

Scripture MEDITATION Toolbox

SEVEN TOOLS FOR ENGAGING
THE WORD OF GOD



WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

Have you ever felt that your time in God's Word was beginning to get dry? For some of you this may never be a problem, but for many of us (especially those who have a more creative personality) we can easily grow tired of the same approach every day. We are looking for something fresh. Something to remind us that this is not a ritual—something to help us remember that we are listening to the Words of our Creator while guided by the very Spirit of God.

The goal of this little booklet is to give you a variety of tools to use when approaching God's Word. The term meditation has been chosen to distinguish this list of tools from other spiritual activities that focus on the Word of God. Some other important Bible-focused spiritual activities are:

- Bible Reading Program – reading through the Bible or a book of the Bible to see the big picture.
- Bible Study – investigating the text in detail to better understand the meaning.
- Bible Memory – memorizing verses for the purpose of hiding them in your heart.

BIBLE MEDITATION

Bible meditation focuses on a small portion of scripture for the purpose of hearing the Holy Spirit's voice as He applies it to your life. Notice some key points in this definition:

- FOCUS on a small portion of scripture,
- LISTEN for the voice of the Spirit, and
- APPLY to your life.

Some methods of meditation will work better for one passage of scripture than another or for one person than another. So by having more than one tool in your toolbox, you can select the one that works best for you and/or for a specific passage. It is my sincere hope that this set of tools will reawaken your heart to hearing the Spirit speak into your life through His Word.



Our Toolbox

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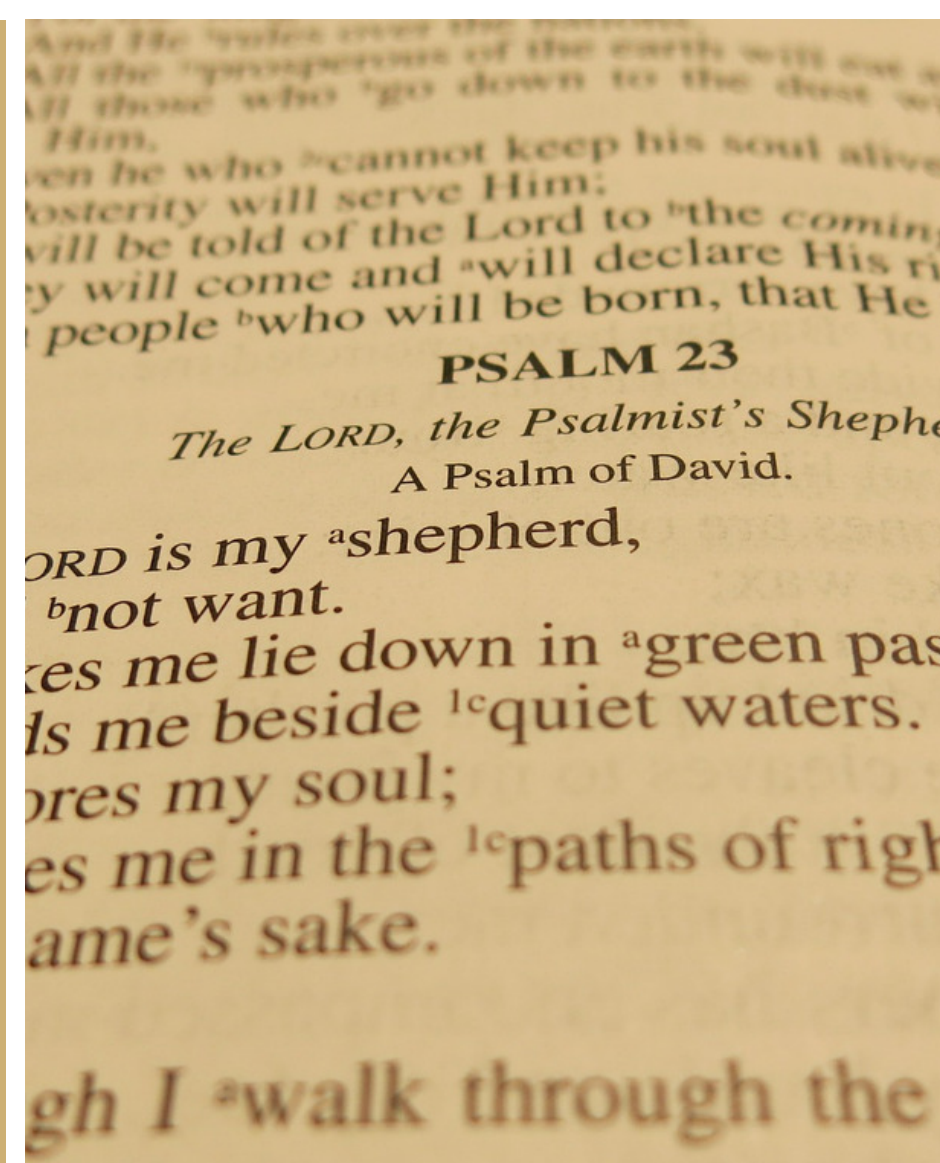
Tool #1



Three common methods used for praying the Bible are: 1) praying a psalm, 2) using a prayer in the Bible for intercession, and 3) using a prayer in the Bible as a guide for your own prayer.

PRAYING A PSALM

Select a psalm.



EXAMPLE: PSALM 41:1

ORIGINAL

God is our refuge and strength, an
ever-present help in trouble.

ALTERED AS A PERSONAL PRAYER

God, You are my refuge and strength,
You are always present to help me
when I am in trouble.



Using a Prayer in the Bible for Intercession

Select a passage. Below are some great passages to use for this:

- Numbers 6:24-26
- Ephesians 1:17-19
- Ephesians 3:16-19
- Philippians 1:9-11
- Colossians 1:10-12
- Colossians 4:3-4
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
- Philemon 6:4-6
- 3 John 2

Place the persons name in the passage.

For example: Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless <Name> and keep <Name>; The Lord make His face to shine upon <Name> and be gracious to <Name>; the Lord turn His face toward <Name> and give <Name> peace.

<Name> can be replaced by the persons name or an appropriate pronoun.



Using a Prayer in the Bible as a Guide

Select a prayer. Below are just a few of the many great prayers to consider:

- Abraham's Prayer for Sodom – Genesis 18:23-25
- David's Prayer of Thanks – 2 Samuel 7:18-29
- Solomon's Prayer of Dedication – 1 Kings 8:22-30
- Elijah's Prayer at Mount Carmel – 1 Kings 18:36-39
- King Hezekiah's Prayer for Deliverance – 2 Kings 19:15-19
- The Prayer of Jabez for Blessing – 1 Chronicles 4:10
- Ezra's Prayer of Intercession – Ezra 9:5-15
- David's Prayer of Repentance – Psalm 51
- King Hezekiah's Prayer when Sick – Isaiah 38:2-8
- Daniel's Prayer for the Captives – Daniel 9:4-19
- Habakkuk's Prayer of Worship and Rejoicing – Habakkuk 3:2-19
- The Lord's Example Prayer – Matthew 6:9-15
- The Tax Collector's Prayer – Luke 18:13
- Stephen's Prayer when Martyred – Acts 7:59-60
- Paul's Prayer for Partners in Ministry – Philippians 1:3-11
- Jude's Prayer of Praise – Jude 1:24-25

Read the prayer to God as if it were your own prayer.

Change words if necessary to make it your own.

If anything in the prayer stands out to you then return to it and continue to pray about that subject.

Tool #2



EXAMPLE: JOHN 1:35-38

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said,

“Behold, the Lamb of God!”

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them,

“What are you seeking?”

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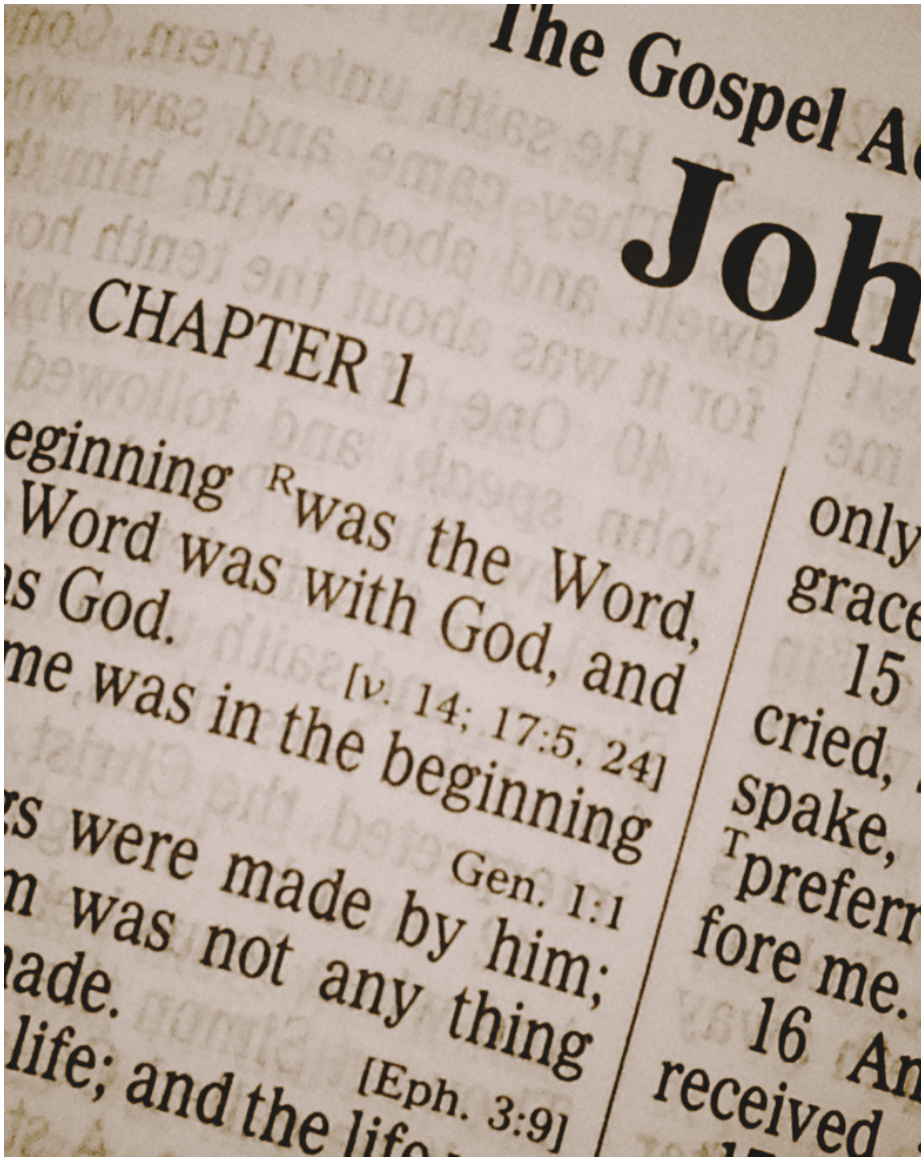
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- Sit silently and ask God to speak to you from this passage.
- Read John 1:35-38.
- Picture yourself meeting Jesus. He turns to you and asks you the same question.
- Answer the question for yourself. "What are you seeking?"
- Talk to God about it.

Tool #3

DIALOGUING WITH GOD



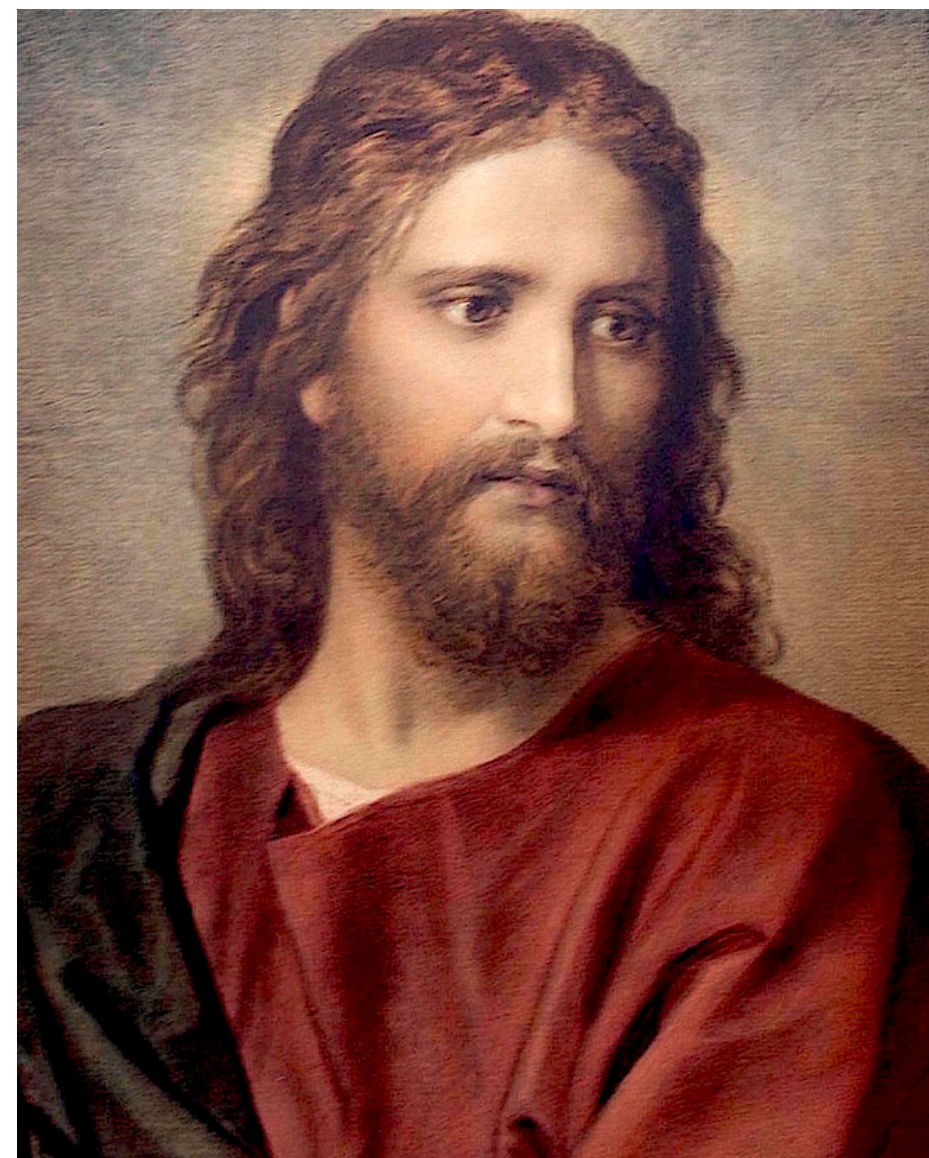
I have often made the mistake of reading scripture as if it was a one-way conversation—as if God was only talking to me and He had no interest in my response to His words. Yes, God is talking to us and we are to listen, but He desires a relationship with us and relationships thrive on conversation. Consider approaching the scriptures as a dialogue. A wonderful example of a dialogue with God can be found at Genesis 18:20-33. In this passage Abraham questions God and yet remains totally submissive and respectful.

HOW TO DIALOG

Sit silently and ask God to speak to you from your selected passage.

Read your selected passage.

Picture yourself sitting with Jesus or even standing before God. Some people find it helpful to have a clear picture in their mind of the location and environment.



- What questions does this passage bring up in your mind?
- Talk to Jesus about it. Many people find it helpful to have the conversation on paper. Write down what you say and what you feel God is saying to you.
- You may wish to ask questions and then sit silently and see if you feel God is giving you an answer. If so, write it down.



Example: Philippians 3:12-16

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Possible discussions you could have:

- Theological: “Jesus, what does it mean to ‘press on to make it my own?’”
- Practical: “Jesus, am I pressing on to the prize or am I focused on the earth?”
- Supplication: “Jesus, help me to press on.”
- Confession: “Jesus, forgive me for my lack of zeal.”

The key is to use the passage as a way to dialogue with God and listen to the Spirit as He dialogues with you.



The Silence of God

There may be times when you attempt to dialogue with God and it seems like God is not answering.

- **POOR RECEPTION.** This may be because you are not receptive at the moment to God. If so, try to calm your spirit so that you are open and receptive. Ask yourself, “Is there any sin in my life that is hindering my communication with God?”
- **SILENCE IS THE ANSWER.** It may also be that God wishes for you to accept the silence. Sometimes God’s answer is silence and we grow through accepting the silence of God. God does not always answer immediately or in the way we expect, so, if God’s answer is silence, patiently accept it for the day and try again later.

Tool #4

ENTERING THE STORY



The Bible can come alive if you use your imagination. Remember as a child when your imagination could take you anywhere? It is time to become like a child again! Take a story from the Bible and place yourself in the story. Try to imagine what it would be like to be there and observe the event as it happens. The goal is to allow the images you see to help you personalize the story and understand it better.

ENTER THE STORY

Read a story from the Bible. (Try Luke 19:1-10 if you do not have one in mind.)

Try to picture the environment. What does it look like? What does it smell like? What do you physically feel? What do you see? Can you taste anything?.



- Now either choose to watch the story or select one of the characters and try to become that person. What are you feeling emotionally? What are you thinking? What would you like to say?
- Interact, if you wish, with one of the characters in the story. Ask him or her questions. What are the answers?
- Talk to God about your experience. Dialogue (tool #3!) about what you saw, thought, wondered, desired, felt, etc.

Tool #5

WRITING THE BIBLE

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life,

In Deuteronomy 17:18-20 God tells the kings of Israel to write their own copy of the law and keep it with them. Verse 19-20 tells us that doing this will have these benefits for the king:

He will learn to revere the LORD his God

He will learn to follow all the words of this law and these decrees

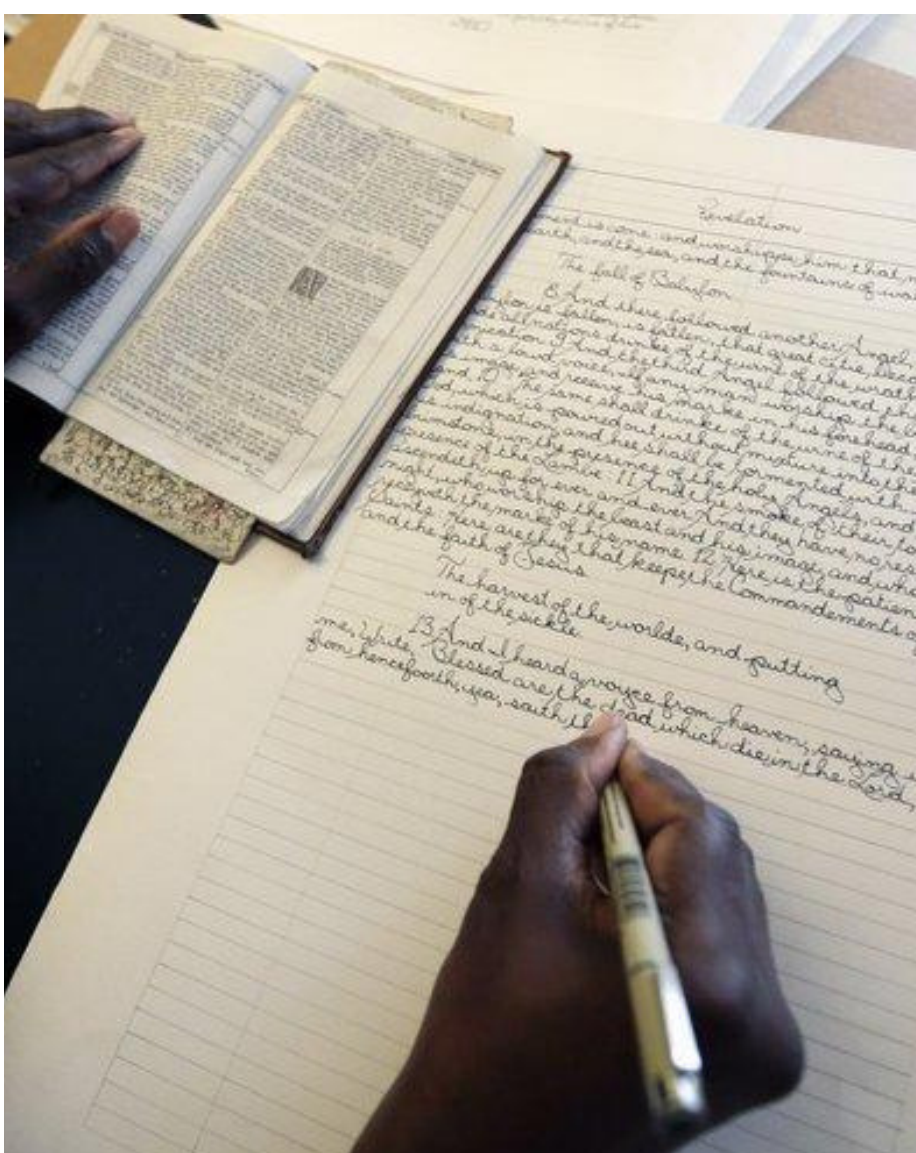
He will learn to not consider himself better than his brothers

He will learn not to turn from the law to the right or to the left.

He will be blessed with a long reign and his descendants also.



- Maybe it is time we took a lesson from God's advice to kings. What would happen in your life if you did as God asked the kings to do?
- Many people find that writing a passage of scripture in their own handwriting (not on the computer) makes that passage more real to them. Even better is to write a passage or verse while you speak it out loud. The combination of speaking and writing will help you focus on the text and remember what you read.



(A Psalm for giving thanks). PSALM 100 (2/4/2011 - 2/5/2011).

1 Shout for Joy to the LORD, all the earth.
2. Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
3 Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter his gates with thanks giving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever.

Try It For Yourself

PSALM 100

1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

3 Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

5 For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

CHALLENGE

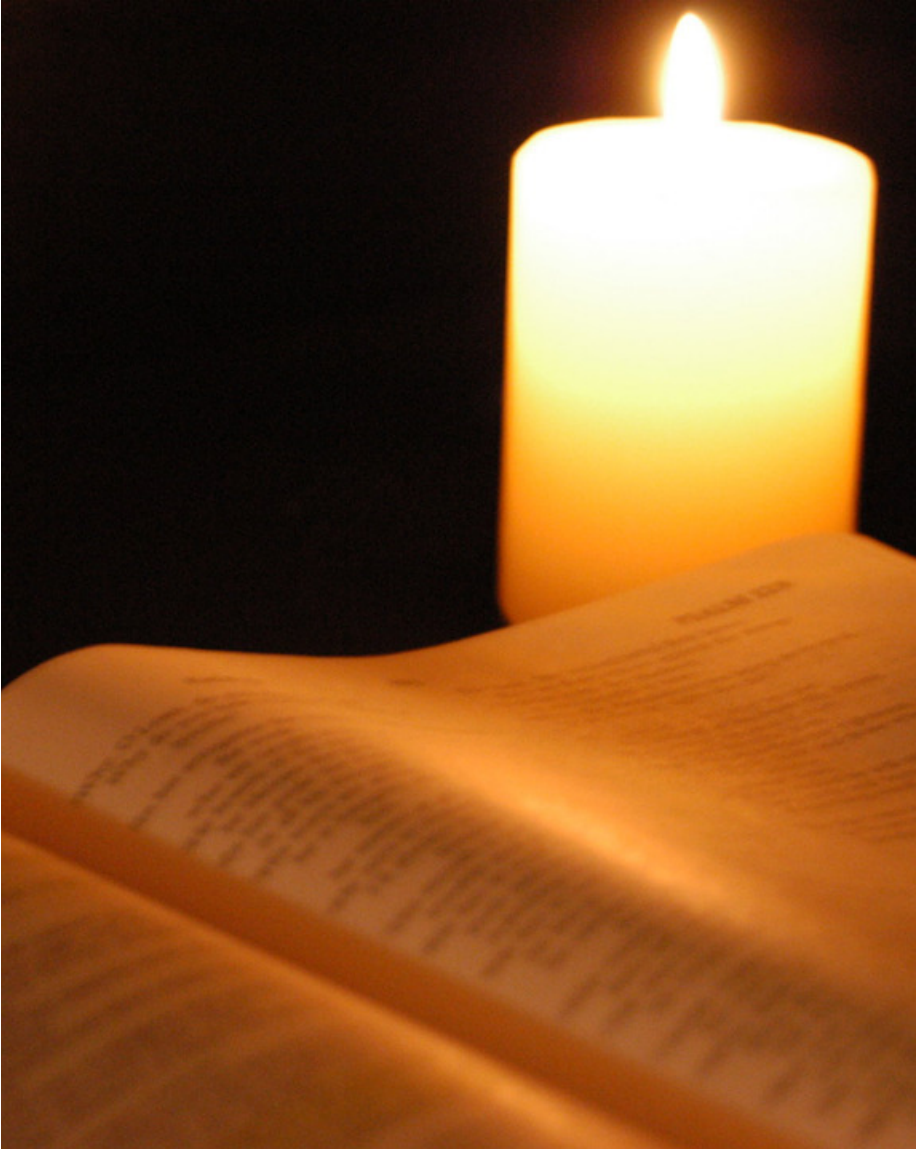
The kings were commanded to write the whole Old Testament law in their own handwriting.

Could you at least write one book of the Bible in your own handwriting?

- Ask God to speak to you as you write
- Read the passage out loud and write it out phrase by phrase
- Stop whenever you feel like it or when your time runs out
- Feel free to mark key words or write notes in the margin
- You can also personalize the text as you write it – for instance: verse 2 could be "I worship You, Lord, with gladness and come before You with joyful songs..."
- Talk to God about the passage and what He is saying to you.

Tool #6

LECTIO DIVINA



Lectio Divina is Latin for “sacred reading”. Lectio Divina is an ancient method of approaching the Word of God. Are you ready to try a method that saints over the ages have found to be a life changing method of reading God’s Word? Select a passage to read. Typically the text should be short.

(The following outline is freely adapted from Invitation to a Journey by Robert Mulholland Jr.)

SILENCIO - SILENCE

Quiet yourself within

Shift from controlling to receiving
– be open to hearing the Spirit’s voice -

Shift from information to formation
– don’t seek information, seek to be changed -

Shift from observation to obedience
– commit to obey God’s voice -



LECTIO - READING

- Read the passage out loud, slowly. Expect God to speak to you.
- Listen for the Spirit’s voice in your heart.
- Reread until a word, phrase or image stands out in your mind.
- Sometimes, nothing will grab your attention. That is OK.



Meditatio - Meditation

Ponder the word, phrase or image.

Repeat it, memorize it, and allow it to settle in your deepest self.

Allow it to interact with your thoughts, feelings, hopes, etc.

Oratio - Prayer

Talk to God about the word, phrase or image.

Why did God give you this? What does He want you to do with it?

Allow God to change you.

Contemplatio - Contemplation

Rest silently in God's presence.

Abandon yourself to God and His will.

Incarnatio - Incarnation

Whatever God has said to you, apply it to your life as soon as possible.

Tool #7

FOUR-STRANDED GARLAND



This is a prayer method developed by Martin Luther in his book *A Simple Way to Pray*. It is very similar to *Lectio Divina* but it is a little more structured in that it includes specific questions to consider.

Luther pictured a garland, or ribbon, with four strands, each of which stands for a way of listening to the scripture.

THE RIBBONS

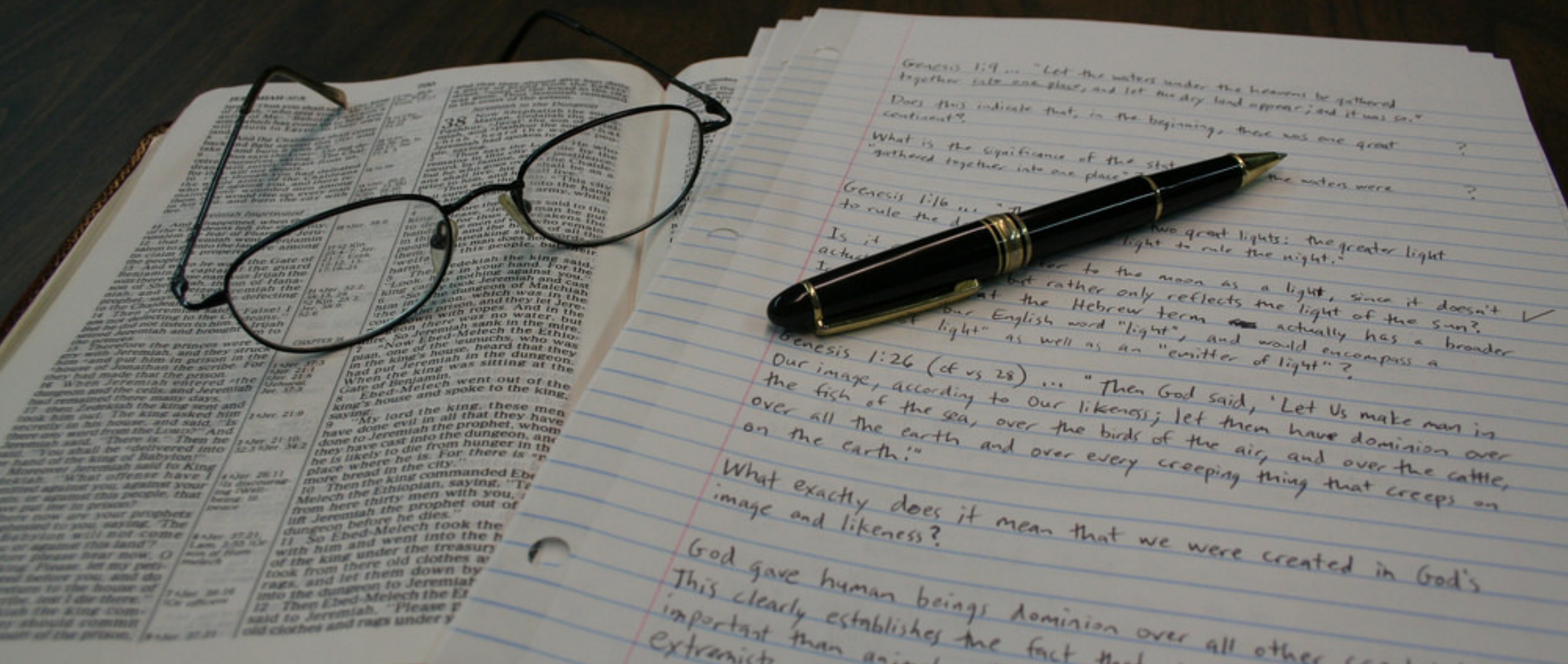
INSTRUCTION – What truth is there for me to know?

THANKSGIVING – How should I thank or praise God?

CONFESSION – What sin should I confess to God?

GUIDANCE – What does God want me to do?





Example

Select a passage to use for meditation.

Ask God to be speak to you and become silent before God.

Read the scripture at least two times. Look for a word, phrase or image that stands out to you. Something you feel God is using to grab your attention.

Repeat the word, phrase or image for a few minutes until it settles in your heart.

Now use the garland to seek God's word for you:

- Is God instructing you?
- Is there something to thank or praise God in this?
- Is God drawing you to confess sin?
- Is God guiding you through this?

Dialogue with God about what He has said to you.

Now rest in God's presence.

Thank God for being alive and present in His Word.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jerold Wyrick is the president of Worship Arts Conservatory. It has been his life long passion to study worship and teach others how to experience the wonder of being with God. He has used this passion to serve as a church worship director for nearly 30 years.

Jerold lives in Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan, with his wife and has two adult children.

LEARN MORE

This material is only 7 of the tools found in the Worship Arts Conservatory Spiritual Foundations course.

This indepth course teaches hundreds of ways to spend time with God and develop your spiritual walk. For more information on Worship Arts Conservatory and their programs of study please go to

WorshipArts.net

KEEP YOUR TIME IN GOD'S WORD FRESH!

- Learn 7 unique ways to approach reading the Bible
- Discover how to be more creative in your Bible reading
- Find out ways to listen for the Spirit's guidance as you read
- Approach the scriptures as a child
- Practice an ancient form of sacred reading

A set of tools you can use to approach God's Word with enthusiasm, creativity and expectation.