

TRANSFORMATIONAL MEDITATION

Psalm 119:97-99, 105-106

Newbegun United Methodist Church

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Walter Zimmerman has what can be described as a high-pressure job. He predicts the direction of movement on the world energies market for institutions such as airlines and oil companies. He is well paid, sometimes earning as much as \$500,000 a month. But his clients expect him to be right all the time. Just a few bad calls could destroy him professionally and financially. It's not a job for the faint of heart, and Zimmerman has witnessed the burnout of many competitors and colleagues over the years. But Zimmerman has a secret weapon that enables him to remain calm and keeps his mind sharp and focused.

Actually, the weapon isn't really a secret. It's meditation. He says that forty minutes of meditation in the morning and at night helps give him the clarity he needs to make a quick, insightful, and accurate analysis of the market. This is not surprising, because study after study shows that meditation is physically good for you. One recent study found evidence that the daily practice of meditation thickened the part of your brain that is responsible for decision making, attention, and memory. Altogether, there have been over one thousand published researched studies that link meditation to better health.

Unfortunately, when we talk about meditation, some people get uncomfortable. I suppose his is because of the popularity of Transcendental Meditation back years ago

and its connection between eastern religions or the New Age movement. What we must essentially keep in mind is that eastern meditation asks you to empty your mind while Biblical meditation asks you to fill your mind. Because Biblical meditation is simply directing your concentration toward specific areas. Biblical meditation is directing the focus on you mind toward any aspect of God: God's Word; God's promises, God's presence, God's power, God's law, God's love, and so on. Now here is the truth: most of us already spend a lot of time in meditation. The problem is that we don't meditate on the best things. We meditate on financial problems or we meditate on worries at home or work or we meditate on the things people do to get on our nerves. We meditate on past mistakes. We meditate on impending failures. We meditate on the hopelessness of today's situation. It's not a question of our needing to pick up the practice of meditation. We've got the habit. It's a question of whether we'll do the hard work of choosing to meditate on the right things. What does the Bible tell us?

The Bible definitely tells us to meditate upon the Word of God. You could say that we are to meditate on God's law or precepts or statutes. In other words, we meditate on the spiritual truths that are communicated to us in the Bible. In the Psalms we read, "O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97) In Psalm 1 it reads, "But my delight is in the law of the Lord; and on his law I do meditate day and night." And Joshua said, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but you will meditate upon it day and night." (Joshua 1:8)

Meditation upon the Word of God is more than just reading the Bible. Have you ever begun reading an article in the paper and suddenly you don't remember what you just read a minute ago. No, you are not getting dementia, your mind started wandering.

While you were reading your mind flipped on you and you were thinking of a hundred other things. We do that when we read the Bible too. When we read the Bible we also have to try real hard to focus on what is being read so that it is retained. Retained in the brain – that’s not copyrighted, so you can write that down and repeat it. Years ago my son came down with all the symptoms of a bad cold. I asked him if I could go to the store and get him some Nyquil. “No,” he said, “we already have some here.” “Did it help?” I asked. He said, “I don’t know I haven’t taken any yet.” Sensing a good teaching opportunity I said, “Son, the way medicine works is you have to ingest it in order to benefit from it.” The same can be said about the Word of God. It has the power to help you but only when it is allowed to get into you. Psalm 119 reads, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on you statutes.” Meditate; focus; take in; the Word of God.

We also meditate on the works of God. Two very precious friends of mine were getting married. During a meal I jokingly referred to my role in bringing them together. “Really? I don’t remember that?” he said. I said, “Don’t you remember? The two of you met during my Loss Support Group. So in a way, I brought you together.” Now I really didn’t deserve any credit for bringing them together, and I really don’t deserve any thanks, but there is One who does deserve all our thanks and that is God. God deserves the credit for what God has done for us. In Psalm 143:5 it reads, “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all your works; I muse on the work of your hands.” This is the Biblical way of meditating. We don’t empty our minds, we use our minds to recall all the times God worked in our lives.

In Biblical meditation we don't focus on when things went wrong, but when things happened that we can't explain except by the hand of God. And we all have them. We have all experienced some of God's great works. Remember the days of old; remember all that God has done for us. Meditate; focus, on God's works.

Another Biblical way of meditating is to focus on God's presence. The Bible tells us that we are to think about God. We are to meditate on God. Not just God's mighty deeds or commandments, but meditate upon God. Psalm 104 says, "My meditation of God shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." So, we meditate on God's Word and we think about what God wants us to do. We meditate on the works of God and remember what God has done for us. Most importantly we meditate on God – who God is; what is God's nature; God's character; God's essence; God's presence? When meditating we are not asking for anything; we are just thinking about who God is and that we belong to God, ever present ever graceful. David wrote, "I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches. (Psalm 63:3) That is a lot to meditate upon – mercy; grace; faithfulness; holiness; goodness; compassion; righteousness; Savior; healer; provider; Father; comforter; and companion.

It is important to keep this in mind – meditation is not about emptying your mind; it is filling your mind with Godly things – God's Word; God's works; and God's presence. Meditation is a wonderful thing to do. Isaiah said, "God will keep in perfect peace all those whose minds stay on God. (Isaiah 26:3) That is the Biblical way to experience transformational meditation. Amen.