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From Exegesis to Transformation

In his new book, Meditation and Communion with God, John Jefferson Davis explores the reasons for practicing traditional biblical meditation in today's culture. Helping us to recover this ancient practice, he provides a relevant guide for removing the barriers between us and our fellowship and communion with God through Scripture.

What do you think are the relevant reasons for exploring the theological roots of meditation today?

First, the renewal of interest in the spiritual disciplines generally in evangelical Protestant circles in the last generation, and especially since the publication of Richard Foster's seminal book of 1978, *Celebration of Discipline*; second, the growing religious pluralism of American culture and the growing interest in Asian religions and Buddhist and Hindu meditation practices; third, the secularization of American culture and concerns for biblical illiteracy in society and the churches; fourth, growing awareness and concern about the impact of the Internet and digital media on reading habits, the ability to concentrate and to focus the mind, and on levels of personal distraction and stress; fifth, new scientific research in the fields of neuroscience and cognitive science that have studied the effects of meditation on the brain and personal health; and sixth, trends in biblical and systematic theology, including the renewal of interest in trinitarian theology and union with Christ, that have yet to be systematically integrated into a theology supporting ancient Christian practices such as meditating on Scripture.

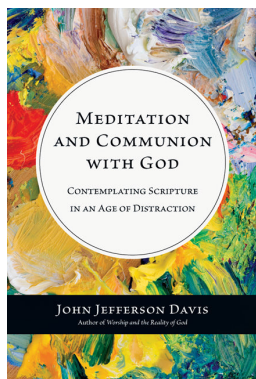
—*from the introduction*

What is one of the benefits of committing to biblical meditation?

Meditating by faith on the Scriptures, in the communion of the Holy Spirit, can open up a spiritual horizon—that of Pauline theology and eschatology—in which “all God's children are mystics,” in the sense of having a personal experience of “real contact,” of the presence of Christ and joyful communion with him.

—*from chapter six*

AUTHOR Q & A



*Meditation and
Communion with God:
Contemplating Scripture
in an Age of Distraction*

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How does one practically begin to practice biblical meditation?

Intention and invocation: Form an intention to place yourself in the presence of God; ask for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text and to bring you into the presence of Christ: “In your presence, Lord; come, Holy Spirit.”

Reading and reflection: In a leisurely, prayerful and meditative spirit, spend at least thirty minutes, if possible, in reading the biblical text, slowly pondering its words, images and associations. In beginning to develop one’s practice of meditation on Scripture, it is probably best in most cases to choose a familiar passage of Scripture such as John 15:5 (“I am the vine; you are the branches. . . . [A]part from me you can do nothing”) or Matthew 3:13-17 (the baptism of Jesus) or Matthew 17:1-8 (the transfiguration)—a passage that is Christ-centered and easy to visualize in the mind. The concrete imagery in such passages makes it refocus our attention when the mind wanders—as it surely will.

Prayer: Thank God for this time in his presence, and for any insights or leading that he may have given you: for example, “Thank you, Lord, for reminding me that in all of my life I am always dependent upon you.”

Recollection: At some later time in the day, remember your time in the presence of the Lord through the text, and remind yourself again of the insight, word, phrase, sense of leading or sense of his presence that you may have experienced during the time of meditation. At the close of the day, perhaps before going to bed, an insight can be recalled: for example, “Thank you, Lord, for reminding me that I, too, am a beloved son of a loving heavenly Father” (having meditated on the baptism of Jesus).

—from chapter seven