

Meditation

By Pastor Alan Utting



'Meditation is simply quieting the noise so you can hear God's whisper.' Anonymous

I have come to understand that biblical meditation is a life-changing principle for *Ministry with Purpose*. It demands time and discipline, but it is a vital key to both fruitfulness and longevity in ministry. In a world and sadly, at times even within the church where relentless activity is often celebrated, we must resist that pressure. Instead, choose to slow down, reflect, and make space for God to speak deeply through His Word.

Many Christians feel uneasy about the word *meditation* because it is often associated with Eastern religions. However, a closer look at Scripture reveals that meditation is a thoroughly biblical concept. Depending on the translation, the word 'meditate' appears numerous times throughout the Bible. For instance, Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2 urge believers to meditate on 'God's law day and night'. Likewise, Psalm 19:14 speaks of the meditation of the heart being 'pleasing to the Lord'. Biblical meditation is not about emptying the mind unlike in Eastern meditation but about filling it with God himself.

Today, there are many excellent books about meditation, and I've observed that many of them draw deeply from the rich practices of the saints of old. Thomas Merton wrote, 'The New Testament does not offer us techniques and expedients: it tells us to turn to God, to depend on His grace, to realize the Spirit is given to us, wholly, in Christ.' True biblical meditation isn't about mastering a method it's about cultivating a deeper dependence on God and living in the fullness of His Spirit.

A Useful Approach

1. Choose a Quiet Place

The saying 'silence is golden' is especially true when it comes to meditation. Even in our fast-paced and overactive world, the busiest people can make time if they choose to discipline their lives and priorities. Stillness before God is not a luxury; it is a necessity for spiritual depth and clarity.

2. Breathing

When my mind feels especially overactive, I find it helpful to lie down or sit comfortably and steady my breathing. One technique I use is to breathe in slowly while counting from 1 to 4, hold that breath while counting from 1 to 8, and then exhale gently while counting from 1 to 7. I usually repeat this cycle four times, but it can be adjusted to suit your personal rhythm. Some Believers are unsure about this but when we oxygenate our body it helps us focus on the Lord.

3. Reflect on Scripture

Reflecting on relevant scriptures is deeply enriching. This can be done by sitting quietly with an open Bible, ideally reading from the Psalms or other passages that help draw you closer to the Lord. Having grown up memorising scripture, I often recall familiar

verses during times of meditation. Psalms 1, 23, 84, and 91 hold special significance for me. I take time to let my mind gently form imagery around the words, allowing the meaning to deepen as I reflect.

4. Managing Wandering Thoughts

A common challenge in meditation is keeping the mind from drifting into unhelpful thoughts. One of the best pieces of advice I've heard is, 'Pay no attention to unwanted thoughts, and in time, they will fade away.' When your mind wanders, don't be hard on yourself but gently bring your focus back and continue.

5. Meditating on God's Attributes

The late Principal Morling of an Australian theological college encouraged us to meditate on the attributes of God the Father, then God the Son, and then God the Holy Spirit. While these attributes are shared across the Godhead, here are some key reflections to consider. That said, don't feel pressured to follow each Scripture in a rigid or legalistic way—let them guide you, not bind you.

The Father: Mighty (Psalm 24:8), Loving (Psalm 25:10), Faithful (Psalm 25:10), Good (Psalm 17:1), Love (Psalm 118:1), Merciful, Compassionate, Righteous, Welcoming Father (Luke 15:20), Just (Isaiah 5:16), Holy (1 Samuel 2:2), Comforter (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Jesus Christ: King (Revelation 17:14), Forgiver (1 John 1:9), Defeater of demons (Colossians 2:15), Deliverer (2 Corinthians 1:10), Victor (1 Corinthians 15:57), Healer (Isaiah 53:5), Truth (John 14:6), Vine (John 15:5), Giver of fruit (John 15:6), Giver of joy (John 15:11), Burden Bearer (Matthew 11:29), Protector (2 Thessalonians 3:3), Light (John 1:8), Creator (Colossians 1:16), Wisdom and Knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

The Holy Spirit: Teacher (Counsellor) (John 14:26), Helper (John 16:7), Giver of Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1), Anointer (1 John 2:27), Giver of the Fruits (Galatians 5:22), Empower (Acts 2:4), Guide (John 16:13).

Outcomes of Meditation

- a. 'And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- b. 'Those who look to him are radiant' (Psalm 34:5).
- c. 'They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights' (Psalm 36:8).

Christian meditation is a powerful and transformative practice that draws us closer to God.

Resources

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*