

## INTRODUCTION

Tonight we're going to talk about our great need for meditation and prayer, what it is and how we can do it. We'll begin with a lesson from Scripture on meditation and prayer, break for some snacks and then come back and practice it. So let's talk about...

### Why do we need to meditate?

What stresses you out the most?

-For me, it's noise. This is why it is literally impossible to have kids and not experience extreme stress. Things that are slow tend to stress me out too. Sitting in traffic or sitting through commercials (TIVO). Feeling like I don't have enough money to pay for something, having too many things to do, turbulence on a plane.

-Maybe for you it's health, health of a loved one, your job, trying to get a job, watching the news, 401K (or lack thereof), a relationship (or lack thereof), making good grades at school or worrying about what other people think.

-For many people the mere pace of life is a HUGE stressor.

### III: Time Management

*Time* magazine noted that back in the 1960s, expert testimony was given to a subcommittee of the Senate on time management. The essence of it was that because of advances in technology, within twenty years or so people would have to radically cut back on how many hours a week they worked, or how many weeks a year they worked, or else they would have to start retiring sooner. The great challenge, they said, was what people would do with all their free time. Yet thirty years later, not many of us would say that our primary challenge in regard to time is what to do with all the excess.

How many problems do you think are the result of stress?

-We know that people suffer from major health problems due to stress. We know people experience major relationship problems due to stress. The biggest trigger for divorce for couples is the stress from money problems. People face intense temptations that they normally don't face due to stress. Men who yield to the temptation to pornography site the relief of stress to be a major cause. People who turn to alcohol, drugs or other addictions say that stress drove them to find some relief. Another result of stress is spiritual depression. Spiritual depression comes when you feel all the normal symptoms of depression, but you also feel very distant or even cut off from God. You've lost touch with what it means to be a child of God. You feel like the Psalmist who says, "Why so downcast oh my soul?"

-Not just depression, I mentioned pace of life before. There is a modern epidemic that has been dubbed "hurry sickness". If we're not careful, this sickness will rob us of joy and life.

John Ortberg says: "Again and again as we pursue spiritual life, we must do battle with hurry. For many of us the danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them."

"In contemporary society, our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds." –Richard Foster

"Hurry is not of the devil; hurry is the devil." –Carl Jung

"People nowadays take time more seriously than eternity." –Thomas Merton

**Transition:** For this reason, we're going to talk about meditation and prayer tonight. Many of us find time to read our Bibles, many Christians pray but report no real change. Many Christians have daily Bible study and prayer, the typical quiet time, but don't have the peace, the joy, the health or the rest that knowing God promises. So, we realize that we're missing something; we're doing something wrong; and how God's desire is that we meditate so that we can slow down; so we can know Him better; know ourselves and others better; and allow Him to help us through the stress and craziness of life and enjoy the good gifts in life that He has given us.

### What is Meditation?

What would you say if I told you that every single person in this room is an expert at meditation?

-You'd probably say, "Huh?"

I want to prove it to you. So let's take a little test. I'm going to ask you a series of questions and if you do any of these, make a mental note. If you say yes to more than 5, you are an expert at meditation.

1. Have you ever gotten a song stuck in your head and you couldn't get it out? (Connections)
2. Have you ever had someone criticize you and think about it more than 5 minutes?
3. Have you ever dwelled for more than 5 minutes upon why someone else made you really mad?
4. Have you ever worried for more than 5 minutes about how you are going to afford something?
5. Have you ever lusted [pause] after ice cream, chocolate cake, starbuck's or any other dessert not mentioned here?

So basically meditation is something you already do without even knowing it because we dwell upon things; focus on things; lust after things or obsess. Since all of us are experts at meditation, the question is not: How do I learn to meditate in my life? The real question is: How do I learn to meditate on the Godly life?

**New Age:** Today, many people view meditation as weird or something for elites. This is because meditation is generally seen as a practice of the New Age movement. This comes primarily from its association with Transcendental Meditation. Transcendental Meditation (TM) was developed by the Maharishi (ma-ha-reeshee) Mahesh (Ma-hesh) Yogi (Yo-gee) of the Hindu religion and is steeped in Hindu philosophy.

“With its **roots** deep in **India and Southeast Asia**, meditation has made its way into modern Western culture, namely through Transcendental meditation, which was brought to the West by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and made popular by celebrities like The Beatles”  
[www.project-meditation.org](http://www.project-meditation.org)

During the 1960s and 1970's a number of celebrities including [The Beatles](#),<sup>[54]</sup> the [Beach Boys](#)<sup>[55]</sup> [you thought it was just the drugs] and [singer-songwriter Donovan](#) (who befriended the Maharishi and put his picture on the back cover of his [A Gift from a Flower to a Garden](#) album) learned the technique. Comedian [Andy Kaufman](#) and magician [Doug Henning](#) were also students of the Maharishi. [Howard Stern](#) interviewed the Maharishi twice and credits Transcendental Meditation with saving his mother from depression [others say that having a kid like Howard Stern can cause the depression] [Clint Eastwood](#)<sup>[58]</sup>

Even though many experient, the general public still think it's weird because Republican Party politician [William Scranton](#), another student of the Maharishi, lost his 1986 bid for the Pennsylvania governorship when political consultant [James Carville](#) ran a television spot about Mr. Scranton's affiliation with the "guru".<sup>[60]</sup> In October 1975, the Maharishi was pictured on the front cover of the US magazine, [Time](#).

But since then many athletes, successful businessmen and yoga instructors...why? Because life has really beat them down and they are looking for peace. And they seek it through connection to the entire universe. Even though many claim that meditation's roots are new age, the Bible tells a different story.

**Scripture:** In the Old Testament there are two primary Hebrew words for meditation: *Haga*, which means to utter, groan, meditate, or ponder; and *Sihach*, which means to muse, rehearse in one's mind, or contemplate. These words can also be translated as dwell, diligently consider, and heed.

There are 20 different Bible verses that use the exact word for meditation and countless others that communicate the idea of meditation. Here are three:

**Joshua 1:8** - Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

**Psalms 1:2** - But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he **meditates** day and night.

**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.

### Principles:

- God **wants** us to meditate.

In *Satisfy Your Soul* (NavPress), Dr. Bruce Demarest writes, "A quieted heart is our best preparation for all this work of God ... Meditation refocuses us from ourselves and from the world so that we reflect on God's Word, His

nature, His abilities, and His works ... So we prayerfully ponder, muse, and 'chew' the words of Scripture. ...The goal is simply to permit the Holy Spirit to activate the life-giving Word of God" (133).

**Luke 5:16** - But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

**Luke 6:12** - One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

- Meditation is a **gift** from God
  - Clarity of God's will (see Luke 6:13; 22:39-44)
  - Many health benefits (Physical, Emotional/Mental)
  - Life Focus and Purpose
  - Peace (Read Philippians 4:6-7)
  - Close to God
- Meditation is simply **focused thinking**. (remember the examples above).

Rick Warren, in *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan), describes meditation this way: "Meditation is *focused* thinking. It takes serious effort. You select a verse and reflect on it over and over in your mind...if you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate" (190). Warren goes on to say, "No other habit can do more to transform your life and make you more like Jesus than daily reflection on Scripture...If you look up all the times God speaks about meditation in the Bible, you will be amazed at the benefits He has promised to those who take the time to reflect on His Word throughout the day" (190).

- We **become** what we **meditate** about.

One important thing the Bible tells us to do is to think about God's Word. Our thoughts determine our behavior and so what we think about is very important. That is why God wants us to think about His Word, or meditate on it. Jim Downing in *Meditation* (NavPress) says God considers meditation a "vital exercise of the minds of His children."

How do I meditate?

When do I meditate?

1. Set a **special time** aside
  - a. Completely unplug
  - b. Develop a habit
2. As you **go**
  - a. **Monitor** what you are thinking about – Take captive every thought
    - i. Make a note of what is on your mind and how it makes you feel or act
    - ii. Be careful about what is going into your mind
      1. What you read
      2. What you watch
      3. People you hang around
      4. What you listen to
      5. What you look at
  - b. **Feed** your mind and heart  
Read Philippians 4:8-9
  - c. **Practice** being in God's presence

What do I do?

### **Meditate on the Scriptures**

This can also be called "gentle Bible reading." The idea is to read the Scripture slowly until your heart burns with a truth from God.

1. Adoration – How does this truth cause me to worship God better?

- a. Read, re-read, re-read, re-read and ask:
- b. What does this passage teach me about the character of God? How can I worship Him?
- c. Stop and worship God for the character of God that He reveals to you
  - i. **EX:** Bill Bright was once asked, “How do you have such a vibrant and effective faith?” He said, “It’s simple. I meditate on the attributes of God and then I go and imitate those.”
  - ii. **EX:** Read Philippians 4:4-9
    - 1. **Q** – What does this Scripture reveal to us about God?
    - 2. **A** – He is a God of peace...He is a God you can count on; He is faithful

## 2. Confession

- a. **Confess Sin:** Once you focus on God and His Holiness, you realize that compared to Him you are sinful. So take time to confess your sin before God. Three tips:
  - i. Learn to focus on SIN more than sins (sins are outburst, gossip, lustful thoughts dwelt on...but what is the sin that runs deeper – pride, idolatry, deep lust and selfish gratification, etc.)
  - ii. Focus on the attribute you noticed about God
    - 1. **EX:** God is peace...How do I get anxious and worked up and not choose to be content and peaceful and trust Him?
  - iii. Allow God to forgive you
- b. **Ask for Help:** Once you confess areas of sinfulness, you need to ask for God to help you be faithful in these areas. God will answer with encouragement that you can do all things through Christ; strengthen you through the Holy Spirit or provide accountability through friends.

## 3. Thanks (How Jesus Fulfills)

- a. Thank God for the example that Christ gave of being at peace.
  - i. **EX:** He trusted God totally with His life. He entrusted His eternity when He died on the cross. He didn’t do anything unless God was part of it.
- b. Thank God for Christ’s work on the cross and resurrection. That He was able obey God perfectly and have perfect faith when we didn’t. Thank God that Christ did this that we may have life.
- c. Thank God being the source of every good and perfect gift.
  - i. Family, provision, health, life, etc. Recognize that these are gifts but the source of life is God, not His gifts.
  - ii. Most especially the greatest gift of Christ’s work – how He lived the life we couldn’t live and died the death we should have died that we may share in His resurrection.

## 4. Supplication (Kingdom Prayers)

- a. Cast your Cares (Palms) – Family, Finances, Frustrations, Fears/Worries, Failures
- b. Focus on Others – 4 S’s (Souls, Saints, Sickness, Suffering) and 3 M’s (Ministry, Missions, Magistrates)

- ✱ It lowers oxygen consumption.
- ✱ It decreases respiratory rate.
- ✱ It increases blood flow and slows the heart rate.
- ✱ Increases exercise tolerance in heart patients.

- \* Leads to a deeper level of relaxation.
- \* Good for people with high blood pressure as it brings the B.P. to normal.
- \* Reduces anxiety attacks by lowering the levels of blood lactate.
- \* Decreases muscle tension (any pain due to tension) and headaches.
- \* Builds self-confidence.
- \* It increases serotonin production which influences mood and behaviour. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression, obesity, insomnia and headaches.
- \* Helps in chronic diseases like allergies , arthritis etc.
- \* Reduces Pre- menstrual Syndrome.
- \* Helps in post-operative healing.
- \* Enhances the immune system. Research has revealed that meditation increases activity of 'natural-killer cells', which kill bacteria and cancer cells.
- \* Also reduces activity of viruses and emotional distress.