

We are responsible for the state of our minds. All of our actions flow from our thoughts; today's actions are but the belated results of what our thoughts have been dwelling on for the last months. We are obviously responsible for our actions and therefore we must be responsible for the source of those actions; i.e., our thought life.

The Scripture commands us to order our thoughts and direct them to things above; we are to see the whole of life out from the perspective on the sovereign throne of Christ. cf. Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:8; Revelation 4.

We cannot be responsible for the many thoughts that present themselves to us, but we are accountable for those on which we choose to dwell. Many thoughts knock on our doors, but we are only responsible for those we invite in for coffee!

If we are going to live on a deeper level than jostling thoughts, we must cultivate the art of stifling those thoughts so that we may hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. To take one hour of our day and use it to practice the art of stillness will bring a stillness to *every* hour of the day or night.

Note the lifestyle of Jesus; a man of the marketplace, surrounded by the bustle of life, living an intensely active life. Yet, His life was lived in a stillness that could detect His Father's whisper within. He refused to react to pressure from every idea that presented itself to Him. His life was not a tennis ball bounced between every demand and pressure of the day. John 2:3; 7:2-4; 6:14,15; Matthew 16:22; John 14:10.

That stillness came to Him from His habitual withdrawal into the aloneness of His Father's presence. Luke 5:16; 6:12; Matthew 14:23.

Jesus *chose* to withdraw and be still, and any entering into silence will be by our choice. Our minds and bodies await the command of our will, and it is good to take authority, ordering ourselves to relax and be still. Our yelling, shoving, whimpering, trembling emotions are indulged in by *choice*. We can command silence that we may wait on God. Exodus 14:13; II Chronicles 20:3.

We have allowed our fragmented selves to talk to us producing confusion within. We must now learn the biblical art of talking to ourselves! Psalm 42:3-5.

If an emotion is dominating our minds or a decision presses to be made, it may be advisable to go beyond commanded stillness. It must be shared with the Lord. We do this by vocalizing it, letting it come out in words, and, in the silence that follows, hear His answers.

As we articulate what is on our hearts, we are sharing our lives in Him who is all answers in Himself. It is the *expectant* casting of care upon Him that we may be aligned to His wisdom in the following stillness.

In all of this we are not seeking to unthink, or to achieve a blank mind. Christian meditation is the *replacing* of our thoughts with His. We do not say, "I will not think of this," but rather, "I will think of that." In seeking *not* to think of something, we inevitably think of it for we must constantly remind our minds of it in our command not to think of it! In seeking not to think a thought, we double its power in our minds.

As we command ourselves to be still in the presence of the Lord, releasing all our problems, joys, and decisions into His hands, we quietly worship Him and so direct our minds expectantly to a word

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from Him. There can be no direction to our lives, no ongoing transformation until we learn to be still. It is in this attitude of silence that the meditation process continues into listening to the Word of God.

2. Listening

Silence is only the preparation of our hearts in which the process of meditation may take place. In that silence we hear God speaking His thoughts, replacing our old worldly wisdom with His thoughts or eternal truth.

We come to the Bible realizing it to be the God-breathed book, and tune our inward ears to hear His voice still speaking, as fresh as when He first spoke. We come with a prayer that the Holy Spirit will open to us what He is saying. Ephesians 1:17-19; Psalm 119:8, 18.

In reading the Scripture we need a good translation (not a paraphrase). It is also helpful to have a notebook on hand so that nothing is lost.

Listening is an art we have lost almost as much as the art of silence. The fact of sound falling on my ear does not imply listening. If we are ever to *hear* God, we must learn to listen.

Listening is choosing to hear *this* as opposed to *that*. It is a deliberate choice to focus on the revelation of God in His Word with an attitude of unconditional obedience.

If we will listen to God speak, we will not read Scripture with a mind that wanders, heeding every passing thought. For example, A short letter of the New Testament should be taken and read through a number of times to get the “feel” of its whole message. Then return to the beginning, taking the first paragraph and settling in to hear what it is saying in context with the whole letter. In reading, it is suggested that reading aloud be employed. This was the way the Jews and early Christians read up until approximately 400 AD. By reading aloud the eyes see, the mouth articulates, and the ears hear the Word of God.

Listen to hear what is said, not what you assume is going to be said. We are always confined within the limits of our expectancy. If we come to the Bible assuming we know what is there, we shall be limited by our assumptions.

We do not fit His Words into our “religious or denominational” presuppositions. We come to the Scripture to hear what God is saying, not what we assume He is saying. Unless we approach the Scriptures in a hearing attitude, we will never hear what God is telling us about Himself, what He is revealing to us concerning who we are in Christ, and what He is saying to the culture in which we live.

Repeatedly the Scripture calls upon us to use our ears. Revelation 2:7, 11,17. In our new birth we received spiritual ears, the ability to hear God clearly; now we must learn to use them.

Read your selected passage asking the question. *What is being said here?* Do not look for hidden mystical meaning unless the book is apocalyptic, such as parts of Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and the whole of the Revelation. God has spoken in our *language* and His Word should be understood as meaning what it says. Deuteronomy 30:11-14; II Peter 1:19.

The Bible is not hidden, known only to a special elite few, but is itself light throwing light into our minds.

Although the Bible is not hidden, it is not easy either. Understanding it and its implications for us and our society requires hard work with our minds. I Peter 1:13.

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Let questions concerning the text flow. Write them down and the Spirit will lead to answers. What does this word mean? Who wrote this? Where was he when he wrote it? Under what circumstances did he write it? To whom did he write it? What were their circumstances? What emotion is in the passage? Is the writer happy or sad? What would I expect to find here? What would I have written under the circumstances? These questions will cause us to actually *hear* what is being said in the passage.

Do not be afraid of questions to which there are no immediate answers. Questions always prepare us for answers; if we are not asking questions we do not notice the answers when they come. The Holy Spirit prepares us for His answers by filling our minds with questions.

Gradually answers will come from this source and that, and we will have a grasp of what the passage is actually saying. At that point write it out in your own words.

But it must be taken further, for God is speaking to us *personally* about our life and our involvement in His purposes for the earth. In Scripture, God spoke personally to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, etc. about their place in God's plan. As you come to the Word of God it is to receive the words for *yourself* and your *relationship* to God's plan to use you to take dominion over the earth. To make this more vivid and real it can help to rewrite the passage, inserting your own name into it as if it were addressed to you.

All of this will take time. The whole process may be gone over each day for a number of days.

Do not be afraid to stay with a verse once you have your teeth into it. We are not in a marathon Bible reading contest awarding those who read through the Bible the fastest. Stay with a passage until whatever the Spirit is saying has been *said* and *done*. Do not be discouraged if you seem slow to hear what God is saying. The sheep who hear His voice did not learn in a day.

3. Contemplation

Constantly *hearing* the Word tends to memorization of the passage you are meditating on. If not memorized, carry the passage you are listening to with you into your daily work world.

Hold it in your mind and pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind and reveal what He is saying to you through it.

Take your questions and *expectantly* look to the Spirit to provide answers. Turn all that has been revealed into praise and worship. Over the weeks the conscious mind will learn not only to direct its attention to the task in hand, but also to be aware of the Word of God being turned over in the Spirit's light just below the surface.

Like the dawning of the day, light will gradually fill our understanding. Flashes of truth will burst into our conscious minds as we are working, driving; as we wake in the morning; as we dream in the night. Carry a notebook with you so that you can capture these times of revelation. In so doing, we discover that the Lord's command to Joshua (1:8) is actually taking place; we are learning to meditate *day and night*.

A change comes over our outlook on life as our minds are renewed. We look at our universe quite differently now that we know the Creator. Our personal lives and interpersonal relationships are no longer based on the desires of self and the roller coaster of our emotions, but on the bedrock of what God says. Decisions are not made out of pressures from every voice that grabs our ears, but from God's presence within where the Word and the Spirit bear witness with our spirits.

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4. Action

Renewing the mind is not simply an intellectual exercise, but an actual bringing about of a new lifestyle that is aligned to God's Word spoken to our minds by the written Word of God.

With every unveiling of God's Word to our minds is the call to do and be. The command to Joshua to meditate was accompanied by the command to *observe to do it*. What the Word of God is *commanding* me to be, the Holy Spirit within *empowers* me to be. The Scripture then becomes to me a description of who I am in union with Christ. Meditation must lead me to step out and become the person He declares I am in union with Christ.

To meditate is to commit ourselves to doing all that He may show us and bring to our understanding. We can accept such a commitment knowing that He who is within us is the power that enables us to fulfill the commitment.

All of this takes time, much time. Do not be frustrated! There is a great land of promise that stretches out before us. We shall discover that land as we renew our minds and become who we are in Christ; His agents who express God's will on earth. Meditation is the skeleton key that unlocks every storeroom of God's treasure house. Learn this art and we shall walk with understanding and confidence in this world, effecting the kingdom of God on earth by placing all things under the crown rights of King Jesus.

What are the fruits of Biblical Christian Meditation? (from Psalm 119)

Regarding Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984), "Dr. Schaeffer read deeply and daily in the Bible, He strived to walk each day in prayerful practice of what the Bible taught. For these reasons, God gave him great insight into the Bible's teachings and how they relate to modern life. This does not mean Dr. Schaeffer's thoughts about the Bible and its answers to the problems of modern man came easily to him. He sometimes spend several years thinking through to the Bible's answer to a particular question. The answers he gave appeared to be effortless, and they were often repeated, but this was so because he had spent many days of prayer humbly seeking for the answers in the Word of God."

- Sincerity, safeguard against defilement (v. 1)
- Saved from doing iniquity (v. 3)
- Not ashamed (v. 6)
- Sincere praise to God (v. 7)
- Cleansing one's way (v. 9)
- Avoidance of sin (v. 11)
- Release in communication about God (v. 13)
- Respectful contemplation of God's ways (v. 15)
- Stops forgetfulness of God's word (v. 16)
- Increases longing for God (v. 20)
- Shelters from slander (v. 23)
- Receive counsel from the Word (v. 24)

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- Freedom to talk of God's wondrous works (v. 27)
- Relief from heaviness (or depression) of the soul (v. 28)
- Restraint from lying ways (v. 29)
- Enlargement of heart - depth of capacity to love and obey God (v. 32)
- Saved from covetousness (v. 36)
- Turns away from looking at vain (worthless) things (v. 37)
- Protection from reproach of others (v. 39)
- Quickens in righteous living (v. 40)
- Understanding of mercies and salvation of God (v. 41)
- Walk in true liberty (v. 45)
- Freedom to witness to kings - leaders in society (v. 46)
- Reason to hope (v. 49)
- Comfort (life) in affliction (v. 50)
- Saves from wrong influence and derision of the proud (v. 51)
- Gives an understanding of the horror of sin (v. 53)
- Inspires songs (v. 54)
- Basis for prayer (v. 58)
- One of the grounds for godly fellowship with others (v. 63)
- Increased understanding of God's goodness (v. 68)
- Gives one a godly perspective on possessions (v. 72)
- Gives a personal understanding of God's creative purposes (v. 73)
- Confirms truths about God's faithfulness amidst adversity (v. 86)
- Proves the veracity and everlasting nature of God's word (v. 89)
- Expands our understanding, not just of spiritual things, but of everything (v. 96)
- Increased love for the Law of God (v. 97)
- More understanding (perspective on knowledge) than teachers (v. 99)
- Determination to avoid evil (v. 101)
- Understanding and hatred of every false way (v. 104)
- Enlightenment and guidance (v. 105)
- Content for rejoicing in God (v. 111)
- Hate for vain thoughts (v. 113)
- Avoidance of wrong company (v. 115)
- Fear of God (v. 120)
- Realization that God's word applies (provides correct perspective) to every aspect of life (v. 128)
- Deliverance from oppression of man (v. 134)
- Compassion for those who live in disobedience (v. 136)
- Understanding of God's righteousness (v. 137)
- Understanding of the character of the Word of God (v. 138-144)
- Source of salvation (v. 155)

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- Source of great treasure (v. 162)
- Great peace (v. 165)
- No stumbling-blocks (v. 165)
- Ability to testify (v. 172)

Proverbs 4:20-22, “My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the mist of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health (medicine) to all their flesh.”

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