

IBCD Seminar  
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Meditation isn't Missing, it is Misdirected  
Colossians 3:2

Description: Though most of us would acknowledge the importance of meditation for those we counsel, what we often don't realize is that the problem isn't that meditation is missing, but that it is misdirected. This is coupled with the challenge of actually trying to teach someone how to meditate on biblical truth. This seminar will look at how we can practically help those we are counseling guard their hearts from misdirected meditation, and then meditate on Scripture in a way that allows it to fuel their faith, love and worship of God.

What do we do when the Word doesn't seem to be working for someone we counsel? Often we think or say:

- "I have already told them that truth, but it doesn't seem to work."
- "They already know it, but they just aren't applying it."
- "I feel like I am saying the same thing over and over."
- "I don't know what else I can say."

Oftentimes, when it seems the Word is not "working," in reality, we are not connecting the truth to everyday life, and we are not going to truth in everyday life. Meditation bridges that gap and helps makes that connection between truth and everyday life, and helps us go to that truth in everyday life.

Colossians 3:2 — *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

Christian Meditation: Thinking deeply about biblical truths.

Christian Meditation (longer definition): The practice of thinking deeply about a biblical truth to see with clarity (light) in a world made dark and distorted by sin, and to warm our affections for Christ (heat), by growing our faith, love, and worship for him.

## I. GUARDING OUR HEARTS: MEDITATION ISN'T MISSING, IT IS MISDIRECTED

Because meditation is simply to think deeply about something, we all meditate. So, the question isn't if we meditate or not. The question is, "What do we meditate on?"

Colossians 3:2 — Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on EARTH. (emphasis added)

Colossians 3:5 — Put to death therefore what is EARTHLY in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (emphasis added)

When we meditate on the things of "earth" we don't put to death what is "earthly" in us. Rather, we give life to what earthly in us.

Big picture questions:

- Light – How am I fueling an earthly worldview?
  - *Who are the unhelpful counselors in my life? What are the sources of information in my life? Am I spending more time reading the internet than I do the Bible? How are things like social media and my newsfeed affecting my worldview?*
  
- Heat – How am I fueling a greater love and devotion for my idols?
  - *What do I feel I need to be happy? What do I feel has to change for me to be safe? What am I thinking about so much that want has become need? What am I looking more to, than I look to God?*

## II. GOING AFTER CHRIST: MEDITATION ISN'T NICE, IT IS NECESSARY

Psalms 119:97-98; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1; Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:16

- Meditation is the fuel that provides LIGHT – it offers clarity in a world made dark and distorted by sin.
  
- Meditation is the fuel that provides HEAT – it warms our affections for Christ by growing our faith, love, and worship.

Philippians 4:6–7 — do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:8 — Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Meditation is often a conversation with God. God speaks to us through his Word, and we respond in prayer.

Sources of Biblical Truth for Meditation:

- The Bible
- Theologically rich worship songs
- Solid, biblically based books
- Sermons

When do we meditate?

- During our personal devotions
- During the rest of the day  
(in other words, all THE TIME)

A. Connecting truth to everyday life

Practically, meditation is often the idea of slowing down and thinking deeply through biblical truth, by turning it over and over in our minds, to consider the many implications it has about God (exaltation), ourselves (examination), and the world we live in (expectation).

EXALTATION – What does this say about God?

- *How does this show God to be great, loving, wise, sovereign, holy, etc.? What does this say about who God is, how he works, and the promises he makes? How does this demonstrate his faithfulness? How does this show his involvement in the biggest and smallest details of my life? How am I tempted to miss this truth about God in my daily circumstances?*

EXAMINATION – What does this say about me (and other believers)?

- *How does this speak to my suffering? How does this speak to my sin? How does this speak to my fear, anger, worry, etc.? How does this help me to better trust, love, and worship Christ? How is missing this truth, leading me to act incorrectly? What is God asking me to do?*

EXPECTATION – How can I expect (and trust) God will act in my world?

- *How can I humbly expect God will be faithful? What might God be doing? How is he actively pursuing my good? How is he loving me? How do I trust that God is being faithful (even if I am not sure why or how)? How would my life be different if this were not true?*

Illustration: 2 Corinthians 12:7 — So TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING conceited. (emphasis added)

## B. Going to truth in everyday life

Notecards 2.0

- FACT (truth/reality) – Verse or passage
- FOCUS – Key truth from the passage to focus on
- FUEL (spark) – Memorable, meaningful summary to meditate on when faced with sin or suffering (this is the spark and fuel for our meditation)

Example:

- FACT – Romans 8:38–39 — For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- FOCUS – Nothing passes into my life that hasn't first passed through the filter of God's love; everything that happens in my life IS God loving me.
- FUEL – Lord this (difficulty/suffering) is you loving me.

*Example: "God, this counseling situation is difficult, but it is YOU LOVING ME. There can be no other way about it. If it was more loving for me to have an easier counseling situation then I would because you are constantly loving me. Lord, I can't understand exactly what you are doing, but I know it is in love. I am sure that you are doing something great in me. I trust that in love you are freeing me from my idols and drawing me to yourself; in love you are rescuing me from my sin and showing that you are infinitely greater; in love you are compromising shallow happiness for greater holiness, to bring me deeper joy. Lord, I believe that because you love me you will make everything right, if not in this world, then on other side of eternity. Lord thank you for loving me not just more than I love myself, but better than I love myself. I confess I so easily want comfort and happiness, but you want so much more for me and in your sovereign love, you pursue for me what too often I don't pursue for myself – a deeper relationship with You. Lord thank you for your love, I do not deserve it..."*

Personal examples from my health problems:

- FUEL – 2 Corinthians 12:9 — But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
- FOCUS – Weakness forces me to depend on God, so weakness is good.
- FUEL – Weakness is the way (borrowed from JI Packer).
  
- FACT – Genesis 32:10 — I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.
- FOCUS – We are not deserving of even one tiny bit of God's steadfast love.
- FUEL – My life is filled with undeserved blessings because of God's undeserved love.

- FACT – Acts 2:23–24 — this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
- FOCUS – God can use the greatest sin and suffering to accomplish the greatest good.
- FUEL – My worst days are my best days (my hard days are my hopeful days).
  
- FACT – Matthew 6:24 — “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”
- FOCUS – We can only worship God or an idol, never both.
- FUEL – Getting healthy may be a gift, but it can never be a God.
  
- FACT – Matthew 6:11 — Give us this day our daily bread
- FOCUS – God will daily give me what I need (physical and spiritually).
- FUEL – This (trial or suffering) is my daily bread.

#### MORE EXAMPLES:

##### Overcoming nervousness/fear in teaching/counseling:

- FACT – Matthew 22:34-40
- FOCUS – My greatest call in life is to love God and love others.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to preach/minister TO love, not to BE loved.

##### Pursuit and purpose:

- FACT – Matthew 6:33
- FOCUS – We need to seek the things of God.
- FUEL – Lord, your kingdom, not mine.

##### God’s beautiful plan:

- FACT – Acts 8:1-5
- FOCUS – God will use challenges and even suffering to accomplish his greater plan.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to believe you are using this inconvenience to accomplish something inconceivable.

Daily provision:

- FACT – Exodus 16:4
- FOCUS – God provided enough manna for one day.
- FUEL – Lord, I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I believe you will give me every bit of grace I need today. Help me get through today.

A bigger story:

- FACT – Habakkuk 1:5
- FOCUS – God's plan offers a bigger story than the story our immediate circumstances tell.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to believe there is more to the story than the suffering I see.

Weakness:

- FACT – 2 Corinthians 4:7-12
- FOCUS – Our weakness is at the heart of our witness.
- FUEL – Lord, thank you that I don't have to be great. In my weakness let people see you are great.

Giving up control:

- FACT – Psalm 131
- FOCUS – Peace comes when we give up the illusion of control.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to give up the illusion of control, so that I can trust YOU, the One in control.

Loving difficult people

- FACT – John 13
- FOCUS – Love is not an exchange, but about serving sacrificially.
- FUEL – Lord, thank you that his relationship is unfair, because it means I am loving more than I am being loved.

The foolishness of idolatry:

- FACT – Psalm 115:4-8
- FOCUS – Our idols have no power.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to stop seeking in dead idols what I am meant to find in the living God.

### Sow and Reap

- FACT – Galatians 6:7
- FOCUS – We will reap what we sow.
- FUEL – Lord, don't let me mock you by believing my sin (anxiety/anger/pride/etc.) does not matter. I will reap what I sow.

### Humility over pride

- FACT – James 4:6
- FOCUS – God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to see that pride invites your opposition; humility invites grace.

### What we see versus what we know to be true

- FACT – Psalm 3:1-3
- FOCUS – We must look to what we know to be true over what we see around us.
- FUEL – Lord, help me to see my Savior more than I see my suffering.

### The blessing of repentance

- FACT – James 4:6-10
- FOCUS – God exalts us in our repentance.
- FUEL – Lord, the way up is down, so please forgive me.

### Strength in weakness

- FACT – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- FOCUS – Humility leads to strength.
- FUEL – Lord, thank you that when I am weak, then I am strong.