

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF DEVOTION

As we begin, there are *some necessary caveats*. **First**, one's prayer and devotional life cannot be reduced to a few simple rules. These areas of spiritual experience are far too dynamic and personal for simplistic reduction.

We must also be cautioned against imagining from the outline we are using (*meditation, confession, adoration, submission, and petition*) that there is a prescribed order for devotion, for there is not and never has been. Life's rhythms sometimes demand that we launch directly, for example, into petition with "**Lord, help me!**" Other times will be spent almost entirely in confession, or meditation, or adoration.

As we discussed in the preceding section, reading God's Word is essential to developing a Christian mind. All Christians should be systematically reading through the Bible, once a year if possible, so that our minds are being perpetually programmed by the data of Scripture.

This understood, there is yet another step: *meditation* — which involves personalizing and internalizing a segment of the Word. We will discuss next week.

MEDITATION

Listening

Meditation begins with the devotional exercise of listening to the Word. **Eugene Peterson** points out that [Psalm 40:6](#) contains a brilliant metaphor in the original Hebrew text which graphically teaches the necessity of listening. It literally says, "**ears you have dug for me.**" Much to our loss, no English translation preserves the metaphor, preferring to variously paraphrase it with phrases like the RSV's "**thou hast given me an open ear.**" Nevertheless, the Hebrew verb retains the metaphorical nugget "**dug,**" which suggests, apart from God's work, a human head without any ears — "**A blockhead. Eyes, nose and mouth, but no ears.**"

This remarkable metaphor, "**ears you have dug for me,**" occurs in the context of a busy religious performance which is deaf to the voice of God — "**Sacrifice and offering you did not desire ... burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.**" The problem was that the Psalmist's religious colleagues had read about how to do the rituals of sacrifice, but had missed the message. God had spoken, but they did not hear.

Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

So what does God do? He takes a pick and shovel and mines through the sides of the “**cranial granite,**” making openings through which His Word can pass to the mind and heart. The result is *hearing*, and the hearer responds, “**Then I said, ‘Here I am, I have come — it is written about me in the scroll. To do your will, O my God, is my desire; your law is within my heart’**” ([vv. 7-8](#)). The words of Scripture are not merely to be read but to be *heard*. They are meant to go to the heart!

The importance of having our ears dug open comes to us from the lips of Jesus: “**He who has an ear, let him hear ...**” ([Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22](#)). We need to read God’s Word, but we must also pray that He will blast through our granite-block heads so we truly hear His Word.