

Fixing the Mind: A Guide to Meditation

Three Stages of Meditation

John Owen suggests there are three stages of meditation in his work, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*. Keller calls these stages engaging the mind, inclining the heart and enjoying the Lord. Here is how John Owen describes it:

Three things may be distinguished in the great duty of being spiritually minded.

- 1) The actual exercising of the mind, in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about things spiritual and heavenly.... They mind them by fixing their thoughts and meditations upon them.
- 2) The inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things...from the love and delight...in them and engagement unto them.
- 3) A complacency of mind, from that gust, relish, and savor, which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitableness unto its constitution, inclinations, and desires. There is a salt in spiritual things, whereby they are condited and made savory unto a renewed mind; though to others they are as the white of an egg, that hath no taste or savor in it. In this gust and relish lies the sweetness and satisfaction of spiritual life. Speculative notions about spiritual things, when they are alone, are dry, sapless, and barren. In this gust we taste by experience that God is gracious, and that the love of Christ is better than wine, or whatever else hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite. This is the proper foundation of that joy which is “unspeakable and full of glory.”

Five Methods for Meditation

1. Read the biblical text slowly, answering four questions as you go
 - a. What does this teach me about God and his character?
 - b. About human nature, character, and behavior?
 - c. About Christ and his salvation?
 - d. About the church, or life in the people of God?
2. Ask application questions of the text
 - a. Any personal examples to emulate or avoid?
 - b. Any commands to obey?
 - c. Any promises to claim?
 - d. Any warnings to heed?
3. Take one verse and emphasize each word, asking what each words uniquely contributes
 - a. For example, “Follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17)
 - b. Follow – we must align our lives
 - c. Me – not just obedience but relationship
 - d. I will – a promise and assurance
 - e. Become – a process, not a single event
4. Paraphrase the verse in your own words
 - a. Verbally and written
 - b. Repeat at various times
5. Memorize the text
 - a. Especially fruitful when combined with one of the other approaches
 - b. Memorizing is “learning by heart”