

*Prayer is the bridge between my unconscious and conscious life. Prayer connects my mind with my heart, my will with my passions, my brain with my belly. Prayer is the way to let the life-giving Spirit of God penetrate all the corners of my being. Prayer is the divine instrument of my wholeness, unity and inner peace.*

*From the book "Space for God"*

## INTRODUCTION

I'm going to give some of you more information that you'd probably like, and if that's the case for you, please feel free to jump down to the meditation guide itself at #4 below.

But I would encourage you to take some time to read some of my initial thoughts since I believe so much of what makes my time effective is about preparation, understanding, and attitude of the heart. So don't try to get through all this in one sitting. Simply begin spending time thinking through the basic premise of why we need to seek to be filled by God and then, on a day you feel ready, you begin practicing the steps of Meditation in answer to your God-given CORE needs.

1. Some thematic Scriptures that have helped me understand the "Filling" of the Spirit concept are:
  - a. John 15:5 *I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing. [Amplified Bible]*
  - b. John 7:37-39 **37** *Now on the final and most important day of the Feast, Jesus stood, and He cried in a loud voice, If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! **38** He who believes in Me [who cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me] as the Scripture has said, From his innermost being shall flow [continuously] springs and rivers of living water. **39** But He was speaking here of the Spirit, Whom those who believed (trusted, had faith) in Him were afterward to receive. [Amplified Bible]*
2. **GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:** The premise that is the basis for my change in devotional practices relies on the fact that the goal of the Christian life is, not to just study Scriptures and know ABOUT Him, but to know and experience fully a real, living relationship with our Creator through Jesus Christ. To me the above Scriptures give us clear guidance on how we are to experience this union or relationship. We ARE thirsty to have our CORE needs of LOVE/FORGIVENESS/DIVINE PURPOSE AND MEANING met, we spent inordinate amounts of time consciously and unconsciously seeking what the world has to offer to meet these needs. The Bible calls this Idolatry.
  - a. The problem is, often times, we don't take seriously God's very real desire to meet those needs within us. Nor do we consider that He created those very needs within us that we might rely fully on Him to meet them, and that daily reliance on Him is a key part of our ongoing relationship with Him... i.e. how we KNOW and experience our relationship with Him.

### 3. Preparation:

a. Quotes to ponder that give perspective to the “why” of meditation:

#### **Thoughts on CORE needs by Henri Nouwen**

- *Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can, indeed, present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. Maybe you think you are more tempted by arrogance than self-rejection. But isn't arrogance, in fact, the other side of self-rejection? Isn't arrogance putting yourself on a pedestal to avoid being seen as you see yourself? Isn't arrogance, in the final analysis, just another way of dealing with feelings of worthlessness?*
- *Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the “Beloved.” Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.*
  - *Regarding this “place” of self-rejection:*
- *“There is a place in you where you are completely powerless. You so much want to heal yourself, fight your temptations, and stay in control. But you cannot do it yourself. Every time you try you are more discouraged. So you must acknowledge your powerlessness.” “The more you relinquish your stubborn need to maintain power, the more you will get in touch with the One who has the power to heal and guide you. And the more you get in touch with that divine power, the easier it will be to confess to yourself and to others your basic powerlessness.”*

4. **Meditation:** First we acknowledge God’s desire to be the Source [the Vine] to meet our deepest needs to be FULLY KNOWN and FULLY LOVED. Second, we confess our desire, in the face of these CORE needs, to turn to Idols in order to meet those needs or escape them. Third, may we seek God to surrender this temptation toward Idolatry and turn to Him and receive His Spirit.

- As you begin, realize that each person is different and may relate to God differently. Experiment! Try new things.
- Ask God for help in learning to rely on Him. Ask with faith and expect him to desire to teach you how to effectively come into His presence. Ask Him to show you the best way for YOU to relate intimately to Him. Because being transformed is life long and God continually surprises us with how we see and experience this transformation.
- Spend a few minutes quieting your mind. If your thoughts are intrusive, turn them into prayers, laying them at God’s feet. Do NOT analyze them [that can distract you], simply take each thought captive and lay it down before God. Quiet yourself until you can focus on seeking God’s filling. ]
- In each of the questions below don’t rush and don’t force thoughts. Some answers to each of these you may know immediately, but others may be deep

below the surface and you want to ask God to show them to you, to allow them to float up into your conscious from wherever you've been stuffing them. **You may not get through all the key words each day!**

- Lastly, this is generally NOT a very emotional experience for me. At times it's even dry. It's not that I don't feel God's presence, I do, but it is very similar to what most of us experience in prayer—a quiet sense of peace not an ecstatic vision. Even so, remember, God promises us his presence and so we can be *confident* that He will meet us. In that regard I usually remind myself as I prepare that God is ALWAYS present and I am the one who shows up.
  - **Gratitude**— think of 5 things to be grateful to God for. Spend a few moments praising Him and thanking Him for those things.
  - **Fears**—this is the step I take the longest on. My fears are the things I am most likely to be denying, so I allow extra time for God to bring them to my attention.
    - [NOTE: if you are not sure of what you fear, they may be buried deep inside of you. One way to get “at” them is to think about your “stress” behavior—i.e. when you feel out of control in how you treat yourself or others. When we get angry, when we overreact, normally it is in response to a deep-seeded fear. In your meditation time spend time tracing that reaction back to what caused the stress reaction. It will help you get to the source of your fears.
    - What Idols am I in the habit of turning to in the face of those fears? In other words, where am I tempted to run [rather than to God] in the face of these fears?
      - For instance: an idol could be my desire to be in control of those fears rather than trusting God with them. Or my idol could be focusing on comfort and security to assuage my fears. These are good things, they just can't be the FIRST thing. If they are, they are hindering my relationship with God.
      - Or, my idol could be escaping these fears through seeking to numb myself through substance abuse or lust.
      - Confess to God the inadequacy of these God-substitutes, and ask Him to help you surrender them to Him. This is the beginning of FREEDOM!
    - In response, I turn to God and spend a few moments envisioning God's Living Water [His Holy Spirit] filling me and covering these fears, these wounds, even the idols. I often envision them as hot rocks that literally steam as God's cool healing water flows over them. During this I remind myself that my idols are ultimately powerless to assuage these fears and that His love, His healing touch is the ONLY answer to my fears.
  - **Self-seeking**—where are my actions and motives self-centered rather than others centered? **This is a clear opportunity for confession of sin,**

for any action or motive that is self-centered leads me away from dependence on God and toward dependence on some other idol.

- This theme of “self” will peek its way foundationally into many of the other words we are reflecting and meditating on. It is often the “why” of a lack of gratitude, of our resentment and dishonesty and our lack of desire to make amends.
- I ask God to forgive me of my self-focus and free me from the bondage it brings. I turn to God and spend a few moments envisioning God’s Living Water [His Holy Spirit] filling me and covering my self-focused desires and healing them, freeing me to have a more generous outlook toward others.
- **Dishonesty**—Am I being dishonest with God, myself, or others?
  - In response I seek God’s help in becoming the honest person he created me to be. I envision His Living Water covering the hot stones of my dishonesty and trusting Him to heal those lies and hurts inside of me.
- **Resentments**—do I feel resentment toward God or others?
  - As I allow these to float up into my conscious I ask God to help me get to the source of these resentments. What self-centered issues are causing me to resent others? Am I in bondage to these resentments?
  - In response I seek God’s help in turning my resentments over to Him. Confessing that resentments don’t help me or anyone else, confessing that forgiveness is the way toward freedom not holding on to old wounds. Trusting Him to heal the brokenness that created these resentments. To envision God’s Living Water covering the hot rocks of my resentments and the hurts that caused them. Praising God for setting me free from these resentments, empowering me to live the life of grace and forgiveness He has called me to live.
- **Amends**—do I need to make amends with anyone today?
  - Especially the first few times this one can be tricky as well. There may be a person that I need to make amends with that has been festering a long, long time but I’ve done a masterful job of stuffing it way below the surface! Ask God to show you if there is someone you need to make amends with and wait upon Him to tell you.
  - If there is someone, in response I envision God’s Living Water filling me and covering over the hot rocks of hurt and pain that this person may have caused me. I remember that only God can heal my woundedness and that He asks me to forgive as I have been forgiven.
- **Filling to Overflowing**
  - Once I’ve completed the meditation on the words above, I then spend a few minutes envisioning God’s complete filling from my head to my toes with His Living Water. While I imagine this

happening I continue to speak the truth to myself: “only God fully knows and fully loves me.” “Only God’s love is adequate to meet my deepest needs for love, affirmation, forgiveness, and grace.” And as I speak those words, I consciously *receive* them in faith, believing it is true and enough for me. I remember that THIS-- God’s Living Spirit inside of me—is what my CORE needs were designed for, and how they will be ultimately met.

- **Contributing to the greater good**—what is God asking me to do today to get outside of myself and contribute to the greater good of His Kingdom??
  - Once I have been totally filled by God’s Spirit, then I am in a position to have, as Jesus says in John 7:38, *From his innermost being shall flow [continuously] springs and rivers of living water.* This is how I can freely and joyfully contribute to the greater good of God’s kingdom around me. This is how I’m freed up to look out for the interests of others before my own [Philippians 2:3].

#### FINAL THOUGHTS:

First, this is a process. It takes time to learn how to relate to God in this new way. Be patient, don’t rush, and don’t give up. Keep at it and I promise God will meet with you!

Secondly, the way I know that God is using this time to meet my CORE needs is in how I live my life in response. One of the key ways you will know is by evaluating what is happening with your stress behavior—i.e. those moments when your reaction to something feels out of control or extreme. For some of us that is an outburst of anger, for others it is becoming passive-aggressive, for others it is withdrawing from the situation we find ourselves in. Whatever your stress behavior looks like, I’ve found that when my CORE needs are met by God, that my stress behavior lessens or goes away that day. What I mean is, usually I find myself saying “Jeff, you shouldn’t get angry, you shouldn’t over-react to this.” And instead I find myself simply NOT over-reacting NOT getting angry. Instead of me fighting for the change, the change simply happens. Why? Because my CORE needs are adequately met and therefore I’m not anxiously negotiating with everyone I meet to have those needs of love/affection and forgiveness met. Because when those needs don’t get met is generally when I begin to have a stress reaction in a situation. Also, I believe the fruits of the Spirit are residing in me and active in a more powerful way because of the Spirit’s presence-- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. When my CORE needs are met I’m less needy, and when the Spirit is filling me the fruits of His Spirit are more evident in my life, and the combination produces what the Scriptures call “a new creation.!”

I am praying that God will meet you in the midst of your efforts to come to know Him in a more intimate and real way. Please don’t hesitate to call me or meet with me if I can be of any help as you grow in this process.