

PT 522 Reformed Spirituality WSC / 2025	10a Meditation Callings in the Wilderness
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“...but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.” – Psalm 1.2

Our Tradition

A. Importance

John Ball (1585–1640) *Treatise of Divine Meditation*: “the most holy” saints were those who “most abounded in meditation.” without it... “a Christian life cannot stand”

Thomas Watson: meditation is “a duty wherein the very heart and lifeblood of religion lies”

Oliver Heywood (1630–1702): “holy thoughts form a great part of a Christian’s devotion,” such that “this exercise of thoughts is indeed a Christian’s walking with God.” We exercise “holy thoughts” most directly in meditation, and in so doing, we walk more closely with God.

B. Defining

1. Bible: *think upon, remember* (Pss 1.2; 77.6; 119.15,23,27,48,78,148; Php 4.8; Col 3.2)
2. Our Forefathers

Wilhelmus à Brakel - meditation is the means by which an empty soul “seeks to be filled with substance” and an activity wherein “the very essence of sweetness is to be found.”

Joseph Hall (1574–1656) *The Arte of Divine Meditation* (1606): “Meditation is nothing else but a bending of the mind upon some spiritual object, through diverse forms of discourse, until our thoughts come to an issue.”

Thomas Manton: “that duty or exercise of religion whereby the mind is applied to the serious and solemn contemplation of spiritual things”

Thomas Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*: “It is a holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves.” 23

- Meditation is a particular sort of thinking for personal application and transformation

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

Isaac Ambrose: Meditation “is as the bellows of the soul, that doth kindle and inflame holy affections.”

The Reformation Triangle: Scripture - Meditation - Prayer

Matthew Bingham, *A Heart Aflame for God: A Reformed Approach to Spiritual Formation* (Crossway, 2025)

A. Closely related

1. Thomas Manton (1620–1677): “Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the word and prayer, and hath respect to both.”
2. Geneva Bible (1560) on Gen. 24:63: “And Isaac went out to pray in the field toward the evening...”

Then comments: “This was the exercise of the godly fathers to meditate God’s promises, and to pray for the accomplishment thereof.”

B. Yet distinct

e.g., Studying Scripture *vs.* Meditation

Thomas Watson, “The student’s life looks like meditation but it varies from it.” They differ in their nature, by their design and by their end result.

How to Meditate

A. General ideas

Thomas Watson - Meditation assumes two things: Quiet place. Serious attention.

B. Meditation & Reading Scripture

1. Tied to Word of God

Thomas Watson (*Hearts Taken by Storm*) - "meditation w/o reading is erroneous; rdg w/o meditation is barren."

Reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli (preaching to Oxford ministerial students in 1553)

Meditation is pondering, as carefully as possible, the words and sentences that occur in Scripture. Psalm 1 proves that such an activity is explicitly commanded in the Bible.

“Whatever happiness we can have while we live here is locked up in the sacred letters” and that the way to unlock this happiness was through meditating on them.

2. Slow down in reading Scripture: 2Tim 3.16-17 (*training in righteousness*); Col 3.16

WLC 160 - "It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer... meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives."

Lewis Bayly: “one chapter thus read with understanding and meditated upon with application, will better feed and comfort thy soul than five read and run over without marking their scope or sense, or making any use of them to thine oneself.”

William Fenner (1600-1640) - meditate as a person thoroughly investigating a house

David Clarkson (1622–1686) - “collect the promises; treasure them up; methodise them aright; meditate on them. . . . Gather them. They are the meat that you must live upon in this wilderness. . . . Be as careful to gather them as the Israelites to gather manna.” 71

C. Journaling

- Keep a journal of spiritual reflections and meditations (which often leads to prayer)