

ABSTRACT

APPLYING THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF MEDITATION
AMONG ADVENTIST FRONTIER MISSION EMPLOYEES

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: APPLYING THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF MEDITATION
AMONG ADVENTIST FRONTIER MISSION EMPLOYEES

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Problem

Personal feedback from AFM personnel indicated deep uncertainty as to the legitimate basis for, and practice of, meditation within the Bible in general and the counsels of White in particular. The ongoing debates within the SDA Church concerning meditation and the lack of formal denominational guidance on how to meditate exacerbated the uncertainty. As a consequence, primary devotional habits for many employees primarily revolved around to prayer, Bible study and corporate worship. Yet there remained a reported hunger on the part of many employees for a more meaningful sense of God's presence in their lives. The problem therefore was whether and how

spiritual growth could be nurtured among AFM employees through enabling them to both understand and apply the counsels of the Bible and of Ellen G. White on meditation.

Method

A study was conducted on the topic of meditation as found in current literature, the Bible, and the writings of White, followed by the development of a meditation model suitable for use within an Adventist environment. Ten AFM employees participated on a voluntary basis in an initial seminar, which included a summary of the above study and an orientation to the meditation model. Each employee participated in an initial in-depth interview, after which each employee worked through the meditation model provided for eight weeks, followed by a final in-depth interview.

Results

The results indicated that the practice of biblical meditation brought significant personal spiritual benefits to the research participants, with 80% of the research participants indicating their intent to continue the practice of biblical meditation. The results also indicated that biblical meditation may not be a suitable devotional habit for all people, suggesting that different people will find different devotional habits to be meaningful.

Conclusions

Biblical meditation is an important and powerful devotional habit with deep roots within the Bible and the writings of White. Biblical meditation within an Adventist theological context may be experienced as intensely personal, deeply transformational, and providing the framework for a dynamic encounter between the Holy Spirit and the

practitioner. To avoid extremes of subjectivity, biblical meditation may be most suitable for an individual if practiced within an active and loving Christian community. Adventist practitioners are recommended to gain a broad understanding of the principles of meditation as revealed in the Bible and writings of White before engaging in meditation. New practitioners are recommended to engage in meditations as per the enclosed meditation model until confident in the use of the principles contained therein. Practitioners are recommended to approach biblical meditation with an expectation of God's transforming presence and a submissive attitude to the deep work of God. Finally, practitioners are recommended to find a mechanism for journaling that ensures confidentiality and encourages open personal reflection.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

APPLYING THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF MEDITATION
AMONG ADVENTIST FRONTIER MISSION EMPLOYEES

A Project Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Conrad Athelstan Raymond Vine

March 2014

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency—the official development and relief agency of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.
ASC	Altered State of Consciousness—any condition which is significantly different to a normal waking beta wave state.
AFM	Adventist Frontier Missions, Inc.—the ministry in which the research will be conducted.
CSG	Context Support Group—a voluntary support group in the local ministry context to provide support and counsel for the researcher.
EGW	Ellen G. White—a writer whose writings are considered inspired by the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
IRB	Institutional Review Board—a federally mandated mechanism to review and regulate all research involving human subjects.
OSC	Ordinary State of Consciousness—the normal waking beta wave state of consciousness.
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist—the name of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Outline

This chapter will outline the strategy used in this research project, and will include the following components: a brief personal profile of myself (the researcher); a concise description of the context in which the project was implemented; a description of the underlying problem which provides the broader context for the research project; a description of the task, identification of the research strategy, research participants and the underlying rationale for the chosen research strategy; the delimitations and limitations of the research project; a description of the project process; and a definition of key terms.

The chapter will conclude by identifying the anticipated outcomes from the research project at the personal, context-specific organizational and wider Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) denominational levels.

Researcher Profile

I was born in 1972 in the United Kingdom into the family of a SDA church pastor. During my childhood years, my family moved repeatedly from pastoral district to pastoral district, serving in a variety of churches which manifested broad ethnic, socio-economic, and educational differences. At the age of 13, I gave my life to Jesus Christ and was subsequently baptized into the SDA Church.

Following high school, I spent a year working in Israel and in the UK before completing my undergraduate studies in business administration. Following two years serving in the UK National Health Service in a managerial role, I served with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in a variety of leadership roles in countries from central Asia, south-eastern Asia, eastern Africa, and Latin America. During these years I tried to maintain as active participation as possible in the life of the local SDA churches, and was married to my wife (a Russian convert within the SDA Church) in 1999.

Subsequent to my service with ADRA, I completed my MA in New Testament Studies at Newbold College (UK), before serving in the pastoral ministry in London (UK). Having been called to Middle East Union Mission (MEU), I served in the MEU as Secretary-Treasurer before relocating to serve once more in the pastoral ministry in the Minnesota SDA Conference. While serving as a pastoral team with my wife, I was called in July 2011 to serve as President of Adventist Frontier Missions, Inc. (AFM), based in Berrien Springs, Michigan. For the duration of this research project, I have continued serving with AFM, and during the period of this research was ordained into the Gospel ministry by the Minnesota SDA Conference.

Profile of Ministry Context

AFM began in 1985 as a supporting ministry of the SDA Church. Based in the USA, AFM has sought since 1985 to open a mechanism for SDA members to serve in front-line cross-cultural mission outreach.

AFM's mission is to establish indigenous Seventh-day Adventist church-planting movements among unreached people groups, and so AFM focuses on unreached people

groups, which are understood within AFM as referring to distinct ethno-linguistic people groups with either < 2% Evangelical Protestant Christian representation or without a formal SDA presence.

At the time of the research (spring 2013), AFM operated 20 missionary projects in 18 countries worldwide (Ireland, UK, Greece, Albania, Turkey, Ukraine, Iran, Mali, Benin, Guinea, South Africa, Namibia, Thailand, Cambodia, India, Philippines, Laos, Papua New Guinea). The projected annual income and ministry expenditures in 2013 were approximately US\$4,800,000. All of the income comes from private donations, and AFM does not accept tithe. AFM is based in Berrien Springs, Michigan (USA), and operates both an office and a large conference and training facility in Berrien Springs.

During the time the research was conducted, AFM had 10 full-time salaried personnel (two female, eight male), 10 full-time hourly personnel (seven female, three male), one student missionary on a volunteer stipend (male), and six unpaid volunteers (female) serving at the Berrien Springs office. All the personnel were of Caucasian-American ethnicity except for an African-American salaried male, an African-American female paid hourly and an Asian-American female paid hourly.

Out of the 10 salaried personnel, a total of seven have served directly in long-term (>5 years) cross-cultural mission outreach, either with AFM or with the SDA Church globally. None of the hourly-paid personnel or volunteers had served directly in long-term cross-cultural mission outreach. All of the personnel were baptized SDA Church members for at least five years at the time of the research, and all regularly participate in worship and spiritual activities in local SDA churches.

Statement of the Problem

Among the AFM personnel in Berrien Springs, consistent personal feedback to myself indicated that core personal spiritual activities revolve primarily around the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and corporate worship, both in the home and the employment (AFM) setting. Empirical feedback from the personnel also consistently indicated that there is limited understanding and practice of devotional habits beyond these core activities, particularly of meditation.

Personal observation suggested to me that the contributing factors to this uncertainty included the ongoing controversy within the SDA Church (from before and during the time of the research) concerning meditation as a biblical practice. The increasing polarization of positions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has been leaving AFM employees confused as to the definition, validity, and use of meditation.

In addition, at the time of the research there was no easily available denominational material which could provide guidance for AFM employees on the practice of meditation from the writings of Ellen G. White, nor was there any practical denominational guidance available on the practice of meditation as recommended in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's fundamental belief 11 ("Growing in Christ").

Furthermore, while there was a reported hunger on the part of many AFM employees for a more meaningful sense of God's presence in their lives, there remained limited understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines beyond the core activities of prayer, Bible study, and corporate worship.

As a consequence, my own pastoral observation suggested that AFM personnel

are unclear as to the legitimate basis for, and practice of, meditation within the Bible in general and the counsels of White in particular.

Statement of the Task

The task of this research project was to nurture spiritual growth among AFM employees by enabling them to both understand and apply the counsels of the Bible and of White on meditation.

In order to develop a theological basis for meditation, I studied the topic of meditation in both the Bible and the writings of White, whose voice is considered to be prophetic and authoritative in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (see Chapter 2).

I reviewed current literature including books, journal articles, published dissertations and theses, seminar presentation notes, and data in electronic format that all relate to the topic of meditation within the Bible and the Seventh-day Adventist context in particular (see Chapter 3).

A strategy for building understanding of this important topic and encouraging its practice was then developed and implemented by myself within the AFM head office (see Chapter 4). I collected data from the study participants through a qualitative instrument (initial and final in-depth personal interviews with the researcher) before the collating the results (Chapter 5) and preparing the final conclusions and recommendations of the research project (Chapter 6).

All subjects (referred to hereinafter as ‘research participants’) met the following criteria (as proposed to and approved by the Institutional Review Board): (a) aged 18 years or over from the moment they volunteer to participate in the study, (b) employees of AFM, (c) willing to participate in the research activities mentioned above, and (d) able

to provide informed consent for their participation in the above mentioned research activities.

Due to the broad range of socio-economic, health, financial, employment, ethnic, and mental health factors among the employees of AFM, I screened the research participants to ensure they met the above criteria. Some research participants may indeed have come from vulnerable population groups, for example, pregnant women, but the study did not focus on these groups per se. No-one was involved who could not and would not give informed consent.

Further to Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval, detailed care was taken by myself to ensure the confidentiality of data gathered and strategies put in place to prevent and mitigate unanticipated harm (spiritual or otherwise) that may have pertained to the research participants by virtue of their participation in the research.

In addition to the factors identified in the Statement of the Problem (above), this research project was important particularly for AFM personnel who are engaged in cross-cultural mission. When coming into contact with Sufi Muslims, Buddhists, or Hindus who all engage in various forms of meditation, it is important for AFM personnel to have an understanding of the differences between eastern forms of meditation and biblical meditation, and to be able to offer a meaningful model of biblical meditation to new converts who are seeking to replace their prior approaches to meditation.

Furthermore, when sharing the Gospel among unreached people groups, it is crucially important to guide potential converts into a living relationship with God, and biblical meditation is a deeply meaningful and personal way for new and potential converts to encounter God and be drawn into a loving relationship with Him before they

come to an understanding of the full Gospel.

Research Delimitations and Limitations

While recognizing the complexities involved in any discussion of the broad topic of meditation, for this research paper I did not (a) engage in a systematic analysis and critique of all the forms of Buddhist, Hindu, or other non-biblical modes of meditation; (b) provide an exhaustive literature overview of the reported impact or benefits of such forms of meditation; (c) review all extant Christian literature since the apostolic era on the topic of meditation; (d) conduct a comparative research in which parallel research cohorts implement both Christian and non-Christian models of meditation; or (e) delineate between and develop different models for meditation based on the Bible or from the writings of White.

However, this research paper did perform the following key activities. First, I conducted a review of landmark works on meditation from the apostolic era onwards. Second, I conducted a review of the biblical testimony concerning meditation. Third, I conducted a review of the counsels and personal devotional practices of White concerning meditation. Fourth, I developed a unified model of meditation for the SDA context which incorporated insights from both the Bible and writings of White. Fifth, I implemented a simple longitudinal research instrument with a single cohort of research participants who participated in an initial seminar and orientation both to the model and the underlying writings of the Bible and White. Sixth, I evaluated the impact of participation in the research on the research participants through conducting initial and final in-depth individual interviews on the research participants. Finally, I evaluated the research findings to identify potential benefits or risk-factors, and the spiritual impact of

utilizing the proposed unified model of meditation. Chapter 4 includes a more detailed description of the research process.

Description of the Project Process

Table 1 outlines the chronological implementation of the research process.

Table 1

Chronological Implementation of the Research Process

<u>Week</u>	<u>Research Activity</u>
1-52	Literature research on the topic of biblical meditation among landmark writers and modern evangelical and SDA writers.
53-104	Identification of principles of biblical meditation as found in the Bible and in the writings of White.
105-156	Development of a model of biblical meditation for use among research participants and outline of detailed research method.
157	Circulation of promotional notice among AFM personnel inviting their participation in the research, to be circulated over four weeks.
157	Physical preparation of lockable filing cabinets.
158	Final editing of initial seminar materials, including (but not limited to) the theological foundations of biblical meditation as found in the Scriptures and writings of White.
159	Final editing of the meditation model to be used by research participants.
160	Final week of circulation of promotional notice among AFM personnel.
161	Determination of project participations based on responses to the promotional notice circulated among AFM personnel.
162	Final production of initial seminar materials and the meditation model for the anticipated number of research participants.
163	Completion of a two-day seminar for research participants on the theological foundations of biblical meditation as found in the Scriptures and the writings of White, and on the meditation model to be used. All research participants sign the Informed Consent form utilized (see Appendix 1).
164	Initial individual in-depth interviews conducted with all research participants (see Appendix 2 for the questions utilized).
165	Research participants begin their eight weeks of meditation, following the exercises outlined in the meditation model provided (see Appendix 3).

Table 1-Continued.

166-173	Ongoing monitoring of research participants progress, response as necessary to negative spiritual outcomes experienced, holding of weekly review meetings with the research participants.
174	Final individual in-depth interviews conducted with all research participants (see Appendix 4 for the questions utilized).
175-179	Analysis of research feedback taken from the following sources: a) initial and final individual in-depth interviews; 2) individual research participants' journals.
180-184	Preparation of Chapters 5 & 6, outlining the main research results, conclusions, recommendations and analysis of research expectations, implementation of meditation model across AFM in partnership with local CSG.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have included a brief personal profile of myself before moving on to provide a profile of the context of the research. Subsequent to concise summary statements of the research problem and of the research task, I have reviewed the research project delimitations and limitations. Following this, I have reviewed a concise outline of the research process

As this research project was implemented, I anticipated the following outcomes. First, I would personally have a deeper and enriched sense of God's presence through moving myself towards an enhanced understanding and greater intentionality within my own personal practice of meditation. Second, this research project would nurture spiritual growth for the research participants, helping them to experience the blessings that come through meditation. Third, this research project would enable me to articulate a uniquely Adventist understanding of meditation. Fourth, this project would advance the

understanding of factors which both limit and encourage the practice of meditation among research participants. Fifth, this project would potentially provide opportunity for AFM personnel worldwide to both understand and encourage the practice of meditation among their local congregations and among potential converts to the SDA faith. Finally, this project would potentially provide a helpful contribution to the current debate within the North American Adventist context on meditation.

Given the above, I now turn to a review of the theological foundations for the practice of meditation as found in the Bible and in the writings of White.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

Introduction

Given the wide diversity of opinion regarding meditation which makes any *a priori* definition problematic, in this chapter I will first examine the Bible passages that include the words translated as ‘meditation’ within the King James Version (KJV) together with some New Testament references (the KJV will be used throughout unless indicated otherwise).

This chapter will then address meditation within the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including an identification of the rationale behind the inclusion of the practice of meditation within these Beliefs.

I will then review the topic of meditation within the writings of White, whose writings are considered to be inspired and authoritative within the SDA Church, before reviewing the personal devotional practices of White.

As stated above, this chapter will then conclude by providing a summary of the theological foundations for the development of a model of meditation for use within the SDA context.

Meditation Within Scripture

Meditation in Joshua 1:8

Following the death of Moses, the Angel of the LORD encourages Joshua with the following words, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

In this passage, the focus of meditation is the law of God, and the purpose of such meditation is that Joshua may personally observe the law of God. Joshua is to engage in meditation night and day, indicating that meditation is not reserved for quiet moments, but may be practiced throughout daily life.

The use of *הנה*, translated as “meditate” and the textual parallelism between “meditate” and “not depart out of thy mouth” strongly suggest an oral dimension to the practice of meditation. Furthermore, the text indicates that to meditate on the law of God (in this context, the Torah per se) is the path to moving beyond a mere knowledge of the law of God to an understanding of how to personally apply the law of God, leading to the divine promise of prosperity and “good success.”

Meditation in Psalm 1:2

Griswold (2010) perceptively notes that Ps 1:1 “shows a specific preparation necessary for meditation” (p. 357). “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” This Psalm indicates a progression of evil: one first walks in conformity to ungodly counsel; then one “standeth” or associates with sinners; and finally one “sitteth” with the

ungodly, that is, one personally joins and identifies with the ungodly. The one seeking God's blessing does not participate in this progression to evil, but holds back from personal involvement in sin. Meditation on תּוֹרָה (the law of God) therefore occurs within a deepening covenant relationship with God in which one seeks an ever-increasing alignment of all aspects of one's life with the will of God.

Ps 1:2 then indicates the emotional state of the one who meditates, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Griswold (2010) goes on to comment that "there is an eager desiring for truth. Biblical meditation engages the heart" (Griswold, 2010, p. 357). Meditation thus engages both heart and mind, involves a life that is careful to avoid sin in order to engage with God, and is focused on the law of God.

The use of הִנָּה, meaning to growl, moan, utter or speak, indicates again an oral dimension to meditation. As in Josh 1:8, meditation is for "day and night," and the divine promise of prosperity (צִלְחָה) of Josh 1:8 is repeated in Ps 1:3 (צִלְחָה).

Understood as a wisdom psalm, the concept of blessedness is prescriptive: to be blessed by God, we are to meditate on His law. Alternately, understood as a Torah psalm, the concept of blessedness is descriptive: we are blessed by God as we meditate on His law. However, this Psalm distinguishes between two basic groups: the wicked; and the righteous.

Thus, meditation on the law of God may be understood more broadly as indicative of a Torah-compliant, covenant faithful life, and is not to be understood as a meritorious act per se, but is a means by which we open ourselves to God within a covenant relationship.

Meditation in Psalm 5:1

Ps 5:1-3 reveals a new dimension of meditation. “Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.” The use of הִנַּחֲתִי (meaning a murmur, complaint, musing, or meditation), and the parallel use of “my cry” “I pray” “my voice” “my prayer” and “my meditation” indicates that meditation may be understood as a dialogue with God.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) version of Ps 5:1 (“Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing”) captures well both the oral and dialogical nature of meditation, indicating that in meditation one communes with a personal God, a personal One other than the one who meditates. As an infant responds meaningfully to a parent using the very words and language the parent has been speaking to the infant since birth, so the psalmist here indicates that meaningful dialogue with God occurs when the worshipper literally uses the words God has given, that is, the Scriptures. Meditation on Scripture that involves reading, vocalization, memorization, inner internalization and utilization in dialogue with God thus directly aligns the worshipper’s thought and language patterns in harmony with God, thereby increasing the intimacy of the dialogue and openness to God’s promptings.

Meditation in Psalm 19:14

Ps 19:14 (“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer”) is a prayer that the

inner thoughts and outer words be acceptable to God. The use of **הִגִּיֵּן** indicates meditation's oral dimension, and the focus is God's revelation of Himself in nature and through His Word.

Verse 13 expresses, as in Ps 1:1, the turning from sin and the turning to God for those who meditate, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." The one who meditates seeks to be "upright" (**תָּמִים**). Meditation upon God's self-revelations in nature and Scripture is helpful for those seeking an upright life.

Meditation in Psalm 49:3

Ps 49:3 ("My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding") indicates through its parallelism and use of **הִגִּיתָ** the close relationship between meditation and orality. The oral dimension to the verb **הִגִּיה** is reflected in its use elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures where it is not translated as "meditate" in the KJV, that is, Job 27:4; Ps 37:30; Prov 8:7, 15:28, 24:2; Isa 31:4, 33:18; and Jer 48:31.

Meditation in Psalm 63:5-6

Commenting on Ps 63:5-6 ("My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches"), Richards (1976) argues that meditation requires a "quiet environment" (p. 10) and "a comfortable position" (p. 11). While one may meditate throughout the day and night, it is helpful to do so in a peaceful and relaxed environment.

The text indicates that God Himself and His help is the subject of meditation (v. 6), which results in conscious praise of God with “joyful lips” (v. 5). Griswold (2010) argues, “The type of biblical meditation described in Psalm 63 can therefore be connected to singing reflectively on the characteristics of God” (p. 358). In verses 7-8 the psalmist presents mental images of God’s deliverance, indicating the place for the sanctified use of one’s imagination within biblical meditation.

Meditation in Psalm 77:12

Ps 77:12 (“And I said, this is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings”) refers to meditation in the context of suffering. In v. 3, the psalmist records that, “I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.”

The verb used for “complained” is שׁוּחַ, meaning to ponder, converse with oneself, complain or meditate. In response to discouragement, the psalmist meditates not on the law of God but on all God’s deeds in the past, including God’s deeds in the life of the psalmist.

This concept is echoed in Ps 143:4-7, in which the psalmist also meditates, “On all thy works” (v. 5) as part of a dialogue with God within the boundaries of *hesed* faithfulness in which the psalmist expects his/her meditations to be heard by God and answered.

Meditation in Psalm 104:33-34

In Ps 103:33-34 (“I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to

my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD”) we find the word **תִּשְׁבַּח**. The psalmist parallels meditation with the concept of conscious rejoicing in the LORD. Meditation may be a joyous experience, paralleling the concept of singing praises to God for the entirety of one’s life. The subject of meditation and praise is God’s role as Creator, and His provision of life and sustenance for all His creation.

Meditation in Psalm 119

The opening verse of this acrostic Psalm (“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD”) reiterates the message of Ps 19:13-14 (above). Those whose lives are ordered around **תּוֹרַת** are considered **תְּמִיִּים**, that is, entirely in accord with truth and fact, and are thus blessed by God.

The second section of this Psalm (vv. 9-16) provides a further reason for meditation. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word . . . thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. . . . I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.” In order for a young man to cleanse his lips, his heart, his way in life, and avoid sin, he meditates on the Scriptures. Meditation is therefore a personal response to the challenge of keeping one’s heart pure.

Verse 11 adds another dimension to meditation, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart.” The use of **סָפַן**, meaning to treasure or hide up, implies memorization of Scripture as a dimension of meditation. Within an oral context, memorization (internalization) precedes vocalization (externalization). For the psalmist, memorization makes possible the continual meditation on Scripture through the day and night.

The third section of this Psalm (vv. 17-24) reveals in verse 17 the desire of the psalmist, “Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.” As in Josh 1:8, the goal is personal obedience to the law of God. The subject here for meditation is the word, law, commandments and testimonies of God, in order to know and live God’s will. Verse 23 highlights another feature of meditation, “Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate on thy statutes” (תִּשָּׁ). The psalmist did not respond to the words of earthly rulers, but in times of stress responded by meditating on God’s Word. The desire in meditation is to know and obey God rather than earthly rulers.

The sixth section of this Psalm (vv. 41-48) opens with a plea to God for His “mercies” (חַסְדֵּי) to come to the psalmist. The psalmist’s desire to personally experience God’s חַסְדֵּי leads the psalmist to meditate on God’s statutes (v. 48), pleading with God in verse 43, “And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.” Biblical meditation therefore occurs within the context of a sought-after and realized covenant relationship with God, while in verses 46-48 we find that meditation on God’s word also leads to boldness in personal witnessing before hostile earthly authorities.

In the tenth section of this Psalm (vv. 73-80) the psalmist pleads with the Creator God for understanding, “that I may learn thy commandments” (v. 73). In response to the perverse dealings of the proud, the psalmist turns to meditation on God’s precepts (v. 78), viewing God’s law as a delight (v. 77) and as a manifestation of God’s “tender mercies” (v. 77). And as a result of meditation on God’s word, as in Ps 19:13-14 and Ps 10:1, the psalmist’s personal plea is for a heart that is sound, entirely in accord with God’s ways (תְּמִיּוֹם).

The psalmist continues to extol the benefits of meditation (שִׁירָה) on God's law in verses 97-99, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." Meditation on תּוֹרָה provides understanding that cannot be found among human teachers or through the wisdom of age, leading to obedience to God's law (v. 100) and a hatred of false ways (v. 104). Engaging in meditation on God's law is a sweet experience for the psalmist, "sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (v. 103).

In verses 145-152 the psalmist cries to God to be saved and in response the psalmist will keep God's statutes (v. 145). Meditation on God's word (v. 148) is part of crying out to God, occurs during the three watches of the night, and before daybreak (vv. 147-148) and is for the purpose of enabling the psalmist to personally keep and apply God's statutes.

Meditation in 1 Timothy 4:13-16.

The New Testament has few explicit references to meditation. For the purposes of this paper, 1 Tim 4:13-16 is perhaps the most salient text, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

In this passage, Paul is charging his protégé, Timothy, to be faithful in his role as a spiritual shepherd, despite his youth. To maintain his spiritual authority, Timothy is to

meditate on the apostolic counsel from Paul and God's works in Timothy's life. The present imperative form used (μελετά) from the verb μελετάω implies that Timothy was to engage in ongoing meditation rather than engage in punctuated periods of meditation.

In thus ordering his young life around and in harmony with God's revealed will, the young man could set older believers an example of a sanctified life, and as all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16), all Scripture is therefore worthy of meditation.

Meditation in Philippians 4:8

In this prison epistle, Paul encourages believers to live with joy, regardless of life's circumstances. Believers are commanded, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil 4:4), and in addition to giving concerns to God in prayer, are commanded, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (v. 8).

The phrase "think on these things" is a translation of "λογίζεσθε" from λογίζομαι. The verb form used (2nd person, plural, middle, imperative, present) indicates the apostolic injunction is for Christian believers to continually think on those things which have been commended. Such thinking is to become the habit and way of life for the believer, and contributes to being able to live with joy through the vicissitudes of life.

This is paralleled in Col 3:2, in which Paul commands believers to, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Although the verb used is different to Phil 4:8, (φρονεῖω), the form of the verb used (imperative, present, active, 2nd person plural) indicates that believers are to continually set their minds on heavenly themes.

In light of the above discussion, Groothuis (2004) provides a succinct definition of biblical meditation, “In the Bible, meditation always means pondering God’s revealed truths and reflecting on how they pertain to us” (p. 78). With the above biblical understanding of meditation in mind, I turn now to the topic of meditation within the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Meditation Within the SDA Fundamental Beliefs

SDA Fundamental Beliefs

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Fundamental Beliefs define doctrinal belief, contribute to unity, and help communicate the Gospel. They do not however constitute a creed, but instead are a living document. The preamble to the 27 Fundamental Beliefs (1988) elucidates the Adventist concept of “present truth” (2 Pet 2:12), and clearly articulates the possibility of further doctrinal development within the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word. (p. iv)

Spiritual Growth Within the SDA Fundamental Beliefs

Oliver (2005), discussing spirituality within Adventism stated, “Adventist Christians have shown special skill in defining and defending biblical doctrines and beliefs. But we haven’t found it nearly so easy to describe our spiritual lives – experiences that by their very nature are intimate, personal and subjective” (p. 8). Oliver

recognized that the Fundamental Beliefs focus more on theological truth than the believer's devotional experience, yet within the Fundamental Beliefs the need for spiritual growth is recognized. Fundamental Belief 10 (1988), "The Experience of Salvation," reads as follows:

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit, we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the Lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment." (p. 118)

Willsey (1991) correctly noted in his discussion of spiritual growth within the Fundamental Beliefs that the Adventist church "takes a thoroughly evangelical position as it affirms the individual's lost condition and total dependence on Christ, the Substitute, for salvation" (p. 84). Through "abiding in Him" the Christian partakes of the "divine nature," but the Fundamental Belief does not address the elements of that growth.

The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of SDAs, in its publication outlining the Fundamental Beliefs (1988), provides further discussion on "The Experience of Salvation." Discussing the inner change that the Holy Spirit works within a believer's heart, we read as follows: "We must place ourselves in the channel of the Spirit's working, which we can do by beholding Christ. As we meditate on Christ's life, the Holy Spirit restores the physical, mental and spiritual faculties" (p. 125). To partake of the "divine nature" is then defined further: "Whereas Christ became human, believers do not become divine. Rather, they become Godlike in character" (p. 126).

Fundamental Belief 5, "God the Holy Spirit" states, *inter alia*, that "He [the Holy

Spirit] draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God” (p. 58), and Fundamental Belief 22, “Christian Behavior”, states, *inter alia*, that “for the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health and joy in our lives” (p. 278). However, despite the recognized need for spiritual growth involving meditation, no practical advice is provided concerning how to meditate.

A New Fundamental Belief

The Ministerial Association prepared an unpublished paper (2004) in anticipation of the 2005 General Conference session of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, in which it argued for the need for a new Fundamental Belief entitled “Growing in Christ.” Due to the rapid missionary expansion of the SDA Church into animist, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist territories, a new Fundamental Belief was needed, because “we confront two main areas of great concern for us among non-Christian religions, namely transcendental meditation and the power of demons” (p. 2). Thus:

Transcendental meditation is a search for contact with spiritual powers in order to enrich the individual. In place of that spiritualistic practice we offer them contact with God through prayer, Bible study, service and meditation on the Word of God and His providential leadings. These subjects . . . are hardly addressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. (p. 2)

The proposed new Fundamental Belief had two main purposes, the first of which dealt with meditation, stating, “First, it explicitly addresses Christian growth in order to exclude eastern transcendental meditation as a spiritual exercise that is incompatible with the gospel of salvation through Christ” (p. 7). What was needed was a new Fundamental Belief with an emphasis on the believer’s devotional life, “characterized by prayer, Bible study, meditation on God’s Word and His providence in our lives, and participation in the

Gospel commission” (p. 9). In a specific rejection of transcendental meditation, the paper argued that “Instead of submission to demons and transcendental meditation, the Bible offers prayer, Bible study and a meditation whose content is the Scripture and God’s providential leadings in our lives” (p. 11).

At the 2005 General Conference session of the SDA Church, a new Fundamental Belief was voted entitled “Growing in Christ.” This included the following statement:

In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church. (p. 149)

The new Fundamental Belief explicitly rejects mysticism, stating “Christian spirituality is thus not a flight into a world of fantasy and mysticism” (p. 156). The devotional life consists rather of a life of the Spirit, a life of love and unity, of study, of prayer, of fruit bearing, of spiritual warfare, of worship, of witness, and of hope (pp. 155–161).

Therefore, while eastern transcendental forms are explicitly rejected, meditation is recognized within the Fundamental Beliefs as being an intrinsic part of the daily devotional life. However, as stated above, no practical advice is provided for Adventists anywhere in the Fundamental Beliefs on actually how to meditate.

I therefore turn to the writings of White, whose writings are considered inspired and authoritative within the SDA Church, for further understanding on Christian meditation.

Meditation Within the Writings of Ellen G. White

White's Understanding of Spirituality

White's understanding of spirituality, spiritual growth, and meditation is very important for Adventists, who consider her writings to be inspired and authoritative counsel for God's remnant church. Her understanding of spirituality may be tentatively summarized as the restoration within the individual of the image of God, as outlined in her book *Education* (1903):

To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized--this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life. (pp. 15-16)

Spirituality is to be the life focus for believers, with White (1908) urging believers, "I urge our people to make it their lifework to seek for spirituality" (p. 356). Such seeking for personal spirituality is to be intentional, for White (1942c) stated, "You need ever to cultivate spirituality, because it is not natural for you to be heavenly-minded" (p. 520).

For White, the motivation for spirituality is not merely ethical, but eschatological. In view of the post-1844 pre-advent judgment and the impending Second Coming, she counsels believers (1882):

God calls upon us to awake, for the end is near. Unless you rise to a higher, holier state in your religious life, you will not be ready for the appearing of the Lord. . . . There must be more spirituality, a deeper consecration to God. (p. 717)

Christians are, through God's empowering grace, to seek to be like Jesus through emulating His character. White (1895a), however, is careful to warn that "we can never equal the pattern" of Christ's character, even though "we may imitate and resemble it" (February 5).

White's Understanding of Spiritual Growth

This restoration of the image of God is accomplished through daily union with Jesus. According to White (1878), "The more that the minister of Christ associates with his Master . . . the more closely will he resemble Him" (p. 244), and in 1898 she explains further, "Are you a follower of Christ? Then all that is written concerning the spiritual life is written for you, and may be attained through uniting yourself to Jesus" (p. 389).

White repeatedly states in her writings the essential human component of spiritual growth, "By beholding we become changed." Willsey (1991) perceptively notes that "this act of beholding must be a code for a very intentional involvement with God" (p. 109). Emphasizing personal intentionality in spiritual growth, White (1898) states, "Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciples that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character" (p. 251), and further in 1898:

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. (p. 83)

Spiritual growth is not however merely a human activity, but involves the human cooperating with the divine. Discussing Nicodemus, White (1898) states the importance of the Holy Spirit for spiritual growth, "The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. . . . This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit" (p. 172). Thus spiritual growth, restoring the image of God in sinful humanity, is an intentional cooperation between the sinner and God.

According to Willsey (1991), in terms of practical spiritual growth, "White

encouraged the use of the classic disciplines of the Christian faith, often referring to them together” (p. 111). Willsey then references the following quote from *Testimonies*

(1942b):

Nothing but holiness will prepare you for heaven. It is sincere, experimental piety alone that can give you a pure, elevated character and enable you to enter into the presence of God, who dwelleth in light unapproachable. The heavenly character must be acquired on earth, or it can never be acquired at all. Then begin at once. . . . Prepare for eternity with such zeal as you have not yet manifested. Educate your mind to love the Bible, to love the prayer meeting, to love the hour of meditation, and, above all, the hour when the soul communes with God. Become heavenly-minded if you would unite with the heavenly choir in the mansions above. (pp. 267-268)

White here identifies basic Christian spiritual disciplines necessary for the believer’s character to be ready for translation: Bible study, prayer, and meditation. We now turn to White’s counsels on meditation within the above context of the importance of spirituality and personal spiritual growth in her writings.

White’s Understanding of Meditation

White’s use of the concepts of “meditation” and “contemplation” seems to reflect the definitions of the verbs “to meditate” and “to contemplate” in the dictionary she kept in her private office in her later years, the *1897 New Revised Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, which defines these verbs almost synonymously.

On occasion, White (2003) uses these terms almost interchangeably, for example, “We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. As we thus contemplate heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger” (p. 91). However, the primary difference between these terms in the *New Revised Encyclopaedic Dictionary* is the discussion on the verb “to contemplate,” which states, “We contemplate what is present or before our eyes; we meditate on what is past or

absent.” Thus, one may meditate on the Scriptures, on God’s revealed will or providence, and one may contemplate on nature, or on the life of Christ using one’s imagination, seeing the scenes in one’s mind (e.g., 1898, p. 83).

Meditation may therefore involve the use of the sanctified imagination under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or as White (1990b) herself suggests:

If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not talk of your feelings. . . . Instead of thinking of your discouragements, think of the power you can claim in Christ’s name. . . . Let your imagination take hold upon things unseen. Let your thoughts be directed to the evidences of the great love of God for you. (pp. 211-212)

Echoing Ps 63 (above), White (1993) goes on to explicitly articulate the proper place for the use of the sanctified imagination when seeking to gain deeper understanding of Scripture:

Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons. (p. 1)

This sanctified use of the imagination within meditation is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and involves the internal visualization of the scenes described in Scripture to more deeply appreciate the truths being revealed in Scripture.

Who Should Meditate?

Concerning who should meditate, White delineates specific groups who are to meditate. The young (1942a) are to meditate (p.503). Ministers (1942b) are to meditate (p.512). Young girls (1942b) are to meditate (p.564). Worshippers (1898) are to meditate during and after worship services (p. 83); students of Scripture (1864) are to meditate (RH, Jan 19). Those who seek to bring themselves “to a more perfect likeness of Christ”

(1980) are to meditate (p. 49). However, White (1958) goes beyond such specific groups to indicate that all Christians should meditate, “All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character” (p. 307).

Spiritual Consequences of Not Meditating

Concerning the spiritual dangers of not meditating, White (1942b) clearly indicates the spiritual declension that arises from not training the mind to focus on heavenly themes, stating, “A neglect of meditation and prayer will surely result in a declension of religious interests” (p. 505).

Furthermore, White (1898) states, “Many attend religious services, and are refreshed and comforted by the word of God: but through neglect of meditation, watchfulness and prayer, they lose the blessing” (p. 83). Concerning God’s love, White (1988) states, “We are ever in danger of forgetting this great love, because we fail to meditate on it” (p. 238).

Youth (1970) fall into temptation because, “They do not study the word of God and meditate upon it as they should” (p. 304). White (1948) further states that Satan knows how important meditation and prayer are for Christians to resist his deceptions, so “he would divert the mind from these important exercises” (1:295).

Perhaps most importantly, not meditating upon Christ directly threatens the ultimate purpose of spirituality within White’s writings (i.e., the restoration within the individual of the image of God), for she states (1988), “The less you meditate on Christ and his matchless love and the less you are assimilated to His image, the better you will

appear in your own eyes, and the more self-confidence and self-complacency will you possess” (p. 213).

Benefits of Meditation

Concerning the benefits of meditation, White (1988) links the practice of meditation with personal spiritual growth and character preparation for translation, stating, “In order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, it is essential that you meditate much upon the great themes of redemption” (p. 237). White (1990a) goes on to state that

merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth. . . . By earnest attention and prayerful thought, he must learn the meaning of the words of truth. . . . God . . . desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. (p. 17)

For White (1942b), not only is meditation essential for spiritual growth, for example, “meditation and prayer are necessary to a growth in grace” (p. 187), but in 1990b she wrote that meditation leads to joy and encouragement in the present:

Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible. (p. 224)

Significantly, meditation upon Christ engenders personal transformation into the likeness of Christ. White (2003) states, “As we meditate upon the perfections of the Saviour, we shall desire to be wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity” (p. 91), and elsewhere she states (1962):

As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is molded after the divine similitude. . . . We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts. . . . By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the likeness of Christ....We have

become transformed in character; for heart, soul, mind, are irradiated by the reflection of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. (pp. 388-389)

Principles of Meditation

Concerning principles of meditation, White does not provide a defined method, but key components may be identified within her writings. In contra-distinction to eastern meditation, meditation for White is not an escape into an inner sphere or an altered state of consciousness. White (1973) clearly links meditation with rational thought, stating “We should meditate upon the Scriptures, thinking soberly and candidly upon the things that pertain to our eternal salvation” (p. 34). Kuhalampi (2010) affirms this theme, stating, “White sees meditation also as a conscious, dynamic effort to fill one’s mind with thoughts tending to a positive impact” (p. 186).

For White, meditation is primarily upon Scripture, including meditation on scenes recorded in the Gospels from the life of Christ, stating (1898):

We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know “what saith the Lord.” (p. 390)

In this passage, White counsels Christians to concentrate their minds on a verse of Scripture, to dwell reflectively on the thoughts within the verse until the Word of God become the Christian’s thoughts and the Christian knows God’s will for them. As in Josh 1:8 and Ps 119:17, and in view of White’s broader emphasis on spirituality within an eschatological framework, the goal is an understanding of God’s will that is translated into personal obedience, but with a new motive—that of character preparation for translation at the Second Coming.

White (1882) also suggests that in addition to the 10 Commandments, the “Testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually . . . when you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation” (p. 58). To an Adventist audience, which believes White to be an end-time manifestation of the “spirit of prophecy” as found in Rev 19:10 and clarified in Rev 12:17, this suggests that her own writings are suitable material for meditation.

A reader may find a rich variety of suitable topics for meditation in White’s writings, but the general theme of her writings is that the subject for meditation be the Scriptures, the promises of God and the character and life of Christ (particularly the closing scenes). Further suitable topics include the plan of salvation, the sacrifice of Jesus, God’s love and mercy, God’s providence, and the wonders of creation.

In White’s writings (1991), Christians should “cultivate a love for meditation, and cherish a spirit of devotion . . . to discipline the mind to dwell upon heavenly things will put life and earnestness into all our endeavors” (p. 23). As the psalmist loved to meditate on the law of God (Ps 119:97), so White (1942b) counsels Christians, to “educate your mind to love the Bible, to love the prayer meeting, to love the hour of meditation, and, above all, the hour when the soul communes with God” (p. 268).

White (1864) argues that one hour’s meditation is to be preferred to hours and days spent studying human authors, stating, “You will receive more strength by spending one hour each day in meditation and mourning over your failings and heart corruptions . . . than you would by spending many hours and days in studying the most able authors” (RH, Jan 19).

Meditation over Scripture is to be preceded by prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, with White (1967) writing that Christians are to “pray, . . . meditate on the Scriptures until the understanding, the gate to the door of the heart, is opened to comprehend its requirements and our dependence” (p. 277). Thus prayerful meditation is a means to opening and submitting the heart to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

White (1967) echoes the psalmist (Ps 1:1) who indicates that a life of meditation requires a circumspect life that deliberately turns from sin, stating, “The mind must be kept meditating upon pure and holy subjects. An impure suggestion must be dismissed at once” (p. 197). Meditation and a holy life are thus symbiotically linked. Each nurtures the other. In opening ourselves to God in meditation, He empowers the believer to lead a victorious life. The believer does not get rid of sin before coming to God, but in opening oneself up to God in meditation, God reveals in a personal and intimate way what it means to live a holy life.

White (2002) echoes the dimension of memorization found above in the psalms, writing, “When you have an hour of leisure open the Bible and store the mind with its precious truths. When engaged in labor, guard the mind, keep it stayed upon God, talk less and meditate more” (p. 156). In White’s own experience, while seriously ill in Australia in 1891-1892, she illustrates (1967) the link between memorization and subsequent meditation:

Many hours I have passed in wakefulness and pain, but I have had the precious promises of God brought so fresh and with reviving power to my mind. The dear Savior has been very near to me, and I love to meditate upon the love of Jesus. His tender compassion and the lessons which He gave to His disciples become clear and so full of meaning that they are the feeding of the soul upon heavenly manna . . . and when the Holy Spirit brings many things to my memory, precious beyond expression, I do not know what reason I have to complain. (p. 121)

Through meditating on Scripture, the believer fixes the Word of God in the mind, enabling meditation while engaged in daily life, thus she stated (2003):

There is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. . . . Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets, you may read a passage, and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind. (p. 92)

Perhaps one of the most famous quotes from White's writings emphasizes this dimension of meditation (1898), "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones" (p. 83). As stated above, White uses "meditation" and "contemplation" almost synonymously and here counsels believers to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation/meditation. White is not recommending an academic or intellectual thought process, but a reflective meditation, because the desired response of such an hour's contemplation is "penitence and faith at the foot of the cross" (p. 83).

The above discussion indicates that restoring the image of God is the purpose of personal spirituality, and that spiritual growth into Christlikeness occurs when the believer seeks union with Christ through daily engaging in key devotional habits such as prayer, Bible study, and meditation. White's concept of the impact of meditation directly correlates with recent research (Meier, 2012) which suggests a positive correlation between Scripture meditation and positive mental health and emotional maturity.

For White, meditation is an essential component and contributor to spiritual growth, the lack of which will directly impede spiritual growth. Although White uses the concepts of meditation and contemplation almost synonymously, in her writings meditation is primarily on God's revealed will and self-revelation in Scripture using

rational thought or the sanctified imagination. Meditation (including memorization) fosters a closer union with Christ through providing more touch-points for the Holy Spirit to guide the believer, literally burning new neural pathways which carry God's perfect self-revelation in Scripture and override existing neural pathways which carry the individual's fallen thoughts.

Before I conclude this chapter, I will briefly address White's personal devotional life.

Ellen G. White's Personal Devotional Practices

White's Personal Diaries

White maintained a diary intermittently throughout her life. While not published, her diaries are kept by the White Estate. I conducted a review of a random sample of her diary entries covering the years 1859 (1859a, 1859b, 1859c and 1859d) and 1873 (1873a, 1873b, 1873c) to provide insights into White's personal spiritual life.

The diary entries reveal a woman struggling with poverty, long separations from her husband and children, cold winters, and the incessant labor of pioneer living. The burden of her husband's illnesses and her own struggle with depression and spiritual exhaustion are regularly mentioned.

I found no evidence of meditation within the above listed sample diary entries, but her diaries do reveal a deep and meaningful prayer life. White records intercessory prayers for the sick and her children, daily early morning devotions which included Bible study and deep prayer, prayers for the encouragement and spiritual welfare of fellow Adventists, for relief from depression, for guidance in decisions, and for forgiveness.

The most striking impression from her diaries is the centrality of prayer in

White's life. Prayer was a constant activity, whether on her own, with her family, or with others. At times, prayer is recorded for no purpose other than to commune with God, that is, it was not merely a functional practice (to gain a specific answer), but prayer represented the ontological dimension of her relationship with God. Thus, her definition of prayer in *Steps to Christ* (2003), "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend" (p. 94) may be seen as a reflection of her own spiritual experience.

White's Other Writings

While the above listed samples of White's diaries give no evidence of meditation, there is evidence of meditation in her other writings. Speaking later of her teenage years and vivid early spiritual experiences, she testifies of finding love and peace through meditation and prayer as she sought to keep Jesus and heaven "continually in mind" (1942a):

For six months not a shadow clouded my mind, nor did I neglect one known duty. My whole endeavor was to do the will of God, and keep Jesus and heaven continually in mind. I was surprised and enraptured with the clear views now presented to me of the atonement and the work of Christ. I will not attempt to further explain the exercises of my mind; suffice it to say that old things had passed away, all things had become new. . . . My heart was so filled with love to God and the peace that passeth understanding, that I loved to meditate and pray. (p. 32)

Later in life, writing in 1892 to colleagues in the General Conference about her long illness in Australia, she states (1943):

I have felt that I could welcome suffering if this precious grace was to accompany it. I knew the Lord is good and gracious and full of mercy and compassion and tender, pitying love. In my helplessness and suffering, His praise has filled my soul and has been upon my lips. My meditation has been so comforting and so strengthening as I have thought how much worse condition I should be in without the sustaining grace of God. My eyesight is continued to me, my memory has been preserved, and my mind has never been more clear and active in seeing the beauty and preciousness of truth. (p. 339)

White's Australian correspondence indicates that during her long illness, God brought to mind texts already memorized, her mind was clear and perceptive of truth, she was able to meditate on heavenly truths, find comfort, and respond with praise. This experience closely parallels that of the psalmist in Ps 77:12 and 63:5-6, who in the midst of suffering meditates on God's revelation in Scripture and responds with praise and joy.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to seek to provide a theological foundation for the development of a working model for meditation within the SDA context.

When I considered the biblical evidence, I came to certain conclusions about biblical meditation. Meditation involves conscious reflection upon God's revelation of Himself in Scripture, nature, salvation or personal history. Meditation may include memorization and vocalization of Scripture. Meditation may involve singing and is to be a continual activity, occurring at all hours of the night or day. Meditation requires a comfortable or a quiet location. In meditation, the sanctified imagination may be used, and the purpose is to go beyond merely knowing God's law to understanding how God's revealed will is to be applied in one's life. Meditation is manifested in a life that consciously turns from sin and evil to God and occurs within a covenant relationship with God. Meditation is not a meritorious act, but a means of opening oneself to God's transforming presence. Meditation cleanses the heart, keeps one pure, brings vitality to witnessing, and leads to obedience. Furthermore, meditation nurtures a hatred of evil, provides a refuge in times of stress, and leads to God's blessings in the present and future life. Meditation thus may be understood as being causative for a religious life, descriptive of a religious life, and a condition expressed within a religious life.

Within the SDA Fundamental Beliefs, meditation is recognized as being an intrinsic part of the daily devotional life. Focussed on the life of Christ, the Word of God and His providence, the experience is rational rather than mystical, and eastern forms, including transcendental meditation, are explicitly rejected. Progressive sanctification includes Christian meditation, and the purpose is not to discover, as in some eastern forms of meditation, the inner divine, but for the believer to become more Godlike in character.

Within the writings of White, restoring the image of God is the purpose of personal spirituality, and that spiritual growth into Christlikeness occurs when the believer seeks union with Christ through daily engaging in key devotional habits such as prayer, Bible study, and meditation. For White, meditation is an essential component and contributor to spiritual growth, the lack of which will directly impede spiritual growth, and although she uses the concepts of meditation and contemplation almost synonymously, meditation is primarily a reflection on God's revealed will and self-revelation in Scripture using rational thought or the sanctified imagination.

Within White's personal spiritual life, the evidence reviewed suggests that not only was White a woman of prayer, but she also engaged in meditation during both her teenage years of formative spiritual experience and her senior years during illness. While White does not elaborate on her practice of meditation, the evidence suggests it involved reflection on memorized Scriptures under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

With the above conclusions in mind, I recognize that while there is sufficient material within Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White to provide a theological foundation for the practice of meditation within an Adventist context, there remains no

denominationally voted or approved model anywhere within Adventism for members on actually how to meditate.

Recognizing both the abundance of theological material but the relative paucity of practical material on meditation within the Adventist context, I now turn to a review of the relevant literature on this topic.

CHAPTER 3

MEDITATION IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST AND OTHER CHRISTIAN WRITINGS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Having provided an overview of the theological foundations for the practice of meditation from a biblical basis and within the SDA context, I now turn to review the salient viewpoints and literature concerning meditation from 1990 onwards to the present day.

During my research, I reviewed landmark sources (prior to 1990) to set the broader context for the literature review, which covered two broad streams of (occasionally inter-related) material: meditation within Christian literature and meditation within SDA literature. Following this review, I looked for pertinent similarities between the broader Christian and SDA literature streams.

Because much of the literature in the above referenced review discusses contemplative prayer and centering prayer in the context of meditation, I reviewed these sources also, but only insofar as they explicitly related to meditation.

The review of relevant literature will lead to an understanding of the current gaps in research and understanding that provide the space for the development of a working model for meditation within the SDA context.

Meditation Within Christian Literature

Landmark Writers

Following the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C. E., the Syriac church flourished in modern-day Syria and Iraq. According to Nagler (2003), a tradition of monks developed who sought solitude and cultivated intense experiences of interior prayer that are recognizably meditative events. Isaac of Syria (circa 700 C. E.) wrote extensively on a form of prayer that involved focussing the mind until it becomes silent and God is heard and experienced.

Nagler (2003) argues for close conceptual similarities between early Syriac and Eastern forms of meditation. In both streams, because words are close to the source of thought, the use of words to go beyond words (e.g., in mantras) brings the mind into a kind of deliberate suspension. Nagler argues this is the supreme spiritual endeavour, open to all practitioners of meditation, ignoring the scriptural paradigm of meditating to hear God and to grow in Christlikeness.

Mysticism and meditative practices continued within Christianity, with notable exemplars being Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), St. Catherine of Siene (1347-1380), the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471), Richard Rolle (1300-1349), Julian of Norwich (1342-1423), St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and St. John of the Cross (1542-1591).

The writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola form another landmark. The pre-eminent criterion for decision-making in the Loyolan *corpus* was the greater glory of God. Within this framework, Loyola developed a program of personal spirituality known as the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*, all simply means to the end—the greater glory

of God. The *Exercises* were eventually codified into a systematic weekly program of devotional activities, including confession, repentance, meditation, and contemplation, and are practiced to this day in some faith traditions.

McGrath (1999) expounded further on the *Exercises*, arguing (correctly) that for Loyola, meditation was a “technique of empathetic projection or imaginative engagement” (p. 85). Loyola suggested entering a biblical scene and experiencing it with one’s senses, an idea akin to the concept of contemplation in the writings of Ellen G. White (see Chapter 2).

The conversations and letters of Brother Lawrence (1611-1691) form the next major landmark. Allegedly written by M. Beaufort, Grand Vicar to M. de Chalons, we find repeated references to the concept of practicing the presence of God. For Brother Lawrence (2007), this was achieved through living as if only he and God existed, through viewing every moment and deed as an act of worship, and through focusing the mind of God until God became the habitual focus of thought and deed. For Brother Lawrence, practicing the presence of God involved the conscious focussing of the mind on God, the Scriptures, and worship, in clear contradistinction to the later landmark writers (see below) whose teachings suggested an emptying of the mind and the cessation of rational and focussed thought.

Landmark writings continued through the centuries, including the writings of George Fox (1624-1691), Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), and Evelyn Underhill (1871-1941). Whereas Brother Lawrence differed from the Syriac eremites and Loyolan *Exercises* in some details, the previously mentioned landmark writings shared a common *modus operandi*: the seeking of God through inner silence and an inner conversation.

In the modern era, Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was a pivotal figure in popularizing contemplative prayer among Christian laity from multiple denominations through a ministry of writing and conducting seminars worldwide. A Trappist monk, Merton was deeply influenced by Eastern mysticism, and understood contemplative prayer as the seeking of God through inner silence and an inner conversation. At one point, Merton believed he needed to leave the Christian faith behind in order to become a true mystic, but he was persuaded against this line of reasoning by a Hindu teacher, and thereafter sought to incorporate Buddhist and Hindu traditions within his own Christian faith. His book, 'Contemplative Prayer' (released in 1971), is a landmark writing of the modern era for Christian spirituality. Merton did not seek to provide a set of techniques, but in this reflection upon contemplation that was heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism he presented contemplative prayer not as a retreat from the world but as a source for renewed engagement in the world.

Within this overall context of landmark writers addressing the topic of meditation within Christendom over the centuries, I now turn to more recent non-SDA Christian literature on the topic of meditation.

Christian Writers Since 1990

Willard (1991) believes that Christians “have at their disposal the means to bring the world effectively under the rule of God” (p. 255). Whether Willard is operating within a post-millennial framework or within the Augustinian framework outlined in *City of God*, he does not explicitly promote the mystical approach to meditation found in the landmark writings, but recommends memorization and reflection on the Word of God (a focus later endorsed by Moore in 2001). Willard (1991) does, however, recommend that

as one ponders Scripture, one withdraws, “into silence where we meaningfully and steadily focus upon it [i.e., Scripture]” (p. 177).

Willard’s ambiguity on the actual practice of meditation remains when he later (1998) recommends a series of spiritual disciplines (solitude, silence, meditation, worship, and study) within an intentional program of discipleship aiming at personal Christlikeness. Willard agrees with the earlier landmark writers on the need for spiritual disciplines, but provides a new focus—becoming transformed into the image of Christ.

Concurring with Willard on the purpose of spiritual disciplines, Mulholland (2000) argues that “Christian spiritual formation is the process of being confirmed to the image of Christ for the sake of others” (p. 25). Mulholland’s approach to Christlikeness, however, is not based on a series of spiritual disciplines as proposed by Willard, but on a formational rather than informational reading of Scripture, akin to that proposed by Sorge (2009). Drawing on the writings of John Wesley, Mulholland incorporates three essential components: approach, encounter, and response. Meditation is understood by Mulholland as being reflection on Scripture within an ordinary state of consciousness (OSC).

Furthermore, Mulholland (2000) recommends “Praying the Word” (p. 158). Although similar to meditative exercises involving mantras or breathing exercises which seek an altered state of consciousness (ASC), Mulholland’s concept remains firmly within an OSC, breathing prepared micro-prayers through the day in response to the realities of life.

Mulholland’s influence among evangelicals, however, is dwarfed by that of Foster. Writing from within the Quaker tradition, Foster (1998) sought to move Christians from shallow spiritual lives to find joy and meaning in a closer walk with God.

The means he proposed are inward disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, and study), outward disciplines (simplicity, solitude, submission, and service) and corporate disciplines (confession, worship, guidance, and celebration), and in 2008 he argued that the purpose of these disciplines is personal transformation into Christlikeness, for the believer to experience the promise of Phil 2:5.

Foster (1998) provides a brief biblical framework for meditation, arguing that obedience is the natural fruit of meditation. For Foster, the spiritual disciplines in general are “God’s way of getting us into the ground; they put us where He can work within us and transform us” (p. 7). In Foster’s writings, meditation is simply one way of the believer opening himself or herself to God and God’s transforming power, thus leading to a deeper understanding of God, His will, and resulting in the fruit of obedience. His belief that meditation is “the ability to hear God’s voice and obey His word” (p. 17) is profoundly simple, and reaffirms the underlying purpose of meditation as found in the earlier landmark writings, Mulholland and Willard.

Foster (1998) delineates Christian and Eastern meditation, arguing that whereas Christian meditation fills the mind to seek attachment to God, Eastern meditation empties the mind, seeks detachment from the world, and denies the existence of God (pp. 20-21). He recommends a variety of meditative practices, moving from *meditatio Scripturarum* through Loyolan contemplation to entering the “recreating silence” through breathing or mantric practices. In this, Foster’s close connection with Roman Catholic mysticism emerges when he argues that Jesus Christ “desires a perpetual Eucharistic feast in the inner sanctuary of the heart” (p. 20). Furthermore, he draws repeatedly on Roman

Catholic mystics in his writings (e.g., Brother Lawrence, Thomas Merton, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and Thomas a Kempis).

Foster (1992) then described meditation in essentially the same way as Maxson does: guided and content (narrative) meditation. However, Foster goes further than Maxson, moving through *lectio divina* to meditation as contemplative prayer, an ecstatic union with God in deep inner silence. Intriguingly, Foster offers a note of caution: in the silent spiritual realm there is “supernatural guidance that is not divine guidance” (p. 157). Foster recommends a special prayer for God’s protection from demonic forces when seeking His presence in the inner silence. Scripture, however, does not instruct us to seek God’s protection before seeking His presence. We are to come “with boldness” (Heb 4:16) before God, and Jesus’ instructions on prayer make no provision for initial prayers for protection from demonic interference before we open ourselves to God in prayer (Matt 6:9-15).

Foster’s concept of meditation as a praxis of inter-spirituality (i.e., a merging together faith traditions) later explicitly crosses all Christian denominational boundaries (2001), yet his concept of inter-spirituality echoes the writings of a Roman Catholic monk, Thomas Keating (1994).

Resonating with the work of Finley (2005), Kaisch and Kaisch (1994) and Pipkin (1977), Keating’s approach to meditation is based on the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (Vatican II), in which the Roman Catholic Church affirmed the spiritual values and “highly developed psychological wisdom” (p. 26) of the East. Keating’s understanding of inter-spirituality moves beyond that of Foster to argue that Christian leaders need to understand Eastern faiths and practices in order to

minister more effectively to modern humanity. Meditation for Keating thus becomes a meeting point across faiths in which practitioners from all faith traditions seek the divine within.

Keating (1994) argues for the need to move beyond meditation as *lectio divina* to contemplative prayer in which one seeks to move from OSC to ASC through the use of breathing exercises and mantras. When one's flow of thought is turned off, one reaches a place where thought and words disappear, a "suspension of consciousness, a space" (p. 114) wherein one allegedly encounters "God's presence within" (p. 109).

The major weakness of Keating's approach (and indeed of all who promote ASC forms of meditation or prayer) is that he assumes God's revelation of Himself and His will for humanity in Scripture is insufficient, that 2 Tim 3:16 is only a partial truth, and that Eastern forms of spirituality contain intrinsic truth and wisdom that are both lacking in Christianity and which the born-again Christian requires in order to truly experience God. None of this is defensible from Scripture, and opens the practitioner, as Foster explicitly recognizes, to demonic influences.

This notwithstanding, Keating sees his approach to meditation as an essential expression of interfaith inter-spirituality. Keating's approach is taken yet further by Mermis-Cava (2009), who argues that traditional boundaries (Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox) are being replaced by spiritual types, and that modernist spiritual types find in contemplative meditation a vehicle for crossing denominational and faith boundaries to find common meaning wherein "every religious tradition is a legitimate path for leading people to their common spiritual goal" (p. 440).

Mermis-Cava bases his study on the work of the World Community for Christian

Meditation (WCCM), itself based on the work of Father John Main. Main practiced Hindu meditation before taking his monastic vows in 1957, and merged his Hindu meditation practices with the writings of the Syriac eremites. His protégé, Father Laurence Freeman, then established WCCM as a non-denominational entity that promotes mantric meditation as a means to achieve an ASC and become part of a new “global consciousness” (Mermis-Cava, 2009, p. 440). For Father Freeman, Christian meditation is best experienced as “pure prayer” (p. 440) that is, in the silence of ASC, and WCCM promotes a “belief in the unity and value of all religious traditions” (p. 450).

This understanding of the alleged validity of ASC meditation is further endorsed by Versteeg (2005), who reaffirms this stream of interfaith inter-spirituality, arguing that Christian meditation and yogic meditation are entirely compatible from a Christian philosophical basis. Versteeg’s research into meditation promoted in spiritual centers by Dutch Jesuits led him to conclude that meditation is a uniting spiritual praxis without regard for traditional denominational or faith demarcations.

So far, I have found a steady stream of non-SDA Christian writers on the topic of meditation within recent years. Furthermore, the above-referenced academic and theological works are mirrored by the publication of handbooks of spiritual disciplines in easily digestible formats as evidenced by the systematic handbooks of spiritual disciplines (including meditation) by Calhoun (2005) and Johnson (2009). Neither overtly discusses ASC meditative states, but both focus on providing step-by-step guidelines for meditation either as *meditatio Scripturarum*, *lectio divina*, or Loyolan contemplation.

Calhoun goes further than Johnson, encouraging meditants to practice breathing

exercises & breath prayer, and comes close to Eastern philosophy in recommending *Becoming Christ* (Taylor, 2002) and pantheism when quoting A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*, “God dwells in His creation and is everywhere indivisibly present in all His works” (p. 172).

However, the trend noted above to increasingly understand meditation as a path towards inter-spirituality and practiced ultimately through ASC is not uniformly accepted. The literature is replete with dissenting authors who understand Christian meditation differently, and it is to these authors that I now turn.

Turner (1990) argues that the modern concept of spirituality is not Christian, wherein Scripture reveals humanity as being dead in sin and separated from God, requiring a new birth. For Turner, modern spirituality does not require repentance but rather the arousing of the alleged latent capabilities within the human spirit to achieve spiritual maturity. Turner (1990) critiques modern spirituality because “the original temptation is that we can become divine through a mechanical act” (p. 123). In this, I believe Turner is theologically accurate, although Turner does not address meditation per se.

Addressing the differences between Eastern meditation and Christian prayer from a psychological perspective, Kaldor, Francis, and Fisher (2002) argue that whereas there is an inverse relationship between the practice of Christian prayer and psychoticism scores, there is an opposite and positive correlation relationship between Eastern meditation and psychoticism. Due to the limited nature of their study parameters however, their research does not prove a harmful relationship between Eastern meditation

and mental health, but does invite further study into which aspects of Eastern meditation correlate positively with psychoticism.

There is more explicit opposition to ASC meditation with Groothuis (2004). Recognizing that overstressed Americans are turning to Eastern forms of meditation (e.g., Transcendental Meditation), he argues from a worldview perspective: Eastern religions teach that our fundamental problem is not separation from God by sin, but salvation lies within, and is found through gaining enlightenment. Enlightenment comes through allegedly higher or altered states of consciousness in which rational thought is suspended and the practitioner meets the inner divine.

Groothuis' response is solidly biblical: the answer to the human condition is not in some meditative ASC, but in placing faith in Jesus Christ; contact with God comes through rational prayer, which is interpreted by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26); and biblical meditation (as outlined in Chapter 2) is a conscious pondering of the personal application of God's revelation in Scripture and creation.

However, probably the most trenchant opposition to ASC meditation understood and practiced as a central praxis of inter-spirituality within a non-SDA context is found in the writings of Yungen and Oakland.

Yungen (2006) argues that the New Age movement is infiltrating and reinventing Christianity through Eastern mystical practices. The endgame for Christianity as a whole will be its wholesale abandonment in favor of inter-spirituality, and for the individual with the rejection of the biblical worldview of the natures of God and humanity, sin and salvation in favor of the New Age concept of realising one's inner divinity through progressive enlightenment (a process referred to in New Age circles as either awakening,

transformation, enlightenment, self-realization, cosmic-consciousness, and Christ-consciousness).

Within this overall framework, Yungen argues that ASC meditation and entering “the silence” is the key spiritual praxis that unites and brings together people of all faiths. He argues that rather than being assaulted from without, Christianity is allegedly succumbing internally to false teachers, many of whom are identified by name: M. Scott Peck, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Keating, Morton Kelsey, Matthew Fox, Richard Foster, Brennan Manning, John Main, and Oprah Winfrey.

Such false teachers allegedly came initially from within Roman Catholicism (after initial contacts between monks and practitioners of Eastern philosophies) and now are arising within American Evangelical Christianity. Yungen succinctly states his key message (2006):

The silence is really all the same. It transcends context. Whatever the format in which it is placed, from stress reduction to contemplative prayer, it inevitably leads to a certain spiritual perception, but one that contradicts the Gospel and nullifies the Cross as essential to salvation. (p. 100)

This key message is further rephrased: the essence of Satan’s sin was his desire to be like God (Isa 14:14), and the desire in New Age philosophy to arouse the divine essence within and achieve oneness with the alleged cosmic divine through a path of self-enlightenment is essentially the same sin.

Yungen’s (2006) approach of naming and shaming authors is more direct than witnessed in any of the literature previously reviewed. At times he condemns by interpersonal association, at other times by word association. Merton’s “silence,” Nouwen’s “space,” and Foster’s “contemplative prayer,” are allegedly synonymous with

entering “the silence” through ASC meditation and by implication constitute a denial of the Gospel.

Yungen’s strength is that he carefully delineates the influence of Eastern mysticism on Roman Catholic practitioners of spiritual disciplines, and shows how these practices are entering western Christianity. His weakness is that his logic at times requires the reader to take a leap of faith, relying on insinuation, inference, and deduction rather than outright evidence.

Because of his hermeneutical presuppositions—that certain writers are part of a New Age infiltration, he reads conclusions into writings that are not immediately apparent to those who do not share his presuppositions. However, despite Yungen’s methodological weaknesses, his writings call the reader to a careful reading of the literature on the spiritual disciplines in general and on meditation in particular.

Joining Yungen in alleging a New Age infiltration in modern Christianity is Oakland (2007). However, whereas Yungen argues for ASC meditation being the entry point for all faith traditions to meet as equals and deny salvific exclusivity, Oakland argues that the Emergent Church and Eastern mysticism are in fact a modern manifestation of the Counter Reformation, in which the “separated brethren” (Orthodox and Protestant Christians) are being lulled back into communion with, and submission to, the papacy.

Key factors in this process include the promotion of EPIC Christianity (a form of post-modern religious culture that is experiential, participatory, image-driven, and connected), the promotion of contemplative prayer and mysticism as practiced by the Church Fathers (including “the silence”), and the evolving concept of a global Christ

Consciousness within a renewed focus on adoring the Eucharistic Christ. Oakland (2007) delivers theological broadsides against a broad range of writers (very similar to those attacked by Yungen), and predicts both increasing intolerance of fundamentalist approaches to the interpretation of Revelation and a rise in Marian adoration among the “separated brethren” as part of their unwitting path back to Rome.

Oakland’s strength is that he identifies Eastern and Roman Catholic mystical practices as central to the Emergent Church. His weakness is that he takes the same evidence as Yungen and comes to a significantly different conclusion. Are these practices the focal point of inter-spirituality and the nullification of claims to salvific exclusivity on the part of Christianity (as proposed by Yungen), or are these practices part of a cunning conspiracy to lure the “separated brethren” back to Rome? With both writers (Yungen and Oakland) looking at the same evidence, and drawing such different conclusions, we are forced to ask whether the evidence really is as overwhelming as either writer suggests, or whether we are witnessing the triumph of hermeneutical presupposition over textual evidence.

It is clear that the salient non-SDA Christian literature in the modern era is sharply divided on the topic of meditation. The debate is dynamic, with some writers going beyond the issues and ideas involved to make *ad hominem* attacks on other writers. Worrying, the literature indicates that not only is the biblical foundation to the practice of meditation becoming lost in the acrimony of the debate, but some writers are increasingly utilizing non-Christian sources and faith traditions to inform their understanding of meditation.

Having reviewed landmark writers and the modern non-SDA Christian literature

in the area of meditation, I now turn to the SDA literature of the modern era, where we see once again that there is an increasingly fractious debate on the topic of meditation and writers going beyond the issues to make *ad hominem* attacks.

SDA Writers Since 1990

Within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church, as in the wider Christian world, the literature reflects an increasing debate around the practice of meditation.

In a landmark SDA article, Richards (1976) outlined the essential differences between Eastern and Christian meditation. Christian meditation involves: a quiet environment, a comfortable position, suitable subjects for meditation (identified as God's acts, character, law, precepts, statutes, and promises), and a proper attitude, which is understood as setting aside preconceptions and being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Richards' refreshingly gracious style adds credibility to his basic but biblically sound approach.

Maxson (1991) augmented Richards' work by producing a study guide for pastoral spirituality, and presented it at the pastoral meetings prior to the 1990 General Conference. In this guide, he provided detailed guidance on a range of basic spiritual disciplines, including meditation. Emphasizing the need for both relational and doctrinal readings of Scripture rather than purely doctrinal readings of Scripture, he argues for two types of meditation on the basis of Col 3:2 and Phil 4:8: content meditation (asking basic questions of a text and applying it to one's life), and guided meditation (entering a Bible story and focussing on experiencing as much of what happened as possible). Given the fractious debate in Adventism concerning meditation, Maxson later preferred to refer to these two types as content and narrative meditation.

Later, in 2000, Maxson went on to argue that the SDA church should focus both on baptizing and disciple-making, and that meditation constitutes an intrinsic part of the discipleship experience.

Maxson's weakness is that his concept of narrative (guided) meditation, while valid in the writings of Ellen G White, opens him to attack as recommending Loyolan contemplation under another name. Furthermore, his explicit recommendation for readers to study the works of Foster and Willard opens him to suspicion among some SDA members. However, his strengths are that he works within a valid and explicit biblical theology, rooting his disciplines in a biblical theology that emphasizes our creation in God's image, with an intrinsic desire for intimacy with our Creator; the disciplines listed are biblical rather than esoteric; he references White sparingly but effectively; he posits disciplines within a dynamic discipleship framework; and he argues that the power of meditation is not intrinsic to the process per se, but in the opening of the believer to a deeper relational dynamic with God.

Echoing Maxson's pastoral concerns, Willsey (1991) decided to explore the spiritual disciplines in a DMin study within the context of his local SDA church where he served as a pastor.

Willsey provides a brief overview of the history of spiritual disciplines within the SDA movement, and then summarizes succinctly the concern Ellen G. White had for the practice of spiritual disciplines, arguing that her counsels focussed on the primacy of prayer, Bible study, and meditation, with limited suggestion of solitude and the practice of silence. Helpfully, Willsey carefully delineates the essential distinctions between Eastern and Christian meditation.

Having established the *prima facie* case for meditation within Ellen G. White's writings, Willsey accurately concludes that subjects suitable for meditation from the writings of Ellen G. White would include, "the meaning of salvation, the infinite love and mercy of Jesus, the sacrifice of Jesus and the character of the Redeemer" (p. 114).

Responding like Maxson and Willsey to a perceived need for personal spiritual growth among SDA members, Samaan (1995) posited true spirituality as the humble following of Jesus Christ (p. 15). Agreeing with Maxson on the need for relational Scripture reading (p. 146), Samaan defined this as the process of picking a passage, praying, pondering (including meditation and contemplation), and projection of the reader into the passage via the imagination, as per the counsel of White (1898), who stated concerning contemplation of the life of Christ, "We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones" (p. 83).

Richards, Maxson, Willsey, and Samaan all place meditation within the context of an ever-increasing intimacy of relationship with Jesus Christ. All have strong Scriptural bases, and all use the counsels of White aptly.

Dybdahl (1997) then presented a basic model for meditation in the *Adventist Review*, an official journal of the SDA Church. Both Bible study and meditation were recommended as means to recognize and hear God's voice. Taking his biblical basis largely from Foster (1998), Dybdahl's model for meditation is a slight variation of that recommended by Martin Luther in 1535, and involves Bible study, prayer, and reflection, which is almost identical to Maxson's content meditation.

Dybdahl's strength was that he briefly but succinctly differentiated between Eastern and Christian meditation and provided a biblical model for meditation. His

weakness is his list of recommended books for spiritual growth—works by Fox, Loyola, Brother Lawrence, Foster, and Nouwen were listed. In 1997, this list did not create a stir, but at the time of this research, this is likely to incur the severe criticism (and possible rejection) by individuals like Yungen, Oakland, and Pipim.

With the turn of the new millennium, a wider variety of themes began appearing in SDA literature. First, I have found meditation being recommended in the context of lifestyle advice, for example, Cate (2009), who recommends meditation for stress reduction, but does not provide specifics.

Pitt (2010) endorses Cate's ideas, arguing for meditation as a stress-control measure. He outlines a progression of breathing exercises, meditation (switching the brain's focus to something simple), and then imagination, involving all five senses.

Like Pitt and Cate, O'Connor (2010) recommends meditation for stress reduction and to increase personal happiness. O'Connor recommends breathing exercises to slow conscious thought, but also recommends reflection on Scripture.

While the relationship between psychological health and meditation remains relatively unexplored by Adventist authors, the non-SDA literature is beginning to see new research indicating a positive correlation between psychological health and meditation on Scripture, for example, Meier (2012). More research is needed in this area.

A second theme that appears is meditation within the framework of 21st century spirituality. Maxwell (2001) argued for "5 ways to increase your Spiritual Passion" (p. 123), including regaining one's first love, repentance, praise, remembering the cross, and reclaiming one's spiritual purpose. As part of remembering the cross, Maxwell affirms the counsel of White (1898) to reflect and meditate on the last hours of Christ's life. The

technique recommended matches exactly that recommended by Maxson (1991), that is, content meditation.

Responding in part to the emphasis found in the non-SDA Christian literature on meditation within the context of personal spirituality, Wong (2001) builds on the work of Nwosu (1999) and Griswold (2010), comparing and contrasting Eastern (essentially egocentric) and Christian spirituality (essentially theocentric), in which Scripture reading, study, and “introspection” are considered basic disciplines.

Oliver (2005), however, takes Wong’s reflective understanding of spirituality further, arguing that Christian spirituality involves time out with God in a desert experience, the fruit of which is expressed in Christian service. As with Dybdahl (1997), Oliver’s recommendation of some of Foster’s writings will cause concern for some SDAs.

Continuing the rather fragmented approach to meditation found in post-2000 SDA writings, Johnsson (2006) includes as part of his vision for the SDA Church a ‘people of the book’ (p. 6) who engage in daily study and meditation on Scripture and the writings of White. Johnsson’s weakness is that he does not outline a model of meditation other than merely arguing for meditation per se.

Jantos (2007) agrees with Wong on the differentiation between Eastern (anthropocentric rather than egocentric) and Christian spirituality (theocentric), and emphasizes the importance of care in meditation, arguing from White (1948, p. 347) that truth and deception enter through the mind alone.

Kibble (2007), however, presents meditation in the context of coming closer to God through an intentional devotional life. While he does not recommend a specific

method, Kibble agrees with Jantos that meditation should be upon Scripture, and goes further to assert that meditation is essential to awaken gratitude and thanksgiving.

In addition to the previous two themes in the SDA literature since 2000, just as the latest (2005) SDA fundamental belief “(Growing in Christ)” came partly out of a perceived need for members to grow in their personal walk with God (see Chapter 2), so there is a stream of recent SDA literature promoting meditation within the context of seeking a closer and more personal walk with God.

Tinsworth (2004) explored Ps 46:10 and asks the rhetorical question, “So why is stillness and silence important?” before succinctly answering, “Through stillness, solitude and silence, we can increase our creative energy and originality, our sense of self and purpose, and our connection with the Divine” (p. 11).

Tinsworth (2004) suggests a series of activities of graduated intensity through which the reader may experience the “Divine.” Tinsworth concludes by stating that “rest—not striving, but surrendering in trust—is the essence of the good news of Jesus Christ,” and that “all we need to do is to accept this and rely on Him” (p. 13).

Recognizing that Tinsworth is writing for a non-SDA audience within an SDA denominational magazine, her article nonetheless gives no indication of coming from within the SDA theological stream, and draws heavily on non-SDA Protestant and Emerging Church theologians. Her theological position would appear to preclude the necessity of repentance, confession, and belief in Jesus Christ as the risen Son of God, focusing instead on the necessity to merely model the behavior of Jesus Christ in the area of spiritual disciplines to experience the “Divine.” If Jesus Christ is reduced to the role of mere role-model, and is not the object of one’s belief, then Tinsworth’s approach denies

the underlying Christology of the SDA church, and questions the inclusion of her article in an official denominational publication.

Anthony (2007) then published online via his personal website (www.reflectingjesus.com) a personal discipleship program entitled *Habits for the Heart*. The purpose for the habits proposed was to allow the words of Jesus to shape the believer's life, thus enabling the believer to reflect the character of Jesus and live as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. Anthony provides a succinct introduction to each 'habit' (i.e., spiritual discipline), and roots them in both the Scriptures and the writings of White. Both meditation and the sanctified use of the imagination are recommended and outlined. Anthony's works primarily focus on personal character transformation, reflecting White's key idea (1898) that "the ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness." The habits presented are simple and easily applicable, however, Anthony's referencing on his website of controversial non-SDA authors, for example, Willard and Brother Lawrence, may be a cause of rejection and personal antagonism among both non-SDA and SDA authors who are suspicious of alleged Eastern infiltration into biblical Christianity.

However, interest with spiritual disciplines in general and meditation in particular was increasing within the SDA church (meditation per se was recommended to members by the SDA General Conference President in 2009) and in 2007 Dybdahl published *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*. Although he purposed to establish a new definition of religion, Dybdahl (2007) instead delivered a new definition of Christianity: "A way of life—one characterized by communion with God . . . an ongoing communion or interaction with Him via Jesus through the Holy Spirit" (p. 9).

Dybdahl's primary contribution (2007) is in tackling the issue of the "missing middle" from the work of anthropologist Paul Hiebert. Arguing that many modern Christians are in fact deists rather than theists, there is limited urgency to practice spiritual disciplines as the deist worldview presupposes the lack of purposeful communication between God and humanity. If an individual can move from deism to theism, however, then spiritual disciplines become absolutely necessary to bridge the gap between the earthly and the heavenly realms.

Moving into a discussion of spiritual disciplines, Dybdahl invites the reader to be aware of the inherent presuppositions that one brings to worship: is worship primarily for the worshipper to receive a blessing from God, or to give a blessing to God for His grace and providence? In addressing the issues of worldview and presuppositions to worship, Dybdahl invites the reader to reflect before approaching God through the disciplines. Dybdahl then succinctly outlines the essentials of repentance, confession, forgiveness, prayer, meditation, fasting, solitude, and simplicity.

Dybdahl's (2007) strengths are that his discussion of meditation is more extensive than his discussion in 1997; he once again clearly differentiates between Eastern and Christian meditation, and after discussing meditation in the life and teachings of Jesus, proposes a detailed and biblically-based method for meditation that builds on his 1997 outline, closely corresponding to *lectio divina*.

His weaknesses are that he veers closely to breathing and proto-mantric exercises (pp. 52-63), and although Dybdahl spent his professional career within the SDA Church and clearly articulates a Seventh-day Adventist perspective on spirituality in his academic teaching, there is no strong sense within his work of a uniquely Adventist perspective on

any of the disciplines (this may be because his book is published by Autumn House Publishing, intended primarily for a non-SDA audience). Indeed, Dybdahl's reference list draws heavily upon non-SDA sources, and there is only very limited reference to the writings of Ellen G. White. His references to key authors targeted by Oakland, Yungen, and Pipim for alleged New Age/Emergent Church infiltration into biblical Christianity (e.g., R. Foster, T. Keating, M. Kelsey, M. Peck, H. Nouwen, T. a Kempis, and Brother Lawrence) only leads to guilt by association among some SDAs and evangelicals, and this needlessly detracts from the major strengths of the book.

A greater diversity of spiritual practice is found within *God Encounters: Pursuing a 24/7 Experience with Jesus* (2009). Reading like a journal from an eclectic mix of sources, the authors present a series of personal and refreshingly authentic spiritual experiences arising out of a conscious seeking of an encounter with God. There is evidence of the Emergent Church EPIC culture (e.g., pp. 82-85)—the contributors relate their encounters with God through dance, prayer, prayer stations, vigils, meditation, reflection on Scripture, and celebration music. Meditation is repeatedly referred to, but is used synonymously for “Encounter,” which on closer examination closely follows the concept of “content meditation” found in the writings of Maxson.

Attacked later by Pipim (2010) for representing a clear infiltration of Emergent Church theology/heresy within the SDA Church, the major strength of *God Encounters* is the authenticity of the spiritual experiences reported, while its major weakness is its failure to precisely define its terminology or provide a clear foundation of biblical theology for the spiritual experiences described.

Perhaps because of the difficulties and potential exposure to criticism in

describing deeply personal spiritual experiences, I then found two systematic programs for spiritual growth in the SDA literature. First, Smith (2010) outlines a forty-day program of readings from Scripture and White, with each reading supplemented by a structured time of personal reflection, discussion, and prayer. Although Smith does not use the word “meditation,” his concept of “reflection” adheres to the concept of “content meditation” found in both *God Encounters* and in Maxson’s writings.

Second, Day (2010) produces on behalf of the North American Division of SDAs a handbook on personal discipleship. Day focuses on six common spiritual problems (building on a shaky foundation, losing sight of Jesus, emotional turbulence, encountering spiritual failure, church absence, and forgetting to cling to Jesus), and provides a series of helpful individual and group assignments. Day’s strengths are that he provides a detailed and wide-ranging list of resources in each chapter, that there are clearly defined discussion and reflection/personal meditation questions throughout, and that the book can be used personally and in a group setting. His major weaknesses are that he repeatedly refers to “Spiritual Formation,” recommends the use of Willard and Foster (p. 154), and includes EPIC style group practices, all of which may lead to guilt by association for Yungen, Oakland, Pipim et al.

However, just as from Tinsworth on (see above) I have traced a recent stream of SDA literature seeking to draw believers closer to God, so there is a parallel stream of recent SDA literature that closely echoes the work of Yungen and Oakland. I will briefly review these sources.

Firstly, Tsatalbasidis (2008) provides a thorough overview of Emergent Church theology. While seeker-sensitive and purpose-driven churches are rooted in modernism,

he argues that Emergent Church theology is infiltrating the SDA Church. He makes a reasoned case that Emergent theology nullifies the heavenly sanctuary ministry of Jesus Christ, obscures the difference between the sacred and the profane, and argues that Emergent theology is that which White (1958) cautioned about (p. 204).

Tsatalbasidis's strength is that he attempts a comprehensive overview of Emergent theology vis a vis SDA theology, and in this he brings a new voice to the conversation. His weakness is that his conclusions appear more as assertions than genuine outcomes of his theological discussion. As such, his writings invite further reflection rather than provide a firm foundation for further theological growth.

Secondly, Pipim (2010) echoes and affirms Tsatalbasidis in providing a comprehensive overview of counterfeit revivals, the emerging church and new spirituality movements. Already known in Adventism for his reactionary theology (2005), in 2010 Pipim discusses true/counterfeit revivals, true/counterfeit spirituality, post-modernism and the Emerging Church, contemplative spirituality, prayer warfare, and the "Ancient Future"—what is the true way to spiritual revival and spirituality? Pipim argues that mystical practices from Eastern religions, Roman Catholic contemplative spirituality, Quaker concepts of the "inner light," and emerging spirituality may in fact be the "Omega" of heresies (p. 34) warned of by White. He reflects closely Yungen and Oakland's concern with ASC meditation and inter-spirituality—the concept that all the world's religions are identical at the mystical level, a concept which nullifies the Gospel Commission and Christianity's exclusivity.

For Pipim, as for Yungen and Oakland, ASC meditation via breathing and mantric exercises to reach "the silence" or the "sacred space" (p. 35) is the preferred means in the

emerging theology for achieving Christ-consciousness, cultivating the divine within, and as such represents a denial of the biblical worldview and the Gospel. Pipim goes beyond Yungen and Oakland to then outline alleged New Age/Emergent Church infiltration within the SDA Church, specifically referencing *God Encounters, Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*, and Tinsworth (see above). Pipim (2010) quotes from Deut 12:30-32 and White (1948, p. 291; 1958, p. 200) to argue that such theological infiltration and mystical practices could represent the “Omega” of all heresies for the SDA Church (p. 43).

Pipim’s strength is that he provides a clear overview of the Emergent theologies and Eastern philosophies involved. In this, he closely parallels Yungen and Oaken. However, while recognizing the validity of Christian meditation, he makes no attempt to provide a biblical model, contenting himself with merely attacking the ideas of others. Furthermore, his conclusion—that we are witnessing the “Omega” of all heresies is tentatively stated as a suggestion for reflection rather than as the inevitable conclusion to his research. It is easy to raise questions and suspicions—it is harder to answer them! However, when we come to our next major contribution (in the writings of Howard), we find an attempt at answering Pipim’s question concerning the alleged “Omega” heresy.

Thirdly, Howard (2010) echoes Pipim’s concern of Eastern heresies infiltrating the SDA Church (later to be amplified by Peth in 2012), and solidifies Pipim’s suggestion that Emergent Church theology, Eastern philosophy, and mystical practices may represent the final “Omega” further. Howard’s basic thesis is succinctly stated:

Remember, many of the teachings included within the model called spiritual formation are good Christian concepts. It is the learning and practice of contemplative/mystical prayer, which leads to altered states of consciousness and the

supernatural experience of the silence, or quiet place, that is the idolatrous teaching we are exposing as a teaching of Romanism. (p. 136)

Howard's writing has some serious academic weaknesses: no bibliography; limited referencing; self-referencing; conceptual leaps of logic; and deduction by implication, insinuation or suggestion. Furthermore, his analysis of White relies on suggestion, inference, and implication. Like Pipim and Oakland, he takes similar source material to Yungen, but instead of concluding with Yungen that the new mystical practices are leading to inter-spirituality and the nullification of Christianity, Howard argues (with Pipim and Oakland) that the new mystical practices are leading Protestants back to Rome and papal supremacy in general, and possibly constitute a satanic attack on the SDA Church through the medium of the adoption of a practice allegedly derived directly from spiritualism.

Howard's basic thesis as stated above has limited merit given the evidence he presents, yet his writings may have certain credibility for some readers due to his years of heavy involvement in the occult as a youth. However, both Howard's primary strength and primary weakness is not in his writings—it is in his ability to stir up debate, suspicion, and some paranoia among SDA members in local churches (based on my personal pastoral empirical experience). For such members, having imbibed Howard's basic ideas, an appeal to Scripture, reason or the writings of White has limited persuasive or corrective power.

Furthermore, Peth (2012) wrote in much the same vein as Pipim and Howard, yet his writings are more focused and less polemical in nature. Peth does not write with broad generalizations as do Pipim (to a lesser degree) and Howard (to a greater degree), but focuses specifically on ASC forms of contemplative or centering prayer, which he argues

cogently to be not merely an unbiblical deception, but an opening of the Christian's mind to direct demonic influence.

Peth outlines the history of the contemplative prayer movement, identifies the main actors within this thought stream, and is very specific about the allegedly symbiotic relationship between contemplative prayer and Eastern forms of mysticism. His inexorable conclusion is bluntly stated, "The bottom line on Contemplative Prayer is . . . it can't be proved from the Bible . . . it's not from God but from Satan" (p. 98).

Peth's strengths are that he defines clearly his subject, and provides clear definitions of all the major concepts he discusses through his book. At no point is the reader left in any doubt concerning what Peth is discussing. His conclusions are clear, if somewhat stridently stated, and he assesses popular writers against Scripture and not earlier landmark or patristic writings. His weaknesses are that he writes in a popular rather than scholarly manner, his book is more a marshalling of evidence to support his *a priori* conclusions rather than an objective assessment of the evidence leading to logical conclusions, and he does not provide a biblical alternative for Christians who are seeking a closer and more intimate experience with God. This failure to provide a biblical alternative for those seeking a closer experience with God was then addressed by Finley (2012), with Markovic (2013) providing additional insights on the dangers of mysticism *per se*.

In light of the ongoing discussion within Adventist literature, the SDA Seminary at Andrews University issued a statement on biblical spirituality to clarify its understanding of biblical spirituality and the process by which the believer is transformed into the likeness of Christ (2011). Furthermore, Finley (2012) wrote in an official

Adventist journal to provide clarification on the need for biblical spirituality, including biblical meditation (described in some detail), and to differentiate biblical spirituality from Eastern or emergent spiritualities, in which he included contemplative or centering prayer. How these balanced and thoughtful articles will impact the Adventist debate remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Although differing in emphasis, the above mentioned landmark writings shared a common *modus operandi*: the seeking of God through inner silence and an inner conversation.

Within the broader Christian community, I have found that despite the trend noted above since 1990 to increasingly understand meditation as a path towards inter-spirituality and practiced ultimately through ASC, the literature is also replete with dissenting authors who continue to understand Christian meditation primarily as *meditatio Scripturarum* and in some cases who understand modern meditative practices as being part of a broader conspiracy, either to bring Protestants under papal supremacy, or to nullify Christianity's exclusivity and understand all faith traditions as having intrinsic salvific value.

During my review of the literature, I have also seen that these broader patterns are replicated within the SDA literature as reviewed, with the debate intensifying in recent years.

Furthermore, I have also seen that while Richards, Dybdahl, Maxson, Saaman, and Anthony have each proposed outline methods for meditation within the SDA context, there are as yet no SDA principles and guidelines of meditation explicitly based on

Scripture and the writings of White that would be acceptable across the spectrum of SDA authors reviewed.

Despite the fractious debate and viewpoints seen in our literature review, it is clear that there remains space for a serious attempt to be made at developing such principles and guidelines for use within local SDA churches. I therefore turn to the research methodology implementation narrative.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND
IMPLEMENTATION NARRATIVE

Introduction

Having provided an overview of the theological foundations for the practice of meditation from a biblical basis and within the SDA context, and having reviewed the salient viewpoints and recent literature concerning meditation, I now turn to the research methodology and implementation narrative.

I will begin by providing a concise profile of the ministry context that relates specifically to the task of this research project.

I will then provide a description of the research methodology, before developing an intervention (meditation strategy) that explicitly builds upon the theological foundations identified in Chapter 2 and the applicable viewpoints in the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 3. Following this, I will provide a concise narrative of the chronological implementation of the intervention.

I will end the chapter with a conclusion that reiterates the main points contained therein and anticipates the findings of the research.

Profile of Ministry Context

Chapter 1 provides a broader description of AFM, the organization within which

this research was conducted. Among the AFM personnel, core spiritual activities revolved primarily around the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and corporate worship, both in the home and the employment (AFM) setting. Empirical feedback from the personnel indicated that there was limited understanding and practice of devotional habits beyond these core activities, particularly of meditation.

Personal observation suggested that a contributing factor of this uncertainty was the ongoing controversy within the SDA Church concerning meditation as a biblical practice. This controversy has impacted AFM personnel based in the United States and worldwide, particularly those who minister among people groups of Hindu or Buddhist backgrounds for whom meditation is an intrinsic part of their spiritual life.

Due to the occasionally vitriolic nature of the debate within modern Adventism, AFM personnel have felt constrained in developing biblical models of meditation for use among new converts. As a consequence, my personal pastoral observation suggested that personnel were unclear as to the legitimate basis for, and practice of, meditation within the Bible in general and the counsels of White in particular.

Even though I was the researcher, I am also an ordained minister of the gospel in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who served at the time of the research as the AFM President. I had served with AFM for 18 months before the research was initiated, and had also served for over five years in cross-cultural mission outreach.

The nature of my relationship with the research subjects (employer and employees) was specifically articulated and discussed during the Institutional Review Board approval process, and the implementation narrative (see below) explicitly took this

into account to ensure that bias or the potential for bias or untoward influence in the research was minimized.

Having provided the above concise ministry context for the research project, I now turn to the research methodology used.

Research Methodology

Purpose, Methods, and Timeframe of the Research

The purpose of the research was to evaluate whether and how employees of AFM experienced spiritual growth through enabling them to both understand and apply the counsels of the Bible and White on meditation.

I asked the research participants to participate in the following three (3) distinct activities:

1. To participate in an initial orientation seminar conducted by myself, including a study on the principles of meditation as revealed in the Bible and in the writings of White.
2. To journal their spiritual experiences as they put into practice over a two-month period the principles of meditation they have learned.
3. To participate in an in-depth personal interview at the beginning and end of the project.

The timeframe of the research took no more than four months to complete the three distinct activities mentioned above.

Description of the Subjects

All subjects (referred to as ‘project participants’) met the following criteria (as

proposed to and approved by the Institutional Review Board):

1. Aged 18 years or over from the moment they volunteer to participate in the study.
2. Employees of AFM.
3. Willing to participate in the research activities mentioned above.
4. Able to provide informed consent for their participation in the above mentioned research activities.

Due to the broad range of socio-economic, health, financial, employment, ethnic, and mental health factors among the employees of AFM, project participants were screened to ensure they met the above criteria. Some project participants did come from vulnerable population groups, for example, pregnant women, but the study did not focus on these groups per se. No one was involved who could not and did not give informed consent.

Recruitment of Project Participants

The following notice was circulated through the internal email system for all AFM personnel for a period covering four consecutive weeks, with acceptance of project participants being according to the above listed criteria:

Volunteers are sought to participate in study being conducted by Pastor Conrad Vine as part of his DMin studies. The study will require participants to first learn the principles of meditation as revealed in Scripture and in the writings of Ellen G. White, participate in an initial interview, and then to put these principles into practice for a period of two (2) months. During these two (2) months, participants will keep a journal, and then they will participate in an interview with Pastor Conrad Vine. All personal data will be kept confidential. Volunteer participants must meet the following criteria: aged 18 years or over at the time of volunteering to participate in the project; an employee of Adventist Frontier Missions; able and willing to participate in two initial study meetings, two (2) months applying the practice of Biblical meditation, and subsequent participation in personal in-depth interview with

Pastor Vine. Participants will participate at their own cost (time and travel to and from the Adventist Frontier Missions office, but no financial costs will be incurred), and will not receive any compensation for participating in the study. Any person who decides not to participate in the study will not experience any change in their relationship with Adventist Frontier Missions, Andrews University or the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Protection of Project Participants

A basic principle of the research was that should I as the researcher at any time become aware that the competency of any project participant(s) to give informed consent had been compromised, I would take the following steps:

1. Discuss the matter with the subject(s) concerned on an individual basis.
2. Discuss the general principles involved with the appropriate Doctor of Ministry project adviser.
3. Agree with the project participant(s) concerned on a plan of action, which may have included (but not have been limited to) modifying or terminating their participation in the project.
4. Should the participation of any subject(s) have been modified in any way, this would be reflected in the final report in a way that (a) maintained the confidentiality of the project participant(s) concerned, and (b) still allowed any reader to draw an informed conclusion based on the available data.

At all times the applicable guidelines, ethical requirements, research method requirements, and specific input of the Institutional Review Board were upheld and honored in an absolute and confidential manner by myself.

While there was no anticipated physical, psychological, social harm anticipated to project participants, there was the possibility of spiritual harm as research participants

may have experienced unanticipated spiritual changes during the period of their participation in the research. In principle, such spiritual changes, should they occur, happen at a personal level, and vary from individual to individual, resulting in different reported outcomes at the end of the research on the part of the participants.

While it was anticipated that some project participants would experience spiritual changes in a positive way, some may have experienced spiritual discomfort. Any such discomfort would be experienced on an individual and personal level, and while the risk of such discomfort was considered to be minimal, there were no known risks associated with participation in the study.

During the course of the research, I was prepared to offer project participants who indicated or experienced perceived or real spiritual difficulties personal counseling in the area of understanding biblical principles of meditation and the experience of personal spiritual growth. I offered project participants during the initial seminar the option of participating in counseling sessions from a qualified Christian counselor should they have so desired at any time during the research process. If necessary, I was ready to offer to project participants the choices of continuing, modifying, or terminating their participation in the research.

To maintain the confidentiality of the project participants, the following steps were taken:

1. All project materials were kept in two locked filing cabinets.
2. Only I had access to the two locked filing cabinets.
3. All personal identifiers used for the individual journals and beginning and

final in-depth interviews were codified by myself before any data was shared with any individual.

4. All research participants completed and signed individual consent forms (see Appendix 1 for a sample). These forms were kept by the researcher in one of the above mentioned locked filing cabinets, separate from the data from the interviews and individual journals.

5. Interview notes from the initial in-depth interviews and end-of-project in-depth individual interviews were kept in the above mentioned locked filing cabinet.

6. Once the data had been coded, all links of identification were destroyed.

Having reviewed the above research methodology, I now turn to the development of an intervention (a meditation strategy) which explicitly builds upon the theological foundations identified in Chapter 2 and on the applicable viewpoints reviewed in Chapter 3.

Development of a Meditation Strategy

Theological Foundations for a Meditation Strategy

The meditation strategy developed for the research project was explicitly based on the theological foundations for meditation outlined in Chapter 2, in which data from both the Scriptures and the writings of White suggests that the devotional habit of meditation is both enjoined upon and is beneficial for the believer.

Given the debate at the time of the research in Christian literature concerning meditation, it is important to differentiate between Eastern meditative practices which involve the emptying of the mind and achieving an altered state of consciousness, and biblical meditation, which occurs within a normal state of consciousness, and involves

filling the mind with the Word of God, reflecting carefully upon God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures, in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and upon God's acts in history, including in the life of the believer.

Specifically concerning the biblical witness, meditation involves conscious reflection upon God's revelation of Himself in Scripture, nature, salvation, or personal history. Meditation may include memorization and vocalization of Scripture. Meditation may involve singing. Meditation is to be a continual activity. Meditation may require a comfortable or a quiet location. Meditation may occur at all hours. The sanctified imagination may be used in meditation.

Furthermore, the purpose of meditation is to go beyond merely knowing God's law to understanding how God's revealed will is to be applied in one's life. Meditation involves a circumspect life that consciously turns from sin and evil to God. Meditation occurs within a covenant relationship with God. Meditation cleanses the heart, keeps one pure, brings vitality to witnessing, leads to obedience, nurtures a hatred of evil, provides a refuge in times of stress, and leads to God's blessings in the present and future life.

Within the writings of White, I have noted that restoring the image of God is the purpose of personal spirituality, and that spiritual growth into Christlikeness occurs when the believer seeks union with Christ through daily engaging in key devotional habits such as prayer, Bible study, and meditation.

For White, meditation is an essential component and contributor to spiritual growth, the lack of which will directly impede spiritual growth, and although she uses the concepts of meditation and contemplation almost synonymously, meditation is primarily a reflection on God's revealed will and self-revelation in Scripture using rational thought

or the sanctified imagination. While White does not elaborate on her own practice of meditation, the evidence suggests it involved reflection on memorized Scriptures under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

A Priori Principles for Meditation

Before engaging in biblical meditation, I shared the following *a priori* principles with the project participants during the initial orientation seminar:

1. Pray. Because all Scripture is inspired by God, pray for the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, claiming the promise of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the mind and bend the will. The Apostle Paul explains, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14, NKJV). White (2000), writing further about the importance of prayer, writes that “never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given” (p. 91).

2. Pick a passage in which God encounters people, either directly or in narrative form. For the specific purposes of the research, participants were provided suggested Bible passages in the meditation model. It is generally wiser to start with clearer passages of the Bible than with obscure or strongly-disputed passages. The Bible is full of stories in which God interacts with individuals or groups of people, as stories are an open way to learn about how God interacts with people and reveals both His love and gracious will. We can often find ourselves in the characters of the Bible stories, readily identifying with their life situations, and are thus able to understand the spiritual lessons God intends for us more clearly.

3. Expect to grow spiritually. According to Maxson (1991), God wishes to restore in us the image of God that was defaced by the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The Apostle Paul writes that we are to

put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:22-24, NKJV)

White (1895b), writing about our need for personal transformation into the character of God, counsels us that “the attributes of God are goodness, mercy, love, long-suffering, and patience, and His followers are to possess the same attributes of character representing Christ in true spirituality” (August 22).

4. Approach God with humility. Jesus spoke thus with disciples who had a sense of their own self-sufficiency and intrinsic worthiness:

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 18:2-4, NKJV)

As we come to God in meditation, we come with a humble desire to follow wherever God leads us. A decision in principle to follow God’s will as He reveals it to us before we come to our time of meditation removes the constant struggle of deciding whether we are going to obey and follow where Jesus leads when we actually engage in meditation.

5. Maintain a regular devotional life. Just as a gardener grows a range of plants in the garden in order to have a harvest of fruit, vegetables, or beauty in due season, so we are to maintain a spiritual garden, that we may have a living and fresh spiritual harvest each day. This involves constant communion with God. Jesus taught the Twelve

that they were not only to labor for Him, they were also to spend time with Him. “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while’” (Mark 6:30-31, NKJV). White (1898), reflecting on the respective spiritual experiences of Mary and Martha and the believer’s need to spend time in regular communion with God, stated:

The cause of Christ needs careful, energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good. (p. 525)

6. Be ready to memorize. Memorization of Scripture brings profound benefits for those who invest the time and effort. According to Maxson (1991), memorization bring a range of benefits across the spiritual dimension of life. First, memorization saturates the mind with God’s word, thereby transforming us (2 Cor 3:18). Second, memorization protects from temptation (Ps 119:11). Third, memorization increases faith (Rom 10:17). Fourth, memorization fosters Christian growth (White, 2010, p. 59). Fifth, memorization provides God with contact points in our minds for His work of mind and character transformation (Rom 12:2). Sixth, memorization aids meditation, particularly when a Bible is not available and during the working hours. Finally, memorization aids us in ministering to others, as the Holy Spirit brings to memory texts that have been memorized at crucial moments (John 14:26).

7. Journal as you meditate. A journal is a diary in which we write about our life with God. As we cannot separate life from God, when we journal we are not merely writing about our life with God, but we are writing about our own lives and how God is present in our lives.

According to Anthony (2007), we can use our journal to write down important discoveries from our personal Bible study, prayer, time at church, or other Christian meetings. We may record prayer requests for others and God's answers, and list our questions and problems for God. The journal becomes the focal point for our private thoughts and feelings about our journey with God. We may record for future reference helpful quotations or Bible verses that we want to remember. Alternatively we may journal those things we have learned about ourselves, God, and life. A journal becomes a living testament to the successes in our spiritual lives and our subsequent gratitude and praise. We may journal anything else that relates to our spiritual growth (the journaling experience is completely up to the one meditating). Finally, we may use our journal to explore with hindsight a particular subject related to our spiritual journey (p. 1).

With the above theological foundations from Scripture, counsel from White, and *a priori* principles in mind, we now turn to the actual model of meditation developed by myself as part of this research project.

A Model for Meditation

I provided project participants a detailed workbook containing meditative exercises for 56 days (eight weeks in total). The full workbook is contained in Appendix 3. Biblical passages were listed in the detailed workbook together with accompanying meditative exercises depending on whether the biblical text in question was a narrative or non-narrative form. I also invited project participants to journal their thoughts, reflections, and spiritual experiences each day.

The two approaches utilized in the meditation model closely parallel the concepts of "content meditation" and "narrative meditation" found in the writings of Maxson, and

the concepts of “ponder” and “project” in the writings of Saaman, both authors who write within the SDA context.

However, whereas these authors provide general theological principles, the meditation model presented to the project participants is explicitly and overtly rooted on a well-defined theological foundation from the Scriptures and the writings of White in an attempt to pre-empt any attacks on the model by Adventists who are skeptical of any kind of meditation.

Furthermore, the meditation model used moves back and forth between clearly defined narrative and non-narrative passages, between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The passages chosen included the 10 Commandments, the Beatitudes, Jesus’ call to the disciples to follow Him, the parables of Luke 15, and New Testament passages dealing with the basic experiences of the born-again believer’s life, for example, humility, forgiveness, and prayer. As such, the model contains passages making it suitable for new Christians who are exploring the basics of the Christian faith, and for more mature Christians who wish to be reintroduced to the basics of their faith. No eschatological passages are included because these tend to lead towards macro-level speculation rather than micro-level transformation. Thus the model provides detailed guidance for believers who are new to the biblical practice of meditation, equipping them to continue meditation themselves in a meaningful manner after the meditation exercises have been completed.

Having covered the development of a meditation strategy for use by Adventists, I now turn to the implementation narrative.

Research Implementation Narrative

Table 2 (below) outlines the chronological implementation of the research process. The research implementation was delayed from the originally planned period of summer 2011 to summer 2013 due to unforeseen circumstances. I had to take into account various factors, such as my availability to provide ongoing support for the project participants, and also the anticipated travel schedules of the project participants. However, as seen below (Chapter 5), the research implementation went ahead smoothly once the variables of travel schedules and physical availability of project participants were taken into account.

Table 2

Chronological Implementation of the Research Process

<u>Week</u>	<u>Research Activity</u>
1-52	Literature research on the topic of biblical meditation among landmark writers and modern evangelical and SDA writers.
53-104	Identification of principles of biblical meditation as found in the Bible and in the writings of White.
105-156	Development of model of biblical meditation in partnership for use among project participants and outline of detailed research method.
157	Circulation of advert among AFM personnel inviting their participation in the research, to be circulated over four weeks.
157	Physical preparation of lockable filing cabinets.
158	Final editing of initial seminar materials, including (but not limited to) the theological foundations of biblical meditation as found in the Scriptures and writings of White.
159	Final editing of the meditation model to be used by project participants.
160	Final week of circulation of advert among AFM personnel.
161	Determination of project participations based on responses to the advert circulated among AFM personnel.
162	Final production of initial seminar materials and the meditation model for the anticipated number of project participants.
163	Completion of two-day seminar for project participants on the theological foundations of biblical meditation as found in the Scriptures and the writings of White, and on the meditation model to be used. All project participants sign the Informed Consent form utilized (see Appendix 1).
164	Initial individual in-depth interviews conducted with all project participants (see Appendix 2 for the questions utilized).
165	Project participants begin their eight weeks of meditation, following the exercises outlined in the meditation model provided (see Appendix 3).

Table 2–*Continued.*

166-173	Ongoing monitoring of project participants progress, response as necessary to negative spiritual outcomes experienced, holding of weekly review meetings with the project participants.
174	Final individual in-depth interviews conducted with all project participants (see Appendix 4 for the questions utilized).
175-179	Analysis of research feedback taken from the following sources: (a) initial and final individual in-depth interviews; (2) individual project participants' journals.
180-184	Preparation of Chapters 5 and 6, outlining the main research results, conclusions, recommendations, and analysis of research expectations, implementation of meditation model across AFM in partnership with local CSG.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an outline of the research methodology and implementation narrative.

I began by providing a concise profile of the ministry context (AFM, Berrien Springs, MI, USA) that relates specifically to the task of this research project. The ministry context emphasizes that the research participants were drawn from a pool of baptized SDA church members who all participate in local SDA Church spiritual activities and who have been professing Christians for at least five years.

I provided a description of the research methodology, with particular focus on the need to be cognizant of unanticipated spiritual outcomes for project participants, before I then outlined an intervention (meditation strategy) that explicitly built upon the theological foundations identified in Chapter 2 and the applicable viewpoints reviewed in

Chapter 3. Following this, I provided a concise narrative of the chronological implementation of the intervention.

The data gathered during the research was primarily qualitative in nature, reflecting the intensely subjective experience of meditation and the meditation model utilized. Furthermore, as the meditation model presupposed the active presence and participation of God in the research process vis a vis individual research participants, a quantitative data collection method was not utilized as it is impossible to quantify the infinite. However, the data gathered focussed not so much on the presence of God (assumed in the research process) but on the research participants' experience of the process and of God's presence in their lives during their active participation in the research process.

Having discussed the research methodology and implementation narrative, I now turn to our evaluation of the outcomes of the research.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY AND RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

Having provided an overview of the theological foundations for the practice of meditation from a biblical basis and within the SDA context, having reviewed the salient viewpoints and recent literature concerning meditation, and having outlined the research methodology and implementation narrative, I now move to a summary of the implementation of the research and the research results themselves.

Summary of the Implementation of the Research

The research was conducted as anticipated and outlined in Table 2, Chapter 4, with a total of 10 research participants, all of whom were AFM personnel and met the criteria established for the research process. The timetable outlined in Table 2 was followed precisely and without deviation. However, there were some qualitative variations in the implementation of the research, which were not anticipated.

First, during the period of advertising for research participants, there was some initial reluctance on the part of AFM personnel to participate in the research. Many of those who ultimately participated in the research came for an initial discussion to ascertain how much personal information I would acquire either intentionally or unintentionally about the research participants and their spiritual lives during the course

of the research. Implicit for many was the concern that I may at a later date use the intimate personal knowledge acquired about the research participants against the research participants in their ongoing relationship of employer and employee. Ultimately, those who did participate in the research did so on the basis of trust in the research protocol as approved by the IRB and in my personal integrity as the researcher to refrain from acting from an employment perspective on knowledge acquired during the course of the research.

Second, many of the research participants expressed a strong reluctance to journaling as they followed the daily meditation model provided (see Appendix 3). While all the research participants had expressed their willingness to journal either on the hard copy provided within the meditation model or electronically during the initial seminar and during their initial in-depth individual interviews, the final in-depth interviews revealed that only 10% of the research participants had kept either a physical or an electronic journal. The basic concern expressed by the research participants who did not journal was a concern over the confidentiality of their journals. As they began the meditation exercises, they had realized that they were interacting with God on very personal issues at a deep level, and there was a strong reluctance to commit anything to a format which could be accessed by a family member or significant other.

The above variations from the intended research process were not significant either in terms of impacting the overall research process itself or in terms of causing any unanticipated or detrimental impact on the research participants themselves as they followed the meditation model provided. Thus the research implementation process was followed as approved by the IRB and as outlined in Chapter 4, albeit it with minor and

ultimately insignificant qualitative variations.

Research Results

Question 1

The first question used in both the initial and final in-depth individual interview was as follows: “Please describe your understanding of the practice of meditation as revealed in Scripture?”

During the initial in-depth individual interviews which were held the day following the initial seminar on meditation as found in the writings of the Bible and of White, the participants’ answers revealed a strong degree of convergence along the following key themes. Meditation is to be on the Word of God. Meditation seeks to find God’s will for the person rather than abstract knowledge per se. Meditation involves memorization and singing of Scripture and filling one’s mind with the Word of God. Meditation requires an expectation that God will indeed work in the life of the one meditating. Meditation involves conscious reflection on the Word of God in an OSC rather than entering an ASC.

During the final in-depth individual interviews, the research participants expressed a basic convergence of insights concerning meditation. Meditation must be bathed in prayer, seeking the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit. Memorization of short passages provides a constant touch-point for the Holy Spirit to guide a person through the challenges of the day. Meditation on the psalms, wisdom literature, or parables and narratives of Jesus provides some of the most fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to impress the emotional, rational, and imaginative dimensions of the one meditating. In meditation, one is less an unbridled consumer of Scripture in large but

cursory quantities as a form of soul-fuel and more a discerning and restrained worshipper standing in awe of God's revelation of Himself in Scripture. Meditation requires a reflective attitude that seeks depth and not breadth.

Reflecting on these results from the research participants, it is clear that the participants experienced significant new insights into meditation as revealed in Scripture as they meditated on Scripture itself. Perhaps most significantly, the practice of meditation served to restore for 70% of the participants a sense of awe-filled worship and reverence before the God of the Scriptures, and emphasized for 80% of the participants the absolute necessity of the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit if a reading of Scripture is to go beyond a merely informational reading and operate at a deeply and personal transformational level.

The final in-depth interviews also revealed that the information presented in the initial seminar had developed from being a two-dimensional and static understanding of biblical meditation on the part of the participants to a multi-dimensional and dynamic appreciation of biblical meditation by the end of the research process. In this aspect of the research, the participants clearly expressed their perceived value and importance in moving from primarily an intellectual understanding to both an intellectual understanding and an emotional appreciation of biblical meditation. Not only was biblical meditation both understood and appreciated by the end of the research, but at least 50% of the participants referenced both intellectual insights and emotional healing as being the personal outcomes of engaging in biblical meditation.

Question 2

The second question used in both the initial in-depth and final in-depth interviews

was as follows: “Please describe your understanding of the practice of meditation as revealed in the writings of Ellen G. White?”

During the initial in-depth individual interviews, the participants once again manifested a strong degree of convergence in their responses. In their understanding of White’s counsels, meditation is an essential discipline necessary for Christian spiritual growth. Without intentional biblical meditation there will be a declension in the spiritual life of the believer. The sanctified use of the imagination to enter into the scenes of Scripture to better appreciate and personally apply the spiritual truths contained therein is an essential component of biblical meditation. The essential truth that by beholding we become changed finds its practical implication in a life of reflection on Scripture, and particularly in regular and extended contemplation on the life of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, all should meditate and all should be taught how to meditate. In addition, meditation involves the memorization of Scripture for use throughout the day so that heavenly truth may gradually unfold throughout the day in response to the unfolding challenges of the day. Meditation with the full imagination on the narratives of Scripture opens the believer to new realms of emotional insight, understanding, and healing. Finally, meditation may involve meditation on Scripture, the life of Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation, or on God’s salvific and redemptive acts in the life of the believer.

Interestingly, while there was considerable new insight and appreciation for meditation as revealed in Scripture in question 1 during the final in-depth interviews, there was little substantive new understanding revealed by the research participants in the final in-depth interviews. Perhaps most significantly, the research participants demonstrated broad agreement on the following concepts in their final in-depth

interviews. First, that it was the writings of White which had given them permission to move from a primarily rational and intellectual reading of Scripture to a reading that was personal, more subjective, and illuminated by the sanctified use of the imagination. Second, that whereas White strongly argued for meditation as one of the means by which God brings spiritual personal growth, the participants' experience throughout the research had demonstrated that it is necessary to approach meditation with a heart that is willing to be challenged and shaped and to have new growth and possibly new directions fostered within it. Third, that for those who are trained in exegesis and systematic theology, content meditation is more amenable and natural than narrative meditation. Finally, that White's own writings, particularly her more devotional works such as *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* and *Christ's Object Lessons* themselves form a valuable corpus of inspired literature which may be the subject of meaningful meditation.

Reflecting on this feedback to question 2 in both the initial and final in-depth interviews, it is interesting to note that feedback from 100% of the research participants indicated that subsequent to the initial seminar, which included an overview of White's counsels on meditation, not a single research participant had seen the necessity to spend any further time in either researching or reflecting explicitly on her counsels on meditation. What is most striking perhaps in contrast to this reported fact is the unanimity among the research participants in attributing to White the crucial concept of the sanctified use of the imagination, particularly in narrative meditations. This use of the imagination had opened new possibilities of emotional and personal engagement with God during meditation, and yet had not been the subject of further study by any of the

research participants. Further questioning suggested that the reason for this seeming dichotomy lay in the fact that the meditation model was prescriptive and focused exclusively on Scripture, not providing any encouragement for further study of White's counsels.

Perhaps most notably, the perception of the research participants towards White herself and her counsels had shifted during the research. Seventy percent of the participants shared how their attitude and emotional response towards White and her counsels had grown so now they understood her counsels to be aimed at fostering and encouraging deeply personal inner transformation and not just driving an exterior compliance to a certain lifestyle.

Question 3

The third question used in the interviews varied slightly between the initial and final interviews. During the initial in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following question: "Please describe how you are currently applying the practice of meditation (if at all)?" In the final in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following: "Please describe how you were able to apply the practice of meditation over the period of the research?"

During the initial interviews, the research participants reported a wide variety of devotional practices, most of which did not include meditation as outlined in the meditation model provided for the research. While 100% reported engaging in regular devotional habits, these varied from prayer (20%), rational Bible study (20%), participation in family worships (10%), and Scripture memorization (10%) to reflecting on narratives to ascertain God's will for the individual (20%) and other unspecified

devotional habits (20%). However, 100% of the participants expressed their eagerness to begin implementing the meditation model provided, with a variety of reasons being given, for example, to experience God in a fuller way than before, to overcome a dry spiritual period, to provide internal accountability, and to provide more focus and intentionality in their devotional life.

What was particularly interesting about the participants was that those engaged in a form of public ministry consistently reported that they were reading the Scriptures each morning in order to be better prepared for their daily spiritual responsibilities, for example, teaching Bible classes, sermon preparation, or lesson development. For these research participants, their daily reading of Scripture was primarily a tool for an other-person oriented activity. However, among those who were not engaged in a form of public ministry, 50% reported that their readings of Scripture was more informal, more inward-focused, and more organic, with a freedom to move from narrative to narrative as they sought God's answers for the ever-shifting questions of daily life.

During the final interviews, 100% of the research participants reported beginning to use the meditation model provided. Twenty percent reported that once they had become comfortable with the concepts involved in the meditation model, they were led by the Holy Spirit to dwell on passages other than those provided in the meditation model. However, for this 20%, the ongoing meditation was reportedly profoundly meaningful. For the remaining research participants, 70% reported continued adherence to the meditation model with daily meditations only interrupted by periods of travel. Ten percent of the research participants focused on memorization of single texts in a form of content meditation and avoided the longer narrative meditations due to heavy travel

commitments. Thirty percent of the research participants expressed their surprise at how quickly their morning meditations passed, finding the structure of the meditation model very helpful in keeping a forward momentum within their meditations.

However, the research participants were evenly split as to whether they found the narrative or content meditation exercises more meaningful. Those who preferred the content meditation exercises also were more likely to engage in memorization of the single texts which were the focus of their content meditation and to report an ongoing reflection on the text in question throughout the day. However, among those who preferred the narrative meditations, a common theme emerged of preferring the narrative meditations because they lent themselves more to the use of the imagination, they contained human characters with whom the research participants could identify, and there were more dimensions on which to reflect than in the shorter content meditation exercises.

Question 4

The fourth question used in the interviews varied slightly between the initial and final interviews. During the initial in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the spiritual benefits that you anticipate receiving as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?” In the final in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following: “Please share the spiritual benefits that you received as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?”

During the initial in-depth interviews, the research participants, 80% indicated that they anticipated some element of personal transformation as a result of their

participation. For 30%, the personal transformation related specifically to areas of emotional healing and growth, whereas for the other 50%, the personal transformation was predominantly identified as becoming more like Jesus Christ, experiencing a softening of the heart to become more willing to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, or gaining victory over character defects. Forty percent of the research participants responded that they anticipated gaining a deeper understanding of God, with 20% also expressing their desire to be able to more effectively teach and preach as a result of their participation. Sixty percent expressed the belief that participation would reinvigorate their walk with God and daily devotional lives, and 30% indicated that they anticipated being more open to the promptings and leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

These anticipated benefits on the part of the research participants are not surprising given the focus in the initial seminar on the role of meditation in personal transformation and spiritual growth rather than on serving merely as a theological data-gathering tool.

In the final in-depth interviews, 10% of the research participants indicated that they experienced only limited benefits from their participation, and as a result were experiencing disappointment with God in particular and the model in general for God's failure to "show up" in the process. However, 80% of the research participants reported fully experiencing their anticipated benefits, with the remaining 10% reporting personal spiritual benefits that different from those anticipated.

More crucially, the research participants had also experienced on a personal level a range of benefits that they had not anticipated at an individual level in the initial in-depth interviews. Ninety percent of the research participants reported a wide range of

benefits over and above those they had anticipated prior to working through the meditation model. These benefits may be summarized as follows. First, a sense of peace with God and a more gracious subsequent social intercourse. Second, being spiritually refreshed and energized each morning. Third, victory over temptation. Fourth, conviction of hithertofore unrecognized personal sins and a more realistic sense of the individual's own sinfulness and need of God's grace. Fifth, a more reflective walk as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Sixth, a deeper understanding of God's will for the individual. Seventh, a greater depth of and aptitude for reflection, combined with a new delight in Scripture. Eighth, a new hunger for the promptings of the Holy Spirit together with an improved prayer life. Ninth, the regaining of emotional stability and self-control. Finally, deeper sermon preparation.

Although 10% of research participants reported no personal spiritual benefits as a result of their participation, this 10% also recognized that while meditation was not personally spiritually beneficial, meditation could be a very valuable way of opening oneself up before God for others. What was important was not the meditation model per se, but the interaction between individual personality and devotional habit, with some personalities being more open to some devotional habits than other devotional habits.

Of the 90% who reported receiving spiritual benefits, 30% reported that they had already been sharing the meditation model with their friends and work colleagues and encouraging them to begin biblical meditation themselves. Furthermore, 90% of the 90% reported that they planned to continue with biblical meditation as an intrinsic part of their daily devotions, which reflected one of the dominant anticipated benefits in the initial in-depth interviews of a reinvigorated personal walk with God.

Question 5

The fifth question used in the interviews varied slightly between the initial and final interviews. During the initial in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following question: “Please describe the spiritual harm or any other effects that that you anticipate receiving as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?” In the final in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following: “Please describe the spiritual harm or any other side effects that you received as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?”

One hundred percent of the research participants responded that they did not anticipate any spiritual harm. However, 100% also reported anticipating other side effects which would not necessarily be pleasant. These included: a potential sense of disappointment with God if He did not “show up” during the course of daily meditations (30%); temptation to explore more eastern forms of meditation (20%); physical or spiritual satanic attacks (20%); discomfort if the Holy Spirit were to convict of cherished personal sins (30%); and the need to rearrange one’s daily schedule to include a meaningful time of meditation each morning (30%).

In the final in-depth interviews, only 10% responded that their anticipated side effects had come about—a sense of disappointment with God for not “showing up.” However, 80% responded that they had received no spiritual harm, with 10% responding that while they had not experienced any spiritual harm or the anticipated side effects, there was caution needed to avoid an overly directive approach in the meditation model. To focus on a single narrative passage in the Gospels, and to avoid the parallel passages in the other Gospels, may be overly restrictive and reduce the richness of a given

meditation unnecessarily. No research participants had either felt or succumbed to the temptation during the research to move into more eastern forms of meditation involving an ASC or contemplative prayer. Moreover, 30% reported a renewed appreciation for the beauty and wonder of the Bible, and 10% reported an unanticipated but welcome transformation in their entire approach to the Bible.

Question 6

The sixth question used in the interviews varied slightly between the initial and final interviews. During the initial in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following question: “Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that are enhancing your current practice of meditation (if you are practicing meditation at all)?” In the final in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following: “Please describe those factors in your personal experience that enhanced the practice of meditation?”

Although only 20% of the participants were regularly engaging in prayerful reflection on Scripture (a form of meditation) prior to their participation in the research, the research participants revealed significant agreement concerning factors that enhanced their devotional lives in general. These factors included the following: a regular routine; a quiet spot where they could have privacy; adequate sleep and physical rest; a healthy lifestyle; daily prayer, and confession of sin; the absence of electronic gadgets both prior to and during one’s devotional time; social and immediate family support for a devotional life; an intentional attitude; and a humble spirit which anticipated God’s presence and action. Interestingly, only 10% indicated that journaling constituted a helpful factor,

whereas the 10% who self-identified as being kinetic learners reported that regular driving enhanced the devotional life.

During the final in-depth interviews, while all of the above factors were mentioned again, there were some new factors mentioned which were of a more personal nature. First, the need to pray for the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit (40%); second, a sense of expectancy that one is encountering the living God (30%); a humble and teachable attitude (30%); and a willingness to allow God to perform sometimes painful “heart-surgery” to engender spiritual growth (30%).

Reflecting on these results, it is noticeable that most of the factors identified by the research participants in their initial in-depth interviews related to the physical and social environments within which meditation and devotional times occurred. However, in the final in-depth interviews, while there was a general repetition of factors as expressed in the initial in-depth interviews, the factors identified as enhancing meditation were of a much more personal nature. The research participants had a new appreciation not merely for the spatial dimensions within which meditation would occur but also for the spiritual dimensions. In particular, the role of the person of the Holy Spirit and the heart-attitude of the one meditating were identified as being crucial factors which enhanced one’s experience in meditation. This finding coheres with the earlier results (Questions 1 & 2) which indicated a shift in understanding of biblical meditation over the course of the research on the part of the research participants towards a more personal, transformational and reflective stance.

Question 7

The seventh question used in the interviews varied slightly between the initial and

final interviews. During the initial in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following question: “Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that are currently reducing the effectiveness or value of the practice of meditation?” In the final in-depth interviews, the participants responded to the following: “Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that reduced the effectiveness or value of the practice of meditation?”

As with question 6, although relatively few (20%) of the research participants were engaging in an activity that approximated to a form of biblical meditation, there was remarkable consensus concerning restricting factors for a devotional life: an overly busy lifestyle; lack of adequate physical rest and sleep; regular travel and jet-lag; the prior use and close proximity of electronic gadgets; poor personal lifestyle discipline; lack of intentionality within a devotional life; an inability to slow down before God; chronic fatigue; training in reading Scripture for exegetical rather than for transformational purposes.

In the final in-depth interviews, the research participants reported only a single factor that they had not reported in the initial in-depth interviews. This factor was the sense that having an overly prescriptive model actually restricted the ability of the Holy Spirit to lead the meditation process and to direct the research participants to texts which were most applicable to themselves (40%). While all of the research participants expressed their satisfaction with the meditation model in general, and felt it functioned well in terms of providing a training framework and clear guidelines for the personal practice of meditation, 40% responded that they had struggled to stick with the texts outlined in the meditation model when they sensed the Holy Spirit leading them to other

passages. In fact, as stated above, 20% had actually felt led to focus on Old Testament wisdom literature exclusively after the first two weeks of the research process.

Reflecting on these results, for some there is clear value in being taught principles of content and narrative meditation, but then being given the freedom to meditate as they are led by the Holy Spirit rather than on prescribed texts. Furthermore, if regular travel mitigates the value of a devotional life in general and biblical meditation in particular, this is strongly suggestive of the need to restrict travel engagements to the absolutely necessary. The respondents suggested an inverse relationship between the strength of one's devotional and meditative life, and the amount of travel one engages in. This feedback implies that those in organizational (AFM) or denominational leadership who by virtue of their positions travel extensively are particularly susceptible to experiencing an impoverishment of their devotional life and being unable to hear and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Question 8

The final question used in the interviews was identical in both the initial and final interviews. The research participants were asked, "How would you describe in personal terms the spiritual benefits or risks associated with applying the practice of meditation?"

During the initial in-depth interviews, the research participants suggested the same benefits for this question as for Question 4 (see above). Additional benefits suggested included the following: the shift in one's prayer life from a perceived monologue to a living dialogue (20%); to more meaningfully express one's personal testimony (20%); to be able to witness more effectively for Jesus Christ (30%); and to live a life of greater obedience to God's will (20%).

During the final in-depth interviews, the research participants suggested a closer connection with God (80%) for those who meditate; that the Scriptures would become more personal (40%); that God would give powerful new insights through biblical meditation (30%); and that meditation would provide a store of memorized Scripture upon which to draw in difficult circumstances (40%).

During the initial in-depth interviews, when asked to suggest the spiritual risks associated with meditation, the research participants suggested the danger of engaging with God only to then spurn the promptings of the Holy Spirit, ultimately leaving an individual in a worse spiritual state than before (30%); the possibility of veering towards intensely subjective or irrational understandings of God's will (40%); the lack of any moderating influence on the conclusions drawn from meditation (20%); and the ongoing temptation to move into eastern or other forms of meditation involving an ASC (30%).

During the final in-depth interviews, the research participants highlighted the danger of moving to eastern forms of meditation (40%); the danger of veering without any moderating influences into overly subjective interpretations of Scripture (50%); and the temptation to add to or detract from Scripture based on the outcome of one's personal meditations (30%).

Reflecting on these results, the research participants could readily identify potential benefits and risks associated with meditation subsequent to the initial seminar and prior to engaging in the research process with the meditation model provided. There were no new insights added in the final in-depth interviews, but there was greater support for the understanding of potential risks, particularly involving temptation to experiment with eastern forms of meditation and the intensely subjective nature of biblical

meditation. Just as the research respondents had identified previously as a benefit of meditation the intensely personal and transformational nature of biblical meditation, they also recognized that this major strength could also function as a major risk factor if the individual meditating was to be without any moderating influences. Thus the importance of biblical meditation occurring within the moderating parameters of an active Christian community becomes paramount, in contrast to the practices of the Syrian eremites and desert monks for whom meditation often occurred without human contact for many years at a time.

Conclusion

The research process was implemented as proposed and approved by the IRB. There were two variations (an initial reluctance for employees within an employee—employer relationship with myself to become research participants and a reluctance to journal due to a concern for lack of personal privacy) from the intended research process which were not significant either in terms of impacting the overall research process itself nor in terms of causing any unanticipated or detrimental impact on the research participants themselves as they followed the meditation model provided. Thus the research implementation process was followed as approved by the IRB and as outlined in Chapter 4, albeit it with minor and ultimately insignificant qualitative variations.

With regards to the results, the overwhelming consensus of the research participants was that the practice of biblical meditation brought significant personal spiritual benefits. Such were the realized benefits that 80% of the research participants reported that they planned to continue with biblical meditation as an intrinsic part of their daily devotions. The results also indicate that biblical meditation may not be a suitable

devotional habit for all people, suggesting that different people will find different devotional habits to be meaningful.

Paradoxically, the most significant reported strengths of biblical meditation also suggested its greatest risk. The results reveal biblical meditation to be intensely personal, deeply transformational, and providing the framework for an ongoing and dynamic encounter between the Holy Spirit and the one meditating. However, this opens the practitioner to the risk of irrational interpretation and subjective speculation concerning the will of God. Thus biblical meditation would be helpful for an individual if it were one among many devotional habits practiced within a life which is lived within an active and loving Christian community.

Having reviewed the research process and the results from the research participants, I now turn to the final chapter, in which I will review the main conclusions from the research, assess to what extent the anticipated research outcomes were realized, and provide final recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH PROJECT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Having provided an overview of the theological foundations for the practice of meditation from a biblical basis and within the SDA context, having reviewed the salient viewpoints and recent literature concerning meditation, having outlined the research methodology and implementation narrative, and having reviewed the main research results, I now move to the research conclusions. The research conclusions will include a summary of the project, a concise description of the method used to evaluate the intervention, an assessment of the outcomes of the research, and a brief review of the main conclusions of each chapter before finally providing a concise list of recommendations.

Project Summary

The task of this research project was to nurture spiritual growth among AFM employees by enabling them to both understand and apply the counsels of the Bible and of White on meditation. In order to develop a theological basis for meditation, I studied the topic of meditation in both the Bible and the writings of White. I reviewed current literature, including books, journal articles, published dissertations and theses, seminar

presentation notes, and data in electronic format that all relate to the topic of meditation within the Bible and the Seventh-day Adventist context in particular. I then developed a strategy for building understanding of this important topic and encouraging its practice, before implementing this strategy within the AFM head office. My strategy included an initial seminar to orient research participants on the testimony of the Bible and of White concerning meditation, orientation to the meditation model to be used by the research participants (the model was developed as part of the overall strategy of building understanding), and initial and final in-depth individual interviews with research participants, who were all encouraged to follow the meditation model provided for an eight (8) week period.

Intervention Evaluation Method

I collected qualitative data from the study participants through a qualitative instrument (initial and final in-depth personal interviews with myself). The initial in-depth interviews happened in the day immediately after the initial seminar on biblical meditation and the orientation on the meditation model to be used by the research participants. I kept detailed interview notes, following which I summarized in an anonymous form the essential components of each research participant's answers. All research data remains in an exclusively anonymous and confidential format. At a broader level, I conducted an ongoing assessment of overall research outcomes by reviewing progress against the milestones indicated within each of the outcomes.

Assessment of Research Outcomes

Following are the individual anticipated outcomes of this research project. First, I

would have a deeper and enriched sense of God's presence through moving me towards an enhanced understanding and greater intentionality within my own personal practice of meditation. Second, this research project would nurture spiritual growth for the research participants, helping them to experience the blessings that come through meditation. Third, this research project would enable me to articulate a uniquely Adventist understanding of meditation. Fourth, this project would advance the understanding of factors which both limit and encourage the practice of meditation among research participants. Fifth, this project would potentially provide opportunity for AFM personnel worldwide to both understand and encourage the practice of meditation among their local congregations and among potential converts to the SDA faith. Sixth, this research project would potentially provide a helpful contribution to the current debate within the North American Adventist context on meditation.

Regarding the first outcome, I continue to experience this outcome in three key dimensions: a deeper sense of God's presence, an enhanced understanding of biblical meditation, and an active and vibrant personal devotional life which includes biblical meditation. With regards to the second outcome, the results strongly suggest that at least 90% of the research participants experienced spiritual growth, with 80% continuing post-research to experience the spiritual benefits of biblical meditation. Regarding the third outcome, the meditation model developed and utilized during this research project is explicitly based on the testimony of Scripture and the counsels of White, thus forming a uniquely Adventist understanding of meditation. Regarding the fourth outcome, the results indicate clear understanding among the research participants of the factors which contribute to and limit the practice of biblical meditation. Regarding the fifth outcome, I

have answered numerous requests from AFM colleagues worldwide for information on the biblical meditation model, and the model will be incorporated from 2014 onwards in all AFM career missionary and short-term missionary training programs. Regarding the sixth outcome, the research of the biblical foundations for the practice of meditation and the analysis of the counsels of White on meditation, together with the development of the biblical meditation model based on these theological foundations, combine to form a potentially helpful contribution to the current debate within North American Adventism on the practice of meditation. At the time of writing these conclusions, I was already in dialogue with a major SDA publishing house for the underlying research and subsequent meditation model to be published and distributed in Adventist Book Centers across the United States. Based on the above considerations, I have concluded that this research project has largely met all of its anticipated outcomes.

Theological Foundations for the Practice of Biblical Meditation

In Chapter 3, when I considered the biblical evidence, I came to the following conclusions about biblical meditation. Meditation involves conscious reflection upon God's revelation of Himself in Scripture, nature, salvation, or personal history. Meditation may include memorization and vocalization of Scripture. Meditation may involve singing and is to be a continual activity, occurring at all hours of the night or day. Meditation requires a comfortable or a quiet location. In meditation, the sanctified imagination may be used, and the purpose is to go beyond merely knowing God's law to understanding how God's revealed will is to be applied in one's life. Meditation involves a circumspect life that consciously turns from sin and evil to God and occurs within a covenant relationship with God. Meditation cleanses the heart, keeps one pure, brings

vitality to witnessing, and leads to obedience. Furthermore, meditation nurtures a hatred of evil, provides a refuge in times of stress, and leads to God's blessings in the present and future life.

Within the SDA Fundamental Beliefs, I concluded that meditation is recognized as an intrinsic part of the daily devotional life. Progressive sanctification includes Christian meditation, and the purpose is not to discover, as in some eastern forms of meditation, an alleged inner divine spark or the divine essence within, but for the believer to become more Godlike in character.

Within the writings of White, I concluded that restoring the image of God is the purpose of personal spirituality, and that spiritual growth into Christlikeness occurs when the believer seeks union with Christ through daily engaging in key devotional habits such as prayer, Bible study, and meditation. Within her personal spiritual life, I found evidence that White was not only a woman of prayer, but also engaged in meditation during both her teenage years of formative spiritual experience and her senior years during illness. While White does not elaborate on her practice of meditation, the evidence suggests it involved reflection on memorized Scriptures under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. However, I noted that there remains no denominationally voted or approved model anywhere within Adventism for SDA church members on actually how to meditate.

Landmark and Modern Christian and SDA Literature

In Chapter 3, I noted that although differing in emphasis, the referenced landmark writings shared a common *modus operandi*: the seeking of God through inner silence and an inner conversation. Within the broader Christian community, I found that despite the trend noted above since 1990 to increasingly understand meditation as a path towards

inter-spirituality and practiced ultimately through ASC, the literature is also replete with dissenting authors who continue to understand Christian meditation primarily as reflection on Scripture and in some cases who understand modern meditative practices as being part of a broader alleged conspiracy. Such alleged conspiracy would either be to bring Protestants under papal supremacy or to nullify Christianity's exclusivity and understand all faith traditions as having intrinsic salvific value. My research also indicated that within the SDA literature reviewed, these broader patterns are being replicated, with the debate intensifying in recent years.

Development of a Research Strategy

In Chapter 4, I provided a description of the research methodology, with particular focus on the need to be cognizant of unanticipated spiritual outcomes for project participants, before an intervention (meditation strategy) was outlined that explicitly built upon the theological foundations identified in Chapter 2 and the applicable viewpoints reviewed in Chapter 3. The intervention included a meditation model (see Appendix 3).

Research Results

In Chapter 5, I noted from the data provided by the research participants that the practice of biblical meditation brought significant personal spiritual benefits to the research participants. In this regard, I have concluded that the project task was satisfactorily achieved. The reported benefits included the following: a sense of peace with God; being spiritually refreshed and energized each morning; victory over temptation; conviction of hithertofore unrecognized personal sins; a more reflective walk

as a disciple of Jesus Christ; a deeper understanding of God's will for the individual; greater depth of and aptitude for reflection; a new hunger for the promptings of the Holy Spirit; regaining of emotional stability and self-control; deeper sermon preparation; a more realistic sense of the individual's own sinfulness and need of God's grace; an improved prayer life; a new delight in Scripture; direct insights for daily challenges; more gracious social intercourse and personal spiritual transformation. Such were the realized benefits that 80% of the research participants reported that they planned to continue with biblical meditation as an intrinsic part of their daily devotions. The results also indicated that biblical meditation may not be a suitable devotional habit for all people, suggesting that different people will find different devotional habits to be meaningful.

Overall Conclusions

Overall, I conclude that biblical meditation is an important and powerful devotional habit with deep roots within the Bible and the writings of White. Biblical meditation within an Adventist theological context is intensely personal, deeply transformational, and provides the framework for an ongoing and dynamic encounter between the persons of the Holy Spirit and the practitioner.

Paradoxically, I have also noted that the most significant reported strengths of biblical meditation may also be suggestive of its greatest risk, as meditation in isolation from the broader Body of Christ and away from any moderating influence may open the practitioner to the risk of irrational interpretation and subjective speculation concerning the will of God.

Thus biblical meditation may be most suitable for an individual if it were one

among other devotional habits practiced within a life which is lived within an active and loving Christian community.

Recommendations

With regard to the above conclusions, listed below are the final recommendations of this research project:

1. For meditation practitioners to gain a broad understanding of the principles of meditation as revealed in the Bible and writings of White before engaging in meditation.
2. For practitioners to engage in meditations as per the enclosed meditation model until confident in the use of the principles contained therein, and thereafter to move freely through Scripture as led by the Holy Spirit.
3. For further theological foundations, counsels from White, and practical guidance on the sanctified use of the imagination in meditation to be provided in the meditation model for future practitioners.
4. To approach biblical meditation with an expectation of God's transforming presence and a submissive attitude to the deep work of God.
5. To find a mechanism for journaling that ensures confidentiality and encourages open personal reflection.
6. For further research to be conducted into the topic of meditation within Reformation-era literature and practices.
7. For further research to be conducted into the nature and extent of any impact on early Adventism of devotional habits from within Methodism.

8. For cross-cultural missionaries to both understand and model biblical meditation as outlined in the enclosed meditation model in order to have a suitable alternative for new converts who are leaving religions with alternate meditation models.

9. To promote and model the meditation model described in this document for helping new SDA converts experience the reality of a relationship with God.

10. To include the meditation model described in this document in the initial training program for all new AFM cross-cultural missionaries.

11. For administrators to be conscious of the potentially inverse relationship between extensive travel and the quality of personal time with God, seeking wherever possible to both reduce travel commitments and increase the intentionality of their daily walk with God.

Final Thoughts

During the course of this research project, my studies and reflections have impacted my experience with God so that the above conclusions are not merely written in paper, but are now vivifying principles embedded in my daily walk with God and service in ministry. As a ministry professional, I have learned to listen more deeply not only to God, but in dialogues with others. Whereas previously I was primarily ministering to others, now I am open to the possibility of God ministering to me in the course of my ministry for others. My ministry is now more open to the mystery of God unfolding His perfect will in my life, requiring a more reflective and patient ministry posture than before. Throughout and subsequent to my research, as I have sought to practice the biblical meditation principles discovered, I have become more open to and aware of my Heavenly Father's mysterious shaping and reshaping of my innermost being. Although

there is much reshaping still to be done, Phil 1:6 has a new and joyous meaning, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

My prayer for you, dear reader, is that you may also, in the words of the psalmist, “Taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps 34:8).

APPENDIX 1
INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Informed Consent Form

For all research participants in the research being conducted by

Conrad Athelstan Raymond Vine

as part of the following DMin project:

Applying the Biblical Practice of Meditation
among Adventist Frontier Missions Employees

I am agreeing to participate in the research activities being conducted by Conrad Vine in association with his DMin project entitled 'Applying the Biblical Practice of Meditation amongst Adventist Frontier Missions Employees'. I understand the following:

1. That the purpose of the research is to understand whether and how applying the practice of meditation as revealed in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White contributes to personal spiritual growth.
2. That the DMin project referred to above involves research requiring the participation of volunteers.
3. That the duration of my involvement in the research is anticipated to take no longer than four (4) months.
4. That all of the research which I am agreeing to participate in will be conducted either on the premises of the Adventist Frontier Missions' Berrien Springs office or in my home.
5. That my participation in the research will be voluntary, is without any form of coercion, has no impact in any way upon my employment status or future employment status with Adventist Frontier Missions or on my relationship with the Seventh-day Adventist Church or Andrews University, and will receive no financial or other compensation, is entered into of my own free will.
6. That I have the right to request that my participation in this research be modified or terminated at any moment, and am only required to inform the researcher (Conrad Vine) in writing of my decision to withdraw from the research.
7. That to participate in this research, I am aged 18 years or over from the day I first volunteered to participate in the research.
8. That my participation in the research will consist of participation in the following activities: a) two (2) study days on the principles of meditation as revealed in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G White; b) participation in an initial in-depth interview with Conrad Vine; c) putting these principles into participation for myself in my personal life for a period not exceeding two (2) months (during this period I will keep a journal of my spiritual experiences); and d) participation in an end-of-project in-depth interview with Conrad Vine.
9. That whilst the data I provide as a result of my participation in this research may be published, my personal identity in this study will not be disclosed in any manner, published or verbal.
10. That to participate in the research I must be an employee of Adventist Frontier Missions, and that I am an employee of Adventist Frontier Missions.
11. That my participation in the research involves a risk of me experiencing spiritual discomfort. Spiritual growth is an intensely personal experience, and changes in spirituality are possible through participating in the research. Should I believe that I am not being benefitted through my participation in the research as I hoped, or that my spiritual growth as a result of participating in the project is more difficult and challenging for me than I had anticipated, I have the right to immediately discuss the matter with the researcher (Conrad Vine) and either continue, modify or terminate immediately my participation in the research.
12. That should I experience spiritual discomfort during my participation in the research, I may contact the researcher or the research advisor, who will offer the option

- counseling from a qualified Christian counselor. During this time, I will be offered the choices of continuing, modifying or terminating my participation in the research.
13. That I may contact the Andrews University Institutional Review Board at any time should I have any concerns about the research process.
 14. That my participation in the research may result in me receiving spiritual benefits that are as yet unknown and undefined. I have been told that because of the experimental nature of this study, it is possible that these spiritual benefits may not occur, and that complications and undesirable side effects, which are unknown at this time, including a worsening of my spiritual condition, may result.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher's adviser or an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint I may have about the study I may contact Dr Skip Bell, (Andrews University Doctor of Ministry Program Director) tel: 269 471 3306, email: sjbell@andrews.edu, or at the following address: SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104-1560.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher (Conrad Vine) on any matter concerning the research or my participation in the research, I may contact him at the following address: 8354 South Scottdale Road, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. Email: cvine@afmonline.org. Cell: 218 849 7254.

I have read the contents of this consent form, and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the researcher, Conrad Vine. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. If I have additional questions or concerns, I may contact Conrad Vine at the following address: 8354 South Scottdale Road, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. Email: cvine@afmonline.org. Cell: 218 849 7254.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject	Date

Signature of Witness	Date

I have reviewed the contents of this form with the person signing above. I have explained potential risks and benefits of the study.

Signature of Researcher	Date

Signature of Witness	Date

APPENDIX 2

INITIAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Initial in-depth interview lead questions for all research participants in the research being conducted by

Conrad Athelstan Raymond Vine

as part of the following DMin project:

Applying the Biblical Practice of Meditation
among Adventist Frontier Missions Employees.

1. Please describe your understanding of the practice of meditation as revealed in Scripture.
2. Please describe your understanding of the practice of meditation as revealed in the writings of Ellen G White.
3. Please describe how you are currently applying the practice of meditation (if at all)?
4. Please share the spiritual benefits that you anticipate receiving as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?
5. Please describe the spiritual harm or any other side effects that you anticipate receiving as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?
6. Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that are enhancing your current practice of meditation (if you are practicing meditation at all)?
7. Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that are currently reducing the effectiveness or value of the practice of meditation?

8. How would you describe in personal terms the spiritual benefits or risks associated with applying the practice of meditation?

APPENDIX 3

MEDITATION MODEL

An Adventist Model of Biblical Meditation

‘The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness’
(Ellen G. White, 1898, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 311).

‘By beholding we become changed’
(Ellen G. White, 1952, *The Adventist Home*, p. 330).

‘Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him....God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption....The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures’
(Ellen G. White, 1900, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 59).

Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons.
(Ellen G. White, 1896, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 1).

Introduction

The devotional habit of meditation is enjoined upon the believer both in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. Eastern meditative practices involve the emptying of the mind, whereas biblical meditation involves filling the mind with the Word of God, reflecting carefully upon God’s revelation of Himself in the Scriptures, in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and upon God’s acts in history, including in the life of the believer.

Key Elements of Biblical Meditation

A study of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy indicates that biblical meditation incorporates the following key elements:

- Meditation involves a conscious reflection and ‘chewing upon’ of God’s revelation of Himself in Scripture, nature, salvation history and personal experience.
- The purpose of meditation is to grow in Christlikeness, to reflect the character of Jesus Christ more and more. This happens as we grow daily from merely knowing God’s Word to understanding how to apply God’s revealed will in our own lives.

- Meditation may involve the memorization and vocalization of Scripture.
- Meditation may involve singing Scripture to oneself.
- Meditation is to be a continual activity of one's mind and heart.
- Meditation may require a comfortable position or a quiet location.
- Meditation may involve the sanctified use of one's imagination to project oneself into a biblical story in order to better appreciate and apply the spiritual lessons within the story.
- Meditation happens within a circumspect life that consciously turns from sin and evil to God in faith and obedience.
- Meditation occurs within a covenant relationship with God.
- Meditation involves humbly and consciously opening oneself to the leading and promptings of the Holy Spirit.

How to Approach Meditation

As we begin to meditate there are certain principles we need to remember and practice. These are outlined below:

1. **Pray.** Because all Scripture is inspired by God, pray for the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, claiming the promise of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the mind and bend the will. The Apostle Paul explains, 'But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. 2.14, NKJV).

Ellen G. White (2000), writing further about the importance of prayer, writes that, 'Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given' (*Steps to Christ*, p. 91).

2. **Pick a passage in which God encounters people.** It is generally wiser to start with clearer passages of the Bible than with obscure or strongly-disputed passages. The Bible is full of stories in which God interacts with individuals or groups of people, as stories are an open way to learn about how God interacts with people and reveals both His love and gracious will. We can often find ourselves in the characters of the Bible stories, readily identifying with their life situations, and are thus able to understand the spiritual lessons God intends for us more clearly.
3. **Expect to grow spiritually.** God wishes to restore in us the image of God that was defaced by the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The Apostle Paul writes that we are to '...put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness' (Ephesians 4.22-24, NKJV).

Ellen G. White (1895b), writing about our need for personal transformation into the character of God, counsels us that, ‘The attributes of God are goodness, mercy, love, long-suffering and patience, and His followers are to possess the same attributes of character representing Christ in true spirituality’ (August 22).

4. **Approach God with humility.** Jesus struggled with disciples with a sense of their own self-sufficiency and intrinsic worthiness, and He spoke these words to them. ‘Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 18.2-4, NKJV).

As we come to God with humility, we come with a humble desire to follow wherever God leads us. A decision in principle and in our hearts to follow God’s will as He reveals it to us before we come to our time of meditation removes the constant struggle of deciding whether we are going to obey and follow where Jesus leads when we actually engage in meditation.

5. **Maintain a regular devotional life.** Just as a gardener grows a range of plants in the garden in order to have a harvest of fruit, vegetables or beauty in due season, so we are to maintain a spiritual garden, that we may have a living and fresh spiritual harvest each day. This involves constant communion with God.

Jesus taught the Twelve that they were not only to labor **for** Him, they were also to spend time **with** Him. ‘Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6.30-31, NKJV).

Ellen G. White (1898), reflecting on the respective spiritual experiences of Mary and Martha, writes that, ‘The cause of Christ needs careful, energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good’ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 525).

6. **Be ready to memorize.** Memorization of Scripture brings profound benefits for those who invest the time and effort. These benefits include the following: memorization saturates the mind with God’s word, thereby transforming us (2 Corinthians 3.18); memorization protects from temptation (Psalm 119.11); memorization increases faith (Romans 10.17); memorization fosters Christian growth (Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 59); memorization provides God with contact points in our minds for His work of mind and character transformation (Romans 12.2); memorization aids meditation, particularly when a Bible is not available and during the working hours; memorization aids us in

ministering to others, as the Holy Spirit brings to memory texts that have been memorized at crucial moments (John 14.26).

7. **Journal as you meditate.** A journal is a diary in which we write about our life with God. As we can't separate life from God, when we journal we are not merely writing about our life with God, but we are writing about our own lives and how God is present in our lives. All you need are a book with blank pages and a pen! According to Anthony (2007), we can use our journal to write down:

- Important discoveries from your personal Bible study, prayer, time at church or other Christian meetings.
- Prayer requests for others and God's answers.
- Questions and problems for God.
- Private thoughts and feelings about your journey with God.
- Helpful quotations or Bible verses that you want to remember.
- Things you have learned about yourself, God and life.
- Successes and thanks to God.
- Anything else that relates to your spiritual growth – its completely up to you!
- Explore a particular subject related to your spiritual journey. For example, how does God communicate with me?

As we meditate through the passages listed below, remember to keep your journal; pray constantly; be humble and open to God's voice; determine to follow where God leads; prioritize your life around your time with God; be ready for tears – of sadness and of joy, but God will grow you and transform you. Remember - your purpose is to reflect Jesus more and more in your character, and to more fully live God's will for you.

Day 1 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me' (Exodus 20.2-3, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – "This is it!"
 - A nudge – "Have you thought about....?"
 - An encouragement – "This will help with...."
 - A soft whisper – "How about....?"
 - Comfort – "This is right."¹
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

¹These questions are based on the work of Gavin Anthony.

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 1 Journal Entries

[Please note: a full page of lines was provided in the model for all project participants.

For the purposes of this Appendix, only three indicative lines are provided for each daily meditation exercise]

Day 2 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments’ (Exodus 20.4-6, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with...”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?

- Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 2 Journal Entries

Day 3 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: 'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain' (Exodus 20.7, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 3 Journal Entries

Day 4 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it' (Exodus 20.8-11, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?

- Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 4 Journal Entries

Day 5 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: 'Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you' (Exodus 20.12, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – "This is it!"
 - A nudge – "Have you thought about...?"
 - An encouragement – "This will help with...."
 - A soft whisper – "How about....?"
 - Comfort – "This is right."
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 5 Journal Entries

Day 6 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘You shall not murder’ (Exodus 20.13, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 6 Journal Entries

Day 7 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘You shall not commit adultery’ (Exodus 20.14, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 7 Journal Entries

Day 8 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: 'You shall not commit steal' (Exodus 20.15, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – "This is it!"
 - A nudge – "Have you thought about....?"
 - An encouragement – "This will help with...."
 - A soft whisper – "How about....?"
 - Comfort – "This is right."
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 8 Journal Entries

Day 9 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor’ (Exodus 20.16, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 9 Journal Entries

Day 10 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's’ (Exodus 20.17, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 10 Journal Entries

Day 11 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" -- He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2.1-12, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of the paralytic.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the paralytic’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the paralytic’s spiritual experience before he met Jesus, whilst he met Jesus, and after he was healed.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the paralytic at each stage of the story. What does the paralytic hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Does he hear condemnation as he tries to approach Jesus? What does the voice of Jesus sound like in the midst of the pharisees’ angry mutterings? What does it feel like to walk again?
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?

- What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 11 Journal Entries

Day 12 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region’ (Luke 7.11-17, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of the widow.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the widow’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the widow’s spiritual experience before she met Jesus, whilst she met Jesus, and after her son was raised from the dead.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the widow at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Imagine the touch of her son’s lifeless body followed by the embrace of her risen son. What future does she see for herself when her son is dead and after he is risen? How does Jesus touch her life on that day and for years after? Imagine the silence of her dead son, the sound of Jesus’ voice and then the joyous sounds of the family reunion.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 12 Journal Entries

Day 13 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always" (John 12.1-8, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of one of the disciples.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine a disciples’ thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the disciple’s spiritual experience as he sat down to eat, during Mary’s ministry to Jesus, and after hearing Jesus’ tender words to Mary.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the disciple at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Imagine the smell of dirty bodies being replaced by the sweet smell of perfume. Hear the dinner gossip turning to silence then to the sounds of Mary’s weeping then to Judas’ criticism and then the loving voice of Jesus. See the gratitude in Mary’s eyes, the hostility in Judas’ eyes, and the love in Jesus’ eyes.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 13 Journal Entries

Day 14 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father’ (Luke 9.37-42, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of one of the father.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the father’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the father’s spiritual experience when he brought his boy to the disciples, to Jesus, and then home to his family.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the father at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear the commotion of the crowd, the accusations of the Pharisees, the uncertainty of the disciples, the taunts of the demon, the voice of Jesus, and the loving voice of his restored son. Imagine the release of physical burden when he no longer needs to carry his grown son home. Taste the bitter disappointment turning to sweet joy after Jesus’ miracle.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 14 Journal Entries

Day 15 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken. Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God’ (Luke 18.35-44, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of one of the onlookers.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the onlooker’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the onlooker’s spiritual experience when they first told the blind man to be quiet, saw the healing, and then celebrated the restoration of sight.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of an onlooker at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear the cries for help above the crowd’s commotion. Hear Jesus asking, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Imagine seeing for the first time, and the first thing you see being the face of Jesus. What does it feel for Jesus to work a life-transforming miracle in your life? What life-transforming miracle are you crying out to Jesus for?
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 15 Journal Entries

Day 16 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him. Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "*Talitha, cumi,*" which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat' (Mark 5.21-43).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of the disciple John.

- At each stage of the story, imagine John’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
- Imagine John’s spiritual experience when Jairus pleads for his daughter’s urgent healing, the slow journey to Jairus’ home, the healing of the unclean woman, and the joy of seeing the girl restored to her parents.
- Focus on the 5 senses of John at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear Jairus’ desperate pleas, the unclean woman’s quivering confession, Jesus’ command of life, and the parents’ cries of joy. Smell the odor of the crowd, the blood-soiled clothing of the unclean woman, the stench of death and fear. See the sick healed, the mourners rejoice and death defeated.

5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
- How does this touch my life today?
- What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
- What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
- How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 16 Journal Entries

Day 17 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8.2-11, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
7. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
8. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
9. For example, enter the story through the perspective of one of the woman.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the woman’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the woman’s spiritual experience as she enters an adulterous relationship, as her lover betrays her, and as she finds the One who will never leave her nor forsake her.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the woman at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Anticipate the thud of rocks cracking your skull. See eyes filled with lust then with hatred and then love. Taste the bitter-sweet of illicit love, the bitterness of betrayal, and then the sweetness of God’s love.
10. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?

- What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
- How do I respond to this today?

11. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 17 Journal Entries

Day 18 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him’ (Matthew 4.18-20, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of Simon Peter.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Simon Peter’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Simon Peter’s spiritual journey as he is called from fishing for today to fishing for eternal results, from a self-directed life to following Jesus in obedience.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Simon Peter at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear the sound of Jesus’ voice cutting through the bustle of daily activity. Taste the liberating uncertainty of following Jesus wherever He leads. Walk only where Jesus leads.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 18 Journal Entries

Day 19 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Matthew 11.2-6, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of John the Baptist.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine John’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine John’s spiritual journey: his doubts in prison; his anxious wait for an answer from Jesus; and how Jesus’ answer may have impacted him.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of John at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? See the darkness and despair of a dank prison cell. Feel trapped in a situation from which there seems no way out. Hear of Jesus working miracles for others but not for him. Taste the bitterness of seeming failure. Hear the voice of Jesus speaking to him in his prison cell.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 19 Journal Entries

Day 20 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9.9-13, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of one of the characters and journey with your chosen character through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. For example, enter the story through the perspective of Matthew.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Matthew’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Matthew’s spiritual journey: his social ostracism; his acceptance by Jesus; his new life of ministry.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Matthew at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Taste the bitterness of social ostracism and the joy of reconciliation with God. Hear voices accusing him of being a traitor to the voice that calls Him lovingly back to God. Feel like an outsider to one sent by God and living in the presence of Jesus Christ.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 20 Journal Entries

Day 21 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15.11-32, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the father and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the father’s spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the father’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.

- Imagine the father’s spiritual journey: the rejection by his younger son; the social shame of seeing his youngest son leave home; the joy of welcoming home the prodigal; and his ongoing struggle with a bitter older son.
- Focus on the 5 senses of the father at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Feel the pain of rejection, the social shame, the joy of reconciliation, and the struggle with a bitter child. See the prodigal walk away, see the empty horizon each day, and see the prodigal walking home. Taste the bitterness of rejection, the joy of the fatted calf, and the frustration at being misunderstood by those closest to him.

5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
- How does this touch my life today?
- What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
- What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
- How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 21 Journal Entries

Day 22 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15.11-32, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the Prodigal and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the Prodigal’s spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the Prodigal’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.

- Imagine the Prodigal’s spiritual journey: his sense that his father had nothing worthwhile to offer; his sense of having nothing in and of himself; and his sense that his father had everything good to offer.
- Focus on the 5 senses of the Prodigal at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Feel the elation of freedom, the bitterness of failure, the shame of the return journey, and the sheer surprise at the love of his father’s welcome. Hear the sounds of money being counted, of riotous living, of grunting pigs, of an innocent calf being butchered, of an angry brother, and of a joyous father. Taste the hunger that comes from being alienated from his father, the emptiness of pods for pigs, and then taste the fatted calf, symbol of reconciliation with his father.

5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
- How does this touch my life today?
- What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
- What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
- How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 22 Journal Entries

Day 23 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15.11-32, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the older brother and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the older brother’s spiritual experience.

- At each stage of the story, imagine the older brother's thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
- Imagine the older brother's spiritual journey: his years of obedient but loveless service; his bitterness at his father's expressed love for the Prodigal; his confrontation with his father; his physical closeness but spiritual distance from his father.
- Focus on the 5 senses of the older brother at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Feel the elation of being the dominant brother, the grind of years of seemingly thankless service, and the bitterness at the rejoicing over the Prodigal. See the father's love for the Prodigal, and fail to see the father's love for himself. See the father staring every day out for the Prodigal, but only see his father's lack of appreciation for him. Hear the father's final question.

5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character's spiritual experience in the story?
- How does this touch my life today?
- What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
- What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
- How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 23 Journal Entries

Day 24 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15.11-32, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the surrounding community and journey with them through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the surrounding community’s spiritual experience.

- At each stage of the story, imagine the surrounding community's thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
- Imagine the surrounding community's spiritual journey: the shock at the breakdown of the seemingly perfect family, the years of gossip and innuendo during the Prodigal's absence, and the invitation to the party when the family is reunited.
- Focus on the 5 senses of the surrounding community at each stage of the story. What do they hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear the gossip at each stage of the story. Feel the critical judgment on the father for those long years. See the father's longing for his ungrateful son. Taste the calf and the joy of reconciliation. Rejoice with the father – but with what spirit?

5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character's spiritual experience in the story?
- How does this touch my life today?
- What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
- What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
- How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 24 Journal Entries

Day 25 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15.1-7, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the lost sheep and journey with it through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the lost sheep’s spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the lost sheep’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the lost sheep’s spiritual journey: the casual drifting away from the shepherd, the shock of discovering it is lost, the fear of not knowing its way home, the trust in the shepherd to come and find it, and the joy of hearing the shepherd’s voice once again.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the lost sheep at each stage of the story. What does it hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Taste that delicious grass just over the ridge, the shock of discovering the flock has moved on, the fear of wolves and bears that lurk in the hills, and the comforting grass in the sheep-pen once again. Hear the voice of the shepherd fading, then the silence of aloneness, then the shepherd’s voice once again.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 25 Journal Entries

Day 26 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15.1-7, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the 99 sheep and journey with them through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the 99 sheep’s spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the 99 sheep’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the 99 sheep’s spiritual journey: discovering that one of their number had drifted away unseen and unnoticed, the sad journey to the safety of the sheep-pen, the long period of mutual recriminations whilst trusting in the shepherd to find the lost sheep, and the joy of seeing the lost sheep return.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the 99 sheep at each stage of the story. What do they hear, see, feel, touch and taste? See the preoccupation with daily living and eating, see that one of the flock is gone, see the shepherd leave and then return. Taste the shock of loss, the pain of separation and the joy of restoration. Hear the lost sheep recount what the shepherd did for it.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 26 Journal Entries

Day 27 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15.1-7, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the shepherd and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the shepherd’s spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the shepherd’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the shepherd’s spiritual journey: the shock of realizing that a sheep has disappeared during the day, the urgency of getting the 99 sheep to safety, the determination to find the lost sheep, and the joy of finding the lost sheep.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the shepherd at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Taste the shock of loss, the urgency of seeking the lost, the joy of finding the lost. Hear the bleating of the flock, fail to hear the cries of the lost, hear the cries of the lost, hear the bleating of the reunited flock.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 27 Journal Entries

Day 28 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15.9-10, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the woman and journey with her through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the woman’s spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the woman’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the woman’s spiritual journey: the shock of realizing she has lost a tenth of her dowry, the urgency of finding the lost coin, and the joy of finding the coin.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the woman at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Taste the shock of loss, the urgency of seeking the lost, the joy of finding the lost. Feel the dirt of the house as she scrabbles in the floor, the wonderful hardness of the coin in her fingers, and the joy in her heart as she tells those she loves the good news. Sense the shame at losing part of her dowry, the financial difficulties she was placed in, and the relief when she found the coin. Imagine with her the need to face a crisis in life on one’s own. Imagine with her what the crisis would be like if she faced it with someone she trusted and loved at her side.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 28 Journal Entries

Day 29 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15.9-10, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of the watching angels and journey with them through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on the angels’ spiritual experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine the angels’ thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine the angels’ spiritual journey: the pain of watching a sinner drift from God, the anxious wait for the Holy Spirit to work on the sinner’s heart, and the intense joy of seeing a sinner reconciled with God.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of the angels at each stage of the story. What do they hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Sense the frustration at not being able to directly intervene in a sinner’s drift. Hear the concern of the sinner’s guardian angel pleading with God to intervene. See the angels cooperating with the Holy Spirit to arrange events so that the sinner can be found.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 29 Journal Entries

Day 30 Meditation

Passage for meditation: 'But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd' (Matthew 9.36, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – "This is it!"
 - A nudge – "Have you thought about....?"
 - An encouragement – "This will help with...."
 - A soft whisper – "How about....?"
 - Comfort – "This is right."
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 30 Journal Entries

Day 31 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust’ (Matthew 12.18-21, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with...”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?

- Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 31 Journal Entries

Day 32 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around’ (Psalm 3.5-6, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 32 Journal Entries

Day 33 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts’ (Romans 13.12-14, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 33 Journal Entries

Day 34 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy’ (Proverbs 28.13, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 34 Journal Entries

Day 35 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts’ (Romans 6.10-12, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 35 Journal Entries

Day 36 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 18.3-4, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 36 Journal Entries

Day 37 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold' (Luke 19.8, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 37 Journal Entries

Day 38 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one’ (Colossians 4.5-6, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 38 Journal Entries

Day 39 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’ (Mark 14.38, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 39 Journal Entries

Day 40 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God’ (Romans 8.26-27, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 40 Journal Entries

Day 41 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life’ (1 Timothy 1.12-16, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with...”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?

- Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 41 Journal Entries

Day 42 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 5.3, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 42 Journal Entries

Day 43 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted’ (Matthew 5.4, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 43 Journal Entries

Day 44 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5.5, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 44 Journal Entries

Day 45 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled’ (Matthew 5.6, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 45 Journal Entries

Day 46 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy’ (Matthew 5.7, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 46 Journal Entries

Day 47 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Matthew 5.8, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 47 Journal Entries

Day 48 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God’ (Matthew 5.9, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about...?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about...?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 48 Journal Entries

Day 49 Meditation

Passage for meditation: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5.10, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don't go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – "This is it!"
 - A nudge – "Have you thought about...?"
 - An encouragement – "This will help with...."
 - A soft whisper – "How about....?"
 - Comfort – "This is right."
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 49 Journal Entries

Day 50 Meditation

Passage for meditation: ‘Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you’ (Matthew 5.11-12, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and repeatedly. Prepare the text on a small card and carry it through the day, softly repeating it until your mind is saturated with the text. Memorize it.
3. Ask yourself basic questions about the text:
 - Who is speaking here?
 - To whom is this passage being spoken?
 - When was this passage spoken?
 - Why did the original hearers need to hear this passage?
4. Keep prayerfully reading or speaking the text until God stops you. Don’t go any further! God is calling your attention to something! God can stop you in different ways. It may seem like:
 - Thunder – “This is it!”
 - A nudge – “Have you thought about....?”
 - An encouragement – “This will help with....”
 - A soft whisper – “How about....?”
 - Comfort – “This is right.”
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What is God revealing about Himself to me in this text?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How is God wishing me to change in my heart, attitudes or behaviors?
 - Is there an example here for me to follow?
 - Is there a sin for me to confess and repent of?
 - Is there a command for me to obey?
 - Is there a promise for me to claim and live by?
 - Is there a difficult idea for me to explore further?
 - Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
 - Is there something for me to pray about today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 50 Journal Entries

Day 51 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me’ (Matthew 27.3-10, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of Judas and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on Judas’ experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Judas’ thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Judas’ spiritual journey: his dreams of high position in an earthly kingdom, his disillusionment with Jesus’ refusal to set up an earthly kingdom, and his guilt at betraying Jesus.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Judas at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Taste the exhilaration of ‘being a player’ in God’s Kingdom, the horror of being on the wrong side, and the bitterness of betrayal. Hear the crowds arresting Jesus, the sneering of the priests, the coins on the ground, and the snap of the branch as it bears his weight.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 51 Journal Entries

Day 52 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him." But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified’ (Matthew 27.15-26, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of Barabbas and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on Barabbas’ experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Barabbas’ thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Barabbas’ spiritual journey: his life of violence and insurrection, his capture and condemnation to a cruel death, his meeting with the Prince of Peace who dies in his place.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Barabbas at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear the crowds baying for Jesus’ death, the words of Pilate to set him free, the silence of Jesus before the mob, and the sound of chains dropping from his wrist. See the darkness of the prison cell, the peaceful face of Jesus, and then the bright sunshine of freedom.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 52 Journal Entries

Day 53 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him." But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified’ (Matthew 27.15-26, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of Pilate’s wife and journey with her through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on Pilate’s wife’s experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Pilate’s wife’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Pilate’s wife’s spiritual journey: raised in a pagan culture, serving overseas amongst Jews who hate her, yet open to God’s promptings in a dream and willing to stand up for Jesus when no-one else would.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Pilate’s wife at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? See the troubling dream, the Prince of Peace being scourged, the Prince of Peace standing in her husband’s judgment hall. Hear the crowds calling for crucifixion, Pilate pronouncing judgment on Jesus, and the words of Jesus to her husband. What do those words mean to her?
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:

- What was my chosen character's spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 53 Journal Entries

Day 54 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS’ (Matthew 27.32-37, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of Simon of Cyrene and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on Simon’s experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Simon’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Simon’s spiritual journey: journeying from north Africa to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, being forced to carry a condemned man’s cross to Calvary, observing the crucifixion, and then returning home to raise his two boys as believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Simon at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Hear the taunts of the crowd hurled at Jesus, the mockery of the priests and the commands of the soldiers, and then hear Jesus repeatedly saying, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ See the soldiers’ hard faces and priests sneers, and then see Jesus’ peaceful face and the title on the cross, ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS.’
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?

6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 54 Journal Entries

Day 55 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons’ (Matthew 27.45-56, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of Mary Magdalene and journey with her through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on Mary’s experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Mary’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Mary’s spiritual journey: living under demonic possession, being caught in adultery, meeting Jesus and being liberated from her past to live a life of witness and service, free from fear and full of love.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Mary at each stage of the story. What does she hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Remember the gentle voice of Jesus saying ‘Neither do I condemn you’ and liberating you from demons. Meet the risen Lord in the garden, hear His voice, fall to His feet in worship, and then be the first to joyfully proclaim His resurrection.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?

- How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 55 Journal Entries

Day 56 Meditation

Passage for Meditation: ‘Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb’ (Matthew 27.57-61, NKJV).

1. Open with prayer in a quiet and comfortable place. Ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and bend your will.
2. Read the text slowly and a couple of times until you are familiar with the story.
3. Enter the story from the perspective of Joseph of Arimathea and journey with him through the story. Use your imagination to focus on the story from a particular perspective in order to experience as much of what happened as possible.
4. Use your sanctified imagination to reflect on Joseph’s experience.
 - At each stage of the story, imagine Joseph’s thoughts, feelings and faith journey.
 - Imagine Joseph’s spiritual journey: building a successful career in Judaism and Jewish society, being a respected leader amongst the people, coming to faith in Jesus when he sees Jesus on Calvary, standing up for Jesus by burying Jesus in the family tomb, risking his reputation and social standing at a single stroke.
 - Focus on the 5 senses of Joseph at each stage of the story. What does he hear, see, feel, touch and taste? Feel the dead weight of Jesus’ body, see the scars and bloodied bruises, taste the smell of bloody death. Feel the clean linen wrapping the body, and struggle to seal the body in the tomb behind the heavy stone. Surely, no-one could move that stone away? Sense the power of Jesus’ resurrection.
5. Ask yourself personal application questions about the text:
 - What was my chosen character’s spiritual experience in the story?
 - How does this touch my life today?
 - What did I learn about Jesus in the story?
 - What is God revealing about myself to me in this text?
 - How do I respond to this today?
6. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for revealing Himself to you, and asking for the grace of Jesus Christ to live in harmony with what God has revealed to you.

Day 56 Journal Entries

APPENDIX 4

FINAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Andrews  University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Final in-depth interview questions for all research participants in the research being conducted

by

Conrad Athelstan Raymond Vine

as part of the following DMin project:

Applying the Biblical Practice of Meditation
among Adventist Frontier Missions Employees.

1. Please describe your understanding of the practice of meditation as revealed in Scripture.
2. Please describe your understanding of the practice of meditation as revealed in the writings of Ellen G White.
3. Please describe how you were able to apply the practice of meditation over the period of the research?
4. Please share the spiritual benefits that you received as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?
5. Please describe the spiritual harm or any other side effects that you received as a result of applying the practice of meditation over the period of the research?
6. Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that enhanced the practice of meditation?
7. Please describe those factors in your own personal experience that reduced the effectiveness or value of the practice of meditation?
8. How would you describe in personal terms the spiritual benefits or risks associated with applying the practice of meditation?

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WORK HISTORY

- Sept 11 – present* President of AFM, providing spiritual and strategic leadership for a worldwide supporting ministry of the SDA Church.
- Aug 07 – Aug 11* Church pastor for two districts in the Minnesota SDA Conference.
- Mar 06 – May 07* Secretary-Treasurer for the Middle East Union Mission of SDAs.
- July 05 – Feb 06* Ministerial intern in the Holloway / Muswell Hill district the South England SDA Conference.
- Feb 05 – July 05* ADRA Sri Lanka Country Director.
- Jan 03 – Jan 05* ADRA-UK Consultant.
- Oct 01 – June 02* Program Director, Naxcivan Enterprise Development Program, ADRA Azerbaijan.
- May 00 – Sept 01* Operations Director, ADRA Azerbaijan.
- Sept 98 – April 00* Program Director, Naxcivan Health Assistance Program, ADRA Azerbaijan.
- Aug 97 – Aug 98* Country Director, ADRA Tajikistan.
- Feb 97 – July 97* Mental Health Commissioning Manager, UK National Health Service (NHS).
- Aug 96 – Jan 97* Program Assistant, ADRA Azerbaijan.
- July 95 – Aug 96* Directorate Manager, Head and Neck Cancer Services, QE2 Hospital, UK.

EDUCATION

- 2/1/10 – present* DMin in Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality, Andrews University.
- 1/9/09 – 1/7/10* Pre-requisite courses for an MA in Islamic Studies, Islamic University of Minnesota.
- 1/9/02 – 16/12/04* MA (distinction) New Testament Biblical Studies, Newbold College, UK.
- 1/7/95 – 15/5/98* Post-graduate Diploma in Health Services Management, the Office for Public Management with Sheffield Hallam University, UK.
- 1/10/91 – 15/6/95* BSc (Hons) in Business Management, Aston University, Birmingham, UK. Focus on operations management and production systems analysis.