

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation

iFOLLOW

Walking with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series

Version 1.0 - 11/17/10



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

The Spiritual Discipline of Meditation

This presentation is designed for people who have decided to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Learning Objectives

1. Learn the goals of meditation
2. Discover what the Bible teaches about meditation
3. Find the differences between biblical meditation and other forms
4. Understand the steps to meditation
5. Know how meditation can enrich your prayer life

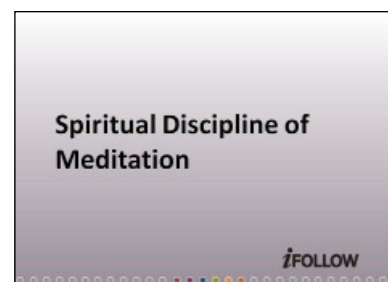
Content Outline

1. Be still and know
2. Meditation in the Bible
3. Steps to meditation
4. The presence of God in your life

Background Material for the Presenter

In our Western culture, we place great value on the ability to talk. We reward individuals who are articulate, quick on their feet, and can express themselves verbally. In fact, some of those who are most rewarded are those who can talk for long periods of time and say nothing. If you don't believe this is true, turn on Monday Night Football and cover up the screen of the TV. Just listen to the audio! For that matter, you can learn the same thing just by leaving the TV on all day.

In fact, talking is so valued that we have entire radio networks devoted to just talk! And there is never a shortage of talkers. What is missing from our culture is the ability to listen. In fact, so rare is this skill that we pay professional listeners, psychologists and psychiatrists, to listen to us!



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So what does all of this have to do with meditation? First off, the goal of meditation is to slow down the talking that goes on constantly in our brain. We chatter to ourselves incessantly. And for the most part, we are completely unconscious of this chatter. The process of meditation is designed to make us aware of this chatter and help us slow down so God can get a word in edgewise.

How does this work? Begin by finding a place where you can sit quietly, where you will have no interruptions. Try it here, today. Invite someone to read Colossians 3:2-3 and then quietly focus on the passage. Can you feel your mind being tugged at from many directions? Reread the passage. Then quietly reflect. Do this as a group for five minutes.

What was it like? Were you surprised at all the thoughts you had? Were you surprised at the kinds of thoughts you had? How did you feel?

One of the easiest ways to practice this “stillness” is to pay attention to your breathing. Don’t make any effort to change how you breathe. Just notice when you are breathing in and when you are breathing out. At first, you will find yourself distracted from your breath by your thoughts. When you realize that you are not paying attention to your breath, just notice this and go back to focusing on your breathing.

This exercise is one way of preparing to listen, really listen for God. As in our human relationships, most of us spend most of our communication with God talking. And, interestingly enough, this constant talking gets in the way of our connection with God, just like it gets in the way with our connection with other people. Few of us really listen, because we are constantly distracted by the chatter in our heads.

This skill of sitting quietly takes time to learn and develop. Be very gentle on yourself as you begin to practice. As you sit quietly, strong feelings may come up. You may feel things that don’t make sense to you. Don’t be overly anxious. As with the thoughts you think during this process, just acknowledge the feelings, feel them and let them go.

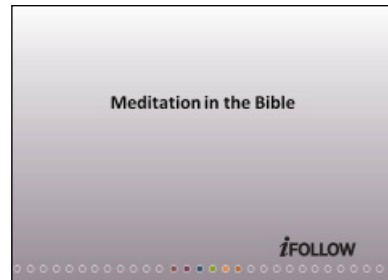
Sitting quietly in meditation helps us learn to really listen. We may not hear a voice when God speaks to us, but quieting the chatter will let us hear God.



Meditation in the Bible

There is much concern, and rightfully so, among Christians, when someone brings up meditation. There are a lot of counterfeits out there. People ask, are we trying to “conjure up” Jesus or someone from the Bible, or get Him to give us “special knowledge,” or special treatment? Are we trying to enter a trance?

What is meditation, and how does Christian meditation differ from the world’s counterfeits? The Bible’s answer may surprise you. We’ll go into it in some detail, so that you can know everything the Bible says about it. And don’t just take this presentation’s word for it, either. Study for yourself.



The English word “meditate” is listed fourteen times in *Strong’s Concordance*, only two times in the New Testament, and one of those—Luke 21:14—really should be “premeditate.” “Meditation” is listed six times, all of them in the Old Testament. Fifteen of these references are in the Psalms, and seven of those are in Psalm 119. Interestingly, Psalm 119 uses a different Hebrew word than the other passages use. It is **siyach**, which means, and I quote Strong exactly, “to **ponder**, i.e. (by impl.) **converse** (with oneself, and hence aloud) or (trans.) *utter*: commune, complain, declare, meditate, muse, pray, speak, talk (with).” Other than Psalm 119, only Psalm 104:34 uses the noun form of this word.

The rest of the Old Testament passages in which “meditate” occurs use forms of another Hebrew word—**hagah**—which means, “to **murmur** (in pleasure or anger); by impl. to **ponder**: imagine, meditate, mourn, mutter.” So the two Hebrew words are pretty much equal in meaning.

At this point you may begin to think how strange it is that the Hebrew words for “meditate” seem to include so much sound. We know that non-Christian meditation often includes sounds, chants, and mantras. It brings to mind a completely different passage—or is it so different? There is a text about “wizards that peep and mutter.” (KJV) The text is Isaiah 8:19. Here it is, from the *New American Standard Bible*:

“And when they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people consult their God?” If you look in the lexicon to find out what word is translated “mutter,” you will discover, perhaps to your astonishment, that it is **hagah**—same word, same form, same tense as “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night.” (Joshua 1:8, emphasis supplied.) The same word as “in His law he **meditates** day and night.” (Psalm 1:2, emphasis supplied.) The same word as “I **meditate** on Thee in the night watches.” (Psalm 63:6, emphasis supplied) and many more! Clearly, the **action** the

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wizards were performing was not wrong—in fact, we are commanded to do it. What then made them wrong? Let's go back to Isaiah 8.

“Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” (Verses 19-20) “No light in them.” (KJV) These wizards and mediums are using a God-given form of communication to consult, not the dead, of course, but the devil. They are then using the information they receive to lead the people who believe them away from the Word of God. The Lord makes it very clear what He thinks of these practices in the following verses. Here is His strongly worded warning:

“And they will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and **they will be** driven away into darkness.” (Verses 21-22)

But what about those who do not follow these deceivers? “But there will be no **more** gloom for her who was in anguish; ... The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.” (Isaiah 9:1-2) And there follows one of the most beautiful of the Messianic prophecies.

Is any of this still going on in this enlightened age? Today it comes as part of the broad category labeled “New Age.” The principle is crystal clear. Meditation connects you with somebody. You might want to be certain with whom you are connecting! Every one of the above texts commands that we are to meditate upon God, His law (the Bible) and His works. To be afraid to do that is like being afraid to use the telephone in case you might get a wrong number. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (James 4:8) It's a promise.

Here are some steps to meditation. Try them, experiment with them, pray about them, change them to fit your own patterns. Do whatever it takes to make meditation a tool that works for you—a tool that will bring you closer to the One who loves you best of all.

Step One: Pray

There is no Christian meditation without prayer no matter how pure may be the motives of the person attempting the meditating. In fact, in a way it's misleading to call prayer a “step,” since Christian meditation **is** a part of prayer, the listening part. Begin by asking God to help you relax, stop worrying, and put down your burdens. He'll tell you, “My peace I give to you ... Let not your



heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (John 14:27) Ask Him to forgive your sins and take away your own desires and wishes that might confuse you. He’ll remind you, “Trust in [Me] with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge [Me], and [I] will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Ask the Holy Spirit to come into your mind and help you to gain exactly what you need from this time with Him. And hear Jesus answer, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” (John 14:26)

Step Two: Prepare

The primary key to scriptural meditation—your Bible—is implicit in its name. You must choose and carefully read a passage upon which to meditate. Choose—there’s the rub! The Word of God is packed so full of gems with personal treasures for you, His beloved child, that choosing just one is sometimes a difficult task in itself. If you have a specific need or problem, your choice is easier. Use a concordance or one of those lists of passages addressing a variety of needs, moods, or problems contained in the back of many Bibles. Or look on line.

If you just want to feel close to Him (what could be more important, after all?) pick a story from His life or choose a favorite Bible story with which you are already familiar. You’ll be surprised at what new things you’ll learn!

In a pinch, you can just open the Bible and point. Unless you hit the genealogies (and maybe even then), it’s almost a guarantee that you’ll find a vivid picture of God. Here’s an important note if you have never done anything like this and are afraid you haven’t enough imagination, God has given everyone just the minds needed to get to know Him. He also expects us to develop ever-increasing abilities to see and hear Him, and it won’t always be easy. Sometimes it will seem impossible. But He said you could know Him, and “has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”(Numbers 23:19) Here’s another encouraging note from someone else. Ellen White was speaking to someone who had not accepted truth that was new to him, so she uses “if-you-had,-God-would-have” language. That means that for someone who wants to accept all the truth God has, it could also read “if you do, God will.” Here is what she says:

“If you had received the truth into a good and honest heart, you would have become a channel of light, with clear perception and sanctified imagination. Your conceptions of truth would have been exalted, and your heart made joyful in God. God would have given you a testimony clear, powerful, and convincing.” (1888 *Materials*, 1052)



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When you meditate, keep your Bible near at hand. The depth of the blessing you receive from biblical meditation will be dependent on how much care you take to become familiar with God’s Word before going on. What the Bible says is far more important than anything you or I or anyone else says or thinks **about** the Bible.

You will especially need your Bible after you meditate, if you feel that God has given you any new or different understanding of truth. Check what you think He told you with what He has already said. Remember what we read in Isaiah 8:20: “If they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no dawn,” or no light. It’s possible to be honest and still get off track, if you don’t immediately check your impressions with God’s revealed Word.

Step Three: Relax

The thing you need most is often the hardest thing to come by; at least fifteen or twenty minutes (and preferably much more) of peace. The more you need meditation in your life, the harder it will be to obtain it.

That’s what “stress” means. Do what you have to. Jesus is patiently standing by, longing to talk with you.

Once you have a comfortable spot and some quiet time to yourself, you’re ready to begin. Meditation can be done anywhere; a comfortable chair, the floor, even a tree branch outdoors is great if you can manage it. Just don’t lie down; you’ll go to sleep. (Meditating is a great way to go to sleep in the arms of God, but that’s a different goal!)

You have already asked the Lord to clear your mind of the cluttered, worried, and (let’s face it) self-centered thoughts that usually live there. But you’ll find it’s not as easy as you wish to cooperate with Him. Your mind is so used to scrambling, on six levels, at ninety miles an hour, (remember the “chatter”?) that it takes practice to shift into neutral. An almost universal complaint of beginners at meditation is, “I can’t do it. My mind just wanders!” Remember, this is not a performance. No one is grading you on how perfectly or how quickly you can free your mind from turmoil. Don’t get upset or impatient with yourself. Tense meditation is a contradiction in terms; it can’t be done! As in every other facet of Christian life, we must pray for the faith to let go and let God do it for us.

Remember the old saying about “not thinking about the green-eyed monkey”? As soon as someone says that, what do you think of? It is impossible to “not think”



about anything. Remember our Bible study on meditation. Others may try to meditate on nothingness or empty their mind, but Christians must meditate on something, actually, Someone. Fix Jesus' face in your mind's eye. Don't worry, He knows you don't know what He really looks like, and He doesn't mind how you imagine Him. Apparently in Bible times, people meditated out loud. So you could say, or murmur, or whisper one of the names of God. Or you could sing. It is well known that music goes to the heart as nothing else can do. If you're a visual person, gaze at a lake or stream, or a lit candle. The important thing is to think of something that will help you to concentrate on Him. Not on thoughts about Him or to Him or from Him, not yet, but just on **Him**. This is where the breathing exercise above can come in. You can concentrate on your breathing going in and out. When intruding thoughts come in, (and they will), calmly and patiently turn your mind back to its focal point. "In the strength of God the imagination can be disciplined to dwell upon things which are pure and heavenly." (White, *Mind, Character, and Personality Vol 2*. 1978, p 595)

One more point. The healthfulness of our lifestyle has a bearing on our devotional life. Not only can a clear mind pray better, but it can listen and obey much better as well. But if you are not living as healthfully as you might, certainly don't let that stop you from meditating. How else will He enable you to overcome that appetite—or whatever the problem may be? Here's something you can do every day, especially before meditating, that will help to clear your mind even if the bloodstream is a little more sluggish than it ought to be. Take several deep breaths, (preferably outside or in front of an open window), inhaling from the abdomen, not from the chest. Exhale slowly and completely, to clean stale air out of your lungs and get your circulation going. Then with eyes closed, begin to breathe slowly and evenly, consciously relaxing your body, especially the muscles of the face, neck, and shoulders, where tension collects. Take God at His word when He says He'll grant you His peace; feel your tension, anger, depression, busyness, or whatever, all drain away.

Step Four: Be There

Now you're ready to use your senses to create the scene of your encounter with God. Put the Bible story you have read in your mind. What can you see, hear, smell, feel, taste? What season is it? Where are you? What are you doing? Are you inside, outside, walking, or sitting?

"Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern



in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons.” (White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* 1896, p 1)

When the scene is real and you feel yourself “there,” begin the action. Look up and see Jesus, or whatever scriptural scene you have chosen. Go through the story and be a part of it. Find out what it means to you. A good description of this process is provided by Ellen White in *Desire of Ages*. “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.” (Page 83)

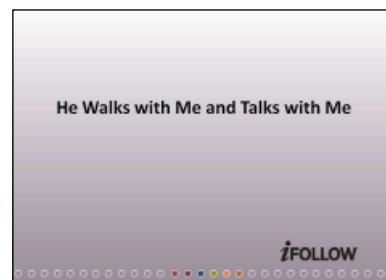
Step Five: Come Back

Close with another prayer. Thank Jesus for being with you and for what you have learned from Him. Then open your eyes, breathe deeply, stretch, and get up slowly. And then, **don’t** imagine yourself saying goodbye to Jesus and going about your business. That’s the difference between this kind of meditation and the pale copies! When a busy executive merely takes five minutes to relax, her body benefits. When she gets up, she picks up her burdens again, feeling more able to cope with the stresses of her complex life. But we **leave** our burdens. We put them in hands that know much more than we do about how to take care of them, and we leave them there. We get up and take Him with us to do the dishes or to guide our hands as we fix a car or mend a broken body. Wherever you go, whatever you do, your best Friend wants to go and do it with you.



He Walks with Me and Talks with Me

Once a converted, saved, growing, forgiven child of God learns how to see the Bible in a personal light and read all the precious old stories as if they really were written for him, then he is ready to discover the next step. He is ready to learn how he can talk to God and “hear” God’s answer just like all those people in the Bible did.



For Christians, this personal guidance from the Holy Spirit is second in value only to salvation, and Satan knows it. He is in the business of preventing souls from remaining in constant touch with the Father as Jesus was. It

really is possible to be so connected. It was one of Jesus' last requests: "That they may **be one, just as We are one.**" (John 17:22, italics supplied)

How? There is only one way to the Father, and that is to stow away in Jesus, so that where He goes, you go. One extremely vital part of this abiding life is personal meditation. It's a way in which you, or any Christian, can go to God for guidance on personal problems or questions that the Bible doesn't deal with specifically, or just to share the joys and trials of daily life and really hear an answer just for you, just in your own heart.

But this becomes a rather unnerving matter. Isn't it possible to make up a conversation with God, inventing lines for Him that will feed your own will?

Yes, it is. The child of God who truly wants guidance, will carefully guard herself from such possibilities by making full use of the armor God freely provides. She must become, through patient, prayerful study, firmly grounded in what God has already said in His Word. This means both practicing scriptural meditation and careful, systematic study of the themes and teachings of the Bible. God is never going to give you guidance that disagrees with His already-recorded Word.

You also must not forsake the fellowship of other growing Christians, especially those more experienced in their life with Christ. If you are perplexed or in doubt about something, check it with someone you trust and know to have a vital, experienced relationship with God.

But most of all, trust your Lord. Jesus is more concerned with keeping you from deception than you could ever be and is quite capable of protecting you if you just ask. So always, before any meditation, pray a prayer something like this: "Dear Father, I believe that You love me and want more than anything to guide and bless my life. I know that You have something to say to me today, and I want to hear You and nothing else. Please fill me with the Holy Spirit, as you have promised to do. Forgive my sins, take away my own wishes and desires, my doubts and worries, and protect me also from the devil's plans to harm me. I claim Your promise of wisdom, found in James 1:5, and the personal guidance You promise in Isaiah 30:21 and John 14:6 and 16:13. Help me to hear only Your message for me and to follow You throughout this day. Thank You for Your love. In Jesus' name, amen."

But in spite of all your prayer and preparation, and even though God is beside you and speaking to you, your meditations will still sometimes seem like mere imaginings, a child's daydreams. Don't be discouraged. Discouragement in itself is one of the devil's plans to harm you. Tell God your fears, too, and never give up.

Above all, remember this: "And the kingdom of God is like unto a radio network with

a perfect transmitter and a great many very faulty receivers.” No matter how perfect the transmitter (and it is), if I am not also a perfect receiver (and I am not, nor will I be until this world is ended and we are all put back on the same wavelength with God), there will sometimes be misunderstandings.

Never forget that, but don't let it throw you, either. God will not let you continue in a mistaken understanding as long as you stay tuned in. Keep checking back. Keep yourself conscious of His presence with you every moment of the day. With a humble realization of the frailty of your reception, keep your mind and heart open to Him, and “your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left.” (Isaiah 30:21) The High King of the universe has said it; never dare to doubt it. And the moment you are sure of His will, obey immediately. Hesitation will give the devil a chance to come up with all kinds of logical reasons why you shouldn't do it, and you will end up uncertain all over again about what your Teacher's will really is.

It is also possible to go to the other extreme. Some have let one subjective experience define their spiritual lives—this despite the counsel of others and to their own eventual calamity.

A man we'll call Bob was having an affair with the wife of another man we'll call John. When John, having talked to no avail with his wife, confronted Bob, Bob assured John that he had prayed very much over this matter and that God had told him it was His will for Bob to leave his own wife and take John's instead! The Bible says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.” (Jeremiah 17:9) We all know it will go to any extreme to get its own way. Bob failed to put the Bible first above his own ideas, even ideas he might think he got from prayer and meditation. Some who have taken this route have never accepted correction. “God told me,” they insist. Let's repeat it again: **God will not set aside His revealed Word, least of all His own law, to suit you!** We **must** keep a balance.

Personal Meditation

A very good way to start personal meditation is by using Scripture as a springboard. God has declared through His servant Paul that “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16, 16) That's pretty comprehensive.



If you want to sharpen your mind, wrestle with Paul over a point of doctrine. If you

want to increase your faith, meditate on the great scenes of the Old Testament. If you want to prepare for the future (and stretch your mental powers), watch the tremendous prophecies of Daniel and John the Revelator. No movie can compare!

If you want to learn how to meditate and how to deal with the tempest of feelings that tosses you about, go and sit at the feet of King David, a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) who was, believe me, just like you and me! Some people wonder why the Psalms are in the Bible. They are there because David, who wrote many of them, was the resident meditation expert of the Scriptures. He told God what he really felt in all kinds of situations, even when his rage and desire for revenge was outright wrong. And God has kept that record alive for us, in part to show us that we can tell Him anything at all and that He can help us to deal with it in a way that becomes positive and healing. You don’t have to know much about the Psalms; just page through them until you find one to match your mood. Read it and study how David meditated, how he expressed his woes or his joys, and how God answered him. Notice that his complaints all begin and/or end in praise, always.

Then follow David’s example. Talk to God yourself and hear Him comforting you or sharing your happiness. If you’re angry, tell God about it, just as David did, and let God take your anger and show you how to constructively deal with whatever the real problem is.

There are many other passages which are wonderful springboards to personal meditation. Isaiah is tremendous, especially anything after Isaiah 40. Did you think those prophets spoke only for Israel? Try substituting your name whenever it says “Jerusalem,” “Judah,” or “Zion,” and see if that changes your mind.

Our God stands ready to speak to us and guide us. If you’d like to hear Jesus Himself speak on the subject, walk with Him on the way to Gethsemane and listen to Him saying John 14-16. All we have to do is take His hand, trust Him, and quiet our spirits to hear His still, small voice. He is knocking, and waiting.

Handouts in this Package

1. Some Things to Meditate On
2. Experiments with Silence
3. Steps to Meditation



Additional Resources

- Augsburger, David (2006). *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God and Love of Neighbor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
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Websites

All About God Ministries is a nondenominational information service on basic Christianity. It includes material on Christian meditation under its “Discipleship” section: www.allaboutgod.com

John Mark Ministries is a nondenominational counseling ministry for Christian clergy who are struggling with burnout. Included on its website is practical information about meditation: jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/13763.htm

Renovare is a Christian parachurch organization that provides resources related to spiritual disciplines: www.renovare.org/

Rhonda Jones is a Christian author (not an Adventist) who publishes a website focused on the topic of Bible-based meditation: www.thechristianmeditator.com

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**Spiritual
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Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of when someone says the word “meditation?” Has this presentation or the activities changed your thoughts? If so, how?
2. List some of the differences between biblical meditation and the kinds of meditation found in the world. What are some dangers and some safeties?
3. Do you practice meditation? Compare and contrast your previous experiences with this presentation. Have you learned anything new? Do you have further insights you would like to share with the group?
4. What are some ways you could gently share these differences with a friend who is into a New Age form of meditation? What cues would you watch for to see if they were ready to hear such information?

Group Activity

Purpose: To consider how we might better listen to God.

Preparation: This activity is in two parts. For the first part, you will need pairs of chairs facing each other. Place the pairs in a circle so that it will be quick to put them back in a circle when the first part is over. For the second part, the only necessary preparation is to choose a short, simple story from Jesus' life, such as a parable or miracle story. Read it over a couple of times to familiarize yourself with it.

Assignment:

1. Have the group choose partners and sit in the pairs of chairs, facing each other. If there is an uneven number, one group can have three people. Ask each person to think of something significant that happened to them this week. Time this exercise for two minutes. When you say go, both partners should tell their stories to the other simultaneously. They are not to stop talking until you call time. Reform the chairs into a circle and share feelings and reactions.

2. Ask the group to get comfortable and close their eyes. For two minutes, simply breathe quietly, asking them to pay attention to their breathing. If they are becoming distracted, it can help to have them count their breaths silently. Then quietly read the story you have chosen. Wait a minute. In a quiet voice, ask them to imagine what they might see if they were there. Wait a minute. Ask them what they might hear. Wait a minute. Ask them what they might smell or taste, if it is applicable to the story. Wait a minute. Ask them what they would feel. Wait again. Then quietly read the story again. After a couple of minutes of silence, ask them to open their eyes and take a deep breath, or stretch if they need to.

Debrief: Share feelings and reactions. It is not uncommon that these are strong reactions, including tears. People may say they have understood this story as never before. Discuss how this is different from what is commonly called "guided imagery," in which a leader actually guides what the participants are to imagine, think, or "see." What would be the dangers, if any, and how does biblical meditation guard against those dangers?

Time: The first part should not take more than five minutes from choosing partners to finishing the stories. Allow five minutes for discussion of feelings, then begin to calm them down for the second part, which will take about 10 to 15 minutes. Allow another 10 minutes for discussion.

Handout 1

Some Things to Meditate On

1. Read Zephaniah 3:17. What do you think the phrase, “He will quiet you with His love,” means?
2. Read Psalms 46:8-11. Think of why the Psalmist invites us to “be still and know.” What do you believe David meant?
3. Read Luke 9:29-36. Discuss what Peter was feeling. Why was he chattering? Do you ever feel the need to “talk” all the time when communicating with God?
4. What do you think Luke 9:33 means when it says Peter “did not know what he was saying”?

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Handout 2

Experiments with Silence

Try This: This week experiment with silence in your relationships. Instead of talking, arguing, or giving advice, just listen quietly to those most important to you. At the end of the week, write at least one page about your experience with the “silence experiments.”

Personal Reflection

After focusing on a Scripture passage, practice sitting quietly for 10 minutes each day. Shut off all the sound that you control in your environment. What do you feel? Begin keeping a journal of your experiences as you sit quietly. Are there themes or issues that repeatedly draw you away from your “quiet” experience?

Write down a list of 10 “works of the Lord” (Psalm 46:8) that God has done in your life. Meditate and reflect on these blessings in your quiet time.

Draw a picture of your life as you would like it to be. Don’t worry about the quality of your artistic ability and don’t show the picture to anyone else. When you have finished this picture offer it to God and then sit quietly for at least five minutes. Write at least one page about your experience drawing your life and then listen.

My Appointment with God

How did your personal time with God go this last week?

What are your specific plans for personal time with God this coming week?

Share This

At least once during this week, call a member from your group and share with them the experience you had of sitting quietly. Compare notes, share feelings and support one another as you experiment with this new skill of sitting quietly.

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Handout 3

Steps to Biblical Meditation

Step One: Pray

Step Two: Prepare

Step Three: Relax

Step Four: Be There

Step Five: Come Back

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