Meditation

Biblical Method Versus Eastern Method

by
Timothy R. Jennings, M.D.

A Guide to a Bible-based Experience with God

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Meditation

Biblical Method Versus Eastern Method

A Guide to a Bible-based Experience with God

Oh, how I love your design—your living law built right into reality!
I meditate upon it all day long.
Your laws make me wiser than my enemies;
they continually enlighten me.
I have greater understanding of reality than all my teachers,
for I humbly contemplate your law of love.

Psalm 119:97–99
The Remedy Psalms

There is much debate in the world over what constitutes biblical meditation versus other forms of meditation, particularly Eastern meditation. The purpose of this guide is to document the differences between biblical and Eastern meditation, the divergent meditation methods and their impact upon brain function and character outcomes, and to show how people can engage in healthy biblical meditation; it also provides a simple test to help you differentiate which meditation practice is being used.

Definitions of Meditation

General Meditation is the practice of focused, extended, and contemplative thought and can be applied to any subject. A person can meditate upon a physics problem or contemplate innovative surgical techniques. Thus, the word "meditation" can have a generic meaning of deep, contemplative, and focused thought.

Biblical Meditation is the thoughtful, focused, extended, and active contemplation of God, His character, laws, methods, principles, precepts, actions, purposes, plans, and creation, with a willful reaching out of the mind to connect with God for enlightenment, understanding, growth, wisdom, insight, and personal union in humble surrender to the Creator.

Eastern Meditation is the self-directed focus of the mind on a single point, phrase, or repetitive mantra, with the goal to quiet the mind, diminish contemplative thought, and experience a state of mental emptiness and bodily relaxation.

Underlying Design Laws for Biblical Meditation

God is the Creator of all reality—space, time, energy, matter, and life. His laws are the protocols He established and built into reality and that govern the operations of all things (laws of physics, laws of health, and the moral laws: the law of love, law of liberty, law of worship, etc.). Life is built to exist only in harmony with God's design laws, for they are the protocols that life and health operate upon. Deviation from God's laws brings pain, suffering, destruction, and death. Thus, the Bible teaches: "He who pursues righteousness and **love finds life"** (Proverbs 21:21), because life exists only in harmony with God's law of love:

> Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law** (Romans 13:10; see also Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; Proverbs 12:28; Psalm 19:7).
>
> "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart** and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments** (Matthew 22:37–40).

This love is not merely emotional; it is also functional—it is a principle upon which life is built to operate. The apostle Paul describes it this way: Love "is not self-seeking" (1 Corinthians 13:5).

If love doesn't seek self, what does it seek? Others! Love is giving, outward moving, beneficent. And God, who is love, built reality to operate in harmony with His nature and character of love. As Paul says in Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature**—have been clearly seen, **being understood from what has been made,** so that men are without excuse."

All through nature, we see that the law of love—the principle of giving—is the law upon which life is built. Every breath we take, we *give* away carbon dioxide to the plants, and the plants *give* oxygen back to us—a never-ending

circle of *giving*, which is the foundation of life. If one chooses to *transgress the law* and tie a plastic bag over their head, hoarding their carbon dioxide to themselves (selfishness), the *wages of* their choice is death.

With regard to meditation, there are two design laws directly involved, and understanding these two laws will give insight into why biblical meditation is healthy for the soul but Eastern meditation is not.

The Law of Worship

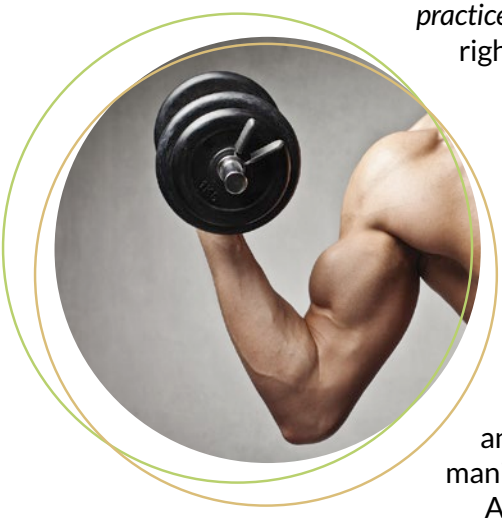
In Scripture, the law of worship is described as by beholding we are changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). We are changed both neurobiologically and characterologically according to what we meditate upon and worship. This is why the Bible instructs us to meditate upon some aspect of our infinite God:

> Do not let this **Book of the Law** depart from your mouth; **meditate on it** day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it (Joshua 1:8).
>
> But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and **on his law he meditates** day and night (Psalm 1:2).
>
> Within your temple, O God, **we meditate on your unfailing love** (Psalm 48:9).
>
> I **meditate on your precepts** and consider your ways (Psalm 119:15).
>
> Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then **I will meditate on your wonders** (Psalm 119:27).
>
> I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and **I meditate on your decrees** (Psalm 119:48).

Humans are God's crowning work of creation, and there is nothing on Earth we can worship that will ennoble us. It is only by beholding our infinite God that we develop in godliness and are changed to be like Him. When we worship the created rather than the Creator, the mind becomes darkened, depraved, and futile (Romans 1:18–31), or as Jeremiah 2:5 says, "They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves." We become like the God we admire and worship. Thus, as we engage in biblical meditation, we cooperate with God, not only to grow in our knowledge of Him, but by placing ourselves in harmony with the law of worship, we also experience the God-designed transformation of our souls.

The Law of Exertion

If you want something to get stronger, you must exercise it—because, as we all know, "if you don't use it, you lose it." This is true not only for physical strength but also for mental and spiritual development. If you want strong math ability, you must work problems; if you want strong musical skills, you must practice your instrument. Likewise, if we want to grow strong in our knowledge of God or in our ability to discern right from wrong and mature in character, then we must exercise our abilities in pursuing God and His truths. As Scripture teaches, the mature are those who *by practice* have developed the ability to discern right from wrong (Hebrews 5:14).



When we practice biblical meditation, we exercise the brain circuits of reason, thoughtful contemplation, and admiration for God. We grapple with concepts beyond our current understanding, stretching our abilities, which develop ever-increasing, more complex brain circuitry. These higher cortical regions grow stronger, as does our wisdom and our capacity for self-governance and manifesting the fruits of the Spirit.

As we engage in biblical meditation, we operate in harmony with the laws of worship and exertion, and we develop ourselves in harmony with God and His kingdom of love. But if we practice Eastern meditation, we behold nothing or some self-conjured idea, and we do not grow and develop in patterns after our Creator. We restrict the mind, enfeeble the soul, and cloud our understanding of reality.

Eastern meditation exercises the neural circuits of attention, focus, and suppression of active thought, and thereby trains the mind to avoid deep contemplation and wrestling through the realities that contribute to emotional uneasiness. Thus, it develops the ability to induce an emotional calm without actually confronting and resolving the reasons for the distress.

Eastern meditation, by suspending activity in the critical reasoning circuits and by failing to actively engage the mind with God—His character, methods, designs, principles, and creation—is out of harmony with both the law of worship and the law of exertion. Thus, the individual does not behold the infinite God in order to be transformed and does not exercise critical reasoning circuits in order to develop complex neural networks capable of processing spiritual truths.

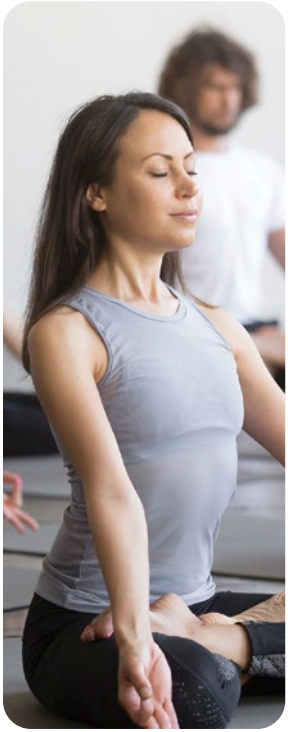
Techniques of Meditation

Eastern Meditation

Eastern meditation consists of four key elements:

1. Relaxed body posture with eyes closed
2. Slow rhythmic breathing
3. Single mental focus, typically on a repetitive mantra
4. Gently pushing away of other thoughts and returning to the mantra.

Guided Eastern meditation, which often approximates group hypnosis, will have a leader who will guide the group through the meditation, and it may look like this:



With a calm, monotone, hypnotic voice, the leader will say something like the following:

- "Everyone, please relax your body and find a comfortable position and close your eyes …"
- "Now, take a slow, deep breath … in ... and ... out …," pause, "in … and … out …," doing this several times.
- "Now, imagine being on an elevator or escalator and breathe deep … in … and … out … imagine the elevator or escalator going down and, as it goes down, you feel the tension leaving your body. You are getting more relaxed, breathe … in … and … out ..."
- "As the escalator reaches the bottom floor, you are completely relaxed, and you step out onto a beautiful beach, or meadow, or some other relaxing mental image. In … and … out …"
- "Now, just focus your mind on the sound of the wind, or waves, or stream, in … and … out ..."

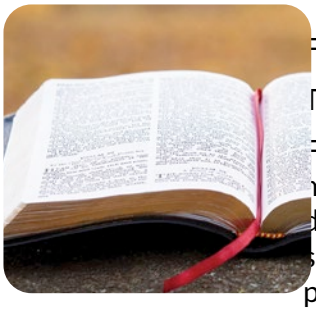
This may continue for 5 to 15 minutes, and then instruction will be given to mentally walk back to the escalator or elevator. You will be told that as the elevator or escalator takes you back to the main floor, you will

experience greater energy, refreshment, alertness, and well-being. Then the instruction is given to open your eyes. And behold, you just went through a process of being hypnotized into an Eastern meditation trance.

And because of the law of exertion, the more you do this, the easier it becomes to enter a hypnotic trance in the future; in other words, the more vulnerable one will become to being hypnotized.

Biblical Meditation

Whether self-directed or group-directed, biblical meditation looks like this:



Find a comfortable position for your body.

Take a couple of deep breaths to relax.

Fix or focus your mind on some truth worthy of meditation; e.g., a Bible verse, an action of God in dealing with humankind, some element of nature, some aspect of God's law or design for life, some principle or purpose of God.

Close your eyes and actively consider, contemplate, and examine this idea, seeking to gain new insights into its meaning, application, purpose, use, what it reveals about God, how this truth connects to other truths in God's kingdom. Actively reach out your mind and heart, inviting God's presence into your mind to enlighten, teach, inspire. Or one could take the element (e.g., text, or aspect of nature) and rejoice in the beauty of what God has done or revealed, reaching out the heart and moving into intimacy with our Creator, celebrating Him for what He has done as revealed in the "focus stage" of the meditation.

End the meditation by giving thanks to God for His goodness.

Commonality Between Biblical and Eastern Meditation

Both types of meditation—biblical and Eastern—*can* have the following elements in common:

1. **Guided imagery**—using one's imagination to picture a calming scene; e.g., beach, stream, streets of New Jerusalem, meadow, forest, walking with God, bowing before God's throne, etc. However, Eastern forms are *always* a calming, relaxing scene, whereas biblical meditation is only *sometimes* calming; at other times, biblical meditation may bring one face to face with an issue in the self that is anxiety-provoking and needs to be wrestled out with God.

2. **Relaxed body**—Eastern meditation *always* promotes this; biblical meditation can promote bodily relaxation, but if biblical meditation leads one to a place of personal confrontation with selfishness or shortcomings in the heart, then the body *may* experience increased tension until the issue is resolved (consider Jacob wrestling with the angel). The goal of Eastern meditation is to experience calm regardless of unpleasant reality; e.g., one's defects of character. The goal of biblical meditation is to actually heal the sin condition through a personal relationship with God.

The Philosophies of Biblical and Eastern Meditation

Biblical and Eastern meditation are not only different in their technique and subsequent impact upon the brain, mind, and character, they also have quite dissimilar understandings of reality.

Biblical meditation views the universe as being created by an intelligent God, as operating upon design laws emanating from God, and as being sustained by His constant care. Buddhism—the Eastern philosophy established by Gautama Buddha—does not have an intelligent creator who built and governs reality, and it teaches that what the Bible calls "the law of sin and death" is necessary for life.

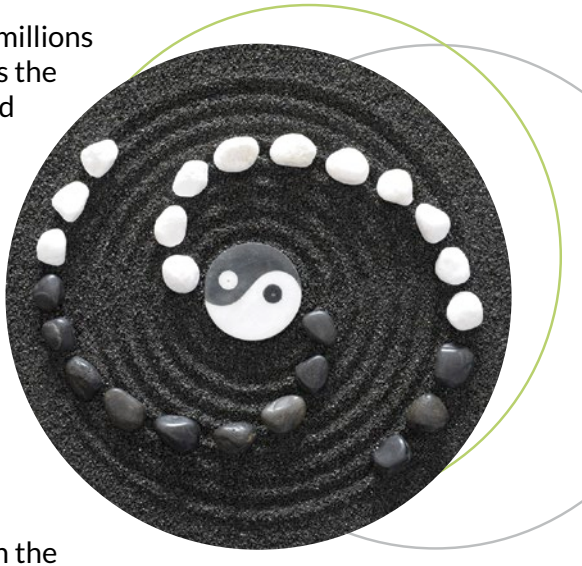
In the biblical worldview:

> God is love, and when God built his universe, he constructed it to operate in harmony with his nature and character. God's law, then, is the construction protocol on which the universe is built and is the principle of other-centeredness, giving or beneficence that life is designed to operate on.[1]

When Adam and Eve believed Satan's lies, they broke God's design law of love and trust and were filled with fear and selfishness. This is known today as "survival of the fittest," or "the law of sin and death." Fear drives people to protect self at the expense of others (instead of loving others). This fear and selfishness introduced discord. Where there had been unity and peace, there now exists disunity, conflict, and tension. This is not just an external conflict between self and others but also is internal—occurring in the heart and mind of every person. This conflict is rooted in two antagonistic principles—it is love warring against selfishness, the law of God warring against the law of sin and death. This state is referred to as a "dual state of being," where both love and selfishness exist at the same time within the heart and mind of a person.

> It was not only humankind that was changed by sin but this entire world. Creation, as God designed, was in perfect unity with its Creator, operating on the law of love. It was only *after* sin that planet Earth became infected with Satan's principle of self-first, which caused the dual state in which God's law of love and Satan's law of sin and death exist together.
>
> We see this current coexistence of good and evil in the world around us. Plants produce beautiful flowers, fruits and nuts, but also thorns, thistles and poisons. The rains refresh the earth, yet storms

destroy. Despots can murder millions yet love their families, which is the manifestation of our conflicted hearts, filled with fear and selfishness yet also built to love. Christianity itself teaches our internal dualism with its battle between the spiritual and carnal natures.



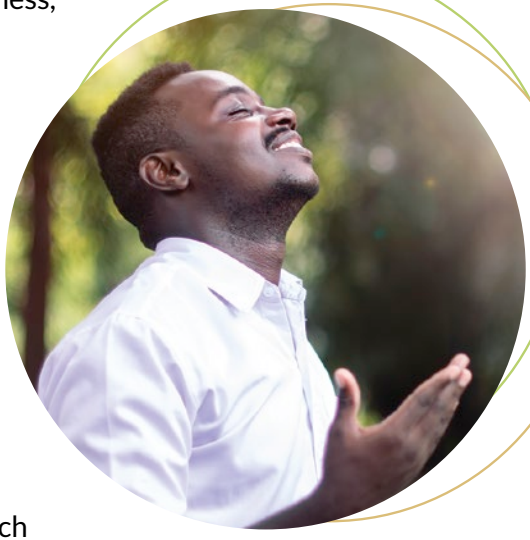
Eastern religions teach a cosmic dualism of an *eternal* existence of good and evil in which both good and evil are required for balance in the universe—the yin and yang. As Buddhist Lama Anagarika Govinda explained: "Thus, good and bad, the sacred and the profane, the sensual and the spiritual, the worldly and the transcendental, ignorance and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, etc., are not absolute opposites, or concepts of entirely different categories, but two sides of the same reality." *This is Satan's hope*, for good and evil to exist together eternally. Selfishness, being out of harmony with God's design for life, has caused our dual state and is the source of our fear of death. Eastern mystics experience the sin-induced fear of death, but accepting the faulty premise of the *eternal* coexistence of good and evil, they do not seek deliverance from evil with its ever-present fear of death. This leaves them with only two possible options:

1. Consignment to eternal cycles of rebirth into higher or lower realms dependent on one's karma or
2. Escape—transcendence—of both good and evil through Eastern meditation

We can trace the motivational basis for Eastern meditation to Buddha, who when tormented by the fear of death, finally found peace in meditation where he transcended both life and death, good and evil and experienced what the East calls nirvana, sartori or enlightenment—and what Christians, using the same practices, call the God Encounter. Eastern philosophies seek to escape

the anxiety of our dual state by ascending, through meditation, to another "realm." In Hinduism and Buddhism, this realm is described as a "nondual state" in which one feels unity with the cosmos and one another. Thus, in the brain of the practitioner of Eastern meditation, the torment of being in a dual state is avoided by a self-imposed, artificial euphoria and transient disconnect from individual reality. Yet the actual condition of selfishness and fear, existing in the character of the Eastern practitioner, is not changed, as no intervention is made to confront and overcome it. In other words, Eastern practices create an illusion in which one feels as if they are healed and transformed into a nondual, unified, healthy state, when in actuality they remain infected with fear and selfishness. Their condition remains out of harmony with God's design and thus terminal.[2]

But biblical meditation leads to actual healing of the heart and mind and to the restoration of God's perfection into the believer—in other words, to the eradication of the infection of fear and selfishness, the elimination of the dual state, and to the return to oneness with God and with each other. Via the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, the victory of Christ can be experienced in the believer. We get a new heart and right spirit (Psalm 51:10), have God's law written on our heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10), become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and are changed into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).



Revelation 12:11 describes such healed people in these words: "They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." Think about it! A people who no longer live driven by the fear of dying and no longer controlled by the "drive to survive"; instead, they live to love God and others.

The Impact of Each Type of Meditation upon the Brain

The human brain has two major hemispheres: left and right. The left side of the brain is where our individuality resides—our sense of self, our unique identity. It is where we do critical reasoning, examine evidences, plan, strategize, and discern truth from falsehood.

The right side of the brain is where we experience a sense of the world around us and process the big picture. We do not become consciously aware of information picked up in our right hemisphere until it moves across to our left hemisphere, where our sense of self exists. Some suggest that our "gut instinct" or intuition—the feeling that something isn't right in a situation—is when our right brain is picking up on something in the environment that our left brain hasn't yet objectively identified.

If we suppress activity in the left hemisphere, we lose our sense of self and we experience a greater awareness and sense of connection to the world around us. This is the goal of Eastern meditation—to change the way we feel without regard to our actual condition.

Eastern Meditation

The human brain will change and rewire based upon the choices we make and the thoughts we think. Our choice of meditation will have significant impact on both brain function and, over time, its structure.

> The brain is a bioelectric organ, which means it has not only chemical signals but electrical ones. And changing electrical activity in the brain can alter hemispheric dominance. When the brain circuits fire together in different ways, they create different patterns of electrical signals. The electrical signals of the brain, or brain waves, are classified into four general categories: alpha, beta, theta and delta waves. Alpha waves occur when the brain is resting or during REM sleep, the dream state. When we are awake, reading, giving a speech, engaged in focused activity, thinking or problem solving, the brain is producing beta waves. Theta brain waves occur when one "zones out," daydreams or allows the mind to freely wander. And delta waves occur in deep sleep, the nondream state.
>
> Eastern meditation techniques increase the frequency of alpha and theta waves, suppressing beta waves and causing increased secretion of a brain chemical called dopamine (which enhances visualization), provoking a predominance of right-brain activity

and altering one's entire consciousness. This would cause one to feel a loss of self-awareness, a feeling of unity with the cosmos, more intense mental imagery, and less awareness of time and space. It would also reduce one's ability to discern evidence-based truths.[3]

Eastern meditation focuses upon nothing, or upon a repetitive mantra, and thereby slows or diminishes activity in the left cortex. Via the law of worship, the mind, not being focused upon our infinite God but instead upon nothing or upon a single mantra, fails to develop and grow in godlikeness. Further, brain activity in the left hemisphere is reduced; thus, via the law of exertion, the brain fails to develop advanced and complex critical-reasoning circuitry.

Biblical Meditation

The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of both truth and love. Truth would be processed in the left hemisphere of the brain, whereas love, which seeks to be in unity with God and others, would activate the right side of the brain. Thus, biblical meditation does not induce an imbalanced brain that avoids truth for an emotional euphoria but a brain united with God and that stands firm in pursuing truth in order to overcome the real deficiencies in ourselves, so that we may experience the healing of the heart and mind and be united with God and others.

Via the law of worship and the law of exertion, biblical meditation activates the brain to utilize the circuits of reason, contemplation, deep thinking, and admiration in assimilating truth and entering into an experience with a real Intelligence, which elevates, ennobles, stretches, develops, and transforms the individual. These changes occur both neurobiologically and characterologically.

The Purpose of Biblical and Eastern Meditation

Eastern Meditation

The primary purpose of Eastern meditation is to resolve the fear of death, to enter a state of nirvana, or to experience a feeling of peace and unity with the world and universe. This is a state in which one loses their sense of self, with its concern for preservation, and feels a peaceful unity of being part of an incomprehensible universe. Eastern meditation practices do result in a calming of the brain's fear circuitry and a relaxed emotional experience, but they fail to truly resolve the underlying reason for our fear—namely, our self-centeredness and actual mortal condition; they fail to provide a remedy that genuinely heals the soul and provides eternal life.

Biblical Meditation

The primary purpose of biblical meditation is to unite the heart and mind with God and thereby grow in godliness, intimacy with God, and experience transformation of character to become ever more like our Creator. In other words, biblical meditation is the participation with God for healing of the sin-condition and the actual restoration of the soul to God's original ideal. This healing results in the freedom from fear of death as one experiences the actual, internal recreation of God's design for life (a "new heart and right spirit"). This healing process will necessarily result in periods of confrontation in areas of the self that are unpleasant to admit to and address, and thereby result in transient periods of increased anxiety and emotional turmoil as one is working through areas in need of transformation. But as one heals, grows, and develops, they experience greater wellness over time.

This uncovers a truism: *Once there is brokenness, there are no pain-free options*. If one has a broken leg and refuses treatment because manipulating the bone will hurt, one remains in pain and stays disabled. If one allows a splint, surgery, and then physical therapy, one does not avoid pain but actively participates in the path that heals and restores to wellness. When health is restored, the pain remits.

Because of Adam's fall, humanity is broken in heart and mind and broken off from God's design. We cannot avoid pain; we can only choose to participate or not in God's healing plan. Eastern meditation seeks to merely avoid pain—the pain of fear, shame, and guilt that sin brings. Biblical meditation seeks to lead us back to God for confronting, and then for removing all deviations from God's design from the heart, mind, and character, and thereby restore the believer back to God's design for life.

> This is the covenant [healing agreement] I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts (Hebrews 8:10).

What drives people to either type of meditation is the inherent fear and anxiety that sin causes—the fear of death:

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and **free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death** (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

Through Eastern meditation, Buddha sought merely to avoid this uncomfortable feeling. The following is a further explanation of the differences between the two meditation methods:

> Jesus Christ stands in stark contrast to Buddha. Jesus Christ, rather than seeking to avoid the fear of death, instead confronted, overcame and destroyed death by the exercise of his human brain in perfect self-sacrificing love (2 Tim 1:9-10). Jesus Christ humbled himself to partake of our terminal condition, and in the brain of Jesus Christ, the dual state of love versus fear and selfishness warred it out. Jesus Christ experienced temptation in every way we do, but he did so without sinning (Heb 4:15). And since we know we are tempted by our "own evil desires" (Jas 1:14), we know that in the human brain of Jesus, the principles of love battled the human fear of death with its drive to survive. Jesus' humanity was tempted with powerful human emotions to fear death and to act to save self.
>
> In Gethsemane Jesus Christ experienced terrible, emotional anguish that caused excruciating temptation, leading the Savior to plead, if it were possible, to avoid the cross (Mt 26:36-39). Jesus experienced, in his humanity, the internal pull of our fallen nature, yet, unlike Buddha, he did not seek to escape this condition through a meditation-induced state of altered brain function, causing an illusionary euphoria. He instead overcame this powerful fear of death by perfect love for God and humanity—truly, greater love had no one than this (Jn 15:13).
>
> In the humanity of Jesus Christ, the dual state brought about by sin was eradicated! Jesus cleansed humanity by eliminating the powerful drive of fear and selfishness when, in love, he voluntarily surrendered to death (Jn 10:17-18). Thus, he rose on the third day in a humanity

that he purified and restored to God's original design. For, if at any point along death's approach Christ would have exercised his power to stop death from taking him, he would have acted in self-interest to save self, and humanity would not have been freed from the infection of fear and selfishness.

As a result, each human being is privileged to receive, via the Holy Spirit, all that Christ has achieved. We can experience cleansing of our characters, such that we enter into a genuine, non-dual state of unity and oneness with God, in which our hearts are brought into unity with his. We "die to self" and live a new life of love. This is what God is waiting for, a people who have overcome their fear of death through their unity with Christ. Revelation describes this people as those "[who] did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (Rev 12:11). Think about that: a people no longer live driven by the fear of dying. They no longer live with their drive to survive controlling them. They no longer live focused on protecting self. They live to love God and others.

Biblical conversion is not the process of meditation to calm the fear circuitry, but rather the confrontation and overcoming of fear and selfishness when we follow our Shepherd into the "valley of the shadow of death," in which we die to ourselves and are renewed with hearts of love for others. … This is a transient time of great anguish and anxiety. It is not a time of peace and avoidance of fear, but rather the time when we stand our ground, through God's grace, to overcome our inherent fear and insecurity (for example, Jacob's night of wrestling, Peter after his denial, David after Nathan confronted him). It is in this anguish, as we confront the truth intelligently, wrestling with our own selfishness and, ultimately, surrendering to Christ, that we experience his love, a supernatural regeneration, a new set of motives and freedom from fear-based living. We are brought not to a universe of eternal good and evil but to unity and oneness with God, who is eternal love, and a future free from fear, suffering, pain and death.[4]

Differences Between Biblical Meditation and Prayer

Prayer is conversation with God as with a friend. Spontaneous prayer results in the activation of the same brain regions as when talking to another person. These are regions associated with anticipation, consideration of another's response, attitudes, feelings, and reaction. This activates both the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

Reciting repetitive mantras activates the same regions as reciting nursery rhymes, regions of recall, rote learning, and memory, but not higher cortical function. In fact, it suppresses the regions of critical thinking.[5]

Biblical meditation is more than prayer. It is the active engagement of one's mind to grow, expand, and develop through deep contemplation into the things of God. It is the focused desire and purposeful choice to reach out and connect with God to participate with one's in-most being in His methods and designs for life.

Biblical meditation will naturally flow in and out of prayer (conversation with God), praise, and worship as one experiences greater insights, truths, and intimacy with and knowledge of God. One can pray and praise without meditating, yet biblical meditation will frequently result in spontaneous prayer and praise.

Outcomes of Both Types of Meditation

Outcomes of Biblical Meditation

Biblical meditation, because of the laws of worship and exertion, results in growth of prefrontal cortex circuitry and in a corresponding growth in wisdom, insight, understanding, maturing of character, and in experiencing the fruits of the Spirit. As the Bible says:

> Oh, how I love your design—your living law built right into reality!
> I meditate upon it all day long.
> Your laws make me wiser than my enemies;
> they continually enlighten me.
> I have greater understanding of reality than all my teachers,
> for I humbly contemplate your law of love
> (Psalm 119:97–99, *The Remedy Psalms*).

However, biblical meditation may initially result in a state of increased turmoil, anxiety, and uneasiness, as the truth that is revealed by seeing God and His ideal more clearly brings to light our deficiencies, which need healing. Only after self has surrendered to God (biblical crucifixion of self or conversion; e.g., Jacob's night of trouble, David after Nathan confronted him, Peter on the night of his betrayal) and the individual has been reborn with a new heart and right spirit does genuine peace develop. Prior to conversion—the death to self—there is continual uneasiness and anxiety.

In contrast, Eastern meditation merely leads a person to seek to suppress this feeling of anxiety without any actual change of heart, mind, and character. Biblical meditation leads the individual through the valley of the *shadow of death*, in which the person dies to self and is reborn in Christ, with a renewed heart, to walk in the path of righteousness. In other words, Eastern meditation treats the symptoms, but biblical meditation participates with God to cure the problem.

Once conversion is experienced, the individual will:

- Grow in understanding of reality—biblical truth
- Increasingly trust God
- Have reduced anxiety, particularly existential anxiety
- Experience better physical and mental health (lower heart rate, blood pressure, etc.)
- Have a greater sense of peace and wellbeing over time
- Experience less irritability
- Relate to others in healthier ways.

Outcomes of Eastern Meditation

Eastern meditation results in an increased sense of emotional peace, the calming of fear circuits with subsequent lower heart rate, blood pressure, and sense of anxiety, but also in decreased genuine spiritual insight, a numbing of the conscience (conviction of the Holy Spirit for genuine conversion), and in a false sense that all is well with the self despite remaining in a spiritually terminal condition.

A Simple Test to Identify Eastern Meditation

You can run a simple test to identify Eastern meditation by answering the following questions:

- Does it focus on nothing—an emptying or a repetitive mantra—rather than focusing upon some aspect of God and His kingdom?
- Does it restrict and narrow the mental focus—rather than expanding and stretching the mind to grander themes?
- Does it cause an emotional sense of loss of self and connectedness to a non-intelligent force—rather than activating one's thinking to engage with our intelligent God?
- Does it quiet, silence, and suppress thinking—rather than stimulating the mind to think, contemplate, reason, and consider new possibilities and ideas?
- Does it cause one to flee existential anxiety by seeking emotional relief through avoiding truth and silencing the mind—rather than bringing one to confront one's own inadequacies and overcome them in union with our Creator?

Guidelines for Biblical Meditation

- Never surrender the mind to another created being.
- Guided imagery should always be an active process—not passively allowing another created being to direct your mind. A leader can provide the subject matter of the meditation, but the individual must actively choose to engage and direct their own mind.
- Always focus on some aspect of God's character, law, Scripture, creation, etc.; biblical meditation's focus is never on emptying self or on repetitive mantra.
- Ensure that you engage in the active mental process of thinking, contemplating, reflecting, worshiping, admiring, etc.
- Reach out of self to connect to a real being—our intelligent God.
- Commit to the active and purposeful intention to seek truth combined with altruistic love.

How to Do Biblical Meditation

- Establish a daily 15- to 30-minute time slot for meditation.
- Choose a quiet place and ensure all distractions are minimized (e.g., TV and radio are turned off, phone is on "do not disturb," etc.).
- Choose a focus or theme for meditation (e.g., Bible verse, an aspect of nature, an action of God, one of God's design laws, etc.).
- Purposely focus your mind to contemplate, consider, examine, reflect, extrapolate, understand, and appreciate the focus or theme. Actively ask God to enlighten your understanding and reach out your mind to connect with God in your reflections.
- End the session with a prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and admiration to God, recounting what you have learned, how you have grown, or what you are still struggling to comprehend; ask for insight and intervention as God's providence determines is best.

Examples of Bible-based Meditation

Meditating on God's Law and Character

During your meditation time, read this Bible passage:

> Let the wicked forsake his way
> and the evil man his thoughts.
> Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him,
> and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
> "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
> Neither are your ways my ways,"
> declares the LORD.
> "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
> so are my ways higher than your ways
> and my thoughts than your thoughts"
> (Isaiah 55:7–9).

Reach out to God and ask for the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind, so that you can understand the meaning and implications of the passage. Consider the following:

- How are God's ways higher than our ways?
- God is Creator—what kinds of laws does God's universe operate upon?
- Can humans build space, time, energy, matter, or life? What kinds of laws do humans make?
- What happens to a person if they break a design law of God (e.g., tie a plastic bag over their head, breaking the law of respiration)?
- What happens if someone breaks a human law (e.g., doesn't pay their taxes)?
- How are God's ways different from our ways?
- How can God freely pardon?
- What does this text mean: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law"? (1 Corinthians 15:56).
- What are other design laws of God built into nature, and what do they reveal about God?

Close your meditation by gi
thanks to God, surrendering y
heart to Him, and asking Hi
to restore in you His law a
methods. Go forward wi
day, considering how G
laws impact every aspe
your life.

Meditating on God's Creation

Choose a clear night f
meditation and go outside
a place where you can see the
Look up at the sky and allow you
appreciate the magnificence of the ur
the number of stars, galaxies, and worlds. Then meditate upon the
who spoke all these things into existence:

- Consider how He sustains it all, every moment of every day.
- Consider how immense it is and what that implies about who God is.
- Consider the precision and constancy of how the stars stay on their course.
- Meditate upon a universe cleansed from sin and consider traveling this universe as God's representative, sharing what He has done for you.

End your session by praising God for His greatness, His majesty, His goodness, and by thanking Him for His love; ask Him to restore in you His character of love and enable you to be more effective in sharing His love with others.

Endnotes

1 Jennings, Timothy, *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life*, Expanded Edition, 2017, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p. 222.

2 Ibid., 222, 223

3 Ibid., p. 225

4 Ibid., p. 228

5 Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, DOI: 10.1093/scan/nsn050.

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