

CHRISTIAN MEDIATION

Christian Meditation: Is it Christian to Meditate?

Christian meditation is rooted in the Bible. In fact, the Bible commands us to meditate. In Joshua 1:8, God says to meditate on His word day and night so we will obey it. The psalmist says "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Actually, the Bible mentions meditate or meditation 20 times.

In the Old Testament there are two primary Hebrew words for meditation: *Haga*, which means to utter, groan, meditate, or ponder; and *Sihach*, which means to muse, rehearse in one's mind, or contemplate. These words can also be translated as dwell, diligently consider, and heed.

Christian Meditation: A History

One form of Christian meditation that has been used by believers since at least the fourth century AD is the *lectio divina*. It has been traditionally used in monastic religious orders and is enjoying a resurgence today. *Lectio divina* means "sacred reading" and has four stages: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (discursive meditation), *oratio* (affective prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). In the *lectio* (reading) stage, one finds a passage and reads it deliberately. The next stage, *meditatio* (discursive meditation), is where one ponders the text. In the *oratio* (affective prayer) stage, one talks to God about the reading, asking Him to reveal the truth. In the final, *contemplatio* (contemplation) stage, one simply rests in the Lord's presence.

Today, meditation is generally seen as a practice of the New Age movement. This comes primarily from its association with Transcendental Meditation. Transcendental Meditation (TM) was developed by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of the Hindu religion and is steeped in Hindu philosophy. The "yogi" in the TM founder's name indicates his status in Hinduism. Courts in the US have ruled that TM is not a secular discipline; it is Hindu religion (US District Court, Newark, NJ, on October 29, 1977 and the US Court of Appeals, Philadelphia, PA February 2, 1979).

Christian Meditation: What do Christian Leaders Say?

One important thing the Bible tells us to do is to think about God's Word. Our thoughts determine our behavior and so what we think about is very important. That is why God wants us to think about His Word, or meditate on it. Jim Downing in *Meditation* (NavPress) says God considers meditation a "vital exercise of the minds of His children."

Rick Warren, in *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan), describes meditation this way: "Meditation is *focused* thinking. It takes serious effort. You select a verse and reflect on it over and over in your mind...if you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate" (190). Warren goes on to say, "No other habit can do more to transform your life and make you more like Jesus than daily reflection on Scripture...If you look up all the times God speaks about meditation in the Bible, you will be amazed at the benefits He has promised to those who take the time to reflect on His Word throughout the day" (190).

In *Satisfy Your Soul* (NavPress), Dr. Bruce Demarest writes, "A quieted heart is our best preparation for all this work of God ... Meditation refocuses us from ourselves and from the world so that we reflect on God's Word, His nature, His abilities, and His works ... So we prayerfully ponder, muse, and 'chew' the words of Scripture. ...The goal is simply to permit the Holy Spirit to activate the life-giving Word of God" (133).

Christian Meditation: How do we do it?

There are three times during the day we can actively turn our minds over to God's Word in Christian Meditation. Just before we fall asleep, we can have God's Word be the last thing that occupies our mind. Upon awaking, we can have God's Word be the first thing to fill our minds to start the day. Finally, we need a specific time each day to be in God's Word so it can speak to us throughout our day.

What should we focus on in Christian meditation? "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8, NASB).

PETE: Here's a deal on Christian mediation that utilizes a "mantra" or repeated phrase.

Maranatha is the final instruction: To many people the use of mantra or sacred word appears to be an Eastern practice, often associated with Buddhism or Hinduism. However, there is a Christian meditation mantra that has been used for a very long time by the early monks, though it is little known publicly. It is the mantra **Maranatha**. The word **Maranatha** is the final instruction of St. Paul's teachings to the Corinthians, and is St. John's final instruction in the Book of Revelations. Thus, the last word, the final teaching of the entire Christian Bible is "**Maranatha**," which is Aramaic and means, "Come Lord."

Mara-natha and Maran-atha: One meditation teacher explains he was taught in seminary that when the word **Maranatha** is parsed (broken into parts) as "**mara-natha**" or "**maran-atha**," it has two different meanings:

As "**mara-natha**," it means "Come Lord," or "Lord Come."

As "**maran-atha**," it means "Lord is Here" or "Lord has Come."

Pronouncing the mantra: The **Maranatha mantra** is pronounced with "a" as in "car" or "far" (**Ma-Ra-Na-Tha**). Allow it to arise rhythmically in the mind field at whatever speed comes naturally, whether fast or slow, though you will probably find it will slow down on its own. Allow yourself to feel the meaning of the mantra, in whatever way matches your own spiritual or religious predisposition. Or simply feel the calmness that comes from the gentle repetition. The feeling is more subtle when remembered in the silence of the mind rather than spoken aloud. As you meditate, focus on the concept of "Come Lord" whereby you are asking and pleading for the wholeness of Christ's presence in your life or daily circumstance.