



HOAW Newsletter

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. Philippians 4:8

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HELPING MEN LIVE LIVES OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR

Absorbing the Mind of God

Dr. Greg Bourgon

A man approached a speaker and said, "You Christians are all brainwashed." The speaker replied, "I think we are all brainwashed to a degree. The important thing is that we Christians choose what we want to wash our brains with."

Meditation is a lost art for many Christians, but the practice needs to be cultivated again. Meditation is the bridge we cross to personal application of general Biblical principles. J. I. Packer, in his classic book, *Knowing God* (1973), makes two insightful observations.

One can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him. One can know a great deal about Godliness without much knowledge of God.¹

We have great access to books about God; theology, commentaries, handbooks, language resources, topical bibles, etc. J.I. Packer concludes:

All very fine - yet interest in theology, and knowledge about God, and the capacity to think clearly and talk well on Christian themes, is not at all the same thing as knowing Him.²

We tend to short cut the learning process by reading and using 'How To' books on every theme under

the sun. This pre-chewed, pre-digested diet from leading scholars or contemporary expositors of the Word rob us the joy of searching His word for ourselves so that we can hear His 'still small voice' and apply His principles first hand rather than second hand.

We are on a personal spiritual journey. How many of us long to be experienced travelers, yet seem satisfied with reading about other people's journeys instead of enjoying our own? J. I. Packer goes on to describe the four basic characteristics of people who have a knowledge *of* God versus a knowledge *about* God.

- Those who know God have great energy for God.

¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 21-22.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

- Those who know God have great thoughts of God.
- Those who know God show great boldness for God.
- Those who know God have great contentment in God.

It may be that the reason we have lost the art of meditation is because our idea of success in this area is based on false expectations. We expected emotional exhilaration and were disappointed because we didn't 'feel' a difference. We weren't 'stimulated' or 'excited' so we gave up.

Archibald D. Hart wrote a book on **Adrenalin and Stress** (1995).³ He made the following comment in an article for Christianity Today.

A constant state of adrenalin arousal, although physically damaging, is often experienced as pleasant excitement and stimulation. And it is this that makes it most dangerous, because we can come to think of the arousal state as "normal" and to depend on the high it gives us to get anything accomplished. I believe there is a corresponding spiritual danger. Becoming dependent on adrenalin arousal for the good feelings of life can create an association between spirituality and high arousal. In other words, one doesn't feel

*"spiritual" unless one is being stimulated by adrenalin arousal. Many expressions of spirituality have become linked to adrenalin arousal, and this can be very harmful. A great many of the true saints of God have found their peak spiritual experiences in quietness and solitude. But many modern "saints" look for it only in exciting challenges or emotional catharsis.*⁴

So, what is meditation?

We could not find a better definition than the one proposed by Packer. *"Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is the activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God. Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God, and to let its truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart."*⁵

Meditation is the regular filling of your mind with the thoughts of God and Godly thoughts.

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.*⁶

Why should I meditate?

Richard J. Foster, in his highly acclaimed book **Celebration of Discipline** (2002),⁷ remarked on how busy activity can keep us from needed contemplation on God's truth. *"In contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in 'muchness' and 'manyness', he will rest satisfied."*⁸ He further quotes Psychiatrist C.G. Jung. *"Hurry is not of the Devil; it is the Devil."*⁹

Why meditate? Because the Word of God encourages us to do so. We are to meditate on His word day and night.¹⁰ Our meditation is pleasing to the Lord.¹¹ Our meditation makes us aware of how we demonstrate our love for Him through obedience to His Word.¹² Our meditation helps us focus on what is important to God.¹³ Our meditation gives us an eternal perspective.¹⁴

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in **The Way to Freedom** (1966),¹⁵ identifies three compelling reasons to meditate on God and His Word.

1. Because we are Christians who need to penetrate more deeply

³ Archibald D. Hart, *Adrenaline and Stress: The Exciting New Breakthrough That Helps You Overcome Stress Damage* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995).

⁴ Archibald D. Hart, "Adrenalin-Fed Spirituality," *Preaching Today*, June 1998. <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1998/june/4430.html>.

⁵ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 18-19.

⁶ Philippians 4:8

⁷ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper Publishers, 2002).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰ Psalm 1:2

¹¹ Psalm 19:14

¹² Joshua 1:8

¹³ Philippians 4:8

¹⁴ Colossians 3:2

¹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Way to Freedom* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1966).

into the knowledge of the Word of God for establishing a firm foundation.

2. Because we need a firm discipline of prayer, the day's first service to God and His opportunity to register His presence in our hearts.
3. Because we need help against the unseemly haste and disquiet that endangers our work as pastors. Truly devoted service each day comes only from the peace of the word of God.

Neil Anderson, author of *Bondage Breaker* (2006),¹⁶ declared it's not what you do that determines who you are. It's what you are that determines what you do. What we are, our character, determines our behavior. Our character is made up of our beliefs, values, attitudes, and motives. Our character becomes Christ-like through meditation and application born out of our precious time with God.¹⁷

As Christians, people should see Christ in us. Our actions speak louder than our words. Our actions reflect our character.

What can we expect from meditation? Bonhoeffer suggests that we want to rise from meditation different from what we were when we sat down to do it. We want to meet Christ in His Word. His fellowship, His help, and His direction for the day through His Word -- that is His aim.

Foster describes the following as our goals; a sense of balance in our lives, an ability to rest and take time to enjoy beauty, and an ability to pace ourselves. Meditation should produce a knowledge *of* God and not a knowledge *about* God. Over time our meditation will transform our character. God's presence will become increasingly real to us as our relationship with Him deepens. Our demeanor will reflect the glory of God as we consciously and unconsciously manifest His excellence in our lives.

What can we expect? We can expect purification,¹⁸ invigoration,¹⁹ endurance,²⁰ transformation,²¹ and renewal.²²

How do I meditate?

Find a place that is quiet and free from interruption. Stay away from the telephone. Find a place that is peaceful, that typifies contentment for you. Try to find one designated place rather than hunting for a different spot each day. Foster comments that posture makes no difference at all; you can meditate and pray anywhere, any time, and in any position. He goes on to say, however that the body, the mind, and the spirit are inseparable. Not only does outward posture reflect the inward state, it can also help to nurture the inner attitude of prayer.

The Bible describes everything from lying prostrate on the floor to standing with hands and head

lifted toward the heavens. The best approach is to find a position that is most comfortable and the least distracting. The aim is "to center the attention of the body, the emotions, the mind and the spirit upon 'the glory of God in the face of Christ'."²³

Biblical meditation shapes our prayers, disciplines our thoughts, and makes us conscious of our fellowship with God. Bonhoeffer's words are helpful at this point.

*The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long love. Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love but accept them as they are said to you, accept the word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart. "Do not look for new thoughts and connections in the text, as you would if you were preaching! Do not ask 'How shall I pass this on?' but "What does it say to me?" Then ponder this word long in your heart until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you.*²⁴

There are several types of Biblical meditation you can adopt for your personal use.

Meditate on some aspect of creation. Choose something in the created order: tree, plant, bird, leaf, cloud, and ponder it carefully and prayerfully for 5 to 10 minutes. God who made the heavens and the earth uses His creation to show

¹⁶ Neil Anderson, *Bondage Breaker* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2006).

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ Psalm 51:10

¹⁹ Psalm 103:5

²⁰ Isaiah 40:31

²¹ Romans 12:2

²² 2 Corinthians 4:16

²³ 2 Corinthians 4:6

²⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)." *Selah Center*. January 2016. <http://selahcenter.org/lectio-divina/>.

us something of His glory and give us something of His life.

Foster states the *"meditation upon Scripture becomes the central reference point by which all meditations are kept in proper perspective."*²⁵ Meditation on Scripture centers on 'internalizing and personalizing' the passage. Bonhoeffer recommended spending a whole week on a single text.

Take a single event like the resurrection, or a parable, or a few verses, or even a single word and allow it to take root in you. Use your five senses to live the experience (smell, hear, feel, see, taste, touch). You can encounter the living Christ in the event.

The objective of this exercise is to bring you into a deep inner communion with the Father where you look at Him and He looks at you. Picture and sense a place of beauty and peace (a forest and stream, flowers and birds, a lovely grassy knoll, a lush large meadow encircled by stately pines, a blue sky and light clouds).

Sense this place with all your senses. Sense the warm presence of the eternal Creator. Rest in His presence. Listen quietly, anticipating the unanticipated. Note carefully any instruction given. When it's time to leave, audibly thank the Lord for His goodness.

This exercise meditates upon the events of our time and to seek to perceive their significance. It's a process whereby we try to gain God's perspective through the lens of His word. This form of meditation is best accomplished with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper or magazine in the other. Hold these events before God and ask for insight to discern where these things lead.

Ask for guidance for anything you personally should be doing to be salt and light in our 'decaying and dark world.'

Select one or more of the specific exercises described above. Find a quiet location apart from others and complete the meditation exercise.

As Foster remarks, *"meditation is not a single act, nor can it be completed the way one completes the building of a chair. It is a way of life. You will be constantly learning and growing as you plumb the inner depths."*²⁶ Welcome to an incredible journey! May God bless your efforts as you meditate upon Him and bask in His glory. Maybe someone will come up to you one day and say, "Are you Jesus?"

The following resources will help you regarding meditation.

- Foster, Richard J. ***Celebration of Discipline***. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978.

- Packer, J.I. ***Knowing God***. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973.

Questions to Ponder

When is the last time you heard the voice of God in your life?

When is the last time you took a spiritual retreat?

How will you make meditation a part of your routine?

OTHER NEWS



Heart of a Warrior Ministries offers four journeys you can take to become who God

created you to be.

The Foundation (Ground Zero) helps establish strong biblical foundations for the battles ahead.

The Compass (Phase I) calibrates a warrior's heart and tunes that heart to the heart of God. I am currently leading 45 at Calvary Church WBL Campus on this journey.

The Map (Phase II) helps men focus on what matters in accordance with their unique divine wiring.

The Guide (Phase III) develops the spiritual discipline of being mentored and mentoring others.

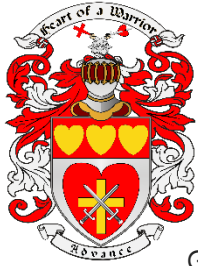
Go to our website for more details. www.heartofawarrior.org/journeys/

²⁵ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper), 29.

²⁶ Ibid., 32.

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depends on the resources we can use to that end. Simply go to the donations tab on heartofawarrior.org. Thank you for being a subscriber.

Check out *The Store* on our website (www.heartofawarrior.org). There are downloadable resources you can use to lead a group through Phases I, II, or III, Foundations of a Warrior, and Bible Study Guidelines.

Websites for Men

Heart of a Warrior Ministries

www.Heartofawarrior.org

A Chosen Generation

www.achosengeneration.info/

Band of Brothers

www.bandofbrothers.org/

Church for Men

churchformen.com/

Every Man's Battle

<https://newlife.com/emb/>

Every Man Ministries

www.everymanministries.com

Iron Sharpens Iron

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Life Way Men

www.lifeway.com/en/shop/ministries/men

Man in the Mirror

maninthemirror.org/

Man Up God's Way

www.manupgodsway.org/

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Men's Ministry Catalyst

mensministrycatalyst.org/

Men with No Regrets

www.menwithnoregrets.org/

National Collision of Ministries to Men

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Ransomed Heart Ministries

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