



The Essentials of
Christian Meditation

The Transcript
of two
Seminars by
Lionel D C Hartley, PhD

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Seminar 1: Meditation Matters
The What, Who & Why of Meditation.

Promo:

Meditation is not what you think. Eastern meditation empties the mind and centres the meditator on self. Christian meditation fills the mind and centres the meditator on Christ. In the 15th Century, the Puritan writer Edmund Calamy wrote, “A true meditation is when a man doth so meditate of Christ as to get his heart inflamed with the love of Christ; so meditate of the Truths of God, as to be transformed into them; and so meditate of sin as to get his heart to hate sin.” He went on to say that in order to do good, meditation must enter three doors: the door of understanding, the door of the heart and affections, and the door of practical living.

“Thou must so meditate of God as to walk as God walks; and so to meditate of Christ as to prize him, and live in obedience to him”

(Edmund Calamy, *The Art of Divine Meditation*, London, Tho. Parkhurst, 1634, pp26, 28). There

are many practical and positive outcomes from meditation, such as connection with our Creator, peace, rest, inner joy, reassurance, hope, solutions to life's problems, healing and health. But did you know that Christian meditation also has its dangers? What does the Bible say? Christian meditation is simply when we focus on attitude rather than outcome; on the whom of prayer and bible study not the what. In the first of a series of two seminars on *The essential of Christian Meditation*, Dr Lionel Hartley looks at the original languages of the Bible and reveals some surprising truths. In the second seminar we learn some very practical ways to incorporate Christian meditation into our spiritual growth experience. Through some hands-on activities we look at prayer and meditation and why some prayers are answered and why some are not.

Program:

1. Meditation is Not What You Think! (What is Christian Meditation?)
2. Differences between Christian Meditation and Other Forms of Meditation (Centering Prayer & Contemplation, Kabbalah & Qabalah, Mindfulness Meditation, Ridhwan School Diamond Approach, Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF), Transcendental Meditation, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism & Ch'an)
3. Biblical References to Meditation
4. Meditation Dangers
5. The Power of Prayer
6. Practical Outcomes from Meditation – connection with our Creator, peace, rest, inner joy, reassurance, hope, solutions to life's problems, healing & health.
7. Question & Answer Session

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(Topic and main title suggested
by Joanna de Bruyn.)

Slide 1 – Title Slide

Slide 2 – Intro video clip

Slide 3 – Who is your seminar author
Since the 1960's, the "Christian West" has shown a growing interest in eastern religions and some of their practices. The New Age influence has stimulated the multiplication of workshops, clubs and clinics associated with Yoga, Zen, Buddhist and Taoist related practices, Transcendental Meditation (or TM) and the like. In particular, the practice of meditation has become popular, even trendy. Today meditation is definitely "in." Through diverse media, a variety of meditation techniques are encouraged promising results such as inner peace, fulfillment and enlightenment, better mental and

physical health, increased intelligence and creativity. Meditation promoters recommend meditation stools, cushions, background music, postures and sacred places. They invite you to "enter into the realm of meditation," to "seek your personal revelation," to "tap into the power of your mind." In the Bible we also find references to meditation. Today's seminar is the first of two investigation the essentials of Christian Meditation. Today will be mostly theory with an activity or two thrown in the mix. Part two will be intensely practical with a number of hands-on activities and useful resources.

Slide 4 – What is meditation
But before we look at meditation from the Christian perspective, we need to ask a few questions: "Is Christian

meditation similar to that practiced in eastern religions?” “Can we combine them?” “What is Christian meditation?”

Before entering the promised land, God instructed Joshua: “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh 1:8). It is important to notice that the biblical definition of meditation encourages an active mind, focused thinking. Here Joshua is commanded by God not only to read the law, but take the necessary time to meditate on it, to think about it, to reflect on it. This meditation is a calm and disciplined “chewing the cud” of God’s words. The insights and

convictions gained through this meditation will lead naturally to God pleasing attitudes and activities that He can bless.

The “chewing the cud” concept of meditation is quite biblical...

Overlay Slide 4 – Hebrew Hagah

The Hebrew word for meditate is ‘Hagah’. Hagah is spelled äâlä (Hei, Gimmel, Hei – Hebrew is read from right to left). It is a sigh (the Talmud in Menachot 29b teaches that this letter Hei is God’s sacred breath), it means to contemplate, ponder and study. The Hebrew letter ä (Hei), the fifth letter in Hebrew alphabet, is the pictogram for wonder (to marvel, to be in awe).

Gimmel, the 3rd letter in Hebrew Alphabet (Alef , Bet, Gimmel) has a picture word of a camel, an animal

that chews the cud like a cow. In very ancient Hebrew the pictogram for Gimmel looked like a foot, symbolising moving forward or carrying – reminding us that meditation is actually active and not passive.

Slide 5 – What is Eastern or New Age meditation?

In order to relax or achieve inner peace, meditation techniques based on Eastern religions suggest ways to empty your mind. By choosing to disconnect from reality, either by concentrating on your breathing, by repeating again and again a word or set of sounds (called a “mantra”), or focusing all your attention on one object (like a light or a tree), the mind enters into peaceful standby. It is a mystic or psychic experience.

Let's look at some examples of this mind-emptying self-centred process:

Overlay Slide 5 – Centering Prayer & Contemplation

Centering prayer originated in St. Joseph's Abbey, a Trappist monastery in Spencer, Massachusetts. During the twenty years (1961-1981) when Thomas Keating was abbot, St. Joseph's held dialogues with Buddhist and Hindu representatives, and a Zen master gave a week-long retreat to the monks. A former Trappist monk who had become a Transcendental Meditation teacher also gave a session to the monks. Many people assume centering prayer is compatible with Christian tradition, but in fact the techniques of centering prayer are neither Christian nor prayer. They are at the level of human faculties and as

such are an operation of man, not of God. The deception and dangers can be grave. Centering prayer differs from Christian prayer in that the intent of the technique is to bring the practitioner to the centre of his own being. There he is, supposedly, to experience the presence of the God who indwells him. Christian prayer, on the contrary, centres upon God in a relational way, as someone apart from oneself. True prayer goes to God *from* the centre of one's being, not *in* the centre of one's being.

Slide 6 – Kabbalah or Qabalah
Kabbalah or Qabalah is a Jewish technique taught by Yehuda Ashlag; David Coope and Michael Laitman. Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem in his book *Kabbalah*, p3 writes, “Kabbalah’ is the traditional and

most commonly used term for the esoteric teachings of Judaism and for Jewish mysticism.”

Although it is surprising that in order to study Hebrew Mysticism, one has to live in a Torah-observant community, be a Jewish male who is married and over the age of thirty, and study under the direction of an enlightened Jewish master. Is it any wonder that strange concepts such as this quote from Allan Cronshaw's book *The Divine Marriage*, reveals that Kabbalah is to (quote), “raise up the lower centers by engaging them within a Divinely Ordained Marriage – thereby causing the upper to be One with the lower, giving birth to the Son of God within the disciple in search of Truth.” In other words by the practice of Kabbalah we can create Messiah God within ourselves. Avi Ben

Mordechai in his commentary *Messiah* Vol. 3, p42 writes, “True Kabbalah is a receiving of Divine light, but this is not physical light as we know it. Rather, it is a powerful but invisible light that has the Divine lifeforce behind it. And when we receive this light into our heart, the darkness is not able to withstand it”.

Slide 7 – Mindfulness Meditation

What is mindfulness meditation?

Mindfulness meditation (MM) is rooted in the East (China, India, Tibet) It is moment-by-moment focused awareness of the breath, body, mind, and environment. Mindfulness Meditation is not limited to formal periods of sitting meditation because it also includes moment-by-moment awareness of what is going on inside and outside of yourself throughout the

day. The focus, which is based in Hatha Yoga, is on our breathing and proponents insist that (and I quote): “When your mind wanders into thoughts, memories, daydreams, images, ideas, worries, tasks, stories, body sensations, passions, or sounds, gently return to the breath. Let everything go. Returning over and over again to the breath is the process itself.” The focus is on pauses between breaths, changes between breathing in and breathing out, and changes in how deep you breathe and the speed of the breaths. The purpose is to clear and empty the mind.

Slide 8 – Ridhwan School Diamond Approach

The Ridhwan School Diamond Approach was founded in the 1970s, is called the “Work”, draws from

psychology and integrates a spiritual approach to self liberation

This approach originated in Sufi Islam's mystical Psychology and promoted by A H Almaas (known to his devotees as Hameed Ali) This approach uses a technique known as *mystical inquiry* and involves breathing exercises and retreats.

Slide 9 – Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF)

Founded in 1920 and popularised as yoga-meditation in the USA, Self-Realization Fellowship teaches a direct path to self-realization through ancient Yoga techniques. Self-Realization Fellowship (or SRF) is based on Hindu Kriya Yoga and is taught by gurus such as Paramahansa Yogananda.

It involves a series of what are called *Energization Exercises* and is taught by mailed lessons, retreats. Note also that SRF demands a guru relationship with a mentor.

Slide 10 – Transcendental Meditation
Transcendental Meditation (or TM) is, in reality, Hinduism adapted by the Hindu guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi for use in a Western cultural setting. Mahesh Yogi, employing the terminology of the ancient Vedic tradition, speaks of the practice of TM as to plunge into deep, deep rest for fifteen or twenty minutes twice a day to experience (quote) “the Absolute”. According to Mahesh Yogi, when the practitioner goes to his deepest self, he finds in himself an image and participation of God, and he finds God himself.

The Christian's Absolute is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We invite the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, but we don't look inside to find God – God is revealed in our outward acts not in our inner feelings. God is revealed in our behaviour not our biology.

Consider also that the introductory ceremony to Transcendental Meditation, the Puja, involves worship of a dead Hindu guru and that the mantras given to those being initiated are in fact the names of Hindu gods.

Slide 11 – Tibetan Buddhism Meditation

Tibetan Buddhism Meditation follows (and I quote), “The model of non-violence loving compassion of sentient beings with ongoing dialogue with neuroscience researchers.” It stems

from various Tibetan lineages and was promoted by the 14th Dalai Lama as well as Panchen Lama, Chogyam Trungpa and 17th Karmapa Mantra. Tibetan Buddhism Meditation uses a combination of Visualization, Chanting, Rlung-sgom walking and Mudras. In Rlung-sgom walking, the focus is on very slow walking body movements, chanting what each part does, e.g. ‘legs up, legs down, legs up, legs down’.

Slide 12 – Zen Buddhism and Ch'an
Zen Buddhism and Ch'an is a combination of both the Chinese and Japanese tradition that arrived in USA after WWII and has since gone global, including here in this country. Most Zen meditation literature is in Japanese, so frustratingly, a number of key manuscripts that I researched in

preparing today's seminar required translation from Japanese.

The main teachers are Bodhidharma; Eisai; Dogan; Huang Po; Charlotte Joko Beck; Claude A. Thomas.

Zen Buddhism and Ch'an use a technique called Zazen that involve the martial arts, specifically Kungfu and is practiced through Zen arts such as ceramics, archery and calligraphy.

(Aside: Kungfu is a combination of karate and judo)

Slide 13 – What is Christian Meditation?

Eastern or New Age meditation has as its main aim, a process of emptying the mind.

It must be acknowledged that the emptying of the mind can lead to a spiritual experience. For example, many testify how hypnosis and trance

have opened their life to the influence and torment of evil spirits.

Notice the stark contrast between Christian meditation and Eastern or New Age meditation.

Slide 14 – What is Christian Meditation?

Christian meditation leads to freedom and blessing through the filling of the mind while the other offers a false or transient peace by seeking to empty the mind.

It is a false peace because it is achieved through denial. It is a peace apart from God. Christian meditation encourages an active rather than a passive mind; constructive thinking rather than mindless drifting. When we live difficult times, the practice of Christian meditation eventually leads us to face the source of anxiety, guilt,

sin or conflict. The Lord uses this meditation to correct our defective thinking or lead us to recognition, confession and restoration. Those who try to empty their mind are really trying to run away from their problems. The feeling of peace and wellbeing achieved through a static or vacant mind is at best artificial and short-lived. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (Jn 14:27).

Slide 15 – The content of Christian meditation

Our minds can be actively engaged in good as well as bad things (Ps 38:12). Therefore the Psalmist prays "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in

your sight, O LORD" (Ps 19:14). Some of the Psalms suggest good themes for our meditation.

Overlay Slide 15 x 2

(a) The Word of God : "Oh how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day... I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation" (Ps 119:97-99). Meditation of God's Word leads to improved understanding.

Overlay Slide 15 x 2

(b) The works of God : "I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds." "I will meditate on your wonderful works" (Ps 77:12; 145:5). This could include meditating on the wonders of God's creation, God's acts of judgment and of grace, the sublime act

when God the Father gave His beloved Son and what has been achieved when the Lord Jesus gave His life to save a lost world.

Overlay Slide 15 x 2

(c) Past experiences with the Lord :
“So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed. I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land” (Ps 143:3-6). We can meditate on God’s dealings with humans over the years. This is a particular type of work of God. We may also reflect on how the Lord has touched our own life in the past and how He is dealing with us today.

Overlay Slide 15 x 2

(d) The Lord Himself: “Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.” “May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD” (Ps 48:9; 104:34). We can meditate on some of the attributes of God, such as His love, goodness, mercy, patience, holiness, justice, faithfulness, nearness, greatness, transcendence, etc., and the attractive virtues we see in our Lord Jesus Christ. You will find that it is difficult to meditate on Him without talking to Him. Christian meditation and prayer are closely related.

Slide 16 – Forms of Christian Meditation

A man was seated on a park bench when a little chap of about five sat down beside him and started winding

what appeared to be a most prized possession—a watch. “My, what a pretty watch,” remarked the man. “Does it tell you the time?” “No sir,” replied the boy; “you gotta look at it.”

Do you know the Book of the Lord ... or the Lord of the Book?

Jeremiah 15:16 reads, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.”

Overlay - Slide 16 - The practice of Christian meditation (Nature)

When the Christian’s mind turns to nature, his heart turns toward God in worship and praise. But when the unbelieving mind turns to nature, it often may turn from God. For many people looking at nature simply

highlights pollution and our degradation of the environment. Their only hope in life is centred on man’s efforts to save the earth. In reality, there is only one hope. That hope is not in us saving our planet from being destroyed, but in God saving men and women from destroying themselves. The unconverted mind simply does not think of God when it looks at nature. Indeed, the unbelieving mind sees nature as a god.

Overlay 2 - Slide 16 (Psalm 8)

Psalm 8 Reads “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ... When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that

you care for him You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet – all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

I have prepared a handout with extra resources on this.

Slide 17 – The practice of Christian meditation (prayer)

A small town in America had never had a pub and had historically been promoted as “dry,” but then a local businessman decided to build a tavern. A group of Christians from a local

church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case, stated that, “no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not.”

Slide 18 (Patience Strong)

Meditation as prayer is summed up in this poem attributed to Patience Strong:

*When you're very busy and you've
heaps of work to do
And when you're tired and can't see
how you're going to get through,
Just stand quite still and tell yourself,
that in those crowded hours
You will be given guidance, quiet
strength and inner powers.*

Slide 19

*...You say you have no leisure time,
but surely you can spare
A moment in the hectic day? You may
be anywhere -
A shop, a street, an office - any place
that you may be -
Just calm your worried, flurried
thoughts,*

Slide 20

and praying quietly...

*You'll find new zest, new energy. The
will to start again -
And you'll complete your daily work
without the stress and strain.*

Slide 21

We will focus on prayer in our next seminar on the Essentials of Christian Meditation, and I have a homework sheet that I would like you to complete in readiness.

Slide 22

It has been said that if you know how to worry, you have the necessary skills to meditate! What do you do when you worry? You talk to yourself. You ask your self "what if..." "Why did..." "How can..." Similarly, when you meditate on Scripture, you talk to yourself about it. It is a chewing process. We start by asking the Lord

to speak to us through His word, to illuminate our minds. We read a chapter or so, but we stop or go back to that verse or expression that caught our attention. We then begin to talk to ourselves about it. We can ask ourselves questions such as: What could this mean? What does this say about God? Is this something I should do? How can I lean on this truth? Does it point to a sin I should confess? Alternate between speaking to yourself and speaking to the Lord.

Lets practice this now with an exercise

ACTIVITY

It is better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot.

The model for Prayer is given for us in what is commonly called the Lord's

Prayer. Matthew 6:9-14 It can best be remembered by the use of the acrostic ACTS:

Adoration - Praising God's attributes and character

Confession - Confession of our sins to God,

Thanksgiving - Thanksgiving for the blessings we have received from Him

Supplication - Petitions for the blessings we need. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Remember these don't necessarily need to be in this order, but putting them this way does make it easier to remember, and I may be sensible to praise God before asking for anything.

(See also slide 34 – then back to 22)
The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) contains all the elements of effective prayer, best remembered by using the

acronym A.C.T.S.: Adoration,
Confession, Thanksgiving and
Supplication.

The 'Lord's Prayer' was addressed to:
'Our Father which art in heaven' (Vs
9a)

Starts with our Adoration: 'Hallowed
be thy name' (Vs 9b)

Followed by our supplication for
universal need: 'Thy kingdom come'
(Vs 10a)

Followed by our Thanksgiving: 'Thy
will be done in earth, as it is in
heaven' (Vs 10b)

Followed by our supplication for
physical need: 'Give us this day our
daily bread' (Vs 11)

Followed by our confession: 'Forgive
us our debts, as we forgive our
debtors' (Vs 12)

Followed by our supplication for
spiritual need: 'Lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil'
(Vs 13a)

Finishes with our Adoration: 'For
thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory' (Vs 13b)

Finalised by our affirmation: Amen
(So be it!)

Now I would like to suggest that we
spend a few minutes writing our own
prayer using this formula.

Here is an example:

A – Adoration: Precious Lord, we
praise you for who you are and what
you have done, are doing and plan to
do in our lives.

C – Confession: We confess to you
that we have sinned – sins that no one
knows and sins that everyone knows;

sins that burden us and sins that do not bother us any more but ought to. T – Thanksgiving: Thank You for our needs that we have received from your bounty

S – Supplication: We ask wisdom for ourselves and even greater blessings for others.

Overlay Slide 22 – Stop timer

Slide 23 – Benefits of Christian meditation

Of course it is good to listen to Scriptural sermons and attend Biblical seminars. Of course it is good to read Christian books, watch Christian videos and listen to Christian music. But none of these can yield the benefits of meditation. Charles H Spurgeon once said, “It is well to meditate upon the things of God,

because thus we get the real nutriment out of them.” In other words, Christian meditation is spiritual medication.

Meditation makes truth real to us. It helps truth travel from the head to the heart. It opens truth, it fixes truth in our mind, it warms our heart.

Slide 24 – Benefits of Christian meditation

The Power of Prayer video segment (9 minutes, 23 seconds)
(Distribute Associated handouts during video.)

Slide 25 – Dangers of Christian meditation

Can Christian meditation be dangerous? Yes it can. It can be dangerous because as we meditate, we

focus only on one text or one truth. We can only chew on what fits into our mouth! The danger therefore is to work on a verse ignoring the general Biblical context, to chew, eat and digest only on one side of a truth. For example, like the psalmist David we can meditate on God's unfailing love. We can enjoy and maybe even begin to feel the warmth of His love. But in doing so, we should not forget that our loving God is also a righteous and a holy God. In the contemplation of or meditation on any passage of scripture we need to remember that a text without context is a proof-text pretext. The Concise Oxford Dictionary calls this 'decontextualization'.

Christian meditation is completely different from New Age type

meditation. Seeking to empty or disconnect our minds can be dangerous. On the contrary, we should follow Paul's advice to Timothy and engage our minds with God's words: "Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this" (2 Tm. 2:7). Christian meditation is a chewing process. As Christians we are encouraged to meditate of God's Word, God's works and on God Himself. This will enhance our spirituality by making God's truth real in our experience. The next time you read your Bible, make a little time to be still and to meditate. If you have stopped doing so, start again. The Lord's invitation still stands: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

And another danger is having unrealistic expectations.

Eric Braithewaite, the author of “To Sir With Love” and later to become the Guyanese ambassador to the UN, tells in His book “Reluctant Neighbours”, of a time when his young daughter was dying. He pleaded with God to save her life and God did not. He concluded that a God who could allow the death of an innocent young girl was not a desirable God and he gave God away.

Contrast that to the following story: One day a lady was giving her little nephew some lessons. He was generally a good, attentive child, but on this occasion he could not fix his mind on his work. Suddenly he said, “Auntie, may I kneel down and ask God to help me find my marble?” His aunt gave her consent, and the little boy knelt by his chair, closed his eyes,

and prayed silently. Next day, almost afraid of asking the question lest the child had not found his toy and so might lose his simple faith, the lady said to him, “Well, dear, have you found your marble?” “No, Auntie,” was the reply, “but God made me not want to.” That is the way God many times answers our prayers and thus rids us of division within ourselves.

God always answers prayer with a “yes”, “no”, “wait”, or “here’s something different or better”.

And a fourth danger is praying to anyone other than God.

1 Timothy 2:5 says, “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

There is no one else that can mediate with God for us. If Jesus is the only

mediator, that indicates Mary, the saints or even a effigy of Garfield the Cat cannot be mediators. They cannot mediate our prayer requests to God. Romans 8:26-27 describes the Holy Spirit assisting in intercession for us, but remember, the Holy Spirit is also a living God, unlike a statue of a deceased person, no matter how saintly there were when they were alive.

Slide 26 – Practical Outcomes from Meditation

Overlay slide 26 – Connection with our Creator
He was just a little boy, on a week's first day.
He was wandering home from Sunday School, and dawdling on the way.

He scuffed his shoes into the grass; he found a caterpillar.
He found a fluffy milkweed pod, and blew out all the "filler".

A bird's nest in a tree overhead, so wisely placed on high,
Was just another wonder that caught his eager eye.
A neighbour watched his zig zag course, and hailed him from the lawn,
Asked him where he'd been that day and what was going on.

"I've been to Bible School," he said and turned a piece of sod.
He picked up a wiggly worm replying, "I've learned a lot of God."
"M'm very fine way," the neighbour said, "for a boy to spend his time."
"If you'll tell me where God is, I'll give you a brand new dime."

Quick as a flash the answer came! Nor
were his accents faint.

“I’ll give you a dollar, Mister, if you
can tell me where God ain’t.”

Overlay slide 26 – Peace

Poet Edwin Markham wrote, “At the
heart of the cyclone tearing the sky /
And flinging the clouds and the towers
by, / Is a place of central calm; / here
in the roar of mortal things, / I have a
place where my spirit sings, / In the
hollow of God’s palm.

Overlay slide 26 – Rest

Orin L. Crain wrote, Slow me down,
Lord. Ease the pounding of my heart
by the quieting of my mind. Steady
my hurried pace with a vision of the
eternal reach of time. Give me, amid
the confusion of the day, the calmness

of the everlasting hills. Break the
tensions of my nerves and muscles
with the soothing music of the singing
streams that live in my memory. Teach
me the art of taking minute vacations
— of slowing down to look at a
flower, to chat with a friend, to pat a
dog, to smile at a child, to read a few
lines from a good book. Slow me
down, Lord, and inspire me to send
my roots deep into the soil of life’s
enduring values, that I may grow
toward my greater destiny. Remind
me each day that the race is not
always to the swift; that there is more
to life than increasing its speed. Let
me look upward to the towering oak
and know that it grew great and strong
because it grew slowly and well.
The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of
King Charles I of England, lies buried
in Newport Church, in the Isle of

Wight. During the time of her father's troubles she was a prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, in the same beautiful island. While there, she had a long spell of sickness. She was found one day, dead in her bed with her Bible open before her, and her finger resting on these words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." A monument in Newport, erected by Queen Victoria, represents the young princess with her head bowed in death, and her hand rests on a marble book before her, her finger pointing to the words.

Overlay slide 26 – Inner joy

Among the students at a college was a young man on crutches. Although not a handsome fellow, he had a talent for friendliness and optimism, and he

earned many scholastic honours as well as the respect of his classmates. One day a new student asked him what had caused him to become so badly crippled. "Infantile paralysis," replied the genial young man. "With a misfortune like that," exclaimed the other fellow, "how can you face the world so confidently and so happily?" "Oh," replied the polio victim, "the disease never touched my heart."

Men have pursued joy in every avenue imaginable. Some have successfully found it while others have not. Perhaps it would be easier to describe where joy cannot be found:

Not in Unbelief – Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type.

He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Not in Pleasure – Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone."

Not in Money – Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in Position and Fame – Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret."

Not in Military Glory – Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept in his tent, before he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where then is real joy found? – the answer is simple, in Christ alone.

Overlay slide 26 – Reassurance

When the Golden Gate Bridge was constructed, it was then the longest, highest, widest, costliest bridge in the world. Because of the danger, work proceeded behind schedule. Then someone hit on a brilliant idea. Why not build a net under the construction area? Then, if any workman fell, he would not tumble to his death, but would land in the net and thus be saved. So a giant safety net of stout cord was made and swung under the construction work, the first time in history a major construction that such a net had been used. This safety net reportedly cost around one hundred thousand dollars. Because the workmen knew that if they did slip,

they would not fall to their death, the work then proceeded at a much faster rate.

Overlay slide 26 – Hope

In Robert Louis Stevenson's story of a storm, he describes a ship caught off a rocky coast, threatening death to all on board. When terror among the passengers was at its worst, one man more daring than the rest, making the perilous passage to the pilot-house, saw the pilot lashed to his post with his hands on the wheel, turning the ship little by little into the open sea. When the pilot beheld the ghastly white, terror-stricken face of the man, he smiled, and the man rushed to the deck below shouting, "I have seen the face of the pilot and he smiled. All is well." The sight of that smiling face averted panic and converted despair

into hope. It is through prayer and meditation that we see the smiling face of God.

Overlay slide 26 – Solutions to life's problems

In his book, *A Gift of Hope*, author Robert Veninga describes this transforming experience, which took place in the life of a 41-year-old man after he prayed:

"I left work early after hearing that I would lose my job. I got in my car and went to my church. Unfortunately the minister was not there. But the chapel was open. I went in and stared at the cross. I started to cry. I told God that I didn't have the strength to get through this mess. And I asked for help. I must have sat there for a couple of hours. I brushed away my tears. Suddenly a whole load went off my shoulders. I

can't explain it, but I went into that chapel crushed and I came out feeling strong. I actually felt that I could make it.”

Overlay slide 26 – Healing & health.
Book editor Edythe Draper saw the connection between our health and prayer when she garnered this anonymous piece: He who formed our frame / Made man a perfect whole / And made the body's health / Depend upon the soul.

Relaxation is another such outcome and we will be discussing this in our next seminar today, Learning to Relax.

Slide 27 – Our next program is an intensely practical one with loads of resources and hands-on activities.

Seminar 2: The Mechanics of Meditation

The How, Where & When of meditation.

Program:

1. Review: Meditation is not what you think! (What is Christian Meditation?)
2. Meditation Positions and Postures
3. Meditation Places
4. Meditation Times and Seasons
5. Meditation and Relaxation
6. Meditation Resources
7. Question & Answer Session

Slide 28 – Question & Answer Session

The Essentials of Christian Meditation

Seminar 2: The Mechanics of Meditation
The How, Where & When of meditation.

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Slide 1 – Title Slide

Slides 2 – 10

Before we start today's program, for the benefit of those who were faithful in doing their homework from the last session, we will briefly review the answers.

Slide 11 – Video clip introduction

Slide 12 – Review

In our last program we looked at The What, Who & Why of Meditation. We learnt about different types of meditation and saw that most were focussed on emptying the mind. We saw also that true Christian meditation is a filling of the mind, talking with God and chewing the cud of His word.

Mother Teresa said, “The fruit of silence is prayer. The fruit of prayer is faith. The fruit of faith is love. The fruit of love is service. The fruit of service is peace.”

Today we are going to look at the practical side of meditation, that of prayer. We are also going to use Bibles to answer some of our questions.

Sometimes we find it easy to pray when we have time but find it difficult to pray when everything is going well. But when things do not go the way we think we should start praying. A saying that came out of the First World War is “There are no atheists in foxholes” suggesting that when the position

is critical, praying is crucial. The word prayer comes from the Latin *precari*, meaning “to beg.” Maybe that is why we are only good at praying when we need help. Growing a prayer life is like building a muscle. When you complete the exercise a little bit at time you begin to grow. Here are a few tools to help along the way.

Slide 13 - 1. Stop

Stopping is hard for us to do some times. There are so many distractions. The mobile 'phone vibrates, or the kids may want something, or you just can't stop thinking of different things that pop into your head. Stopping is very difficult for most of us. We like to stay busy and praying just does not feel busy enough for most people. In Luke 5:16 we find that Jesus withdraws to desolate places to pray. I don't think you need to go into the desert or the forest but a quiet place in your house free of distraction, if you have such a thing, may help you stay focused and less distracted. Yes, that means logging of FaceBook and unplugging the

telephone. Susanna Wesley, mother of 10 children (two of whom became great preachers) advised her children that whenever they saw her sitting on the floor in the middle of the room with her apron over her head she was not to be disturbed as it was her prayer time.

If you are in a family situation you can download a free door-hangar from our website to let others know not to disturb your devotional time.

Slide 14 - 2. Reflect

Think about the past experiences where God has been seen during your day. You may write down things throughout the day for you to easily remember how God is seen in your life. Understanding the past may be helpful for moving forward in the future. I like to keep notepaper and a pencil in various places around the house, especially on my bedside table. When things come to mind during the day or night I write things down. I can later use these thoughts in my prayers.

Slide 15 - 3. Forgive Before You Pray

You need to forgive other before you pray. That might even be the reason why you are praying. If you have hatred for others, praying to God will be more difficult. God has forgiven you many times for little and big things. You need to do the same and forgive others. These people are only human. They will hurt you. Try to forgive them before praying. If you can't do that, then try praying for them. Wayne Dyer wrote, "Release the need to be upset with others. Remember that anytime you're filled with resentment, you're turning the controls of your emotional life over to others to manipulate."

What is forgiveness? EXERCISE

What is forgiveness? HANDOUT

Slide 16 - 4. Be Honest to God and Yourself
Be real with God. Tell him genuinely what's on your heart and mind. This might take the form of a 20-minute monologue or a half-

hour of tears or anger. Being honest about where you are spiritually—your hopes, worries, frustrations, or failures—is essential.

You need to be honest with yourself. You cannot pretend that everything is great or that everything is horrible. Be honest about your current situation. Let go of all your fears and worries and let God take over. Giving up control can be difficult but the changes you see in your life will be worth it.

Slide 17 – 5. Start early

My wife is a “morning person”. She tells me that if she doesn’t start her day early, then she’ll have to rush through her time in the Word and focused prayer. That’s never a good way for anyone to begin. You may be a night owl and like to do your devotional time at 11 p.m. While that may work for your particular wiring as it does mine, I’ve found that I need to also start my day by asking the Spirit to fill and direct me, ask the Father to show me the sin I’m blind to and

open my heart to receive the truth of His Word for that day. This is like a violinist who tunes his instrument before the concert, plays for the concert and then checks it thoroughly before putting it away afterwards. So I begin my day with what I call my “Seeking God” time. This carries me through the day (I’ll talk later about what happens prayer-wise during the day) and at the end of the day I close it with my rather lengthy “Discovering God” time. Prayer and God’s Word go hand in hand: the Word directs our prayers, and at the same time, prayer is our communication line as we seek to receive instruction from God’s Word.

Slide 18 - 6. confess

God knows all that is in my heart, all I’ve done, every wrong thought and selfish action. Nothing is hidden from Him, but when we ignore or try to cover and hide our sin, Psalms 66:18 and Psalm 32 tell us that God will not hear our prayers. Confession is agreeing with God about my sin, bringing it into the light, and then turning from it.

Slide 19 - 7 Respond

As you pray and spend time in Scripture and learn to discern God's voice, he may present you with an invitation to act. When you sense him calling you to do something, respond. Don't sweep the invitation under the rug: whether it's to pray, serve, forgive, submit, generously give, etc.. Act on it. And notice how God uses that.

By responding, we cultivate hearts that are soft and ready to respond to God, rather than remaining complacent or indifferent.

Slide 20 - 8. Pray With Faith

Hebrews 11:6 says "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." You may not fully believe yet, but as you pray and have faith your belief will grow as you see the changes in your life.

Try praying as an act of faith. Even if you don't believe, you can fake belief until it becomes real in your life. Mark Batterson

said in his *The Circle Maker* media series that prayer is like a time capsule. You never know when or where God is going to answer your prayers but you can live the holy anticipation.

Prayer is not like asking the genie from Aladdin for something and in a cloud of smoke it magically appears. But the good news is that you get more than three wishes.

Slide 21 - 9. Talk with God

In Luke 18:11 we have the story of a Pharisee – a religious separatist – praying. Although he begins his prayer addressing God, it is clear that he is praying by himself to himself about himself.

Talk to God like you are talking to a close friend. Talk to God, by all means, but don't forget also the importance of talking *with* God. Prayer is a conversation – a dialogue, not a just monologue.

Slide 22 - 10. Pray out loud

You may not like to pray aloud where others can hear or in front of others. But listen

when others pray aloud. Hear and learn from the way they talk to God. Each person is different. Some treat him like their best friend. Others keep the prayer to a carefully calculated formula that they use to communicate with him. Hearing people pray for the things in my life makes me feel loved. Praying out loud can help others pray together. If you are in an environment where others can't hear you, praying out loud or at least whispering your prayers can keep you focused on praying.

You can even write them out so that you can stay on track and not wander off.

You won't hear me praying out loud while I'm engaged in conversation with someone, but typically, I'll be lifting up silent prayers—asking God for discernment and help.

Slide 23 - 11. Posture Matters

There is something about going to our knees in prayer that adjusts our attitude. Because of degenerative bone disease, I cannot always pray on my knees, but I can and do

pray when I'm driving, walking, washing dishes, having a shower, or working on some manual task. That is the beauty of having an open door of communication with God. He is Spirit, and He is always accessible. I don't have to physically transport myself to a specific location to pray. It doesn't have to be in church, and I don't have to kneel. But there is something that happens in our heart when kneeling or bowing as we signify that God is worthy of our adoration. Closed eyes and bowed head may help in blocking out distractions, but if they still come, God understands. Just bring your thoughts back to Him when you can and move on.

Slide 24 - 12. Make a Prayer Guide

We can all be busy and forgetful people at times. We may hear sad news from a friend or on the news and forget later that day what we want to pray for. You can have a notebook or a digital document to remind yourself who and what to pray for. You can use bullet points to stay organized. You can

start to ask others how you can pray for them. When they tell you write it down. If I meet someone in the street or shopping centre and they express a need for prayer, I not only write it down I also pray with them on-the-spot if I can. Many a security camera would have captured me praying with someone in a supermarket aisle.

Slide 25 - 13. Keep a prayer journal

You may not think that God has answered any of your prayers in the past. Try keeping a journal of all your prayers. Then continue each day going through the list and checking off the prayers that have been answered.

There is a plethora of software available to help you if you want to keep a prayer journal on your iPad, laptop or desktop computer. There is one available from Hal Lee Ministries (www.hallee.org). They have a recent version, but I would recommend downloading version 4. If you're using version 4 already, stick with it. Simply ignore the advertising links and you have a very useful and free product.

Start to keep a list of your prayers and if God has answered them. You will soon see answers to prayer you did not even realize were happening. Every week I have a few that were answered according to his will. Not all prayers were answered as I expected and many were not answered in the time frame I would have liked.

If you use a note pad rule it into columns so that you can see the answers and thank God for them specifically. Acknowledging when prayers are answered is important to continue to grow faith and your prayer life. But what about when prayers seem unanswered?

Slide 26 - Exercise: Unanswered Prayer

Take your clipboards once again, remove the top page (if you haven't done that already), and follow the instructions on the board.

Handout – Exercise

Handout – Information sheet

What about when God says 'No'? Eric Braithwaite, the author of "To Sir With Love" and later to become the Guyanese ambassador to the UN, tells in His book "Reluctant Neighbours", of a time when his young daughter was dying. He plead with God to save her life and God did not. He concluded that a God who could allow the death of an innocent young girl was not a desirable God and he gave God away.

Contrast this to the following story: One day a lady was giving her little nephew some lessons. He was generally a good, attentive child, but on this occasion he could not fix his mind on his work. Suddenly he said, "Auntie, may I kneel down and ask God to help me find my marble?" His aunt gave her consent, and the little boy knelt by his chair, closed his eyes, and prayed silently. Next day, almost afraid of asking the question lest the child had not found his toy and so might lose his simple faith, the lady said to him, "Well, dear, have you found

your marble?" "No, Auntie," was the reply, "but God made me not want to." That is the way God many times answers our prayers and thus rids us of division within ourselves.

Slide 27 - 14. Timed / Trigger moments Maggie tells me she is having an operation at 9:00am on Thursday. I write it down in my diary. I set the timer on my mobile 'phone for 8:30am to remind me to pray for her. Egbert is travelling to Timbuktu at 1:30am so I jot it down and make a point of praying about it before retiring to bed the night before.

Fred has a coffee break at work every weekday at 10:00am and his wife and children know that he is praying for them at that time.

I hear a siren from an ambulance, police car or maybe a fire engine. I use this as a trigger to pray for whoever is anxious because of the siren – it may be an accident victim, it may be a burglar, it may be a speeding motorist, it may be a homeowner whose

house is on fire, it may be other motorists trying to get out of the way of the emergency vehicle, it may be the emergency personnel themselves. Someone or many will be anxious and we can use the trigger of hearing the siren to connect with God and to pray for them.

I see a rainbow and I remember God's promise to Noah in Genesis 9:13 and use the opportunity to praise God for sending the rain but withholding world-wide destruction. Others will contemplate the wonders of God and give him thanks each time they look at a clock face, put on their clothes in the morning or partake of a meal. These are what I call "Trigger Moments" and this is part of practising the presence of God.

Slide 28 - 15 Time & Place (handout)

Where and when can we meditate? In the Bible we find people meditating out in a field (Genesis 24:63), in a place of worship (Psalm 48:9) even while lying down in bed! (Psalm 63:6).

There are many times and places mentioned in the Bible. I have a handout to expedite getting this material to you.

The following may be worth noting:

1. Choose a specific place to pray away from distractions so you can concentrate. Ringing phones and crying children will sabotage your "quiet time" before it gets started.
2. Pray at the same time every day, if at all possible. Make it part of your regular routine and it will become habit. Write it into your schedule or appointment diary and then treat it just like a daily appointment.

Slide 29 - 16. Change pace

Change the pace during your prayer time. Include praise, thanksgiving and singing as well as petition. Spend some of your time reflecting on the Scripture, meditating on it and digesting its meaning. You may recall that in seminar one I likened this to "Chewing the Cud". Even a cursory glance at a colourful flower garden will tell you that God loves variety. Give it to Him in

your prayer time. Prayer should be varied just like any relationship. Sometimes it should be light. Sometimes it should be fun. Sometimes it will be deadly serious and tear-filled. However, it should always be specific and sincere.

Slide 30 - 17. Praying for others
(Intercessory prayer)

Just as we need to be specific when we confess our sin, we need to be specific in our praise and requests. Instead of praying for your family in general, pray for each individual family member separately by name. Take the time to pray for each one to show your concern. Each is their own person with their own praises and needs for the future. Ask others what they would like you to pray for them. If you ask you will probably get a smile and a long list.

Lists available from the web-page: Praying
Scripture: Prayers for our spouse:
Eph.1:17-19; Ps. 15:1-2, 92:12-15.
Prayers for our children: Col. 1:9-12; 2

Cor. 13:7-8; 1 Tim. 4:12, 6:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Prov. 2:20.

Slide 31 - 18. praying with others
(Communal prayer)

Pray with someone else. Though some prayers can only be said in solitude, there will be times when you'll want to join hearts with another person in prayer. If you commit to meet on a regular basis, the accountability can really help build consistency. Such prayer trysts can become powerful, life-changing events. Many times people have telephoned me with an issue and we have prayed together over the telephone.

Slide 32 - 19. Ask/listen 4 answers

The other day my eldest son had need of something and suffered all day because he did not have it. I had a spare of the very item that he wanted and when he finally told me about his situation, I asked, "Why didn't you contact me? You know that I have a spare and all you needed to do was ask and I

would give it to you.” He said, “I don’t like having to ask.”

I replied, “Hey, I’m not a mind reader. If you want something, knowing I’m willing to give, ask!”

Now God is a mind reader, but he desires us to want, and so to ask. Jesus said in Matt. 7.7, “Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Also in Matt. 21.22, he said, “And, whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

So ask. Then listen for how he will answer: yes, no, wait, here’s something different or here’s something better.

Slide 33 - 20. Be creative

There are as many ways to pray as there are pray-ers. For example, if you are pressed for time or the thought of labouring over a topic wears you out, pray short, sincere one-sentence prayers instead. A sentence or two may be all that’s needed to exhaust the topic for you for the time being. If so, just move

on to the next item without feeling guilty for your brevity. God knows. God cares.

Slide 34 - 21. don’t give up

Question & Answer Session

