

Melva's Corner

MEDITATION THE WAY TO FULFILLMENT

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(Psalm 1:1, 2)

Central Truth: The reality is, meditating with others - whether with a group at church, with a spouse or a couple of friends - can be one of the richest, unifying experiences we can do.

In our Western civilization we tend to associate happiness with money, sex, or power — preferably all three! And while each of these is not inherently bad, in fact they are all gifts from God. Yet there are portions of Scripture, the life of Jesus, and many Eastern religions point to another source of happiness - **meditation!**

As with the other classical spiritual disciplines, meditation cuts against the grain of living in the material world and may seem like a waste of time. But those who are trained in meditation have a far different view and point to the fruit that meditation produces, some of why are **peace, joy, and love.**

What is meditation? Quite simply, meditation is an intentional act of simplicity. **So it is not hard to understand why this is seldom practiced.** Most of us live scattered lives, pulled in numerous directions by forces of work, family, church, recreation, friends, and so on. In addition, most people - Christians included - are always thinking ... thinking ... thinking. And while thinking is a good, God-given trait, too much of it - whether replaying tapes from past conversations, planning tomorrow's activities, or day dreaming about the future - often leads to a complicated and unhappy life. Thus the need for the simple act of meditation!

Meditation is not a panacea to our cultural or personal search for meaning. And is certainly more than a **theoretical** admonition to simplicity. Rather, meditation is practical, easy, and, best of all, a means to happiness, a life with and for God.

There are numerous things to say about meditation and Psalm 1 provides some practical and pertinent counsel:

"And on his law they mediate day and night." (Psalm 1:2)

Meditate on the Teachings of God

When it comes to meditation, it is important to remember, "less is more." In other words, you might consider easing into meditation by reading a short narrative from the gospel. When meditating, it is best to read slowly, perhaps pausing after each sentence. Don't be afraid to sit in silence for a few minutes, asking the Lord to help you to absorb it all. Using your imagination to fill out the picture can also be helpful - e.g., from the story in Luke 5: 1-11 you might ask, "What might Jesus have been teaching the crowds? What might it have smelled like, felt like, to be in the water or in the boat with Jesus?" After allowing yourself to enter the story by using as many of your senses as possible, many have found it helpful to quietly repeat one of Jesus' sayings –such as His admonition to Peter: "Do not be afraid." As you repeat this phrase and allow each word to seep in, not only can we enter the story but we likely will find ourselves being challenged as well.

The point is, the teachings from Scripture are a treasure-house of material on which to meditate. As we "eat the scroll" as the angel admonished John in Revelation 19:18, the Spirit calms and simplifies our spirit, leading to a real sense of God's presence, the source of true happiness.

Mediate in Community

In our narcissistic culture that encourages us to look out after number 1, we can easily overlook the benefit of community. The reality is, meditating with others - whether with a group at church, with a spouse or a couple of friends - can be one of the richest, unifying experiences we can do. Meditation in community can keep us awake, accountable, and encouraged as we share our "aha moments," questions, and doubts. That's not to say meditating on Scripture can't be done alone; rather, as we meditate and pray with others the truth of Jesus' promise rings true: **"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."** (Matthew 18:20 NRS)

Mediate through the Day

The Psalmist knew how fleeting happiness could be. Therefore, not only does he tell us to meditate on Scripture and tells us with whom to meditate, he also points to the reality that meditation is to be a way of life. In other words, meditation is much more than getting alone and being quiet each morning and evening in order to read our Bibles — important as that is. Rather, the point seems to be that meditation, like all the spiritual exercises, is about cultivating a lifestyle of awareness to the reality of God in our midst.

Anthony de Mello tells of a conversation between a teacher and his student that serves as an important conclusion to why we meditate.

Student — Is there anything I can do to make myself spiritual?

Teacher — As little as you can do to make the sun rise in the morning.

Student — Then of what use is meditation or the other spiritual exercises?

Teacher — To make sure you are not asleep when the sun does begin to rise.

The worst thing in life is to be asleep at the switch when God is moving. Meditation will guarantee that we are alert and fully engaged when the Master of the Universe is acting on our behalf.

Scriptural References:

**"Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."
(Psalm 1:1, 2)**