

## Chapter 4 - Meditate

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the story.
  - A) Compare and contrast your life to Timothy's. Think about some of the ways you are similar and different to him. Think about how your circumstances may be similar in some ways and how they are different.
  - B) Many of us are susceptible to worry. That seems very natural to us. What is a challenge to us, but of infinitely more benefit is to focus our minds on something that is positive. Can you think of a time in your life when some positive thoughts were introduced and the worry was dispelled?
  - C) Not all of us worry in the sense of fretting about some feared future event. Some of us are more inclined toward obsessive negative thoughts, often a weakness or flaw in a family member, an injustice, a desire to even a score, or an inappropriate sexual fantasy. These thoughts can actually make us feel good! Is this something which resonates with you?

2. What kind of circumstances provoke you to spontaneous obsessive thinking (whether you call it worry, daydreaming, fantasizing or something else)?

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3. God doesn't intend for us to dwell on negative things - sin, injustice, revenge, fantasies and the like. He has provided an exhaustless supply of positive things and themes to occupy our attention. How many can you think of in two minutes?

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4. Meditation requires disciplining your mind - a skill few of us have mastered. This is another area where building on small successes is far better than taking on a big challenge that ends in failure and discouragement. Visual electronic media have conditioned us to expect a change in stimuli every few seconds. A minute can seem like a very long time to stay focussed on one idea. So start small and work your way up. Pick one of the themes suggested in *Refresh* and pick an appropriate time duration to fix on it. It may help you to jot down a few notes in the space provided.

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5. I've found a good time to meditate is as I'm drifting off to sleep. After (or instead of) your evening dose of TV, pick a theme and think about it. As a sample, take something like "our fellowship with Christ" and look at it from different angles by asking yourself questions like:

How did I get to be "in Christ" in the first place?

What could hinder that fellowship?

How do I let the things that hinder fellowship take root?

Who needs to act to restore the fellowship?

What needs to be done to restore fellowship?

What are the benefits of close fellowship with Christ?

What do I need to watch out for to be sure I don't drift out of fellowship with Christ?

Finish by praying that God would help you to remember your thoughts. Try this a few times. Pick a particularly fruitful meditation and outline it in the morning. (I should mention that you may fall asleep with these thoughts in your mind and you'll have to collect and develop them when you awaken!)

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6. Whether or not you are part of a group, make a point of sharing some of your meditations with others to get their input. It's possible to slide onto theological thin ice when we are too subjective. Always try to focus your thinking to the biblical context of what you already know. If speculative ideas come to mind, remember that that is what they are. Check them out with more mature believers to avoid being led astray by your own creative thinking. Jot down your friend's reaction to your meditation.

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**For Group Leaders:**

Meditation is a somewhat cerebral pursuit and not all of your group will be instantly attracted to the practise. Be gently encouraging (as you always are).

Though meditation is a private pursuit, it can be done individually in a group and then the participants can report on what they've been thinking about and what they've learned about the process. Choose different themes for each person to avoid potentially discouraging comparisons. Set aside 10 minutes or so for people to consider their theme and jot a few notes, then invite them to share.

Encourage the use of a journal to keep track of the fruit of their times of meditation.