

PRACTICING THE DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION & MEMORIZATION:

Adapted from Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us
by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun ©2005 IVP

Read for further understanding about the practices of solitude and silence and spend time answering the reflection questions. The challenge this week is to try one of the spiritual exercises.

DEFINITIONS:

Meditation is a long, ardent gaze at God, his work, and his Word. Slowing down and giving one's undivided attention to God lies at the core of Christian meditation. Memorization is the process of continually remembering the words, truth and images God uses to shape us. Memorization provides us with a store of learning, which can be accessed anywhere and anytime.

GOD-GIVEN FRUIT OF MEDITATION & MEMORIZATION:

- developing sight for the interior things of God in the natural and external world
- seeing beyond a first glance and first impression to the heart of God
- developing depth of insight and a love for gazing on God
- experiencing calmness, serenity, and quietness stemming from awareness of the nearness of God
- keeping company with Jesus by hiding his Word in your heart
- recollecting God-given encouragement and exhortation
- developing a habit of remembering that anchors your life in biblical truth
- knowing where well-loved portions of Scripture are located

SOME HELPFUL SCRIPTURES:

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Joshua 1:8

"If I'm sleepless at midnight, I spend the hours in grateful reflection."

Psalm 63:6 *The Message*

"I'll ponder all the things you've accomplished, and give a long, loving look at your acts."

Psalm 77:12 *The Message*

"May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

Psalm 19:14

"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."

Psalm 119:97

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Psalm 119:11

REFLECTION QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How would you characterize your ability to pay attention?
2. When do you find it easiest to focus your mind or heart?
3. How might a tendency to do everything quickly affect your ability to meditate?
4. What is your attitude toward memorization?
5. What are the benefits of memorization and when have you experienced them?
6. What sorts of things have you memorized without even trying? Sports statistics, movie trivia, recipes, phone numbers, birthdays, logins and passwords, etc.? How does this encourage you to memorize words that can nourish your soul?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: (choose one to try this week)

1. Prepare yourself to meditate on Scripture by choosing a comfortable and quiet place. Do not rush. Stretch, arrange your chair, take off your shoes. Sit in a position that you can maintain without effort or attention. Place yourself in the presence of God. Release your anxieties and to-do list to the Lord. Ask him to open your heart to his Word. Read Psalm 139, Psalm 86, Psalm 42 or another short passage from Scripture. Take your time, and when a word “lights up” for you, stop and attend. Let the word or phrase roam around in your mind and heart. What do you hear? What feelings do you notice in yourself? Write down any questions that surface. You can attend to these at another time. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back and continue your meditation. Do not feel you have to finish anything. Take your word with you. Begin again tomorrow with the same passage.
2. Take a walk in nature, meditating on the handiwork of God. The lilies of the field and the birds of the air spoke to Jesus of God’s care (Matthew 6:26-31). How does God speak to you in his creation?
3. Meditate on the great truths of the faith using the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, or a confession of faith. Spend time deeply entering into the words and their meaning.
4. When you find yourself captivated by a Scripture, write it on a card that you can tape to a mirror, a window, or somewhere you will see it often. Every day read the verse, rehearsing it in your mind and heart. On a daily basis remind yourself of the Scripture until you know it by heart. Only then are you ready to move on to another portion of Scripture.
5. Memorize some of the worship songs or hymns that you enjoy. Sing the bits you remember. Listen again to the bits you forget. Write them out if it helps you. When you have committed the song to memory, notice when the song simply pops into your mind. Let the song be a way God enters into your life and speaks to you.