

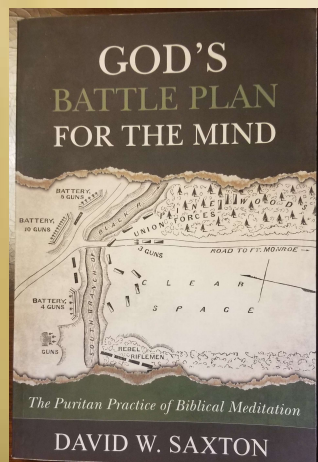
# Biblical Meditation: God's Battleplan for the Mind

"Biblical meditation seeks to think God's thoughts after Him." – David Saxton

"Science is thinking God's thoughts after Him." – Johannes Kepler

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## Biblical Mediation



- David W. Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015).

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## Biblical Meditation

- What is biblical meditation?
  - “Thinking God’s thoughts after Him.” – Kepler
- Why is biblical mediation a battle?
  - “He is a liar and the father of it.” – Jesus
- How do we do biblical mediation?
  - “Think on these things.” – Paul
- What is the promise of biblical mediation?
  - “A tree planted by the rivers of water” - Psalmist

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## What is Biblical Meditation? Old Testament

- Two key Hebrew words – “meditate” and “muse” in Ps. 143:5:  
 “I remember the days of old; I *meditate* [הָגָה – hāgāh] on all thy works; I *muse* [שִׁיָּאָה – śīyāh] on the work of thy hands.”

### hāgāh:

- Josh. 1:8, “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.”
- Ps. 1:2, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he *meditate* day and night.”

### śīyāh:

- Ps. 77:6, “I call to remembrance my song in the night: I *commune* with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.”
- Ps. 119:48, “My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will *meditate* in thy statutes.”
- Ps. 119:148, “Mine eyes prevent [anticipate] the night watches, that I might *meditate* in thy word.”

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? Old Testament

1. Biblical meditation includes biblical remembering (Ps. 143:5).
2. Biblical meditation thinks about God's works (Ps. 143:5; Kepler).
3. Biblical meditation thinks primarily about God's words (Josh. 1:8, Ps. 1:2, 119:48, 119:148).
4. Biblical meditation is aided by biblical music (Ps. 77:6).
5. Biblical meditation is a work of love (Ps. 1:2, 77:6, 119:48, 119:148).
6. Biblical meditation develops a worldview for life (Josh. 1:8, Ps. 1:2).

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? New Testament

Some New Testament words:

- Logizomai:
  - Phil. 4:8 – “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.”
  - Heb. 12:3 – “For **consider** him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”
- Meletao:
  - 1 Tim. 4:15 – “**Meditate** upon these things [reading, exhortation, doctrine (v. 13)]; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? New Testament

### New Testament words:

- Anatheoreo:
  - Heb. 13:7 – “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow **considering** the end of their conversation.”
- Aphorao:
  - Heb. 12:2 – “**Looking** unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? New Testament

### New Testament words:

- Sumballo:
  - Luke 2:19 – “But Mary kept all these things and **pondered** them in her heart.”
- Phroneo:
  - Rom. 8:5 – “For they that are after the flesh **do mind** the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”
  - Col. 3:2 – “**Set your affection** on things above, not on things on the earth.”
- Mnēmoneo:
  - Rev. 3:3 – “**Remember** therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? New Testament

### New Testament words:

- Enoikeo:
  - Col. 3:16 – “**Let** the word of Christ **dwell** in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
- Katoikeo:
  - Eph. 3:17-19 – “That Christ may **dwell** in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? New Testament

1. Biblical meditation transcends fleshly, earthly things (Rom. 8:5, Col. 3:2).
2. Biblical meditation opposes sinful things (Phil. 4:8).
3. Biblical meditation takes commitment (1 Tim. 4:15).
4. Biblical meditation is Christological mediation (Heb. 12:2-3, Eph. 3:17).
5. Biblical meditation is aided by biblical music (Col. 3:16).
6. Biblical meditation is a work of love (Luke 2:19, Eph. 3:17, Col. 3:2).

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## What Is Biblical Meditation? The Puritans

Thomas Hooker: "Meditation is a serious intention of the mind whereby we come to search out the truth, and settle it upon the heart."

William Bates: "Meditation is the serious exercise of the understanding, whereby our thoughts are fixed on the observation of spiritual things in order to practice."

John Ball: "Meditation is a serious, earnest and purposed musing upon some point of Christian instruction, tending to lead us forward toward the Kingdom of Heaven, and serving our daily strengthening against the flesh, the world, and the devil."

[Saxton, 29-30]

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## What is Biblical Meditation?

Biblical meditation is a fight of love for the Lord, empowered by a fervent desire to know and better follow Jesus Christ, which endeavors to think God's thoughts after Him, by remembering and musing on first His word and then His works, often aided by biblical music, which over time constructs a biblical worldview that governs every moment of every day and night of the believer's life.

The mind is the battlefield on which spiritual warfare begins.

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

John 8:44 – “Ye are of your father **the devil**, and **the lusts** of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” – Enemies: Satan and the flesh.

Rev. 12:9 – “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called **the Devil, and Satan**, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and **his angels** were cast out with him.” – Enemies: Satan and demons.

Eph. 2:2 – “Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of **this world**, according to **the prince of the power of the air, the spirit** that now works in the children of disobedience.” – Enemies: Satan and the world.

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

God’s battleplan includes biblical meditation:

**Versus Satan and the flesh:** “For they that are after the flesh **do mind** the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

**Versus Satan and demons:** “Beloved, **believe not** every spirit, but **try** the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world . . . We are of God: he that **knoweth** God **heareth us**. Hereby **know** we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1, 6).

**Versus Satan and the world:** “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by **the renewing of your mind**” (Rom. 12:2).

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

Unbiblical/counterfeit meditation [Saxton, 15-24]:

### 1. "Roman Catholic Spirituality, Mysticism, and Contemplative Prayer"

"The core difference between Catholic and Protestant meditation is the same reason they are ultimately at odds on almost every other fundamental of the Christian faith: historic Protestantism has ***the Word of God as its sole foundation of genuine spirituality***. Whenever any notion or form of spirituality fails to be tied back ***to the written Word***, the end result inevitably tends toward unbiblical mysticism and religious sentimentality. This eventually leads a person to greater darkness rather than light. Psalm 119:130 says, 'The entrance ***of thy words*** giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.'"

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

Unbiblical/counterfeit meditation [Saxton, 15-24]:

### 1. "Roman Catholic Spirituality, Mysticism, and Contemplative Prayer"

"Mysticism promotes having spiritual experiences with God apart from one's mind governed by ***the objective, written truth of Scripture***. It is prevalent within Roman Catholicism as well as in the charismatic and Pentecostal movements."

"Similar to traditional Roman Catholic mysticism, contemplative prayer is an unbiblical form of meditation that seeks a spiritual experience through some kind of existential encounter with God ***apart from His written revelation***. . . . The contemplative prayer movement seeks to experience God's voice ***apart from His written Word***."

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

Unbiblical/counterfeit meditation [Saxton, 15-24]:

### 2. Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, and Far Eastern Religion

“Although each claims to be nonreligious, yoga and TM open the mind to spiritual predators by creating a kind of mental vacuum. TM claims to help people find self-actualization. However, it actually ends in people making their own reasoning an absolute truth and their personal god. Like in the time of Judges, nonbiblical forms of meditation allow ‘every man [to do] that which was right in his own eyes’ (Judg. 21:25).

“In contrast, biblical mediation does not seek to empty one’s thoughts. Rather, it seeks to fill one’s thoughts with **Scripture**, fastening them to **the objective truths of God’s Word**. Rather than seeking to arrive at a plane of self-actualization, biblical meditation seeks to think **God’s thoughts** after Him.”

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

Unbiblical/counterfeit meditation [Saxton, 15-24]:

### 3. The passing things of this world, both evil and mundane.

“Apart from grace, the heart and mind of fallen man are frightful. The mind devises and creates the most wicked and dark thoughts. Just peruse the current evening sitcoms on television or notice the movies playing at a local theater, and one will be convinced that fallen humanity excels at planning evil.”

“Many who would never think of participating in the TM movement nonetheless spend most of their energy dwelling on matters that have little or no eternal value. They even become consumed by them. In contrast, Christian meditation is the scriptural plan to keep from thoughts that diminish the glory of God.”

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

The enemies of biblical meditation [Saxton, 115-127]:

1. The belief that meditation is too difficult, that it is “not my gift.”

Neil Postman: “[Ours is] the spirit of a culture in which all public discourse increasingly takes the form of entertainment. Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death” [*Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in an Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 3-4].

Thomas Watson: “The price that God has set heaven at is labor. Our salvation cost Christ blood; it may well cost us sweat.”

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

The enemies of biblical meditation [Saxton, 115-127]:

2. Too busy with responsibilities.

Thomas Watson: “We do argue so in other things . . . How will men venture for gold! And shall we not spend and be spent for that which is more precious than the gold of Ophir?”

David Saxton: “To overcome the busyness that results in failure to meditate, one must be honest about what is most important to him. Why does a person find time to watch a two-hour movie and yet not find time to read God’s Word and meditate upon it? It is because he simply does not see the value in it and is unwilling to spare the time for it.”

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

The enemies of biblical meditation [Saxton, 115-127]:

3. The distraction of entertainment and gadgets.

Neil Postman: "Stated in the most dramatic terms, the accusation can be made that the uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of our humanity. It creates a culture without moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living. Technology, in sum, is both friend and enemy." [*Technoploy: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), xii].

Neil Postman: "America is engaged in the world's most ambitious experiment to accommodate itself to the technological distractions made possible by the electric plug. This is an experiment that began slowly and modestly in the mid-nineteenth century and has now, in the latter half of the twentieth, reached a perverse maturity in America's consuming love-affair with television."

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

The enemies of biblical meditation [Saxton, 115-127]:

3. The distraction of entertainment and gadgets.

Edmond Smith: "We of the electronic age have much trouble with prolonged thinking. Television discourages it . . . The average length of a shot on television is only 3.5 seconds, so that the eye never rests and always has something new it must see. Christians have allowed themselves to come under the spell of electronic images and spend many hours dazzled by them . . . Thus, even to read the Bible may prove difficult for many Christians nowadays, let alone the effort required to contemplate, in a serious way, the meaning of the words." [*A Tree by a Stream: Unlock the Secrets of Active Meditation* (Rosshire, U.K.: Christian Focus, 1995), 6; quoted by Saxton, 124].

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## Why Is Biblical Meditation a Battle?

The enemies of biblical meditation [Saxton, 115-127]:

4. The influence of ungodly friends.

The Psalmist: "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" (Ps. 1:1).

David Saxton: "The child of God must understand that he cannot be a person of meditation while sharing the same goals and daily habits of world lovers. Successful believers learn that they must keep their hearts in heaven even while their pilgrimage is here on earth. Watson explained, 'A Christian, when he goes to meditate, must lock up himself from the world. The world spoils meditation; Christ went 'apart' into the mount to pray, so go apart when you are to meditate.'"

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## How Do We Do Biblical Meditation?

Two tools of biblical meditation:

1. Meditate on God's Word (deliberative meditation):

Luke 2:46, "And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions."

2. Meditate on God's Works (occasional meditation):

Matt. 18:12-14, "How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

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## How Do We Do Biblical Meditation?

Practical guidance from Scripture for doing biblical meditation:

1. Determine daily to have a time for an open Bible and a bent knee.

Ps. 86:3, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee **daily**."

Luke 9:23, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily**, and follow me."

Ps. 56:2, "Mine enemies would **daily** swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High."

2. Endeavor to make the daily time daily times.

Ps. 55:17, "**Evening, and morning, and at noon**, will I pray [עִשְׂתַּי - *šīyāh*], and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."

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## How Do We Do Biblical Meditation?

Practical guidance for doing biblical meditation:

3. Pray for a love of the preaching and teaching of God's Word.

2 Tim. 4:2-4, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." See Ken Ramey, *Expository Listening: A Handbook for Hearing and Doing God's Word* (Woodlands, TX: Kress, 2010).

4. Memorize and sing well the psalms and great hymns of the faith.

Col. 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

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## How Do We Do Biblical Meditation?

Practical guidance for doing biblical meditation:

5. Harness technology to serve rather than hinder biblical meditation.  
Ps. 143:5, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."
6. Determine to read widely in a worshipful and disciplined way.  
Acts 17:28, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."  
Ps. 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

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## The Promise of Biblical Meditation

Joshua 1:8 – "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Psalm 1:3 – "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Philippians 4:7 – "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

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