Week 1

What Is Christian Meditation?

*Meditation is a universal spiritual practice that brings us to silence, stillness and simplicity. It guides us into the prayer of Christ.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Begin the session by inviting personal introductions. For example you could ask each person to say their name and whether they have meditated before.

Briefly share your own experience of coming to Christian Meditation and say you are a fellow-seeker but have been on the way for some time.

If others from your group are there invite them to briefly add something about their own experience.

Explain how meditation is a universal practice; in the Christian tradition it is a form of prayer. There are no difficult theories or techniques to master. Remind them that meditation is the prayer of the heart so all thoughts, including pious thoughts and images, are set aside.

Tell them the themes to be covered each week.

The Talk

Either Play Track 1 How to Meditate – 14.20 mins. Downloaded from the Website (Taken from *Jesus The Teacher Within*, Laurence Freeman, CD 1: Track 3) or,

Give a talk using the notes at the end of this chapter.

Meditation

Prepare for meditation (seeChapter 3)

Meditation: 20 – 25 minutes

After Meditation

Reading after meditation:

The mantra will lead you into greater silence. The silence leads you to greater depth. In the depth you find not ideals or ideologies but God who is love. The way is to accept to be more and more simple every day of our lives. Meditation is the way to purity of heart, leaving behind all fear and all limitation and entering simply into God’s presence. *John Main*

Or a Scripture reading: *Matthew 6: 5-6*.

**Sharing and questions**

Offer the opportunity for participants to ask questions or share their comments.

Give some information about The World Community for Christian Meditation – handout brochures, newsletter and other material. The sense of community is important.

Suggest subscribing to Daily Wisdom. Give some information about the website, weekly readings and teachings.

Recommend Laurence Freeman’s book, *Christian Meditation: Your Daily Practice.*

Conclusion

Close the group meeting with the Community Prayer at the end of Chapter 3.

Talk Week One

What is Christian Meditation?

Meditation is found in many traditions. In the Christian tradition it is the prayer of the heart and is often referred to as “pure prayer” or “prayer of the heart”, because it is a prayer without thoughts, words or images and so takes us beyond the imagination and the ego.

When we meditate we are not thinking about God or speaking to God. We are simply being with God in the silence and stillness of the present moment. We move from the mind to the heart. It is a prayer of silence, stillness and attention. The essence of all prayer (and love) is attention.

How do we meditate? We meditate by becoming still in body and mind. The first thing is to sit still. Meditation is not something we do just in our heads. It involves the whole person - body, mind and spirit. So the way we sit is important. It is important to sit still with a straight back, to be alert and awake. Jesus said “stay awake and pray”.

Our physical posture is the first stage: we become as still as we can physically. But the real stillness is within. The first thing we discover when we sit still is that our mind is racing, from one thought to another, from one plan to another, one memory to another, one fantasy to another. Don’t be surprised or disappointed – be glad that you can recognise what your mind is like!

Because of this discovery of how distracted we are many people are discouraged when they start. Don’t be discouraged. It is exactly why we need to meditate: to calm the mind, and allow the mind to become quieter, more still, more clear.

Meditation is learning to be in the present moment. When we meditate we discover we are not in the present moment. Our surface mind is usually dwelling in the past or the future or dwelling on some fantasy.

Only in the present moment can we find real peace, can we be at one with the God who is.

Meditation is the work of coming out of the past, letting go of the future and coming into the reality of the present moment; which we call the Kingdom of God for in the present moment we find the presence of God within us.

At this stage the mind is like driving in a fast stream of traffic or being stuck in a traffic jam. Meditation slows the traffic and clears it. But we can’t do this entirely on our own. St Paul tells us that the Spirit prays within us, deeper than words. When we meditate we are allowing what we think of at first as ‘my prayer’ to become one with the prayer of the Spirit.

When we meditate we are entering into the living tradition that John Main passed on to us and which he found in the wisdom of the early Christian monks. They recommended a way of ‘pure prayer’ and childlike simplicity that takes us to the core of our being.

They said to take a single word, a prayer word or mantra: a sacred word. During the time of meditation we repeat this single word faithfully from beginning to the end of our time of meditation. We let go of every thought, word and image. When we become distracted we start saying the word again. Distractions will come constantly. This is normal so don’t fight your distractions. Take your attention off them and return it to the mantra.

We say the word: gently (without force), faithfully (with attention), and lovingly. When we pay attention to our word we take our attention off ourselves. We leave self behind. This why meditation is a work of love. To be a follower of his we must leave self behind.

When we say it faithfully we are letting go of our thoughts, our possessions. We are entering poverty of spirit. When we say it with loving attention we are beginning to love God who loves us so that we can love him.

People often ask at first, ‘what should happen in my meditation?’ We are not trying to make anything happen. But reality is dawning. Nothing may seem to happen but we will discover that meditation gradually changes our lives as we find the fruits of the Spirit growing in us.

At times our meditation may lead us to experience great peace and joy. Sometimes it seems a hard slog and a waste of time. We learn to meditate with discipline, without demands or expectations. We don’t meditate just for short term benefits.

Jesus said in the Beatitudes – “happy are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”. When we meditate we are becoming poor in spirit. Reflect on what ‘poverty of spirit’ really means – think of it as a letting-go and becoming non-possessive.

Choosing the word or mantra we say is important. It is important that we stay with the same word throughout each meditation and at each time we meditate. This allows the word to become rooted in our heart.

We could use the word *Jesus* or *Abba*. The word we recommend is *Maranatha*.

It is the oldest Christian prayer, in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, and means “come Lord”. St Paul closes the first letter to the Corinthians with it. It is a sacred Christian prayer word.

But we don’t think about its meaning. Say it faithfully, attentively, and lovingly. As we listen to it, it calms the mind and leads us from the noisy monkey mind into the heart, the deeper and more silent centre of our being.

Say it as 4 equal syllables: *ma ra na tha*. Articulate it clearly, silently and listen to it.

Try to meditate twice a day, each morning and each evening for about 25 minutes. This will take time. Be patient. Keep on. Meditation is simplicity itself. The only difficult thing is that it is so simple. What makes it possible for all of us is that it is so simple. Think how naturally children take to meditation. The problem is being simple isn’t easy because we have to face our complexities. But meditation itself will simplify us if we allow it to patiently and gently do its work.

*Based On: Jesus The Teacher Within, Fr Laurence Freeman, OSB, CD 1 : Track 3.*

*A similar talk can be downloaded from the website Talk 1.*

1. Sharing the Gift page 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)