

Meeting Jesus In Meditation

There are many approaches to prayer. Not least because there are many different needs. But the greatest of all our needs is to get nearer to Jesus. The most powerful form of prayer for this purpose is arguably Christian meditation.

This article discusses some of the special aspects of Christian meditation

Sources Of The Benefits Of Christian Meditation Meditation has a very long history in Christianity and has taken various forms. But meditation on Scripture, and not least the gospels, is a kind which has great power.

How does the power come about?. From three sources: which work together to bring us closer to God:

1. From the Holy Spirit, of course. But this kind of prayer makes a very special kind of requirement on us and on the Spirit, and that is expressed in terms of
2. Faith. Obviously, the very act of prayer, any prayer, involves some kind of faith. But the degree of faith which this form of prayer demands can be quite different than in other forms of prayer.
3. Consistency. To really get into this kind of prayer one needs a daily commitment which is kept consistently. It is often said that "grace builds on nature" and that is very true. In this case it is true because we need to become habitually open to the way in which the Spirit works within us. We shall not achieve that unless we become habitual in our habits of prayer.

Essentials Of Christian Meditation

Christian meditation on the Bible is essentially straightforward in terms of what we do and the procedure we follow. However, there are many questions and issues which arise from the process. Too many to consider in a short article such as this. The subject receives an in-depth treatment in the book "The Keys To Meditation" by Keith & Iris Whitehead. But here we can indicate some of the essentials and some important benefits.

This kind of meditation should not be confused in any ways with types derived from Eastern religions, such as Hinduism. It is quite different and essentially Christian. Very often it is associated with Ignatius of Loyola because, after his conversion, he developed a particularly clear method of approach.

This involves reading Scripture in a particular way. At its essence is explicitly allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the nature and meaning of what, after all, he himself has written over the centuries.

The Subject Matter

For a Christian, the most important part of Scripture is the New Testament. While, we can meditate on the Old Testament, the former is, at least, the best place to start. Sometimes we meditate on the gospels; sometimes on the letters or Acts or Revelations. In the latter cases the approach is somewhat different in important respects to meditating on the gospels. However, it is meditation on the gospels which can bring us repeatedly face-to-face with Jesus in real and dynamic ways.

Some Of The Benefits Of Christian Meditation

The reality of meeting with Jesus in this way is a principle benefit. But it must not be either over-emphasised nor under-emphasised. The first is a danger because the actual experience of meditation will vary considerably from day-to-day or as between prayer periods on the same day. Few people with considerable experience in meditation would deny the reality of this meeting.

But some with limited experience may tend to overstress these encounters. They get carried away with what the Holy Spirit is providing for them over a particular period of time. But the Spirit deals with us in very different ways at different times.

On the other hand, these experiences are real, of great value and bring many blessings and should not be ignored. Certainly, we should avoid becoming "hucked" on them. That is a real possibility and must not be allowed to happen. People like John of the Cross have warned repeatedly about such dangers.

Allowing Freedom For The Holy Spirit To Work

Moreover, we need to allow the Spirit to balance the graces he is giving us. This requires mixing meditation periods on the gospels with other periods on, say, the letters of the New Testament, or the Psalms are a good source for beginning to meditate on the Old Testament.

One of the greatest benefits which a Christian has in his relationship with God is the very fact that God dwells within him. For example, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:12 that we have not received the spirit of the world, but we have received the Spirit who is from God. The reason for this is so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

When we do understand that, we understand that he needs to be given both the freedom and opportunity to work within us to the maximum possible degree. Only in that way shall we continue in the process of becoming like Jesus. That, after all, is what our lives are about.

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