



reflecting Jesus

BETA

meditation teaches me how to
listen and watch

11

?

did you know...

meditate

turn over in the mind

give serious thought

contemplate

deliberate

mull over

focus on

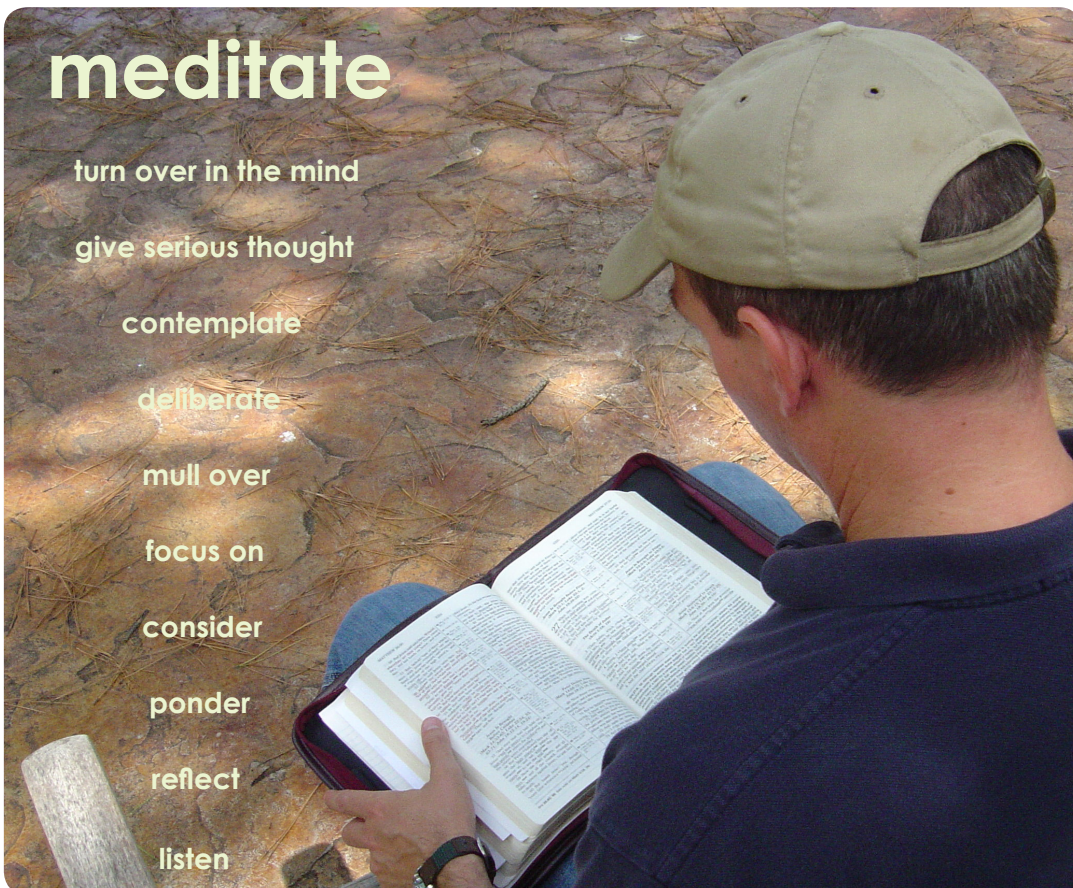
consider

ponder

reflect

listen

photo: sxc prolife white





the facts of his story

Christian meditation is about listening to God's words by filling our minds full with thoughts about God. The more time we have to look and think carefully, the deeper our understanding of God will be. The deeper our understanding of God, the more we are able to accurately reflect who he is.

1. In the following verses, what do our minds focus on to get such thoughts about God?

a. Joshua 1:8 _____

b. Psalm 48:9 _____

c. Psalm 119:27 _____

d. Psalm 119:148 _____

e. Psalm 143:5 _____

2. What do you think Jeremiah meant when he wrote "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jeremiah 15:16) How do you think he "ate" God's words?



thinking it through

Meditating on God's words and works is perhaps a little like eating your most favourite food. You don't try to chew and swallow as fast as possible, but allow the food to rest on your taste buds so you can enjoy its full flavour for as long as possible.

1. According to the texts you have read, what should meditation be like to experience?

2. We are to meditate on nature, on God's work in history and in our lives. Why do you think it is important to meditate on these things as well as meditating on the Bible?



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ meditating on God's words

savouring God's words

We can study the Bible and ask questions about the text like a man digs up the ground to find treasure. With time and effort, the treasure is finally discovered.

But there is another way to hear and understand God's word which is more like tasting an expensive chocolate. You don't just gobble it down, but keep it for as long as you can in the mouth, to sense it's texture—how it feels—and the different flavours. The Psalmist says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103) We can learn how to savour God's words as we learn how to meditate.

As Joshua takes over from Moses to lead God's people into the Promised Land, Jesus appears to Joshua and says, "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." (Joshua 1:8) Notice two things in the text. First, that God's word was to be in Joshua's thoughts continually. Secondly, as God's words were in Joshua's mind, it would lead him to obedience. Then Joshua would be as successful as God had called him to be.

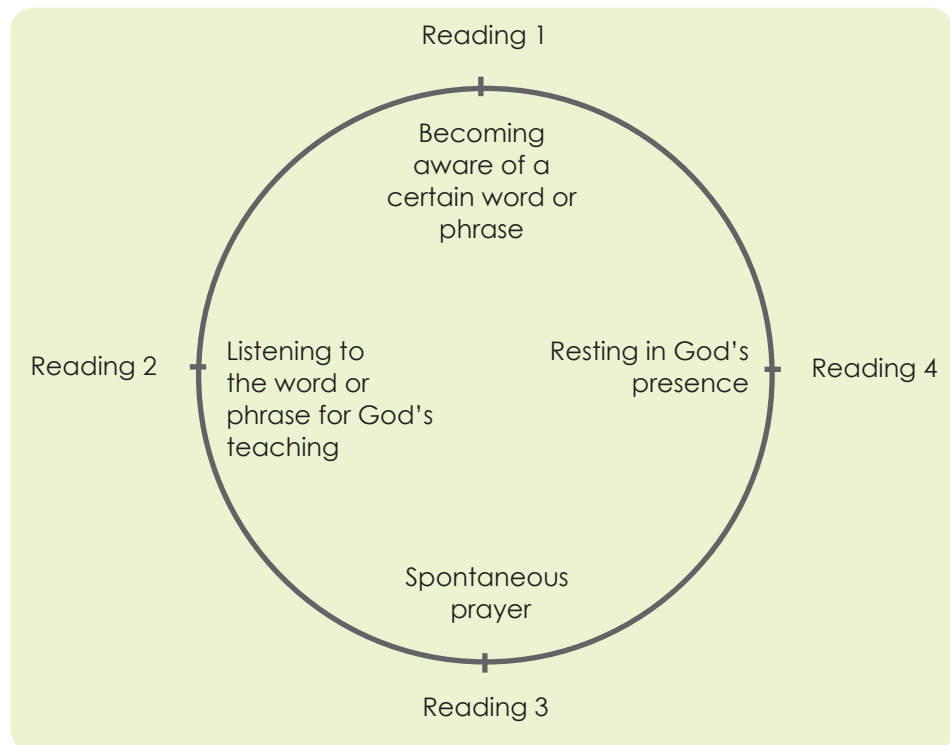
This sort of meditation is very different from what is found in Eastern religions. For example, in Buddhism meditation is a way of emptying the mind. Biblical meditation is just the opposite. In Biblical meditation we learn how to fill the mind completely with God's words. We do this as we

learn to listen to the words God speaks to us.

listening to God's words

Here is one way of learning to listen to God's words through scriptural meditation.

1. Pray for the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit before you begin reading.
2. Read a passage in the Bible. You may want to do this out loud. (It is suggested that you don't take more than 10 verses to begin with.) As you listen to the passage, try to become aware of a particular word or phrase that stands out.
3. Read the passage a second time. Return



to the word or phrase that you noticed after the first reading. Take time now to "listen" to its meaning. Don't rush or hurry. Don't try and force the text open but rather allow time for the Holy Spirit to open up the text to you. This is a time to pause and listen, observe, watch.

4. Read the passage a third time. Based on what you have seen and heard, respond

back to God in prayer. It could be a prayer of praise, thanks, or a specific request.

5. Read the passage a final time. Take time in silence to wait a little longer in God's presence. This prevents us hurrying off quickly to do the next thing on our agenda, and lose what God has just been teaching us.

You might find it more helpful to read the passage through an extra time at the very beginning so you become familiar with the

passage before you start focusing in on a particular word or phrase.

With practice, you do not have to follow the specific order for meditation, but you can move backwards and forwards between reading, listening, praying and resting.

using your Journal

You can use your Journal to jot down your thoughts or prayers at any time during your mediation.



putting the pieces together

In the introduction we saw that meditation is about thinking more slowly and deeply about God than we may normally do.

In "the facts of history" we saw how meditation is about filling our minds with the word and works of God. This means thinking deeply about 1) God's laws, 2) God's love, 3) God's promises, 4) God's creation, and 5) all the wonderful things he has done. As our minds are filled with these things, the Holy Spirit shapes our lives to reflect what we see.

In "thinking it through" you had a chance to think about meditation in your own life. This may be a new idea for many of us, but an important part of our Christian lives.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus" we looked at one way to practice meditation which emphasises listening to what God is saying in the Bible. We listen best as we pause to take time to think slowly and deeply, responding to God in prayer as meditate.



my time with God

During this week, practice using the method for meditation that we explored here. Here are some suggestions for your meditations:

1. Meditating on God's law: Exodus 20:2-11.
2. Meditating on God's instruction: Matthew 5:3-12.
3. Meditating on God's love: Isaiah 40:27-31.
4. Meditating on God's promises: Psalm 103:1-14.

Finally, use the same way of meditating, but this time meditate on :

5. something in nature that you can see that reflects God's character
6. something wonderful that God has done for you in the past



pass it on!

Can you teach someone how to meditate on Bible texts?



extra help

1. Eat This Book, by Eugene Peterson.
2. Ministry of Healing chapter 3, "With Nature and with God"