

A Practice

SACRED Meditation

BRIAN F. SCHUTT



GUIDE

S

Still Your Soul – Put yourself into a position both physically and mentally to enter into a time of meditation.

A

Attend Quietly – Slow your thoughts, acknowledge your emotions, and willfully enter into the present moment.

C

Clear Your Attention – Release yourself from the need or desire to energetically attend to the people and things in your life.

R

Resolutely Express Your Love to Jesus – Tell Jesus you love Him in your own words.

E

Enter God's Temple – Go inward to the Garden of Your Heart. You are the temple of God.

D

Dwell There to Pray – Meet Jesus in prayer, and listen for Him.

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in October of 2023, I began to walk a path of spiritual growth that lasted for two years. I read books. I listened to books. I prayed. I talked with so many people. I listened to sermons. I had long conversations with my wife, Cindy. It led me to a point that was marked by the richest and deepest moments of relationship with God that I've ever experienced since I confessed my faith in Jesus in October 1973. October is an important month in my life of faith!

I want to share with you the single most important outcome of those two years. It's a practice that I engaged in mostly in the early morning (I'm a morning person) when my day began. When the house is quiet. When everything is still outside. When I'm alone except for my dog, Dobby. It's the fruit from the hours, days, months, and years of tilling the soil, planting the seeds, watering the soil, clearing the weeds, pruning the growth, and reaping the harvest of my faith as a son of God. A beloved son. A known son. I call it the **SACRED Meditation**.

I like that the word sacred because it describes this practice and forms the acrostic I use to remember each

step. The word **sacred** refers to something that is 'set apart' from the ordinary, and it's regarded as holy and imbued with deep spiritual significance. Enough so that it invokes a sense of reverence, awe, or devotion. *Sacredness* includes both the intrinsic qualities of the act (the meditation), and the relationship that we form with it because of its significance to our journey of faith.

I must give credit where credit is due. I came out of the worldwide pandemic of 2020 like many people: with my resilience worn paper thin. I was in a state of fragility and fatigue that drove me to look for a resource—any resource—to restore my resilience. I found John Eldredge's book, RESILIENT, and the book's subtitle described exactly what I wanted to begin with: "restoring your weary soul in these turbulent times."

I would not have developed this practice and given it a name were it not for the PAUSE app. It was developed by John Eldredge and his team at Wild at Heart ministries as a resource to the RESILIENT book. All of the DNA of this practice is embedded in the app's 30-day program called, "30 Days to Resilient." SACRED Meditation's form, order, and structure emerged after my third trip through the program and many days of experimentation, implementation, and action. The goal as Eldredge puts it is union with Jesus which heals all wounds. I *embodied* the practice until it became an unconscious competence. *It became the vehicle for deeper union and communion with Jesus.*

In this little book, I will take you on a tour of SACRED Meditation. I will teach you each step. I will show you how it works. It's my desire that it becomes your own practice. But, you will need to make it your own: experiment, implement, and act. This practice can be completed in whatever time box you have. I encourage you to not constrain yourself. As you gain experience with it and confidence in the steps, you'll use it in the best way possible to your satisfaction.

The point of this practice is not to meditate every day. The point is to meditate so that your **union** with God is restored and you enjoy a time of **communion** with Him every day. It is *there* that you grow in faith and transform daily into the image of Christ.

You'll see at the end of each step that I offer a scriptural reference for the step. It is the verse that aligns most closely to the step. I don't offer it to conduct an exegetical exercise. Rather, each one acts as a sign post to the step. It's what anchors my faith, guides my soul, and empowers the practice of the step.

My hope is that someday you and I can share our experience with the practice either in real life or virtually somehow. Either way, it would be my joy to have a conversation about how we commune with God through this practice.

2 Corinthians 3:18

November 2025, San Diego, CA

Still Your Soul

1

The first step of the practice sets the stage for the rest of the steps. It's nothing new. I didn't invent it. To enter a time of meditation, we need to contain the movement and motion we experience both in our minds and in our bodies. Stillness is as much emotional as it is physical.

There are three components to the soul, and each must become still to begin the practice well. The **mind** is always busy. We have a huge number of thoughts each day. The evidence of that is established. Our **emotions** are ever-present, and they run the gamut to reflect the world's stimuli that bombard us every minute of the day. Our **will** is the action center that is like an air traffic control tower keeping track of all that's in motion around us.

We usually come to SACRED Meditation in a state that is not attuned to union with God even if we do it as the first activity of our day. I usually do it after I have gotten out of bed, fed the dog, brewed a cup of coffee, and checked today's weather on my phone. Those simple actions provide enough mental and physical stimulation to take me away from a state of stillness. If you do this practice in the middle of the day, or at the end of the day, the stimulation

of your senses is even greater and the state of your soul will be less than still.

So, get comfortable as you begin the practice. The position is up to you. Sit, stand, or lay down; you choose. I recommend that you assume a position that supports your eyes being closed. I will also place my palms up with my hands open to physically reflect my desire to be spiritually open to God's leading. It also signals my readiness to receive from Him. Also, I don't recommend trying to do something else while you're in this practice. Let your practice be your focus. You'll see in Chapter 3 why I make this recommendation.

I found that a contemplative style of music played at a soft, background level supports my practice. I learned of an artist from the PAUSE App who has become a favorite of mine for meditation: William Augusto. He has several volumes of "Soaking in His Presence." Volume 10 is one of my favorites. His music can be found on Apple Music, YouTube, and Amazon.

This step should take 2-3 minutes to accomplish after you've practiced for a while. In the beginning, it may take a little longer if this is a new idea to you or if you're the type of person that is always on the move. This is not the only step to reach a state in your soul that leads to a satisfying and fulfilling time of meditation. It's like a good launch sequence for a boat leaving a dock.

Reference: Psalm 46:10

2

The second step is paired closely with the first. Once you are still, the movement to get quiet follows naturally as the next thing to do. You might ask, “Isn’t *still* and *quiet* the same thing?” Well, no, not exactly. Stillness sets an intention to slow down, and it’s a posture, metaphorically, to inhabit the present moment. When I am still *and* quiet, I am relaxed, calm, and receptive.

So, when you attend the moment quietly, you simply get quiet by settling your soul. That means doing three things. First, slow your thoughts to quiet your **mind**. A deep breath and an audible exhale signals your mind that you don’t need to overthink this, you simply want to enjoy the present, quiet moment. Second, notice any **emotions** that are present, not trying to stop them but gently to acknowledge or name them and honor how you feel. Third, set your **will** to be in the moment. As the saying goes, “Be here now.”

Reference: Psalm 131:2

3

Once you have become still and quiet, the next step can begin. It's the step whose length is variable and determined by the busyness of your thoughts. It's also determined by how well you can step back from that busyness and inhabit the moment. In short, it's how well you can divert your attention from all that you're thinking to this time of meditation.

We all have thousands of thoughts in a day. At any one moment, you can be thinking about an overwhelming number of things. Categorically, those thoughts could be about your relationships, your work, your plans, your tasks, your hopes, your fears, your dreams, or your future. You get the idea. You're thinking about your life.

So, the purpose of this step is to clear your attention of all the myriad of thoughts that don't support your time of meditation and pay attention to what you desire in the present moment. Let me share the biggest **secret** about this step: it's only temporary and it will last only as long as you meditate. It's not permanent. You won't lose control. You don't have to give up anything. You can pay attention to all of those things I listed earlier when you're done

meditating. So relax, we're only letting go of all those important things for a brief time.

To do this, simply say to yourself (or audibly if you choose), "I give everyone and everything to You." You can add "Jesus," "Holy Spirit," or "God" to the end of the statement if you like for added emphasis. Do what feels most aligned to your faith. Say it again. Repeat that phrase until you are now paying attention to what you want to detach from during this time.

I use mental imagery to picture myself physically letting go of those important things. I use four types. You might use less or you might use more. You get to decide. I created some images with the help of AI. The image isn't the point, it's what the image represents that's the key: release of attention on what distracts you from paying attention to your present moment.

The first image is a small **cart** with a handle that is full of my cares and concerns. It's packed full of objects big and small that represent those things. It's piled high with the stuff that clamors for my attention. I'm pulling it until I decide to stop, drop the handle, and park it off to the side.

The second image is a **backpack** similarly stuffed with with objects that represent my cares and concerns. Think of a backpacker that carries all of the necessary items to survive on a hike of several days. It could be an urban backpacker with a pack full of high-tech items to stay connected to the buzz of the world. A backpack that enables self-sufficiency and self-containment.

The third image is a simple **file folder**. I use this to hold papers that represent my concern, the thing that is fighting for my attention. I place whatever it is gently into the folder and lay it on an imaginary table near the cart I've let go of, and the backpack that I've slid off my back and placed next to the cart. Any time a new concern pops into my mind that distracts me, I gently name it, capture it as one or more pieces of paper, slide them into the folder, and place it on the table.

The last image is a **To Do list**. If something pops into my mind, I write it down on an imaginary list. Somehow I can always remember it so that when I'm done, I transfer it to my physical list of things to do. By the way, I may actually pause my meditation and write it down on my *real* To Do list if it's compelling or potent enough to distract me.

Recall the secret I shared earlier. The power to clear your attention lies in the fact that you will remember what's fighting for your attention, and you can attend to it when you're done with your meditation. It's a way to calm your amygdala, that little structure in your brain that is vigilant and responsible to identify threats and keep you safe. You'll get back to the thought later. It can remain the priority it is before you started to meditate. It's not lost. It will be waiting for you until you finish your meditation.

So, clear your attention so that you can move to the next step with clarity. It's the step that builds your relationship with Jesus better than any of the others.

Reference: Philippians 4:8

4

This step is nuanced and not altogether obvious. When you read the tagline for it you might have thought of all the ways that you love Jesus in the actions you take every day. That's good, but that's not what is meant. This is the act of speaking to Jesus, either audibly or inaudibly, to say in your own words that you love Him.

I can't explain why this is powerful, but it is. It makes this whole practice a personal exercise between you and Jesus. You're not talking *about* Him, you're talking *to* Him.

Be specific. Say it like you would to another human being. Say it the way you say it to your family members, your friends, or if you're married, to your spouse.

When I do this step I get specific, too. For example, I might say, "Jesus, I love you because you gave me the gift of music and how it reaches into my soul when I hear a song that I love." Or, "Jesus, I love you because you want to meet with me more than I want to meet with you." Or one last example, "I love you, Jesus, because you are absolutely trustworthy and will never betray me."

The beauty of this step is that it brings me closer to Jesus. He is my savior who walked the earth two thousand years ago, and He died for me. For little Brian. For Brian, the grown man. He's not a concept or idea or religious icon. He's my living and present Savior and Friend.

Use your own words to make it your own. This will be different for every single person who uses this meditation. Jesus' relationship with every person is unique and different from every other person. I want to encourage you that if it is uncomfortable when you first try it, especially if you've never done it before, it will get easier and you will become more comfortable doing it. It may even become your favorite step.

Reference: Psalm 18:1

5

If you've made your way through the first four steps, you've prepared yourself to meet Jesus in a very special place: the temple of God that is inside you. This is a mystery. There is a long, solid line of theology, however, that makes it so. The line is too long to describe and explain fully here, but it's sound and it makes it possible for us to meet Jesus in meditation by looking *within* rather than *without*.

When Jesus rose from the dead and was resurrected to life on the first Easter morning, this new temple was established. This temple is not a building but the church itself, the body of believers. It was preceded by a significant event when Jesus died on the cross: the curtain of the temple that separated God from the people was torn in two. It symbolized the barrier between God and His people. However, now the Holy of Holies was open to all believers and not limited to the High Priest who entered only once a year on Yom Kippur.

Since each believer is now a part of the temple, we can go there by going inward in meditation to meet Jesus there. This is difficult to explain, but we are invited to make this spiritual journey as we open our hearts and with

intention, seek to meet Jesus there. As we enter, we invite Him to meet with us.

This is what separates Christian meditation from mindfulness meditation. In mindfulness meditation, the practice is to focus awareness on the present moment and its thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment. The goal is a balanced state of mind.

In Christian SACRED Meditation, the focus is on an encounter with the risen Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit's ministry to each believer. The goal is a deeper relationship with Jesus, and He is the focus of the meditation.

The benefits of both types of meditation are the same: reduced stress, improved emotional regulation, the ability to respond to situations with more clarity and less reactivity, and enhanced overall well-being.

I find it helpful to visualize the type of environment or a place where I am most comfortable. For me, that is most often the beach under a warm sun with a light breeze. This is where I am most relaxed, receptive, and at ease. For you, it could be the mountains, the desert, a jungle, the wide open ocean, a lush valley, on a river or lake, or at a waterfall. It could be day or night, too. You get to choose.

Now it's time to move to the last step.

Reference: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

6

I emerge from Step 5 where I enter the temple, the “garden of my heart” as I like to call it, in a posture of readiness and expectation. I **pray** a prayer that is usually brief. I begin to worship and adore Him first. I use words that point to, magnify, and declare his holiness. I will then confess my sins and restore my standing with Him by asking for forgiveness for the ways I have fallen short of his perfect standard. He will only speak to me in truth, so I must remove anything that is present in me that breaks fellowship.

I invite Jesus to meet with me, and I envision what He looks like, and I wait. I wait patiently and expectantly that He *will* come. This is the part that requires great care and self-compassion because at this point I lose control. It’s not up to me whether or not Jesus joins me. I’m dependent on Him. I am yielded to Him. I must have a loose grip on this moment. It can’t be forced and it can’t be faked. It must be genuine and authentic. My mind, emotions, and will must be surrendered.

He usually appears as He would if I was meeting Him at the beach. No fanfare, just a positive, friendly arrival. He has

long dark hair. He is wearing a robe as He is usually when depicted in a movie: long sleeves, belt tied around his waist, and sandals.

I have spent a varied number of minutes in this step, and often I lose track of time because when Jesus *does* meet me here, it's the only thing that I care about. It's the only thing that I am aware of. The world fades away and time loses its grip and is measured on a new scale: time in relationship.

This is when it's time to **listen**. It's imperative that you heighten your attention with intention and make space for Jesus to speak to you. I have learned to be patient in my listening because I don't control when He will speak or how much He will speak, or if He will speak at all. My meditation is an open-ended invitation.

In my experience, He doesn't speak volumes. It's usually a sentence or two or three. I have on only one occasion heard more than that. I test stringently and repeatedly what comes to me and what I think I hear. **This is the most important part of the practice.** I cannot emphasize enough that I test what I hear against what I know to be true and written in the Bible, what is theologically sound, and what I know of the character of God. He will not contradict himself.

I ask God to give me clarity and to confirm what He said. I usually ask myself several times, "Are you sure?" I take a similar approach as if I'm a judge asking myself, the witness, "Is this testimony true?" under penalty of perjury if

it's false. I know it's truly His voice when what I heard resonates as a fully formed thought that is clearly understood in the moment.

I am ready to write down what I hear because my journal is always near me. I transcribe it immediately. I then thank God for His love and grace. I thank Him for loving me so much that He would speak to me.

On select days, what I hear is so beautiful and meaningful that all I can do is joyfully weep. It's the kind of weeping I did when I saw my wife at the back of the church ready to make her way down the aisle to marry me or when my son and daughter were born.

I will spend a few minutes to collect myself and reenter the reality of the room where I am. Once I have settled, I will stay for a moment of quiet reflection before declaring my meditation complete.

Reference: Matthew 6:5-8; Romans 8:26

CONCLUSION

I hope that this guided walk through my SACRED Meditation practice has been enlightening. I pray that it inspires you to give it a try and after having done so that Jesus comes to you and speaks life and love over you.

Writing down what you experience in your meditation is your gift to yourself. It could be a single word, a phrase, a scribbled drawing, or a paragraph. Something—*anything*—is better than nothing. I know the value of it because I needed the notes in my journal to write this little book.

I like to describe myself as a fellow traveler. I am on a path to live a life that is worthy of my calling as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. I have been on that path for a long time, and I do not consider myself an expert at any part of the journey. This meditation practice is included.

I am also a lifelong learner. I know that the more I know, the more I know I don't know. So, take heart if this takes a while to feel comfortable. I will be right there with you in the struggle, and I'll be cheering you on.

Reference: Psalm 84:10a