



Formative Practice Guide: Meditate

Read *Psalm 77:10-15*

A great photographer can snap a picture in a busy environment while composing the image in such a way that everyone who looks at it focuses on one specific thing. When we meditate on God, his word, and his deeds, we are able to let the rest of the business in our picture to blur into the background. But like that picture, instead of ridding ourselves of everything in life, we realize that God is in the center of it all.

Spiritual Exercises:

Plan time in your upcoming schedule to include the following exercises in your routine.

Tomorrow morning, find a place and time with as few distractions as possible to read a small amount of God's word, the Bible (any short passage like *Psalm 42*). After reading it a few times, choose a smaller portion of it to think on and mull over, listening for God's voice. After several minutes of this, commit then to thinking about that section of your reading for the rest of the day. Repeat this exercise with the same passage for the next three mornings. If your mind wanders, take note where your mind wants to go then return to the practice.

Plan a time to take a walk this week in a setting that shows you God's beauty. Don't talk to anyone, look at your phone, or listen to any podcasts. Think about how God's creative handiwork speaks to you.

In addition to Scripture and God's handiwork, statements of faith can also be helpful foci for meditation. Two Christian creeds—the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed—are included below. Allow the statements in these creeds to be a source of meditative practice and encouragement to your faith.

Guided Reflection:

Reflect on these concepts throughout your day. Feel free to also set aside some distraction-free time for more intentional reflection.

What are some of your initial reactions when you hear the word “meditate”? How might you need to realign your concept of “meditation” with an intentional focus on God?

How easy is it for you to meditate on God's word for an extended period of time? When distractions happen or your mind wanders, how gracious are you in your attempts to continue practicing meditation?

Connecting the Practices

We can use many of the other practices as meditative practices by slowing down. In Bible reading, read a small section for a longer period of time. In prayer, repeat to yourself one truth about God for several minutes while listening to God. When you receive, rejoice, or even grieve, take some time to reflect on one thing about God's character or actions.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

(* “catholic”, lower-case, means the true Christian church of all times and all places; it is not a reference to the denomination)

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic* and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(* “catholic”, lower-case, means the true Christian church of all times and all places; it is not a reference to the denomination)