

LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD



***TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH
THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON
JESUS CHRIST 1 JOHN 1:3***

LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

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OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the study, participants would have:

Gained some insight into the character of God

Looked at elements necessary for developing and maintaining a love relationship with God

Recognize the factors which can hinder a love relationship with Him

Prayerfully examine their relationship with God, identify hindrances and make plans to improve their relationship with Him

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1. WHAT IS LOVE?

* “A desire for and delight in the welfare of the one loved.’ - Torrey

* “A holy fire kindled in the affections whereby the Christian is carried out strongly after God as the supreme good.” - Watson

* The Greek word *Agape* is used to describe or define love. It is to choose, to desire and to act for the highest good for God, Man and the universe.

✓ What would you say is the highest good for God, man and the universe?

✓ Write your own definition of love.

1.2. WHAT IS RELATIONSHIP?

* The state of being connected or related; associated by blood or marriage; an emotional association between two people, a condition or character due to being related, kinship. Oxford concise Dictionary.

We can be related to someone by blood, or marriage, have a resemblance or a common origin but the relationship may be bad.

✓ List some ingredients of a bad relationship?

✓ List some ingredients of a good relationship?

2. WHO IS THE GOD WE ARE TO LOVE?

2.1. HIS CHARACTER

God is Eternal - existing always, without a beginning and an end. He is essentially unchanging 1 Tim.1:17

He is Immortal - living forever, unfading, incorruptible.

He is Holy - morally and spiritually excellent. Isa. 6:3

He is Just - blameless, fair minded, impartial, virtuous, right. Isa. 45:21, Zech. 9:9

He is faithful - committed, loyal, dependable, reliable. 1 Cor. 10:13, 1 Cor. 1:9

He is truth - genuine, accurate, has integrity. Rom. 3:4; John 14:6; 1 John 5:20

He is love - 1 John 4:8

He is wise - all knowing. Eph. 3:10

He is the almighty - satisfies, life-giver, restorer. Gen. 17:1

He is merciful - compassionate, forgiving, forbearing. Numb. 14:18; Psalm 145:8,9

He is gracious - compassionate - 1 Cor. 1:4; Psalm 145:8, 9

2.2 HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS US:

God loves us. He is committed to our highest good. He wants us to be like Himself. He wants to be a Father to us, to care for protect and guide us. He wants us to come to know the father.



Read the following Scripture verses and meditate on God's attitude towards us. Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:29; Psalm 103:13; John 16:27; 2 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 11:6; John 16:25.

2.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS LOVE (AGAPE)

It is a Covenant Love. God makes a contract, a pledge. He has commits Himself to us. Isaiah 54:10.

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He loved us first. His love comes before my love for Him. 1 John 4:19; Rom. 5:8

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His love is sacrificial. It cost Him something. John 3:16; John 10:11

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His love is voluntary - He willingly gave of Himself. He chose to give. Deut. 7:7,8; Hosea 14:4; John 10:18.

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His love is intelligent - It is a logical act. Rom. 12

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His love is impartial - He is not discriminating, biased or prejudiced. Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9

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His love is Steadfast. - unshakable, unfaltering 1 Cor.13:8a

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His love is Unconditional - not dependant on what we do or how we act. Rom.5:8

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His love is Protecting - John10:28; Ps.32:10

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His love is Abundant - Eph.3:18

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His love is Personal - Is.43:1,4

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His love is Reaching Out - John3:16

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His love is caring and protecting - Matt.6:32; Deut. 32:12

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His love is Merciful and Compassionate - Ps.51:1, Matt 9:36; Isa. 63:9

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His love is Everlasting - Jer.31:3

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His love is forgiving - Isaiah 38:17; Psalm 103:3

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✓ Which aspect of God's Agape love has become clear to you for the first time or have made a deeper impression on you?

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✓ Which of these characteristics are lacking in your life?

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✓ Share your answer with a friend and take time to pray for each other.

3. HOW TO DEVELOP A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Nicodemus came to Jesus to ask how he could enter the Kingdom of God -

‘ Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." ‘ John 3:3 .

To develop a love relationship with God, we first need to be Born Again.

HOW TO BE BORN AGAIN

Step One. Believe in Jesus

Faith is the key to receiving the gift of salvation and eternal life in Christ Jesus.

It is important to know what saving faith is.

- * It is not just head knowledge about certain Biblical facts. In James 2:19 it says, *"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."* Believing the facts about God will not save the demons, so this is not saving faith.
- * Saving faith is not faith for temporary needs such as safety in travel, provision of food, clothing, etc., or faith for healing when we are sick. At the end of our lives faith for these things will be unnecessary and we may still be in danger of missing our place in heaven, and instead find ourselves in the lake of fire with the devil (see Rev. 20:11-15).
- * Saving faith is trusting in Jesus alone for salvation, through His sacrificial death, burial and resurrection, by which He purchased eternal life for us. In Acts 16:31 it says, *".... Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved...."* Here is an illustration to make this clearer.

"Imagine you are going down a river in a boat when something happens and you fall into the river. Someway you manage to hold onto a log which keeps you afloat. But further down the river (you don't know how far) there is a waterfall, which if you go over, would be the end of you. Then someone on the river bank sees you and throws out a rope to you. You would need to decide whether to take your chances with the log and the waterfall, or let go of the log and hold onto the rope."

That is similar to the choice we all face. You see we are all washed down this river of life and we hold onto what we think will keep us afloat (usually our own

good deeds). But further down the river is that waterfall which we all face, i.e., our death.

Jesus sees us, and He stands on the river bank and throws out His rope, His salvation. We need to make a choice. We can continue to trust in the log (our own deeds), or we can let that go and hold onto His salvation." (Illustration taken from Evangelism Explosion III Level 1 Training Notebook - D. James Kennedy)

We receive the gift of eternal life through repentance (which can also be compared to letting go of the log we hang onto - our old way of life with all its sins, including self efforts) and transferring our trust (faith) to Jesus alone for salvation. In Mark 1:15 Jesus tells us to repent and believe.

Step Two. Repent

True repentance is much more than just saying "sorry" to God.

Included in true repentance is

- * a. admitting and confessing your sin,
- * b. turning away from sin and your own way, and
- * c. turning to God and obeying and following Him.

Step Three. Receive

We have looked at God's provision through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross which makes it possible for us to have our sins forgiven, to receive the gift of eternal life, and to be restored to a loving relationship with God so that we may fulfil the purpose for which He created us.

- ✓ Ask yourself if you have actually received the gift of eternal life for yourself. If you know you have not, or if you are still in doubt, you may receive that gift right now.

If you want to receive the gift of eternal life this is what it will mean to you:

- * It means you will transfer your trust from whatever you have been trusting in the past (i.e. your good works, charms, church going, etc.) to Jesus Christ alone and what He has done for you.

- ✓ Are you willing to turn from your own inadequate ways and to transfer your trust to Jesus Christ alone?
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- * It means you will receive Christ:

+ *as the One Who rose from the dead*, is living today, and is the only mediator between God and man.

- ✓ Are you ready to receive the living Christ into your life?
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+ as your Saviour (Rev. 3:20 "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with Me."). Jesus wants to enter your life and deliver you from your sin, and from your fears and to give you His Holy Spirit to enable you to live the life He meant you to live.

- ✓ **Will you ask Jesus to come into your life as your Saviour today and accept His forgiveness for your sin?.....**

+ as your only Lord. This means being willing to submit to Him as your only Lord, and to be willing to obey Him in everything. If we trust Him, we will hand over the control of our lives to Him (like you moving over to the passenger seat and asking Jesus to take over the steering wheel of your life).

- ✓ **Are you willing to trust Jesus in this way?**

* **It means you will repent from your sins. God's Spirit working within us enables us to repent. Repenting will mean a transformed or changed life.**

- ✓ **Are you ready to confess your sins, turn away from them and turn to God to obey Him and to follow His ways now?.....**

* **It means you will become a responsible member of God's family, the Church. Since the Church is the family of God and the Body of Christ, God wants us to serve Him in the Church. He will give you the gifts (the special enabling) that He knows you will need to serve Him as part of His family.**

- ✓ **Are you willing to become a responsible member of God's family, the Church?**

If you have sincerely answered "yes" to the above questions you are probably ready to receive the gift of eternal life and be restored to a right relationship with God and so enabled to begin to fulfil the purpose for which He created you.

The following is a suggested prayer for you to pray if you have sincerely come to the place where you want Christ to come in and take over control of your life:

Dear Lord Jesus, I realize that I am a sinner. I have been controlling my own life and doing many wrong things, instead of allowing You to control me and

lead me in Your ways. But because You died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin, and to wash me clean through Your blood that was shed for me, I now see that You love me. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your great love. I ask You to forgive me for all my sin and to come into my heart to be my Saviour and my Lord. I thank You for doing this and for giving me the gift of eternal life as You promised in Your Word. I receive that gift with thanksgiving. I now turn over the control of my life to You. Help me to be the kind of person You want me to be through the power of Your Holy Spirit now living in me. Amen

If you have prayed the above prayer and committed your life to Jesus in all sincerity you are now a member of the Family of God. Welcome to that wonderful Family. The Bible tells us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. You can now be sure that your sins are forgiven; Christ lives in you; your name is written in the book of life; and if you were to die today you will go to heaven.

✓ Please share what you have done with someone as soon as possible.

If you have not yet received Christ as your Saviour and Lord and do not feel ready for this step, but would like further understanding, do not hesitate to go to your

Seminar Leader about this. He/she will be willing to help you.

✓ Think about your relationship with a close friend or your marriage partner. How did it develop? Can you see any parallel in developing a love relationship with God?

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4 HOW TO MAINTAIN A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

As important as it is to build a relationship, it is equally important to maintain that relationship. It needs to be fed so that it can develop to its full potential and be fruitful. We also need to maintain our relationship with God so that we can be the people He wants us to be. As we spend quality time with Him, we increasingly become more like Him.

- * Spend time with Him. Song 2:14
 - To know Him and His will better. Phil 3:10, Is 51:4
- * Wait on Him Is 30:18; Isaiah 40:31; Ps 62:1,5
 - To understand His mercy and His justice.
 - To be strengthened.
- * Learn to discern His voice. John 10:4,5,27; 18:37
 - To avoid being deceived.

- * **Obey what He says. John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-5**
- * **Be honest, without hypocrisy Is. 29:13**
- * **Do not leave your first love Rev. 2:4**
 - **Protect it - Jude 21**
 - **Repent if love has cooled down. Rev 2:5**
- * **Ask God to direct your heart in love. 2 Thess. 3.5**
- * **Know His Word.**
 - **Read, meditate, and obey. John 14:21; Ps. 19:7-14; Col 3:16; Ps 119:88 (amp.)**
- * **Pass on His love. 1 John 1:3; John 15:27**
- * **Experience and walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.**
 - **He reveals Jesus to and in us. John 16:14,15; 16:7; 15:26**
 - **He enables us to walk in victory Gal 5:16,25**

5. **RESULTS OF A GOOD LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

When you get into a relationship, you expect some results. If there are no results, you begin to wonder if it is worthwhile.



What results do you expect from your love relationship with God?

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What do you understand by the following Scriptures as it relates to the Results of loving God?

- * **Known by God. 1 Cor. 8:3**
- * **Receive a Crown of life Jam 1:12**
- * **Receive the Kingdom Jam. 2:5**
- * **Have glory beyond description. 1 Cor. 2:9**

- * **Know that all things work together for good Rom. 8:28**
- * **Be His bride. Hos. 2:19**
- * **Experience His mercy and love. Ex 20:6**
- * **He keeps His covenant, loves and blesses us. Deut. 7:13**
- * **He takes sickness away from us Deut. 7:15**
- * **He gives victory over our enemies Deut. 7:16-24**
- * **We will rise like the sun in His strength. Judg. 5:31**
- * **He preserves us. Ps. 145:20**
- * **He will give us a task. John 21:15-17**

6. WHAT CAN HINDER A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

A relationship can grow and flourish in the right environment, or it can be stifled and hindered in the wrong environment.

A relationship with God can be hindered from development if :

6.1. There is no relationship

- * **Don't know Him personally - unregenerate John 3:3 - 8, 18**
- * **Separated from Him by sin. Isa. 59:2**
- * **Nominalism, Matt. 7:21-23**
- * **Legalism. Matt. 23: 13, 23 ,25**

6.2. If there is a break in fellowship with Him through:-

- * **Unconfessed sin Isa. 59:2**
- * **Guilt. Psalm 32:3 -5 ; 1 John 3:20, 21**
- * **Condemnation. Psalm 32:3-5; 1 John 3:20, 21**
- * **Sense of unworthiness. Psalm 32:3 - 5; 1 John 3:20, 21**

- * **Unbelief. Heb.3:12, 19**
- * **Broken relationships with others. 1 John 4:20**
- * **Hardness. Prov. 28:14; 29:1**
- * **Coldness of heart. Matt.24:12**
- * **Disobedience. 1 Peter 2:7, 8**
- * **Apathy. Isa 47:8; Zeph.2:15; Isaiah 32:9 - 11**
- * **Busyness. Eccl. 1:3; 2:18, 22, 23; 5:15; John 6:27**
- * **Neglect Him. Jer.2:32; 3:21; Ezek. 23:35; Hos. 13:6**
- * **Neglect of the Word. Psalm 106:24; Prov. 13:13; John 14:23, 24**
- * **Grieving the Holy Spirit. Eph.4:30**
- * **Not full of the Holy Spirit. John 14:16, 17; 16:13 - 15**
- * **Hypocrisy. 1 Tim 4:2; Matt. 23:27,28**
- * **Pride: James 5:6**



Refer to the above list of things that can be hindrances to our relationship with God. List those which apply to you.

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What practical steps can you take to remove these hindrances?

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7. VISIBLE EVIDENCE AND QUALITIES OF MY LOVE FOR GOD

If we love someone it will be evident to those around through the way we relate the one loved, and the way we speak or behave in his or her presence.

7.1. *OUR LOVE FOR GOD CAN ALSO BE SEEN THROUGH:*

- * Obedience to His commands. 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6**
- * Service to Him Deut. 10:12; 1 Thess. 1:3; Col 3:23**
- * Hatred of evil. Ps. 97:10**
- * Not loving the world. 1 John 2:15**
- * Love for other Christians. 1 John 4:20, 21; 3:16**
- * Love for all people. Gal. 6:10**
- * Desire after God. Is. 26:9; Ps 42:1,2; 143:6; 63:1; 84:2**
- * Want others to love Him. Song 5:11 - 6:1**
- * Grief at His absence. Song 5:6,8; John 16:6, 7, 20**
- * Put God first. Matt. 6:33**
- * Wait for His guidance.**

7.2. *QUALITIES OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD:* Our love for God should be:

- * Whole hearted. Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-39**
- * Based on His intrinsic excellencies**
- * Superlative - above all others. Luke 14:26**
- * Constant Song of Solomon 8:7**



In the next five minutes, share with someone next to you, how your love-relationship with God started.

- ✓ Describe in your own words, your present relationship with
 1. the Father
 2. Jesus Christ
 3. the Holy Spirit
- ✓ Write a specific goal stating what you would like this relationship to be like in 6 month's time.
- ✓ Specify what you will do in order to reach this goal.

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ADDENDUM:

Meeting our Master

Guidelines for the pilgrim's heart

By
L.C. Steyn

Edit to make clear it is a discipline and not a technique
Increase the collection of treasures in your spiritual storehouse that can be used to
bless others

**St. HCF Nederland
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1. Like a city on a hill...

The healthy human heart is like a medieval city on a hill with a protective wall around it. Inside the wall is a complete city with castle, throne room and throne. The king rules from the throne, thus establishing and maintaining a kingdom of love, justice and peace. Loved ones stroll through the beautiful city gardens filled with exquisite flowers.

We could elaborate on this idyllic scene, were it not that human hearts almost never look like this. So many heart-cities are severely damaged. Many throne rooms are occupied by despotic and egoistic kings and queens who further the devastation of the city. Suburbs have been ruined during civil wars; gates have been destroyed and the gardens are in a sad state of neglect. How long will the city still be able to withstand the ravages of time and the pressures from the enemies within and without?

The True King needs to come back to His rightful place. The Bride city needs His correcting, cleansing and caring touch.

The city should become a healed haven of heart-fellowship.

How can this become a reality in our journey? One of the most important helps in this regard is for us to learn how to meditate on the Word of God and thus to live as those whose pilgrimages have become living responses to Who He is.

Shall we explore the world of meditation together?

2. A heart-city transformed...

My devotional life has undergone a major transformation. The first love between me and my Bridegroom has been deeply restored and this has impacted every aspect of my life as disciple of Jesus Christ.

What has made such a fundamental difference?

A Scriptural understanding of what it means to meditate on the Word of God has revolutionized everything.

Yes, it is as simple as that. However, it is a matter of profound simplicity and not of over-simplification.

It is also a matter of entering the process of learning a new discipline rather than of adopting a new technique for instant holiness.

If your heart is longing for a long-lasting God-worked transformation, allow me to share how He has led me closer to His heart than ever before.

First we will seek to come to a biblical understanding of what it means to meditate. It is essential to avoid confusion between a biblical approach and unhealthy mystical entanglement. I have experienced the definite difference in my own life between the meditation I did as a Zen Buddhist and what I now do as a follower of Jesus.

Then we will explore how we can successfully develop a habit of biblical meditation as individuals and as groups of believers.

3. Meditate –

3.1. a first word...

Gen 24:63 And Isaac went out to meditate⁷⁷⁴² in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming. (KJV)

7742 *śûâch*: to thoughtfully focus one's thinking on something.

(Strong has another word: 1897 Hagah for this verse?)

Isaac was studying one of the two glorious Books of God as he was musing out in the fields – the Book of Creation. At that time the second book, the Book of Revelation (the Bible) was not yet available. As he was studying the Book of God's Creation, he would have had ample opportunity to get to know God's eternal power and His Godhead more deeply according to Rom 1:20.

One of my hobbies is bird-watching. It is one of the best excuses for glorious times of worship and fellowship with our Creator God. How could I suppress a 'Hallelujah' when I observe one of His magnificently designed feathered works of art?

Believers in some countries look at me with amazement when I take my binoculars and look for birds. Some of them even start wondering whether their conference speaker is spiritual enough... With gratitude I can report that the famous theologian John Stott shared my passion. He even wrote a book about it: *The Birds Our Teachers*. So if he was excited about creation, it must be OK ☺

The most intriguing aspect of being out in creation together with Abba Father is the variety, the thoughtfulness and the beauty He put into simply everything He made. What a source of joy and inspiration!

Seriously – are you an experienced student of God's Book of Creation? Have you experienced the thrill of getting to know Him better as you focus your thinking on His handiwork? Is the wonder of His intelligent design filling you with deep awe? When last did you make time to be alone with God in the fields?

3.2. Meditate – a second word...

Jos 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate¹⁸⁹⁷ therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Psa 1:2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate¹⁸⁹⁷ day and night.

Psa 63:6 When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate¹⁸⁹⁷ on thee in the *night* watches.

Psa 77:12 I will meditate¹⁸⁹⁷ also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

1897 hagah: to read the Word of God syllable by syllable to oneself in a low voice; to murmur (in pleasure or anger); by implication to ponder. The murmuring can vary in its expression - mourning, muttering, speaking, talking, singing, growling, roaring, groaning, sighing.

Note the picture that 1897 hâgâh paints for us:

Day and night the lover of God is focusing his full attention on every detail of the Word of God (Torah), on every bit of truth about the Lord Himself and/or on His works. The one who meditates reads the Word of God thoughtfully in a low voice, syllable by syllable. The purpose is for the Word of God to profoundly impact the reader's entire being and whole life. God promises divinely-defined success to those who join Him in this pilgrimage through His Word, His character and His deeds.

Sound worthwhile to you?

3.3. Meditate – a third word...

Psa 119:15 I will meditate⁷⁸⁷⁸ in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

Psa 119:48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate⁷⁸⁷⁸ in thy statutes.

Psa 119:148 Mine eyes anticipate the night watches, that I might meditate⁷⁸⁷⁸ in thy word.

7878 siyach: rehearsing the Word of God aloud to oneself; to think upon the Word of God regardless of difficult circumstances; to go over a matter in one's mind. It leads to a response from the core of our being, and might include singing.

This time the audible meditation includes repetition. Not the mindless repetition of the mantra as we find in esoteric mysticism, but the heart deeply depending on the Holy Spirit to illumine the Word of God as one repeatedly weighs and considers the truth of the Bible.

SUMMARY:

If we combine all three biblical words that are translated as ‘meditation’ in the King James Version of the English Bible, the following understanding emerges:

- **Focusing our full attention on a specific portion of the Bible**
- **Repeatedly reading that section of the Bible aloud in a low voice (practically speaking, 5-10 times)**
- **Pondering the Scriptures word for word as we read it repeatedly**
- **Trusting the Holy Spirit to reveal what God wants to say to us**
- **Writing down what God says so that we can refer to it later on.**
- **This process is independent of location, situation or frame of mind; it is a matter of**

Holy Spirit worked self-discipline.

4. Meditation and the Big Picture...

As with all other aspects of our faith, meditation has to fit into the Big Picture of what is really important in life. Our beloved Messiah summarized the Big Picture in two absolutely authoritative statements:

Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

**And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:
this *is* the first commandment.**

**And the second *is* like, *namely* this,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.**

There is no other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:29-31; KJV.

Therefore biblical meditation should help us to love God with all we have and are and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Whenever you meditate on Scripture, always ask the Holy Spirit to give you answers to three questions:

- 1. What does God say about loving Him?**
- 2. What does God say about loving my neighbor?**
- 3. What does God say about me?**

Record and respond to each answer from the Holy Spirit. You will find that the answers will guide you clearly towards loving God, your neighbor and yourself more. As this happens, your heart-city will be fundamentally transformed step by step.

And that is the revolutionary point I am making!

4. Meditation – the path to avoid

Our pilgrimage in the world of meditation is not without danger. The most significant threat comes from an esoterically mystic approach to meditation which has some or most of these characteristics:

Focus: On the inner self, inner being, inner light, inner guide, inner spirit, the wise ones; the direction is inward – in contrast to how our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray: Our Father in Heaven...

Mind: To empty our mind of thoughts; to make our minds calm like an early morning lake surface on a windless day – in contrast to filling our minds with the Word of God

State: Seeking to come to a state of tranquility, of higher awareness and consciousness; to enter into a passive, waiting state; to go into some kind of trance or altered level of consciousness → seeking peace in the emptiness rather than in the personal relationship with Jesus Christ

Goal: unity with the universal energy, with god (impersonal), with the (life) force; enlightenment; inner harmony and peace

The five senses: They have to be by-passed / switched off and be replaced by experiences in the spiritual realm

Openness: Non-discriminatory openness to whatever comes from the invisible realm.

The assumption is that only forces of light will gather if one has good intentions

Visualization: Sometimes visualization techniques are used as part of the experience.

One first needs to be brought into a trance state. Then a story is told as springboard for the visualization exercise or one is encouraged to visualize a beautiful garden (or a future scenario) with wonderful fragrances and vivid color. A spiritual being appears and begins a conversation... Some claim that Jesus Christ will meet with us in such a visualized garden to bring inner healing – a prescription guaranteed to lead to deception.

Salvation: Self-deliverance, salvation by good works

Sin: Defined as lack of enlightenment; lack of knowledge (gnosis)

5. Meditate – getting our act together...

The whole process of meditation usually takes between 30 and 60 minutes. So you have to set the time aside in your agenda to make it possible.

Remember to write down what the Holy Spirit reveals to you from the Word about loving God, your neighbor and yourself in a devotional journal.

As you do this, you will gradually develop the skill of capturing the illumination given by the Holy Spirit in words that you can use to share the treasures entrusted to you with others.

For example, your notes could look something like this:

Date. Scripture for meditation: Psalm 1:1-3 (I find it helpful to actually write out the portion of Scripture for mediation)

Loving God: I am the One that holds the key to the Psalms, the best handbook ever on prayer. My Torah points the way of life and blessedness as nobody or nothing else can. Yes, Lord, I worship You as the key-holder, as the One Who has the way of Life – You are the Way, the Truth and the Life – Hallelujah!

Loving Neighbor: I want people to be encouraged to be diligent in seeking my company. Watch out for the bad influences some people can have on you – the scorners and doubters, for example. Forgive me, Father for not inspiring others to be diligent to seek You. Please show me how I can do this in my next chat with my friend John.

Me: I want you to be diligent in seeking Me. Learn from Me how to pray using the Psalms. Lord, forgive me for neglecting the Psalms. Teach me more as I meditate in the coming week.

6. Meditation – and a systematic Bible reading plan...

Where do we find the Scripture portions to meditate on? One fruitful source can be the Sunday sermons in your local church. Another source could be Scripture verses shared with you on various occasions by others.

In my life, the most important source of Scripture to meditate on comes from my systematic Bible reading plan. Soon after Jesus Christ convinced me that I needed to repent from my sin and follow Him, I was introduced to a systematic Bible reading plan that I have been using ever since – for more than 30 years now.

How does it work? First, take seven bookmarks that will fit into your Bible. On each bookmark, write the names of the books of a specific section. The sections are: Genesis to Deuteronomy; Joshua to Job; Psalms; Proverbs to Song of Songs; Isaiah to Malachi; Matthew to Acts; Romans to Revelation.

Then you read through the Bible one chapter at a time moving from one section to the next. So you read Genesis 1, then Joshua 1, then Psalm 1, then Proverbs 1, etc. When you have finished your reading for the day, put the ribbon marker in your Bible at the place of the next chapter you have to read or if your Bible does not have such a marker, use an extra bookmark to help you remember where to continue. You always continue where you left off. If you are only able to read Genesis 1 today, you continue with Joshua 1 tomorrow. If you backslide after that and you do not read the Bible for some days, then after you have repented, you continue where your marker is.

After you have prayerfully read your chapter(s) of the day, meditate on the verse(s) that jumped out at you while reading.

That is where the powerful spiritual food is!

7. Meditation – and Jesus Christ...

The two major differences between “Meeting our Master” and other approaches to a daily “Quiet Time” or “Devotional Time”:

- **The way you meditate on Scripture**
- **The questions you ask about loving God and about loving your neighbor as yourself.**

So you commence by encountering the Living Word in the Written Word. This is the key concept: “Meeting our Master” builds your love relationship with God as the first priority in your life.

It is vitally important for those of us who are activists, workaholics and no-nonsense-let-us-get-the-job-done persons. Many healthcare workers belong to this category. Are you also one of them?

In addition to “Meeting our Master”, we also need to study the Bible in depth. Use some of the many good books that have been written about Bible Study methods to help you make the most of your Bible Study.

I find it helpful to set aside an extra block of two hours or so for such a time of Bible Study at least once a week. Healthcare believers will do well to study the anatomy chapter of the Bible – 1 Corinthians 12. Other topical Bible studies that are relevant to healthcare include: shalom, health and healing, curses and blessings, the role of the blood, forgiveness, suffering, encouragement, biblical view of human beings, the Ten Commandments and their implications for healthcare ethics, the meaning of ‘ruling over the earth’ and thus also over healthcare.

God wants to us to be filled with both the Living Word and the Written Word. Are you going to give Him the time to do it and thus transform your life from the inside outwards?

8. Meditation – enriching prayer times...

Next time your Bible Study group or prayer group or home cell meets, invite them to have a Meditation Meeting at a time in the future that suits them. Keep the following in mind for that meeting:

- 8.1. Prayerfully select a short portion of Scripture to meditate on
- 8.2. Explain to the group what a biblical approach to meditation is
- 8.3. Set five to ten minutes apart for the group members to have a time of personal meditation on the portion of Scripture. You will be amazed how the Lord will bless them during this time
- 8.4. Then call everybody together for a time of prayer
- 8.5. Praying one at a time, begin by praying back to God what He has revealed to you in answer to the question: What does God say about loving Him in this portion of Scripture? This will almost always lead to worship, repentance, adoration and a deeper appreciation and knowing of who the Lord is. Allow each person in the group to pray back to God everything He has shown them – that is if they have the freedom to pray aloud in a group. Be patient with those who are not yet ready to do this.
- 8.6. Next, pray about what the Holy Spirit revealed about loving our neighbor. He will apply the truth of the Word to relevant situations in your lives.
- 8.7. Finally pray about loving yourselves. This means giving due attention to your life so that you can faithfully fulfill the purpose for which God created you.
- 8.8. You will notice that it is quite difficult to stick to only one point for prayer at a time. Do not hesitate to remind participants to concentrate on one subject at a time and pray for it until all aspects are covered before moving on to the next subject. As prayer leader you might ask questions like: “Any more prayers about this point? Anybody have an appropriate Scripture that you would like to read or a relevant thought or impression you want to share?” When they are finished with one point, say: “Shall we move on?”
- 8.9. Continue until all three key questions have been covered.
- 8.10. Your group will come back for more!

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