



THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

PRAY

If alone, spend a brief time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide this practice. If in a group, get in a comfortable place, sit in silence for a couple of minutes, then have one person open you in prayer.

REFLECT

Talk through the following debrief questions:

- What is your experience with Meditation? If so, what did you think? Where were you taught about meditation? What preconceived ideas do you have with meditation?
- What stood out to you about this week's teaching?

READ

Meditation stands in contrast to the rapid pace of our bustling culture, where we often skim the surface with speed reading and initial impressions. In meditation, we fix our gaze upon Christ with patience and longing, seeking the treasures and truths therein. Like turning a prism, meditation allows God to illuminate our hearts with His truth and light.

Contrary to popular belief, meditation is not about emptying the mind of all thoughts. Christian meditation invites us into the mind of God, revealing His works and presence in the world. As we engage in meditation, it's crucial to release our preoccupations, allowing our minds to focus and become receptive to God. Our minds naturally tend to wander and make connections, but through meditation, we train them to stay centered, exploring meaningful associations.

Simple physical practices such as stretching, comfortable seating, and deep breathing can aid in sharpening our focus, deepening our listening, and reducing distractions. These exercises serve as tools to align body, mind, and spirit, facilitating a greater attentiveness to God and appreciation for His revelations.



MEDITATION EXERCISES

Choose at least one meditation to repeat daily during the week. If possible, you can mix in another meditation exercise or move to another meditation if not connecting with your first one.

1. Set the stage for scripture meditation by selecting a serene and cozy environment. Refrain from hurrying. Take a moment to stretch, adjust your seating, and remove your shoes. Find a posture that allows for relaxation without strain or distraction. Center yourself in the presence of God. Surrender your worries and tasks to the Lord. Invite Him to illuminate your heart with His Word.

Read Psalm 23, 138, 139, Psalm 86, Psalm 42 or another short passage from Scripture.

Read it over peacefully and reflectively until a short phrase prompts you into prayer. Let the word or phrase roam around in your mind and heart. Set your mind upon the word or phrase until it has made its work, then enter into a time of wordless prayer. What do you hear? What feelings do you notice in yourself? Write down any questions that surface. You can attend to these at another time.

- When your mind wanders, gently bring it back and continue your meditation. Do not feel you have to finish anything. Take your word with you. Begin again tomorrow with the same passage.

Be sure you have allowed yourself enough time for this process. Be easy with this time and process. Do not attempt to push it, just let it happen, as a gift of grace.

2. Take a walk in nature, meditating on God's handiwork. Take a deep breath and see how the mountains, snow, green grass, and the birds of the air spoke to Jesus of God's care (Matthew 6:26-31). How does God speak to you in his creation?
3. Meditate on a current world, or local, event that might be filling your mind. How is God speaking to you through this event? Is He inviting you to see the world through his eyes in some new way? Is he inviting you into prayer in a new way?



4. Peak your creativity and mind by focusing on a visual focal point for prayer. Choose a painting which depicts something prayerful. The face of Jesus, the Last Supper, the Prodigal Son, etc. What do you see? What story is being told? What is being revealed to you through the painting? Spend an extended time letting your thoughts on the painting turn into prayers.
5. Meditate on the work of God in the lives of individuals throughout the ages. Listen to what they can teach you and how they can shape you.

LECTIO DIVINA

When we approach the Bible expecting it to function like an encyclopedia, providing us with straightforward answers and instructions for every aspect of modern life, we often find ourselves frustrated. However, viewing the Bible solely through this lens overlooks its true nature. Rather than a convenient manual or textbook, the Bible presents itself as a rich library meant for continual reflection and meditation over a lifetime.

In response to this, the path of Jesus introduces the ancient spiritual practice known as Lectio Divina. This practice isn't a novel method of studying the Bible; instead, it's a time-honored approach to encountering God through Scripture. Unlike traditional Bible study, which emphasizes learning, Lectio Divina prioritizes a deep engagement with the text, allowing the reader to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards a closer relationship with God. This involves a deliberate and repeated process of slow, attentive reading.

Lectio Divina involves five distinct movements: 1) Preparing to meet with God

2) Reading (*lectio*)

3) Reflection (*meditatio*)

4) Response (*oratio*)

5) Rest (*contemplatio*)

Having established a time and place that are both quiet and free from distraction, set aside 3-5 times this week to practice lectio divina.



Any passage of Scripture can be utilized for the practice of lectio divina. Here are a few suggestions with which to start:

- Psalm 23
- Psalm 100
- John 15v1-17
- Romans 12

After selecting one passage, read and move slowly through each of the five movements of spiritual reading.

1. **Prepare to meet with God:** Turn your phone off and leave it another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken through the text, and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.
2. **Read (*lectio*):** Read the passage slowly and carefully. Take your time. As you move through the text, pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways. When your focus is drawn to a particular word or thought, pause momentarily to reflect on them.
3. **Reflect (*mediatio*):** Upon completing the passage, return to the beginning and read again. On your second journey through the text, allow the text to connect with you personally. Which words or phrases assume a particular resonance in your heart, your season of life, your person in this moment. Ask, "What do I need to know, or be, or do in light of the text? What does this mean for my life today?"
4. **Respond (*oratio*):** Talk to God about your experience. If you're confused, say that. Moved? Express gratitude to God. Upset? Tell him about it. Compelled to worship? Worship. If the text has brought something else to mind, talk to God about that.
5. **Rest (*contemplatio*):** Pause to sit in God's presence before fleeing from the moment. You might express wonder, awe, gratitude, or praise through words, or you might allow yourself to feel and experience these things quietly before God.



References:

Josh Porter, Bridgetown Church, archivedpracticingtheway.org

Spiritual Classics – Richard Foster, Emilie Griffin

(Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, IVP Books, Downers Grove, IL, 2015, p.191-193.)