

A stone staircase with metal railings leading up through a dense forest. The path is flanked by lush green trees and foliage, creating a sense of a journey through nature. The lighting is soft and dappled, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

The Way of Life

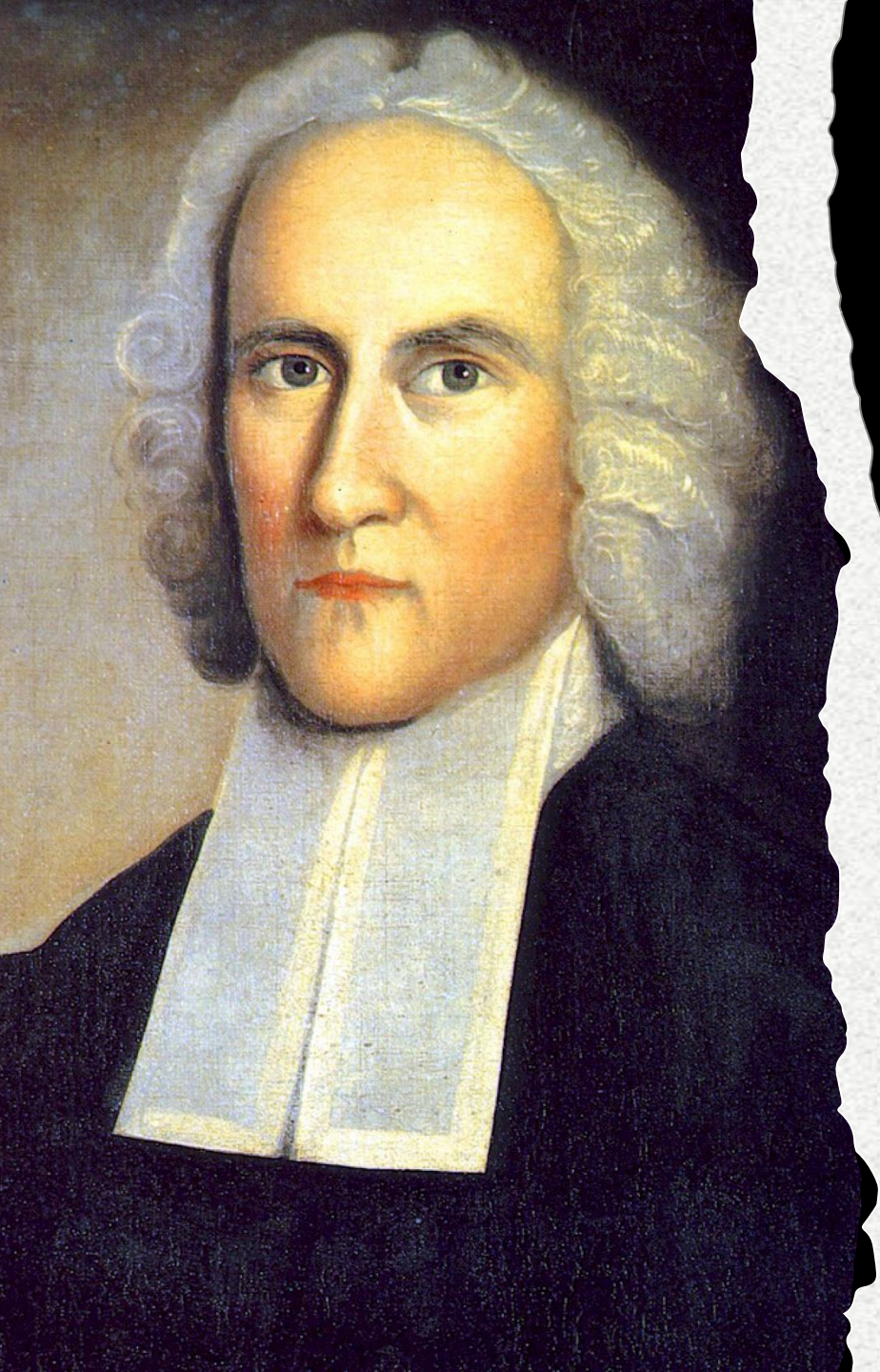
Vital Practices for Your Spiritual Journey



Once, as [I was in the woods] in a retired place . . . to walk for divine contemplation and prayer; I had a view (that for me was extraordinary) of the glory of the Son of God, as mediator between God and man; and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace, that appeared to me so calm and sweet, appeared great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared . . . excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception.



[This] continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour [and] kept me, the bigger part of the time, in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt . . . an ardency of soul to be (what I know not otherwise how to express) . . . emptied and . . . to be full of Christ alone—to love him with a holy and pure love—to trust in him—to live upon him—to serve and follow him, and to be totally wrapped up in the fullness of Christ—and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity.



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—Jonathan Edwards (from his “Personal Narrative”)

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Vital Practices for Your Spiritual Journey

Psalm 27:4

**⁴ One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.**

Psalm 63:1-8

**¹ You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.
² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.**

Psalm 63:1-8

**³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.**

**⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.**

**⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.**

Psalm 63:1-8

**⁶ On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.**

**⁷ Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.**

**⁸ I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.**

Outline

- 1. What is contemplation?**
- 2. Why do we need it?**
- 3. How do we practice it?**

A photograph of a stone staircase with metal railings, leading up through a dense forest. The stairs are made of large, rectangular stone blocks and are flanked by dark metal railings. The forest is lush with green foliage, and the path leads towards a bright opening in the trees at the top of the stairs. The overall scene is serene and contemplative.

1. What is contemplation?

Psalm 27:4; Psalm 63:1-3

1. What is contemplation?

The concept

- **Active / Contemplative**

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The concept

- **Active / Contemplative**
- **Revelation / Response**

1. What is contemplation?

The concept

- **Active / Contemplative**
- **Revelation / Response**
- **Posture / Practice**

1. What is contemplation?

The definition

“Contemplation is both an attitude and activity of loving, focused attention or grateful gazing on God that provides a means for keeping company with and enjoying Jesus Christ.”

—Tom Schwanda, *Embracing Contemplation: Reclaiming a Christian Spiritual Practice*, p. 102

1. What is contemplation?

The definition

“Put simply, the contemplative life is the steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us.”

—Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, p. 46

1. What is contemplation?

The definition

“Contemplation is captivated attention to the triune God. It consists of a gospel-centered gazing [upon] and enjoying, and it culminates in transformation, [the] experience of love, and spiritual rest and peace in communion with Christ.”

—Ryan Brandt, *Embracing Contemplation: Reclaiming a Christian Spiritual Practice*, p. 186

1. What is contemplation?

The definition

→ Contemplation is the gaze of the soul on the beauty and glory of God.

1. What is contemplation?

An objection

- Isn't this this New Age spirituality or a Roman Catholic thing?

1. What is contemplation?

An objection

- **Isn't this this New Age spirituality or a Roman Catholic thing?**
- **Answer: Contemplation (i.e. gazing upon the triune God) is both biblical (Ps. 27:4; Ps. 63:2; 2 Cor. 3:18) and a practice embraced in historic Reformed and Evangelical spirituality.**



“Let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, and virtue will proceed from him to repair all our decays, to renew a right spirit within us, and to cause us to abound in all duties of obedience.”

—John Owen



There is a way, not known to many moderns, but much practiced by the ancients, of knowing the love of Christ by contemplation. Do you know that in the early ages of the Church they spoke more of Christ and of his person, and thought more of him than we do . . . [They] found time to have long seasons of contemplation, and they would sit alone and worship, and draw near to Christ, and steadily fix their gaze upon his person;



for to them he was a real person, whom the eye of their faith could see as clearly as the eye of sense can see outward objects, and they looked, and looked, and looked again, till the love of Christ grew brighter to them than the sun at his meridian, and for very dimness of mortal sight they veiled their faces and paused their speech—awhile their souls were bathed in inward joy and peace unspeakable.

—Charles Spurgeon

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2. Why do we need contemplation?

Psalm 63:4-5; 2 Cor. 3:18

2. Why do we need contemplation?

Three reasons

- **Transformation**

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:18)

BROTHER LAWRENCE



THE
PRACTICE
OF THE
PRESENCE OF
GOD

IN MODERN ENGLISH



TRANSLATED BY MARSHALL DAVIS

Sometimes I consider myself as a stone before a sculptor, who is making a statue. I present myself to God, and I desire Him to make His perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like Himself.

—Brother Lawrence

2. Why do we need contemplation?

Three reasons

- **Satisfaction**

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. (Ps. 63:3-5)

BROTHER LAWRENCE



THE
PRACTICE
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TRANSLATED BY MARSHALL DAVIS

There is no sweeter and delightful life than that of continual communion with God. Only those who experience this and practice it can comprehend it.

—Brother Lawrence

2. Why do we need contemplation?

Three reasons

- **Preparation**

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matt. 5:8)

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3. How do we practice contemplation?

Psalm 27:4; Psalm 63:1-8

3. How do we practice contemplation?

Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**



Edwards was not so much compelled by moral obligation as drawn by divine beauty....Very early on, he had a glimpse of something so beautiful that he chose to spend the rest of his life exploring it.

—Michael McClymond on Jonathan Edwards

The Theology of
JONATHAN EDWARDS



MICHAEL J. McCLYMOND
and GERALD R. McDERMOTT

3. How do we practice contemplation?

Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**
- **Intention**

BROTHER LAWRENCE

THE
PRACTICE
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How can we pray to Him without being with Him? How can we be with Him unless we think of Him often? And how can we think of Him often unless we make this a holy habit?

...This is the best and easiest method I know. I use no other, and therefore I advise everyone in the world to do it.

—Brother Lawrence

3. How do we practice contemplation?

Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**
- **Intention**
- **Focus**

3. How do we practice contemplation?

Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**
- **Intention**
- **Focus → *awareness, attention, affection***

3. How do we practice contemplation?

Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**
- **Intention**
- **Focus**
- **Adoration**

3. How do we practice contemplation?

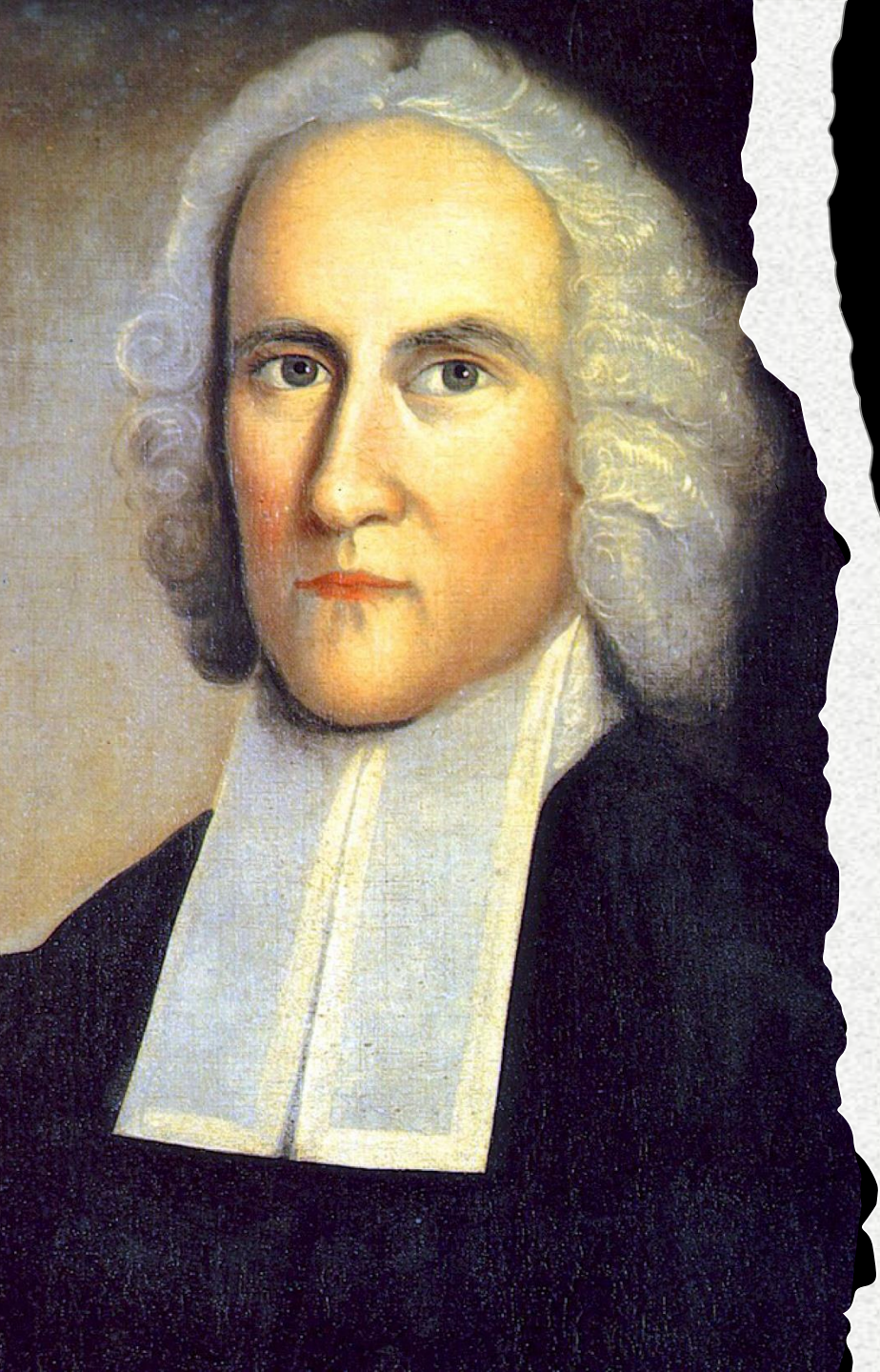
Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**
- **Intention**
- **Focus**
- **Adoration**
- **Perseverance**

3. How do we practice contemplation?

Steps to this practice:

- **Desire**
- **Intention**
- **Focus**
- **Adoration**
- **Perseverance**
- **Dependence**



The Spirit excites to love . . . and makes the attributes of God as revealed in the Gospel and manifested in Christ, delightful objects of contemplation; and makes the soul to long after God and Christ, after their presence and communion, and acquaintance with them, and conformity to them; and to live so as to please and honor them.

—Jonathan Edwards