

# Christian Meditation

## What is Christian Meditation:

When most of us hear the word meditation, our minds are painted with a picture of a small, hot room with incense burning in the background, and in the middle sits a robed figure with his legs crossed chanting “ohmmm.” This somewhat exaggerated description depicts Transcendental meditation, the attempt to empty one’s mind.

However, the goal of Christian meditation is to fill our mind with awareness of God’s presence. Our day-to-day minds are full of many things, but often those things are not centered on God. By practicing meditation, we place God’s voice, rather than the world’s, in our minds, thus putting us in a place for Him to direct us in our day-to-day walk through life.

Psalm 1 draws a vivid picture of the man who is rooted firmly in the Lord opposed to one who is not. The man who meditates on the word of God day and night is “...like a tree planted by streams of water...” Christian meditation helps us to be rooted in the words and voice of God.

Christian meditation calls us to enter into the living presence of God to hear his voice and obey his word. By listening, sensing, and heeding the life and light of Jesus Christ we invite the Holy Spirit to come and work within us – teaching, cleansing, comforting, and rebuking.

## How Begin Practicing Meditation:

- **Pray for the Desire to Hear God’s Voice**

Before we can begin to meditate, we must have the desire to do so. If we do not, our efforts will soon fail. How do we receive the desire to hear his voice? It is a gift of grace, and our first step is to pray to God for the desire and grace to do so. Seeking and receiving that gift of grace is the only thing that will keep us moving forward on our inward journey.

- **Where to Meditate**

This is to be your time alone with God, so find a place that is free from distractions and interruptions. Places that have a view of pretty landscapes are desired, but not a must. Once you find the right place to meditate, stick with it...do not hunt for a new place every day.

- **When to Meditate**

Set aside specific times for contemplation. While we must guard against the notion to do certain religious acts at specific times means we are meditating, we should try and block out a set time(s) to meditate, and make it known to your family members that this is your quiet time when you are not to be disturbed. If we are constantly managing crises, our minds will be distracted and fragmented, and will be unable to be attentive at the moment of inward silence

- **Posture for Meditation**

While you can pray anywhere, anytime and in any position, keep in mind that body, mind and spirit are inseparable. Many people find the best position is simply sitting comfortably in a chair (if you choose this position, try not to cross your legs as it will restrict your circulation). Others may prefer to sit on a pillow on the floor or even lie down, but whatever position you choose, find the one that is the most comfortable and least distracting. The aim is to center the attention of the body, the emotions and the mind upon the spirit of God.

- **What to Meditate Upon**

- **Meditate upon the attributes of God**

For example, "God is Love", "God is merciful" or "God is Just", to name a few.

- **Meditate upon scripture**

Choose any passage of scripture allow it to take root in you. If it is an event, seek to live the experience by imagining yourself there as you feel the warmth of the sun upon your brow, the smell of salt water in the air and the sounds of the crowd filling your ears. A few suggested passages to get you started:

- The parable of the sower and the seed in Matthew 13: 3-8 "Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."
- John 14:1 [Jesus said] "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."
- Philippians 4: 8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."
- Zephaniah 3: 17 "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

## **Ideas for more in-depth practice of Meditation**

Other forms of Christian Meditation – Two other forms of Christian meditation are suggested below, but please keep in mind that ‘meditation upon scripture’ is the central reference point by which all other forms of meditation are kept in proper perspective. Please do not try these forms of meditation until you have practiced ‘meditation upon scripture’

Another form of Christian meditation is called “re-collection”. A brief exercise in this form of meditation is called “palms up, palms down”. We would begin by placing our palms down as a symbolic indication of our desire to turn over any concerns we have to God. We may inwardly pray “Lord I give you my anger I have towards Bob and my fear of next Tuesday’s doctor appointment” say these prayers of letting go with your ‘palms down’ and release it. After several moments of surrender, we will turn our palms up as a desire to receive from the Lord. “Lord I would like to receive your divine love for Bob, peace about my doctors appointment, your patience, your joy.” Whatever you need, say with your ‘palms up’ as you are open to receiving from God. Spend the next few moments in complete silence and allow the Lord to commune with you.

The final form of Christian meditation we will cover is meditation upon the creation. The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork (PS 19:1). Sometimes God reaches us profoundly in simple ways if we will quiet ourselves to listen. Look at the trees, really look at them. Take a flower and allow its beauty to sink deep into your heart. Listen to birds singing and watch the little creature that creep on the earth.

## **Biblical Basis for Christian Meditation:**

God commanded Joshua to meditate (Josh 1:8)

Genesis 24: 63 Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.

In the midst of a very busy ministry Jesus made it a habit to withdraw many times to be alone (see Matt. 4: 1-11; 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:31; Luke 6:12, etc.).

1 Timothy 4:15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

The Psalms are replete with examples of the Psalmist meditating.

Psalm 63:6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.

Psalm 143:5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands.

Psalm 119:48 And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.

Psalm 145:5 On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.

Psalm 119:97 The psalmist expressed love for the law of God and attempted to make it his "meditation all day long"

## **History of Christian Meditation:**

Christian meditation is rooted in the Bible. In fact, the Bible commands us to meditate. In Joshua 1:8, God says to meditate on His word day and night so we will obey it.

Formal Christian meditation began with the early Christian monastic practice of reading the Bible slowly. Monks would carefully consider the deeper meaning of each verse as they read it. This slow and thoughtful reading of Scripture, and the ensuing pondering of its meaning, was their meditation. This spiritual practice is called "divine reading", or lectio divina.

Meditation was more practiced more widely in the middle ages than it is in the present day. Two contemporaries of the time who wrote books on mediation are St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa of Avila.

During the Renaissance Thomas Watson, a Puritan preacher and author who was noted for his intense study, wrote "Meditation has a transforming power in it. The hearing of the Word may affect us; but the meditating upon it doth transform us. Meditation stamps the impression of divine truths upon our hearts. By meditating on God's holiness, we grow holy."