

Christian Meditation

The Practice of Meditation I

There are some basic aspects to consider as you prepare to meditate. These include, making a regular time to meditate, choosing a suitable place, taking time to prepare the body and mind, adopting a good posture and attention to breathing. The practice of meditation in the Christian tradition has four basic components. *Posture, Breath, Word and Blessing*. In this section we will look at *Posture* and *Breath*, and in the section '*The Practice of Meditation II*' we will look at *Word* and *Blessing*.

Focusing on *Posture* and *Breath* as you prepare students to meditate gives them time to make the transition from the busyness of the day to a more receptive mode of being. These simple preparation exercises make the meditation time more effective.

1. Posture

Be still and know that I am God (Ps. 46:10)

Posture is an important aspect of meditation. If your body is still and relaxed, it is more likely you will be receptive to this way of deeper prayer and stillness. You may sit on the floor or on a chair with your hands resting comfortably on your knees or lap. Consciously let go of the stress and tension from your body. Close your eyes gently. If you are sitting in a chair, keep your feet firmly on the floor. Relax your shoulders...arms...neck...face. Keep your spine straight and your head level. Relax your legs and feel the stillness in your body. Be aware of any sounds in the far distance, then be aware of your heart beating. Be aware of the silence in the room.

2. Breath

The Hebrew word for Spirit is *ruach*, the same word for 'breath'. St Paul links the Holy Spirit with breathing (sighing) when he writes:

...the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit...(Rom 8:26–27).

So, as you prepare to meditate, pay attention to your breathing. Become aware of the present rate of your breathing, then gently, move toward a deeper, slower and calmer rhythm. Consciousness of your breathing helps you to become more centred and still, more deeply aware of the Spirit within.

Meditation in the Classroom

Young Children have a special capacity to experience the presence of God – a capacity to develop a conscious and intimate relationship with God.

To Know Worship and Love, Level 1a, 2001, 6

Meditation is essentially a simple practice, and is ideal within the classroom setting. When beginning meditation in the classroom it is best to commit to practicing consistently (at least once per week) for a short amount of time (a few minutes) rather than occasionally for a longer time. This gives the students the opportunity to become accustomed to it, and to enjoy it.

You could begin by setting aside short periods of time for meditation at the beginning or end of a lesson, as part of morning prayer or to conclude the day. As the students become more comfortable with meditating you could increase the time. If possible choose a time of day when the students are most likely to be receptive. It can be helpful to clear a space in the room and create a calming environment, e.g. dim the lighting, light a candle, sit the students in a circle. Students can sit either cross-legged on the floor or upright on chairs. Guide them through the steps of correct posture and relaxation, as well as consciousness of breathing. Simple relaxation techniques allow students to make the transition from the busyness of the day and to move into a more receptive mode, even if just for a few minutes. Do this without haste. Go slowly and allow periods of silence.

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