

## Toward Understanding Biblical Meditation

**Acknowledgment:** Some of the basic concepts in this study are rooted in David W. Saxton's helpful book, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2015). His book is a summary of the Biblical and Puritan teaching on this topic.

**Introduction:** Deliberate, Biblical meditation is too often ignored in our contemporary Christian sub-culture. However ignorant we may be about meditation, everyone still meditates on something (either good or bad). What you meditate on reveals much about your spiritual condition.

### Part 1: The practical importance of Biblical meditation

- 1) It anchors our worship in the reverent recollection of God's person and works.
- 2) It digests God's Word into one's own life and Christian experience.
- 3) It is a necessity for developing wisdom in every growing, healthy believer.
- 4) It heals a believer's heart and settles his mind.
- 5) It stresses what is practical, not the contemplative or speculative.
- 6) It is, though delightful and joyful, a rare and difficult work.

### Part 2: Unbiblical practices of manward meditation

- 1) Far Eastern meditation (Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, etc.) tells you to empty/open your mind.
  - a) Using relaxation techniques to achieve pure awareness or consciousness through passive thinking.
- 2) Roman Catholic spirituality, mysticism, contemplative prayer, and spiritual formation
  - a) Leads to religious sentimentality at best, aiming at an existential encounter apart from the written Word.
- 3) Common forms of unrighteous meditation
  - a) Planning evil—Psalm 2:1; 36:4; Proverbs 12:2
  - b) Worry/anxiety—running the same concerns over and over in one's mind
  - c) Bitterness/resentment—running the same grievances over and over in one's mind
  - d) Taking offense/holding grudges—Leviticus 19:18
  - e) Focus on worldly/fleshly things—Romans 8:5-8; Philippians 3:19

### Part 3: Defining Biblical meditation

- 1) Clear statements
  - a) The NKJ uses the terms *meditate, meditates, meditating, meditation*
    - i) 27 times in the OT
    - ii) 3 times in the NT
- 2) Common words translated *meditate, meditates, meditating, meditation*
  - a) Old Testament
    - i) Verbs
      - (1) *Amar* (# 559)—speak to yourself
        - (a) Psalm 4:4 (a command to obey)
      - (2) Chashab (# 2803)—think, plan, imagine
        - (a) Malachi 3:16
      - (3) *Hagah* (# 1897)—moaning, growling, plotting

- (a) Positively—Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 63:6; 77:12; 143:5; Proverbs 15:28; Isaiah 33:18
- (b) Negatively—Psalm 2:1; 38:12; Proverbs 24:2
- (4) *Suwach* (# 7742)—uncertain meaning; perhaps meditate
  - (a) Genesis 24:63
- (5) *Siyach* (# 7878)—muse, complain, consider, study
  - (a) 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:27; Psalm 77:6, 12; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148; 143:5; 145:5;
- ii) Nouns
  - (1) *Haguth* (# 1900)—thinking, planning, musing
    - (a) Psalm 49:3
  - (2) *Hagig* (# 1901)—sighing, groaning
    - (a) Psalm 5:1
  - (3) *Higgayown* (# 1902)—musing, talking
    - (a) Psalm 9:16; 19:14
  - (4) *Shiggayown* (# 7692)—uncertain meaning
    - (a) Psalm 7:1
  - (5) *Siyach* (# 7879)—object of concern or interest
    - (a) 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:27; Psalm 104:34
  - (6) *Siychah* (# 7881)—thoughtful contemplation, to occupy one's thoughts
    - (a) Psalm 119:97, 99
- b) New Testament
  - i) Verbs
    - (1) *Katanoeo* (# 2657)—consider carefully, scrutinize, fix one's mind on
      - (a) Matthew 7:3; Luke 6:41; 12:24, 27; 20:23; Acts 11:6; 27:39; Romans 4:19; Hebrews 3:1; 10:24
    - (2) *Logizomai* (# 3049)—to think about something in a detailed and logical manner, let one's mind dwell on something
      - (a) Philippians 4:8
      - (b) Cf. Mark 11:31; 15:28; Luke 22:37; Acts 19:27; Romans 2:3, 26; 3:28; 4:3-6, 8-11, 22-24; 6:11; 8:18, 36; 9:8; 14:14; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:1; 13:5, 11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:5; 5:19; 10:2, 7, 11; 11:5; 12:6; Galatians 3:6; Philippians 3:13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 11:19; James 2:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:12
    - (3) *Meletao* (# 3191)—think about, “rack your brains”, serious consideration
      - (a) 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:15
      - (b) Cf. Mark 13:11; Acts 4:25
    - (4) *Mnemoneuo* (# 3421)—remember, self-reflection
      - (a) Matthew 16:9; Mark 8:18; Luke 17:32; John 15:20; 16:4, 21; Acts 20:31, 35; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 2:11; Colossians 4:18; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:3; 2:9; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:5; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 11:15, 22; 13:7; Revelation 2:5; 3:3; 18:5
    - (5) *Promeletao* (# 4304)—practice beforehand with careful thought and attention
      - (a) Luke 21:14
    - (6) *Sumballo* (# 4820)—think seriously, ponder, consider carefully
      - (a) Luke 2:19
  - ii) Nouns
    - (1) *Ennoia* (#1771)—act of thinking, meditation, intention
      - (a) Hebrews 4:12; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:1
    - (2) *Noema* (# 3540)—mental perceptions, the content of one's thinking, purposes and plans

- (a) 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:11; 3:14; 4:4; 10:5; 11:3; Philippians 4:7
- (3) *Dianoema* (# 1270)—the results of considering, ideas
  - (a) Luke 11:17
- (4) *Dialogismos* (# 1261)—inner deliberations, thinking about thoroughly
  - (a) Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; Luke 2:35; 5:22; 6:8; 9:46-47; 24:38; Romans 1:21; 14:1; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:20; Philippians 2:14; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:8; James 2:4
- 3) Similar concepts/synonyms to the word group “meditate”
  - a) *Phroneo* (# 5426)—set your mind
    - i) Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33; Acts 28:22; Romans 8:5; 12:3, 16; 14:6; 15:5; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:6; 13:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:10; Philippians 1:7; 2:2, 5; 3:15, 16, 19; 4:2, 10; Colossians 3:2
    - (1) Noun—*phronema* (# 5427)—mindset, way of thinking, outlook
      - (a) Used of God—Romans 8:27
      - (b) Used of people—Romans 8:6-7
    - (2) Verb—*phrontizo* (#5431)—think seriously about, be intent on, give serious consideration to something,
      - (a) Titus 3:8
  - b) “He said in his heart”
    - i) Used of God—Genesis 8:21
    - ii) Used of people—Genesis 17:17; 27:41; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 27:1; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12:26; Psalm 10:6, 11, 13; 14:1; 53:1
- 4) Practical definitions (Thomas Manton [1620–1677])
  - a) “Meditation is that duty or exercise of religion whereby the mind is applied to the serious and solemn contemplation of spiritual things, for practical uses and purpose.” (*Works*, 17:270)

#### Part 4: Types of meditation

- 1) Occasional/spontaneous
  - a) Definition: Using any normal, everyday experience to lift one’s thoughts Godward to consider His greatness, glory, and truth.
  - b) Examples: Psalm 8:3; 19:1; 77:12; Proverbs 6:6-15; Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31; John 4:1-42
  - c) Benefits:
    - i) It can be done anytime and anywhere.
    - ii) It encourages spiritual growth and godly thinking
    - iii) It uses ordinary occasions of life to consider spiritual truth.
- 2) Deliberate/planned
  - a) Explained:
    - i) Direct: How can I better understand this particular truth?
    - ii) Reflexive: What can I personally do with this truth that I have learned?
  - b) Definition: Obey the command to meditate on God, His Word, and His works
    - i) This includes the teaching one hears during the church services.
  - c) Examples: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 4:4; 111:2; Proverbs 6:20-22;

#### Part 5: How to meditate

- 1) Choose a **time** when your mind will be clear from distractions.
  - a) Sometimes the darkness help keep us from seeing “shiny things”.
- 2) Choose a **location** where you can be free from distraction.