

# Meditation

## The Misunderstood Tool

What is meditation? Is it daydreaming? Is it emptying your mind? Is it reaching a “higher plane of consciousness”? Is it sitting Indian-style, pondering “life’s great questions”? Are these what God calls MEDITATION?

**F**ew any longer take time to *think*! In this rushed and harried age, some no longer even know how.

God actually instructs His servants to “think”! But He calls its most vital form *MEDITATION*.

As with prayer, Bible study and fasting, the newly converted must be taught *HOW* to meditate.

This article reveals both how—and WHY!

### What Does It Mean to Meditate?

The rat race of going to and from work every day, children, the TV, the telephone—all negatively impact our opportunity to find peace and quiet. How can we meditate properly? How can we avoid this world’s distractions long enough to dwell on God’s Way?

Television injects every evil imaginable into the minds of young and old. By an early age, children have witnessed scores of murders, rapes, robberies and a host of other crimes that normally would not be witnessed in a *hundred* lifetimes. The Internet is just as bad, with hundreds of sites depicting every kind of perverted act possible.

King David wrote, “Blessed is the man that walks *not* in the counsel of the ungodly”—doesn’t sit in front of the TV for hours at a time watching every crime show—“nor stands in the way of sinners”—nor in front of his computer searching the web for every available porn site—“nor sits in the seat”—nor in the stands, watching an extreme boxing match—“of the scornful” (Psa. 1:1).

We live in the age of what could be called the “Great TIME Robbery.” In

this society, people do not have the time they once had. They do not have time to spiritually (or even mentally, emotionally or psychologically) digest the events coming at them.

Over thirty years ago, Alvin Toffler wrote a book about “Future Shock.” This theory stated that events were changing and the speed of life was accelerating so fast that it was creating a certain *shock factor* that people were unable to cope with. In effect, the “future” was now seen to be coming at people much faster than they could digest it. Much of civilization was entering a kind of *toxic spiritual condition*.

He wrote a follow-up, *The Third Wave*, which showed that future shock was growing worse. Many read it, but no one *did* anything about it. As a result, society has sped up in the Information Age. The Prophet Daniel foretold this: “...many will run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (12:4).

Knowledge is increasing by leaps and bounds daily. Trying to keep up creates a frantic, high-speed approach to life.

People no longer have time to think!

Imagine that you are a farmer, living one hundred years ago. Sitting behind a team of horses, you plow fields—you have time to think! You are not distracted by televisions, portable radios, computers or mobile phones.

A hundred years ago, nobody ever heard of those things. Until the last century, no one ever spent one minute in front of a television, computer, stereo, etc. Teenagers did not walk around constantly talking to each other on cell phones, with nothing constructive to say.

In the past, people read and *thought* a lot more. Try reading what are called *period letters*—letters written one hundred and fifty years ago. Also read letters exchanged during the American Civil War between President Abraham Lincoln and his generals. These were highly educated people, whose use of grammar and English vastly exceeded today’s standards. People had time to mentally digest—*think* about and analyze—things.

No longer!

God foresaw our time. This is one reason He inspired David to write so much about the need to *meditate*—and how and why: “O LORD our Lord, how *excellent* is Your name in all the earth! Who has set Your *glory* above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You *ordained* strength because of Your enemies, that You might *still* the enemy and the avenger. When I *consider* Your heavens, the *work* of Your fingers, the *moon* and the *stars*, which You have ordained; *What is man*, that You are *mindful* of him? and the son of man, that You visit him? For You have *made him* a little lower than the *angels*, and have *crowned him* with *glory* and *honor*. You made him to have *dominion* over the works of Your hands; You have put *all things* under his feet” (Psa. 8:1-6).

Meditation is a key to proper Bible study. Without meditation (accompanied by prayer, study, fasting and then exercising the Holy Spirit), it would be very difficult to understand God’s will. He talks to us through His Word—the Bible.

When our ways please Him, He gives us understanding by opening our

eyes to His truth. Without meditating—thinking on—mulling over—things concerning God’s Way, we cannot properly utilize our new understanding!

God *does* want us to meditate, but not the way most think.

David gives insight as to *when* to meditate: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law does he meditate *day and night*” (Psa. 1:1-2).

He also stated, “O how love I Your law! It is my meditation *all the day*” (119:97).

How did God view David? The answer is plain: “And when He had removed him [Saul], He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, *a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will*” (Acts 13:22).

### You Are What You Think

*Meditate* means “to reflect on, to contemplate. To plan in the mind; intend. To think or reflect, especially in a calm and deliberate manner. To keep the mind in a state of contemplation; to dwell on anything in thought; to think seriously; to muse; to reflect. To purpose; to intend; to design; to plan by revolving in the mind. To consider; to ponder; to weigh; to revolve; to study.”

This is comprehensive!

Meditation is *not* daydreaming. It is conscious thought control—on a biblical topic. Most people today cannot control their thoughts.

A study thirty years ago concluded that anyone who can concentrate on just one thing for three minutes, and not have his mind wander, is a genius. This is conscious thought control, not daydreaming and just letting your mind roll. As was once said, “Only a fool prays about things as they come to mind.”

There is no conscious thought control if your prayers have no structure to them, no goals or list to work from. Start with a basic framework, then allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. Always remember to ask God to guide your thoughts. Many approach life—whether it is prayer or what they think about—like they are “channel surfing.”

Here are several Old Testament Hebrew words translated “meditate, consider, muse,” etc. *Hagih* means “to ponder, to imagine, to meditate.” *Siyach*

means “converse with oneself, muse, and declare to oneself.” *Biyn* means “to separate or distinguish mentally.”

“The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will *consider* [*biyn*] Your testimonies” (Psa. 119:95). Or, “I will *separate* them one from another.” It is not just a collection of differing thoughts, but rather separating them and distinguishing mentally one from another.

In the New Testament, *meletao* means “to be of interest, concern, to take care of, to revolve in the mind.” Have you ever had anyone say to you, “Just roll it over in your mind”? People roll things across their tongue, but God says to roll things in the mind.

How many times have you caught yourself thinking something you should not? Consider this: What if the person next to you were able to read or understand your thoughts? It would be quite embarrassing!

This is why Christ said, “...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things” (Matt. 12:34-35).

People around us reach conclusions on how we think by what we do. Proverbs 23:7 says it best. “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” Also, Matthew 15:19 states, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

Even though people cannot read our minds, we cannot hide our thoughts from God.

I Chronicles 28:9 states, “And you, Solomon my son, know you the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: *for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts*: if you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off for ever.”

### How to Meditate

Meditation is a great tool to use when you are fasting. Here is a very productive approach: While fasting, spend *one hour* in prayer, followed by *one hour* in Bible study, followed by *one hour* of meditation and reflection on things stud-

ied and learned. Then repeat the cycle until this fast ends.

In II Corinthians, Paul instructs, “*Examine* yourselves, whether you be in the faith; *prove* your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?” (13:5).

All must do this!

### Why Meditate?

Why does God want us to meditate on His Word?

“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, *that you may observe to do* according to all that is written therein: *for then* you shall make your way *prosperous*, and then you shall have good *success*” (Josh. 1:8). God wants His people to prosper and be successful. The only way to prosper and succeed is to follow His direction.

We receive our strength, guidance and salvation from God. David understood this: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my *strength*, and my *redeemer*” (Psa. 19:14). “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and *lead* me in the way *everlasting*” (139:23-24).

Without the Holy Spirit dwelling in a person, helping him to meditate on God’s Word, he cannot begin to understand the way God thinks or *why* He does what He does!

Believe it or not, our natural minds are actually hostile toward God! “Because the carnal mind is *enmity* against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

This is why He tells us to forsake our own way, the way to death! “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:7-9).

The Christian must develop a new, different mind—a different attitude—in order to please God. The only way to do this is with the help of the Holy Spirit. Without that new mind, our hearts will naturally pursue covetousness. Paul instructs, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Again, in I Corinthians 2:16: “For who has known the mind of the Lord, that He may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

### Where to Meditate

We need to get away from everyday life. Society is designed to distract us. There are sports, music, TV, telephone, doorbells, other people in the house, the neighbors, the dog, the neighbor’s dog, cars racing by—the list goes on.

Find a quiet place in your home. Close the door behind you. Lie on your bed. “When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches” (Psa. 63:6). “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” (4:4).

If doing this is impossible in your home, because of noise or distractions, find a place in the local park or drive to a secluded place, like a state park. Take a stroll or a long walk in a park: “And Isaac went out to *meditate* in the field at the eventide” (Gen. 24:63).

Have you ever awakened in the middle of the night, tossing and turning trying to get back to sleep? Don’t try to force yourself back to sleep. Sometimes, the harder you try, the longer it takes. Use that time to dwell on God. Read what the Psalms say: “I have remembered Your name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept Your law” (Psa. 119:55). “Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Your word” (vs. 148).

### When to Meditate

When to meditate depends on your schedule. If you cannot find the time, modify your schedule and *make the time*. Reflecting on God and His Way is not something to take lightly. Being a Christian is serious business, and needs to be treated as such. It is a way of life—not a hobby, as most treat it today.

Moses wrote, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: and you shall love the LORD your God with *all*

*your heart*, and with *all your soul*, and with *all your might*. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be *in your heart*: and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them *when you sit in your house*, and *when you walk by the way*, and *when you lie down*, and *when you rise up*. And you shall *bind them* for a sign *upon your hand*, and they shall be *as frontlets between your eyes*. And you shall *write them* upon the posts of your house, and *on your gates*” (Deut. 6:4-9).

### What to Meditate on

In 1643, Galileo made a statement about the laws of physical science: “Nature abhors a vacuum.” This applies on the mental level as well. You cannot simply empty your mind, expecting that nothing else needs to replace it. Fill your mind with right thoughts, while working to put out the wrong ones (Matt. 12:45).

Meditate on the really important matters. Do not waste time with unimportant, irrelevant things. Meditate on the purpose for human existence and how to fulfill it. Meditate on God’s laws of life—on exactly what eternal life means.

Carefully focus on Philippians 4:8 and practice it: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Meditate on instruction given to you. Most of the time, when people are given instruction, it flows from one ear, straight out the other. Take the time to catch instruction and keep it.

Meditate on being grateful for answered prayer. Sometimes people expect dramatic answers to prayer. They do not recognize that their prayers *have* been answered—GOD’S way. Do not take the way He answers for granted.

Recall the day’s events. Review and analyze them. Draw conclusions about what God expects from you and apply His Law. Then review them so you will remember: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies” (Psa. 119:59).

Meditate on the scriptures so that Bible characters become real to you.

Hollywood depicts most of God’s servants as odd, long-haired “nutcases.”

If you do not meditate on the truth, then Hollywood images will stick in your mind, just as surely as the “long-haired Jesus” that most learned about in Sunday school.

Study the lives of people who lived in the previous fifty-nine hundred years. They were real. You can learn from them. When Solomon said there is nothing new under the sun, he meant it. Think about the many lessons that could be learned from their lives (I Cor. 10:11). They still have meaning for us today.

David said, “*I have considered* the days of old, the years of ancient times. *I call to remembrance* my song in the night: *I commune with mine own heart*: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? does His promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah. And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will *remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will *remember* the works of the LORD: surely I will *remember* Your wonders of old. I will *meditate* also of all Your work, and talk of Your doings” (Psa. 77:5-12).

Only positive results can come from meditating properly. Studies have shown that when people meditate for brief periods during the day (even if they are not meditating on God), their stress level decreases. Individuals with high blood pressure are able to lower it by relaxing and thinking pleasant thoughts.

Aside from physical benefits, several other good things happen when we meditate on God’s Way.

**Meditation brings prosperity and success:** “...for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success” (Josh. 1:8).

**Meditation brings great blessings:** “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper” (Psa. 1:3).

**Meditation brings hope:** “Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall... This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope... They

are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:19, 21, 23).

**Meditation brings wisdom and understanding:** “You through Your commandments have made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation” (Psa. 119:98-99).

**Meditation brings gladness:** “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD” (104:34).

**Meditation brings strength:** “Princes also did sit and speak against me: but Your servant did meditate in Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors” (119:23-24).

**Meditation brings perseverance and endurance:** “For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:3).

**Meditation can prevent you from backsliding:** “And truly, if they had

been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:15-16).

**But most importantly, meditation can lead to eternal life:** “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be *spiritually minded is life and peace*” (Rom. 8:6).

**What NOT to Meditate On**

There are also times when God tells Christians *not* to meditate on something. “But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your

hearts, *not to meditate [promeletao]* before what you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist” (Luke 21:11-15).

*Promeletao* means “pre-meditate.” God does not want you to pre-meditate certain answers to certain things, because then you will say what *you* want to say, rather than what *God* wants you to say!

**“Above All...”**

But, above all, remember again to meditate on this: “Whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any *virtue*, and if there be any *praise*, THINK ON THESE THINGS. Those things, which you have both *learned*, and *received*, and *heard*, and *seen* in me, DO: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:8-9). □

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**HOW TO CONTACT US**

The Restored Church of God  
P.O. Box 23295  
Wadsworth, OH 44282  
USA

The Restored Church of God  
P.O. Box 4064  
St. Catharines, ONT L2R 7S3  
CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266  
Fax: (330) 334-6513

www.TheRCG.org  
e-mail: info@TheRCG.org