

"Meditation: Hearing from GOD"

Tools To Build Your Spiritual Life

January 3, 2021

Good morning and welcome to Brewster Baptist Church. My name is Pastor David Pranga. I am one of the pastor here at BBC. We are glad that you have chosen to watch us online today. Today, we starting a Brand NEW SERIES: "Tools to Build Your Spiritual Life".

Every year, many of us make New Year's Resolutions. Things we want to accomplish. Behaviors we want to change. Things we want to improve upon in our life.

How many of you made 2021 New Year's Resolutions? There is still time for you.

A few days ago, I was talking with one of my daughters who's working on her New Year's resolution. She asked me if I had any goals for 2021? I said, yes. She then asked me what were a few of mine?

One to lose weight, exercise more, spend more time with family, and deepen my relationship with Jesus. I could see my daughter was puzzled by that last answer... I want to do a better job at reading my Bible, listening to God, praying for people and being more grateful.

Then my daughter said, I think I want that too.

Let me ask you a simple question: How many of you are satisfied with your spiritual life with Jesus? How many of you wished that you had a deeper relationship with God? How many of you are willing to put time in to grow and cultivate a meaningful relationship with Him?

I think each of us wants to improve our relationship with God.

This morning, I thought that I would bring my toolbox from home. If you really know me, working with tools is not my forte. I have a dad and a daughter that can do anything with tools. For some reason, those skills just skipped me.

Tools allow us to do two important things. First, tools can help us build and create things. Tools allow us to build a desk, bookshelves, or even make a sandbox.

Second, tools are very important when you want to fix a problem. When something breaks it is nice to have the proper tools to fix the problem. Whether it is to hammer something back in, using a screwdriver and tightening a screw or just fixing something that broke. Tools are very important.

Awhile back, I had a problem underneath my sink where I needed my tools. I had water dripping from a pipe. There was a puddle of water underneath my sink and in the cabinet.

Now what tool would I grab first to try to fix the problem? As I dug into my toolbox, I pulled out this.... A "flashlight" to help me with the problem. Some of you may be wondering, why a flashlight?

I pulled out a flashlight because underneath the sink... it is very dark. I could not see the problem. I needed a powerful light. A flashlight like this (show flashlight) that could produce a lot of light in a very dark space.

This flashlight helped to identify the problem. The flashlight helped me to focus on where the drip was coming from, as the water was dripping from one pipe to another, and then onto the base of the cabinet. The “light” helped me see the problem better.

Each week, we are going to be talking about a tool to help us grow in our relationship with God. Today’s tool is a flashlight. A flashlight can help us to see things better. In our relationship with God, we may need a flashlight to bring light on things in our life, to help us focus more on God and be obedient.

Today, marks the first week of our church-wide book study. As a church, we are going through Richard Foster’s book: Celebration of Discipline. The path to spiritual growth. This series is going to be for the next 12 weeks. I want to encourage you to buy the book. We have copies of the books at church. I want to encourage you to join a small group.

Now the book, Celebration of Discipline is tool and a guide to help us grow in our relationship with God. The book gives us tools, upon which to build our spiritual life. If we practice and pick up these tools. I promise you that your relationship with God will grow and deepen to new levels.

The very first tool we going to be talking about is the tool of Meditation.

What comes to your mind when you first hear the word Meditation?

For some, you may be thinking meditation = that is when you are silent before God. Thinking and contemplating about him. Some of you may be wondering, can Christians practice meditation?

I want to share with you that Meditation is very Biblical. It applies to us just as much today as it applied to people in the bible many, many years ago.

I want to share with you some verses of the Bible that highlights meditation.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NIV) Blessed in the one...who delights in the law of the Lord,
And who **meditates** on his law day and night.

Psalms 63:6 (NRSV) When I think of you on my bed,
And **meditate** on you in the watches of the night;

Psalms 119:148 (NIV) My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,
that I may **meditate** on your promises.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus make “meditating” a habit. Jesus would often withdraw away from everyone (from the crowd of people and even his disciples) and spend time alone with God his Father. Jesus is spending time in prayer, solitude, and in communion with God.

If we see Jesus practicing meditation, how much more vital is it for us to practice meditation.

What is Christian Meditation? In the simplest terms...

It is the ability to listen, hear the voice of God, and obey his word. (Listening, Hearing, and Obeying)

Meditation is simply the process of quieting our mind and heart down to listen and hear from God. It is time, where we focus on God. I believe it is important to invite God to be a part of our life. It is time to listen and hear God speak. Then to be obedient to him.

There is a simple truth that we all need to understand, the God of the universe desires a relationship and communion with his people. God made us for relationships. We were designed and built for relationship with God.

We know this since the beginning of time. Adam and Eve – God desired a relationship with his first two people he created. We see God speak to Noah, Abraham, Moses and many people throughout the Bible. God still speaks to us today. We just have to take time and listen.

Story: There is a story about an old man who had become concerned about his wife's hearing. He was convinced that she was not too many days removed from being stone deaf. But he could not get her to admit she had a problem and see a doctor.

One day, he had had enough and decided to prove the point. He entered their living room, where his wife was seated, facing the fireplace. From behind her, he said in a clear voice, "Honey, I love You. Did you hear that?"

No Response.

He walked halfway across the room and repeated, "Honey, I said I love you. Do you hear me?"

Nothing.

Finally, he walked over, stood in front of her, and shouted, "Honey, I love you! Can you hear me now?"

She looked up from her knitting and replied, "Yes, dear, and for the third time, I love you too."

Summary: Sometimes when I have been talking to God and I feel like he has gone stone deaf. It is helpful to remember that it might be me, that is not listening and hearing. I do believe God does hear our prayers, concerns, and cries, every single time.

I like what the Bible says in Rev 3:20...

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Revelation 3:20.

I personally love that that God is available to us at any time of day. He just wants us to go to Him. To seek after him. God promises to open the door and be with us. No matter what we are going through.

Going back to Meditation.... I love a quote from a great theologian named **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**...

When asked why he practice meditation he replied..... "Because I am a Christian".

As a Christian, we all need to spend time with God in Meditation: listening, hearing and obeying him.

How do we get started with Christian Meditation?

Let us begin by saying, there is not one way or form that is right for everyone. What may work for one person, may not work for another person. There are no rules you must follow. The biggest thing is that you need to create a space and environment where you can allow Jesus into your life.

Getting Started...

- Make time and be consistent (morning, lunch, evening)
- Find a quiet place and start there
- No distraction / free of your cellphone and tv
- Posture: Up to you... kneel, sit, stand, or even walk. Whatever is most comfortable for you.

What are some forms of Christian Meditation that you can experiment with?

These are different forms of Christian Meditation. In the chapter, Foster shares with you several ways you can practice Christian Meditation. I will share with you three different forms with you today.

Forms of Meditation:

1. Meditation on Scripture –

Central to any form of Christian Meditation is scripture. As Christians we believe that the Bible is a primary way that God speaks to us today. Meditating on scripture, is one way we hear from God. Scripture should be central in listening, reflecting, and hearing God's voice.

When you meditate on scripture, you are allowing yourself to hang on to the words of God. Take small amounts of scripture at a time. Allowing the words to percolate in your mind and in your heart. You may want to chew on it for a while. This is not something you rush to do.

Two ways meditate on scripture... Taking a story or parable....Allow yourself to be part of the story...

ILL. Take the example story of Jesus feeding 5000 people. Many of us are familiar with the story.

Imagine yourself in the story. Imagine what it must have felt to be taught by Jesus? Imagine yourself as the boy giving his lunch to Jesus. Image being the parent of the child who is hungry. Image being a disciple and Jesus saying, we are going to feed the crowd? Image yourself in the crowd seeing the food multiply and wondering if there would be enough food for you and your family.

During meditation it is good to use your five senses...

- See the story - the grass, the hills, the faces of the people, the large crowd of people
- Smell – What was the smell of the land, the people, or the food?
- Hear the story. Hear what is going on. Children and people talking, Jesus performing a miracle. What emotions are people feeling. Feeling hungry, not enough food.
- Touch & Taste – What did the food feel? Imagine what it tasted like?
- Image, what it must have felt like for Jesus to teach, perform a miracle, then want to be alone?

This is just one way to meditate upon a story of scripture.

You can also meditate on a simple verse of scripture like Psalms 119:105. "Verse of the Day"

Psalms 119:105 "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path"

This is another familiar verse... Say the verse slowly a three different times. (REPEAT)

Think of each word. Is there one or two words standing out to you in this verse?

When you meditate, and think and listen about the verse, be still and silent. Let God speak to you.

See what God will bring to your mind? Then focus on.....Listening, hearing, and obeying. Close in prayer.

When you meditate on God's word. It reminds me of flashlight.

The light from this verse, is God's word. It's God word that provides illumination to walk without stumbling. God uses a lamp for our feet. A lamp can only light up a few steps at time. That way we stay close to God. The light of God, help me walk along a path and the road of life.

It is important to see the path and any danger which is on the pathway. By meditation, we connect with God. We see things through God's eyes and not our own. That is reason, why meditation is very important. We all need to stay close to Him. It by meditating on scripture that we listen, hear and be obedient to God.

These are just two different ways to mediate upon scripture.

2. Re-Collection: "Palms Down, Palms Up"

A second kind of mediation is called Re-collection. It is really a simple exercise that I have found helpful in my own life. There are different forms and variations to this exercise. It is a time to become still before God. A time to be silent. Allowing our mind to be centered on God.

This exercise is simply called "Palms Down, Palms Up". Begin by placing your palms down as a symbol of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. These concern may be children, marriage, your finances, job, illness, your anger, or frustration.

Whatever is causing you stress in your life. Whatever you are struggling with. Inwardly you may pray, "Lord, I give to you my (fill in the blank). I release my fear of school this morning. I surrender to you my anxiety over not having enough money to pay a bill this month. I give to God the stress of my job."

Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, with your "palms down". Release it. Give it over to God. You are inviting God to be part of your life. Let him hear your concerns.

After several moments of surrender, turn your Palms Up as symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. Perhaps you would like to receive "love", "peace", or "joy" about the stress you shared earlier with God. Whatever you need that you are feeling, just you say, with your "Palms Up". Lord, I need your love right now. Lord, I need your peace in my life.

Having centered down and focusing on God. Spend the remaining moments in complete silence. Do not ask for anything. Let God speak to you. Let God fill your mind. Allow the Lord to commune with you.

I can only speak for myself. Oftentimes, I will just feel better when I call out my anxiety, my fear, or my stress that I am feeling. Sometimes, I just have to let go of the stress. I have to give it over to Him. I am asking God for help. When I give it to God, I often find a peace come over me. For me, this form of meditation is very helpful.

3. Meditation on Creation

A third kind of contemplative prayer is mediation of “creation”. The Lord of the universe made all of creation. We are very lucky living on Cape Cod with all his natural beauty. Being on Cape Cod, we have Nickerson State Park, many freshwater ponds, beautiful nature and the views ocean and waves.

Take a walk in God’s creation. Quiet your mind from the distractions of the day. Open yourself up to God. Take in all of God’s creation: birds, flowers, trees, and waves from the ocean. Take a flower and allow its beauty and symmetry to sink deep into your mind and heart. Listen to the chirping of the birds as they speak to each other. Take in the waves of the ocean as they come to shore. Take in the many breathtaking views being on Cape Cod. Thank him and praise him for all that he has made.

These are just some ways where we can focus upon God. To think, reflect and listen to God’s creation. Sometimes God reaches us profoundly in these simple ways of nature. We just need to take time, look around, reflect, and see that God is at work in this world.

Looking at God’s creation is another form of Meditation.

In closing:

Let me say that the benefits of practicing Christian mediation are well worth it. This week, I invite you to try one of three forms we talked about today or another form from the Richard’s Foster book.

I want you to know, that meditation really helps me to re-focus my life on God and not on myself. It helps me to re-center my life on what is most important. I feel like my connection with Jesus is greater when I take time to be with him.

Let leave with you some challenges this week...

1. Tune in next week to learn more about the tool of “prayer”.
2. Buy the Richard Foster Book and join a small group to talk and share
3. Pastor Doug does a daily devotion that can be found on Facebook, YouTube, and on the website. They are 3 minutes in length and just another way to help you grow closer to God.

Questions:

1. What are some of your first reactions to the idea of meditation? What is your background experience in this area?
2. What is the basic difference between Eastern meditation and Christian meditation?
3. What things make your life crowded? Do you think you have a desire to hear the Lord's voice in the midst of all the clutter?
4. Experience the following words of Frederick W. Faber for fifteen minutes. Record what you learn from the experience.

Only to sit and think of God,
Oh what a joy it is!
To think the thought,
to breathe the Name Earth has no higher bliss.

5. What threatens you most about meditation?
6. Have you ever considered dreams as a means of hearing from God? Have you had any experience in this area?
7. List the five forms for meditation that given in the book. Ponder the fifth form and what it might mean today, given the contemporary political scene.
8. What is the value of thinking through the specifics of time, place, and position during the meditation experience?
9. What are the dangers in concentrating on time, place, and position in the meditation experience?
10. Do "palms down, palms up" today. Note anything you learn about yourself.