



meditation might be Scripture, doctrine, life, the world, or almost anything. (4) the application of the mind and often the imagination to the truths of the faith and esp. to episodes in the life of Christ with a view to stirring an intense affective response (this tends to become a more or less formal exercise). Meditation in all these senses is easily associated with "prayer" because some of the favourite biblical texts are themselves prayers, and thinking about Christian truths sharpens a desire for God's gifts, and thinking about life reveals man's need of God. In sense (4) meditation came in due course to be regarded as part of prayer and so it could be integrated into various methods of prayer. Following St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, many writers have posited a sharp distinction between meditation (in sense (4)) and "contemplation." In modern times various forms of meditation have been adopted or adapted from Eastern non-Christian religions, often involving the abandonment of deliberate thought rather than its focusing on a specific religious object.¹

Christian Meditation: Is it Christian or is 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 prosper. The psalmist says, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Actually, the Bible mentions meditate or meditation 21 times.

In the Old Testament, there are two primary Hebrew words for meditation: Haga, which means to think, grieve, meditate, or ponder, and Shachat, which means to muse, rehearse, or contemplate. These words can also be translated as dwell, diligently consider, and read.

Christian Meditation: A History

One form of Christian meditation that has been used by believers since at least the fourth century AD is the lectio divina. It has been traditionally used in monastic religious orders and is enjoying a resurgence today. Lectio divina means "sacred reading" and has four stages: lectio (reading), meditatio (discursive meditation), oratio (affective prayer), and contemplatio (contemplation). In the lectio (reading) stage, one finds a passage and reads it deliberately. The next stage, meditatio (discursive meditation), is where one ponders the text. In the oratio (affective prayer) stage, one talks to God about the reading, asking Him to reveal the truth. In the final, contemplatio (contemplation) stage, one simply rests in the Lord's presence.

Today, 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, Maharishi Yogi, of the Hindu religion and is steeped in Hindu philosophy. The logo of the TM foundation and website indicates his status in Hinduism. Courts in the US have ruled that TM is not a secular discipline, it is Hindu religion. US District Court, Newark, NJ, on October 29, 1977 and the US Court of Appeals, Philadelphia, PA February 11, 1979.

Christian Meditation: What do Christian Leaders Say?

One important thing the Bible tells us to do is to think about God's Word. God thought's pattern our behavior and so what we think about is very important. That is why God wants us to think about His

¹Ortiz, R. L. & Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.) (2005) in The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 3rd ed., (p. 1352). Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press.

Words or meditate on it. Jim Downing in *Meditation* (Nav Press) says God considers meditation a vital exercise of the talents of His children.

Rick Warren, in *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan), describes meditation this way: "Meditation is a 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." (50) Warren goes on to say, "No other habit can do more to transform your life and make you more successful than daily reflection on Scripture. If you took up all that Jesus 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's work."

In *Simplify Your Soul* (Nav Press), Dr. Bruce Demarest writes, "A quieted heart is our best preparation for all of God's work. Meditation refocuses us from ourselves and from the world so that we reflect on God's Word, His nature, His attributes, and His works. So we prayerfully ponder, muse, and meditate on the words of Scripture. The goal is simply to permit the Holy Spirit to activate the life-giving Word of God" (135).

Christian Meditation: How do we do it?

There are three times during the day we can intentionally turn our minds over to God's Word in Christian Meditation. Just before we fall asleep, we can have God's Word be the last thing that occupies our mind. Upon waking, we can have God's Word be the first thing to fill our minds to start the day. Finally, we need a specific time each day to be in God's Word so that can speak to us throughout our day.

What should we focus on in Christian meditation? "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8, NASB).