

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

The Bible has quite a bit to teach us about meditation.

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”

Psalm 1: 2 - 3

The Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Joshua 1 : 8

The way of meditating, according to the Bible, is to think and ponder on what it teaches. The mind is not a blank or concentrating on one word. The purpose of meditating is to understand so that we may obey.

Nowhere are we taught to concentrate on a single word to bring our mind to a state of 'peace and tranquility ' in order to escape the stress of the world around us. We may spend a few minutes of quiet to calm our minds before worship or devotions. This is quite different when the process itself becomes the end rather than the means.

The by-product of Biblical meditation may indeed give us peace and tranquility as we realise God's faithfulness to us, our families and to His people. But that is not the main purpose of Christian meditation.

Hearing Scripture preached, reading it regularly, memorising it (as those who were unable to read it for themselves have always had to do) internalising it by meditation, and applying it to give content to one's personal worship, as well as to find direction for living one's life, are characteristic evangelical procedures for developing one's communion with the Father and the Son.

J I Packer

Honouring the Written Word of God

The type of meditation that is often taught is to escape into a world of one's mental construction. It is practised by many religions and by those without any religion. That is to say, it is a conditioned reflex, resulting from a response to a repetitive verbal signal. A trance-like state is achieved.

Stress of any sort indeed drives people to seek escape. Some techniques advocate counting 10 backwards slowly when we are on the verge of losing our cool. Others deliberately engage in pleasant thoughts, or hum a tune to push unpleasant things out of their mind. Doubtless they work or they will not have survived today.

Consider also the other Scripture passages such as **Philippians 4 : 6, 7**. in relation to anxiety and how to deal with it :

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Suppose we were to start a movement to help stressed people escape into a blissful state by repeating mantras. This is laudable. Are we really solving their problems ?

It may serve to lead them away from what the Lord Jesus offers to all who come to Him:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

John 14 : 27

I hope what I have said above is of help in looking at the techniques of meditation as practised, even by Christians, in light of the Bible. Yoga practitioners warn their disciples that during deep meditation shadowy figures appear in the peripheral vision. They are told not to pay them any attention. These are demon entities who want people to empty their minds (as they are taught to do) in preparation for them to invade their consciousness. Rather dangerous thing to meditate in this fashion.