

# **The Discipline of Meditation**

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Thoughts of meditation often are viewed as cultic leanings, generally compared to eastern mysticism and other cultic religious groups. Meditation however is a biblical spiritual discipline that has been erroneously confused with cultic practices.

“Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it,” according to Richard Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers; 1978). “The two ideas are radically different.”

Foster and others who advocate developing this spiritual discipline inform us that the hustle and bustle of modern life simply clouds the mind and heart so much that we often cannot hear the voice of God. Meditation helps us redirect our thoughts toward God and allows us to hear His voice.

Each of us has a spiritual inner being, a portion of us that yearns for the spiritual life. God has given each of us that spiritual yearning. His intention was for us to yearn to focus on Him and allow Him to guide our daily lives. Connection with Him allows us to follow God’s voice in living out Christian values.

Developing the discipline of meditation is really simpler than most people would believe because this discipline is not merely a subject we study and learn how to do by reading a book. Meditation is learned simply by doing it—by meditating—so getting better at meditation is a matter of practice. The more we practice meditation, the better we become. How can we make discipline a personal practice?

## **Recognize the importance of meditation.**

If Jesus needed time to retreat to refocus His mind and heart on the Father, who among us cannot recognize our greater need for meditating on God?

## **Understand the meaning of discipline.**

Discipline is not a convenience, but a commitment. We can’t meditate when it’s convenient. Certainly there will be times when our schedules change, but we must set aside time and stick with it.

## **Isolate our thoughts and feelings.**

Find a quiet, protected place away from distractions, a place that provides silence. Silence allows us to focus our minds. If you need something tangible to help you symbolically, obtain a pitcher and bowl. Fill the pitcher with water. When you begin meditating, slowly pour the water into the bowl, telling yourself that with this action you are emptying your mind of the distractions of life so you can be filled with the thoughts of God.

**Open our hearts and minds.**

God speaks through many of our natural experiences, including our dreams and imagination. The Bible records how God spoke often through dreams. We can ask God to speak through our dreams and imagination.

**Think about a Scripture passage.**

Fill your mind with a specific passage. Repeat the passage, pray about the passage, think about its meaning, and think about the words themselves. Allow God to fill your mind with thoughts about that passage and how it relates to your life.

**Take nothing for granted.**

All of God's messages are important. Keep a log of thoughts and ideas, reviewing them periodically to see whether God is recalling something you need to hear.

God speaks in a multitude of ways. Too often we look only for the profound, burning-bush voice, when God wants to use His **“still, small voice”** to help us grow spiritually. The discipline of meditation can open our ears—and minds, hearts, and lives—to the voice of God.