

Meditation Series

Experiencing Jesus Through His Word



REALLY? GOD WANTS ME TO DO THIS?

Satan is never original. He can't create anything. He takes what was God's, twists it and perverts it, and then calls it his. So in light of that, why would Christians believe that 'meditation' is synonymous with 'New Age'? It is not. It originated with God and it is His concept. Satan hijacked it. God gave it to His people all the way back in the book of Deuteronomy.

“You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. Deuteronomy 11:18-19

Meditation was clearly supposed to be a way of life. It is a practice where scripture simmers constantly in my thoughts. If I am out for a walk, having lunch with a friend, sitting at my desk working, or straightening up my family room, thoughts of scripture co-exist alongside my life. I'm talking to the Holy Spirit about what I read earlier and asking Him to unveil what is hidden to me.

Meditation is not the same as bible study or reading through the bible in a year. It involves a couple of verses at a time. The Hebrew word for meditate is 'hagah' which means to savor slowly. ***“Taste (hagah) and see that the Lord is good.” Psalm 34:8*** To savor a bite of food means that it sits on my tongue and I chew it slowly. I engage with the taste before swallowing. Jeremiah said, ***“Your words were found and I ate them; and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Jeremiah 15:16***

Why meditate? Because it re-wires the way I think, aligns my feelings, and changes me into someone who thinks, feels, and then acts like Jesus. So, how do I meditate? What skills are involved? Be prepared to see the parched spiritual landscape of your life change with the addition of this life-giving, God-given spiritual discipline.

In 1997, I was in a deep spiritual, emotional, and physical pit of despair. For three years, I began to engage in biblical mediation alongside bible study. Upon this ~ I finally experienced personal transformation. And upon this ~ Daughters of Promise was born.

Let us sit up straight together, Lord. Sisters. Students. Taught by the Spirit of the Rabbi. We will be changed and it will be stunning. Amen

BRAINWASHING AND RE-PROGRAMMING

Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." John 7:37-38

Brainwashing. Programming. Two more terms that society associates with darkness. Just like meditation. Yet, the washing of our hearts and the re-programming our thought life are two biblical concepts. It is possible to think in whole new ways, ways that are opposite to how we currently think. It is possible to carve out new mental pathways where there were none before. It is possible to re-program the way we look at things. I can believe something deeply for forty years but experience a mental shakeup when scripture redefines my perception of things. He fashions a new mindset! Imagine.

Ever come up against someone's mindset in an argument? Perhaps you've have argued with someone for years and after hours of heated debate, deception hasn't budged. You can't imagine why you, or they, couldn't see the truth. The problem was not an individual thought of deception but a whole conglomeration of thoughts; a mindset that is formed over a lifetime. Only God can change that ~ and boy, is He eager to.

In scripture, God tells me the way things work. He tells me who He is, who I am, the way the world works, and the way the kingdom operates. Any paradigm outside of a kingdom paradigm is futile.

In the messiness of life, meditation is imperative. When I feel abandoned by God, meditation has me focus on His faithfulness. When I fear He has heard my prayers, meditation zeroes in His promises to answer prayer. When my feels trip me up, meditation reorders my thoughts and channels my emotions to match up with truth. A brainwashing and re-programming commences.

Tomorrow, some meditation skills to begin a new way of life. For many it will be like it was for me in 1997. It was the first day of the rest of my life.

I anticipate a new day tomorrow. Amen

I CAN'T GET REVELATION ON MY OWN

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." John 16:13

I can be so familiar with well-known scriptures and bible stories that I believe I know what they mean. I assume that reading them only involves a kind of review. That's a mistake and if I begin to meditate without prayer, I will get little or nothing out of it. I will be feasting on yesterday's manna.

The first meditation skill: **Before opening the scriptures, ask God to open your heart.**

Before setting my eyes on a handful of verses to meditate on, I stop. I make a request for spiritual eyesight. I ask the Holy Spirit to speak to me. I admit that I am blind without the work of the Spirit giving light to the eyes of my understanding. I consider King Solomon who, at the beginning of his reign, saw his inability to rule wisely. He said to Yahweh, *"And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in." I Kings 3:7*

Revelation, insight, wisdom, spiritual understanding ~ these are supernatural gifts. I should never be proud of what I know and never impressed with how much I understand. It has all been a gracious gift to an undeserving sinner. I did not even possess enough spiritual insight to become a believer. The wind of the Spirit had to open my eyes to the glory of Jesus so I could even believe. I am saved through faith alone, nothing for which I can take credit.

Whether you land on a few verses from the Psalms, the book of John, or a heavyweight passage from Hebrews, the process must always be the same. It starts with this prayer.

"Lord, I come humbly and acknowledge that I will know nothing apart from what You will show me. Open the eyes of my heart. Let me see Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen"

WHO WROTE IT AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?

“I am writing these things to you so that . . .” I John

If I went and grabbed an old journal and decided to share a page with you, after reading it, you would probably ask this question. **“When did you write this? And what was happening in your life at the time?”** You’d ask because context is everything.

While the whole bible is inspired and infallible, God used the pens of men to compose it. They are from different places, different times, and possess different personalities and stories. To fully appreciate and connect with what they are writing, it helps to know each one better.

Meditation skill #2: **Investigate the author and know his story.**

I am to wonder who authored my meditation. Was he a type-A personality or a contemplative? Was he in a good period of his life or under great duress? Was he young or old? Knowing the answers (if they are available) means that I can feel comforted when I am experiencing the same circumstances as the author. His words will mean more because of shared experiences ~ even though we are many centuries apart. I won’t consider the Bible just a history book. The authors can be embraced as spiritual family members. Their lives and stories are my personal history.

Oftentimes, hints are given in the very passage I’m reading. John, in his epistles, tells his readers why he is writing. I get an instant picture of motive, of passion, and why he felt the words were imperative. Application is much simpler when intent is revealed and love is the driving force.

Truth is always meant to be a heart thing. Meditation feeds the mind but fortifies the heart. Over time, I feel a bond with the one who wrote the words. When reading the Psalms, for example, I often ask God to tell David how grateful I am for his songs and laments.

Scripture is not abstract poetry and historical storytelling. Personalize it with the breath of Your Spirit. Amen

YES, OVER AND OVER

All Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side. II Chronicles 15:15

When I receive an important letter, I don't read it just once. I read it over and over again to make sure I am reading between the lines. The more precious the letter, the higher the number of readings.

I remember receiving love letters from Ron when we were dating. He attended a boarding school in Florida and I was in New York. He wrote once a week and it was always on light blue stationery. Once I found the letter in the mailbox, it never made it to the house before opening it. I read it again while eating my after-school snack. I took it upstairs to my bedroom and read it several more times before dinner. I wanted to make sure I found every nuance to tuck it away in my heart.

If human words have many layers, it's no surprise that God's Word does too. Human words are finite but Scripture is a 'manna' that only gets deeper at every reading. It's multi-layered and with each intake, there's a new golden nugget. If the book of John were all I had available to me as a believer, it would have enough spiritual food for a lifetime. In fact, one chapter would be enough. If I can't plumb the depths of God, why would I believe that I can plumb the depths of His Words?

Meditation skill #3: **Take time to read your passage over and over again.**

Many of our church fathers practiced a spiritual discipline called *lectio divina*. They were made up of Reformation, Puritans, Revivalists, and others. They read scripture repeatedly to discern, through the work of the Spirit of God, the full meaning of a passage. Martin Luther urged meditation and used the Lord's prayer as a model to teach it to those he taught.

How about this quote from Charles Spurgeon ~ "*The more you read the Bible; and the more you meditate on it, the more you will be astonished with it.*"

Astonish each one who will open your Word today, and who then settles in on it to read Your words like a love letter. Amen

HOW HE FEELS ABOUT HIS OWN WORD

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:103

Years ago, someone I considered a mentor made a comment to me about what faith is like. Her description consisted only of four words and they have lived with me for over thirty years. Words, especially wisdom from God, have a life of their own and live forever.

How does God feel about His own Word? Can you even imagine? When I feel numb and casual about a scripture, God is anything but that. How is the gap bridged between how I may feel about it and how He feels? How does ‘casual’ meet ‘passionate’? How can ‘casual’ become ‘passionate’? There is a way.

The Spirit of God lives inside each of His children. When I read the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is aware of it and is feeling something. He is willing and eager to communicate that to me if I ask.

Meditation skill #4: **Ask God to help me feel what *He* feels about that passage.**

When I’m reading an Old Testament story, God remembers it all in vivid detail like it was yesterday. He remembers the sin of the people and the victories of the saints. Excitement is in His memory. When I’m reading a warning about the consequences of sin, God feels the high stakes. He’s praying I’ll believe what I’m reading and avoid the painful consequences. When I’m reading verses of comfort and promises He’s made, He’s feeling passionately about my encouragement. He’s hoping I’m latching on to His words as lifelines.

I have experienced feeling little one moment while meditating on a scripture, but then asking God to help me feel what He feels about it. Words that failed to move me will often end up causing me to weep over their beauty. What made the difference? Asking the Spirit to stir my heart emotionally and make me as alive to the content as He is alive to it. If I’m not experiencing God in His very words, there is a real disconnect.

You are never numb. I am often numb. Help me move out of stoicism into experiential unity with You. Amen

JOURNAL BEFORE YOU FORGET IT

Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. Jeremiah 30:2

Where would we be today if people hadn't taken the time to write out the Scriptures? Where would we be today if our favorite Christian authors hadn't taken the time to meditate, study, and then capture their findings on paper?

And what would I have missed if I hadn't journaled over these many years? While I haven't been perfectly disciplined, I do have journal books that are stored by date. Each entry reminds me of what I struggled with at the time and the way God spoke to me about it through scripture and prayer. I expressed that day's experience on paper and by reviewing it down the road, I was able to enter into the strength and beauty all over again. God's voice was heard again in my spirit and it benefitted me yet again.

Meditation Skill #5: **Journal before you forget it.**

As you write down your meditation experience, you may have questions as well. Make note of them and commit them to prayer. Meditations are rarely just for one day. The mystery of God and His ways are unwrapped over time.

How can I review if I don't capture the memory? Help me make the most of your personalized instruction. Amen

RESOURCES/ARTICLES/BOOKS

1. Hearing God's Voice ~ Henry and Richard Blackaby
2. Biblical Meditation for Spiritual Breakthrough ~ Elmer Towns
3. Hearing God Through Biblical Meditation ~ Mark Virkler
4. Hearing God ~ Dallas Willard
5. Sanctuary Of The Soul ~ Richard Foster
6. Reading The Bible Supernaturally ~ John Piper
7. Worship In The Shape of Scripture ~ E. Russell Mitman
8. Eat This Book ~ Eugene Peterson