

Spiritual Discipline: Meditation

1. What is the difference between biblical meditation and some of the eastern meditation traditions or “New Age” meditation traditions?
2. Read Psalm 119: 15-16, 23-24, 27, 48, 97. What do these passages teach us about biblical meditation and its importance?
3. Richard Foster defines Christian mediation as “the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word.” What are some practical ways you can “hear” and “obey” God’s voice and word?
4. Reflect and comment on Richard Foster’s explanation of the spiritual discipline of meditation provided below:

Meditation is a more passive Discipline. It is characterized more by reflecting than by studying, more by listening than by thinking, more by releasing than by grabbing. In the Discipline of meditation we are not so much acting as we are opening ourselves to be acted upon. We invite the Holy Spirit to come and work within us – teaching, cleansing, comforting, rebuking.

(Richard Foster, *Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline*, 19)

5. Foster provides a description of the practice of biblical meditation based on John 6 and the story of the feeding of the 5,000. After reading the example, comment on the various aspects of meditation that you have not previously thought about or practiced.

Begin by imagining yourself as the child who gave his lunch. Or perhaps, imagine that you are one of the child’s parents. At any rate, try to place yourself in the actual scene. Following the counsel of Ignatius of Loyola, attempt to use all of your senses as you slowly read the passage. Try to see the story – the grass, the hills, the faces of the people. Try to hear the story – the sound of the water, the noise of the children, the voice of the Master. Try to feel the story – the texture of your clothing, the hardness of the ground, the coarseness of your hands. Finally, try to feel with your emotions – hesitancy at bringing your lunch, astonishment at the miracle of multiplied food, joy at the gracious provision of God.

Then, in your imagination, watch the crowd leave and Jesus go up into the hills. You are left alone. You sit on a rock overlooking the water and re-experience the events of the day. You become quiet and after a little while, Jesus returns and sits on a nearby rock. For a time, you are both silent, looking out over the water perhaps and enjoying one another’s presence. After a bit, the Lord turns to you and asks this question, “What may I do for you?” Then you tell Him what is in your heart – your needs, your fears, your hopes. If weeping or other emotions come, do not hinder them.

When you have finished, you become quiet for a little while. Then you turn to the Lord and ask, “What may I do for you?” And you listen with the heart quietly, prayerfully. No instruction needs to come, for you are just glad to be in Christ’s presence. If some words do come, you take them with the utmost seriousness. More often than not, they will be some utterly practical instruction about seemingly trivial matters, for God wants us to live our spirituality in the ordinary events of our days. And I have often found them to be wonderful words of life. What I have shared here is, of course, only an example – God will, I am sure, give you many other ways to enter into the life of Scripture.

(Richard Foster, *Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline*, 20)

6. Try to follow the above example with the passage containing this week’s memory verse, Philippians 4. Have the group close their eyes and meditate on the passage while a reader walks them through the text. The leader may need to pause periodically with prompts – what do you see, what do you hear, what do you feel, what do you sense God wants to do for you, what does he want you to do for him, etc.?