



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

Does the Word of God saturate your life, sinking into your inmost being? When you fix a cup of tea, you place a tea bag in a cup of hot water. As the tea bag soaks in the cup, the rich tea flavor is extracted and the hot water is colored reddish brown. The tea has completely permeated the hot water.

I want you to see yourself as the cup of hot water and the tea bag as the Word of God. When you allow the Word to soak into your life, then you will grow and experience change. As you soak up God's Word into your heart and mind, you will see transformation in your life. Just as the tea changes the color and taste of the water, the Word of God will change you – your thinking, your speaking, and your behavior.

How can you allow the Word of God to soak into your inmost being? How can the Word of God permeate the whole of your life? This can happen in your life as you meditate on the Word of God. Meditating on the Scripture will let the Word sink into your life bringing about change and growth.

Every believer needs to read, study, and memorize the Word of God. Reading, studying, and memorizing the Word are like dipping a tea bag into a hot cup of water. The more frequently the bag enters the water, the more effect it has. When you read, study, and memorize the Word, it will affect you. It will bring change and growth.

However, meditation allows the Word to sink deeply into your life. It lets the Word permeate the whole of your being. It goes much further beyond reading, studying, and memorizing the Word. Most of the life-altering power of the Scripture comes through meditation. Meditation exists as the bridge between reading, studying, and memorizing Scripture and a holy, changed life. It takes God's Word read, studied, and memorized and applies it to your life. It yields your whole life to the life-transforming power of God's holy and infallible Word.

Too often, we come away from the Word of God cold and unchanged. We see little growth and change in our lives. The Puritan pastor Thomas Watson tells us why this happens, "The reason we come away so cold from the word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation."

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on meditating on the Scripture. We will look at what it means to meditate on the Scripture. We will examine how to meditate and what to meditate on. The purpose of this newsletter is to did you in the practice of meditation. The goal of this newsletter is to help you allow the Word to sink into your life for genuine change and growth.

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What Is Biblical Meditation?

Biblical meditation is the adoring believer's interaction with God by means of the Scripture. When the word "meditate" occurs in the Old Testament, it generally translates one of two words – *hagah* and *siach*. These terms do overlap one another but they give us much insight in what it means to meditate.

"*Hagah*" is often used to refer to the plotting of evil men as they form destructive plans. It is used in **Psalm 2:1**, "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples' plot (*hagah*) a vain thing?" These wicked people thought at length on their evil plans and how to carry them out. These are the "meditations" of evil men.

God wants His people to have the same focus and intensity in their "meditations." Yet, He points us in a different direction. The believer is to think at length on the Word of God. He is to dwell on what God reveals and how to put His Word into practice in our lives.

"*Siach*" means to reflect or contemplate internally or audibly (think out loud). This shows us that believers are to reflect on the Word of God. They think about its meaning and application to their lives. Believers contemplate God's Word, His ways, and His will. They may do this internally in their thoughts. On the other hand, they could do it as they speak, as they think aloud.

These words show us that the believer is to think on God's Word. He is to reflect and contemplate His truth and its application in his life. The believer interacts with God by accepting His Word, contemplating and reflecting on the meaning and then applying it to his life.

When a person receives a love letter from someone, he doesn't read it like it was a business letter. He reads it slowly, savoring every line. He thinks about everything that the loved one writes. He takes it all in and applies it to himself.

The Bible is God's love letter to the believer. Meditation is our interaction with God through this amazing love letter. We take in what God has given us, reflect on it, contemplate it, savor it, and apply it to one's life.

What Meditation Is Not

All that is called meditation today is not identical with what the Bible describes. One sad feature of our modern culture is that meditation has come identified more with non-Christian systems of thought than with Biblical Christianity. Christians often associate meditation with spiritually counterfeit groups like the New Age movement. Just because a cult has adopted meditation for its own purposes does not mean that we ignore the Biblical mandate to meditate on the Word of God.

The kind of meditation in the Bible differs from other kinds of meditation in several ways. The following will help you see the difference. **BM** stands for **Biblical meditation** and **OM** stands for **other types** of meditation.

Mental focus:

BM: Fills the mind with the Word of God.

OM: Empties the mind.

Content focus:

BM: Asks participants to focus on vital content – the living and eternal Word of God.

EM: Asks participants to repeat a single word, a mantra.

Goal:

BM: Honor God and experience genuine change and growth before God.

OM: Aids in self-fulfillment.

Mental activity:

BM: Constructive mental activity.

OM: Passive mentally

Method:

BM: Prays to God and depends on God.

OM: Visualize what you desire; dependence on self.

Resources For Meditation:

BM: The ultimate resource is God and His Word.

OM: The ultimate resource is within the person.

Why Practice Meditation?

You might wonder, "Why meditate? Isn't this just one more thing to put on my "good Christian" to-do list? Why practice this in my life?" The Bible offers several compelling reasons for meditating on the Word of God. These reasons should stir and encourage you to allow God's Word to sink deep into your life.

Meditation will help you to absorb the Word of God. Information floods our lives. Most information, even Biblical information, flows through our minds like water through a sieve. There's usually so much information coming in each day and it comes so quickly that we retain very little. However, when we meditate, the truth remains. It begins to fill our hearts and minds; it permeates our whole being. The Bible is compared to water in **Ephesians 5:20**. If we want to absorb the Word into our lives, we must meditate on it. Meditating on the Word will deliver us from simply hearing the Word. It will transform us into those who receive, understand, and apply the Word of God.

Meditation will inflame your passion for God. The Bible says in **Psalms 39:3**, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned; then I spake with my tongue." The Hebrew word for "musing" in this text stands closely related to the word "meditate" in **Joshua 1:8**. This word "musing" means to meditate on intensely. The psalmist says while he was musing, the fire burned. In other words, while he meditated, his heart burned with passion for God and His Word. Meditating on the Word stokes the flames of your passion for God. As you meditate on the Word, your passion for God will grow in greater intensity. Your love and zeal for God will burn more brightly in and through your life.

Meditation will enable you to gain wisdom and insight from the Word of God. The Word of God says in **Psalms 119:98-99**, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation." In both verses, the psalmist declares his commitment to meditating on the Word of God. He says that God's commandments are "ever with me." He

declares that his commandments are "my meditation."

The result of this meditation makes him "wiser than his enemies" and he has more understanding than all his teachers. This means that he has gained significant insight. He has absorbed more Biblical truth than his enemies or his teachers because of his regular meditation on the Word of God.

As you meditate on the Scripture, you gain a greater understanding of it. You will have insights that cannot be gleaned from simply reading, studying, or memorizing the Word. You will grow in the ability to apply these insights in your life and therefore, grow in conformity to the Word of God.

Meditation will make you spiritually fruitful. The Bible says that the godly person delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night (**Psalms 1:2**). Then, the Bible says this, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (**Psalms 1:3**). There is an intimate connection between meditating on God's Word and fruitfulness.

The fruitful believer regularly meditates on the Word of God. Meditation opens the soil of your heart and allows the water to soak deep in your heart and mind. This will cause spiritual fruit to come forth from your life. If you desire to bear fruit for God, meditation will help you exhibit and cultivate fruit for His glory and for His kingdom.

Meditation can make you stable. Meditating on God's Word will strengthen you to stand firm in all the circumstances of your life. In **Psalms 1**, we also see a connection between meditation (**1:2**) and stability. The Bible says in **Psalms 1:3** that the believer will be like a tree "planted by the rivers of water . . . his leaf also shall not wither." This believer will continue to grow and not fade away regardless of the circumstances of his or her life. Meditating on the Word leads to stability – like that of a tree that has an abundant water supply.

If practiced faithfully, meditation will help you cultivate the stability that **Psalms 1** commends. Like a tree with an abundant water supply that stabilizes it in all conditions, the Word received and absorbed through meditation will help the believer to stand firm and faithful. It

will empower the believer to bear fruit in the driest seasons of life. Meeting with God in His Word produces in them a courageous stability that will not fade in any circumstance of life.

Meditating on the Word can make you successful before God. The Word of God says in **Joshua 1:8**, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success." The Word provides a definite connection between success and the practice of meditation.

The prosperity and success that the Lord speaks of here is prosperity and success before His eyes. It does not necessarily refer to worldly wealth and material prosperity. From the New Testament perspective, we know that the main application of this promise will focus on the prosperity of the soul and spiritual success. This does not rule out worldly success and prosperity; some measure of prosperity in our human endeavors will ordinarily occur when we live according to God's wisdom. Yet, the primary emphasis in this text is on spiritual success and prosperity.

If Joshua desired to succeed in his calling, he had to regularly meditate on the Word of God. If Joshua desired to prosper in glorifying God and fighting the battles of the Lord, he had to spend time reflecting on and applying the Word of God to his life. If Joshua wanted to fulfill God's purpose for his life and ministry, he had to think long and hard about God's truth.

The same is true for you. Spiritual success and prosperity flow out of meditating on the Word of God. As you meditate on the Word of God, it provides you with the wisdom and the insight that you need for your life, your calling, and your ministry. It equips you with the knowledge that you need to live before God and others. It fills you with the understanding that will aid you in pleasing God and sharing His truth with others. As Puritan pastor Thomas Watson put it, "They usually thrive best who meditate most."

Meditation can renew your spiritual life. The Word of God says in **Psalms 119:93**, "I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me." The psalmist confesses

that the Word has "quickened" him. This means that it renewed his spiritual life. It reinvigorated his zeal and desire for God and the things of God. In our lives, our desire and zeal for God can wane. Temptations, Satan's attacks, the pleasures of the world and a host of other things can zap our spiritual energy and vigor. Yet, meditating on the Word can renew our spiritual life. The psalmist prayed, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word" (**Psalms 119:25**). Reflecting on the Word can infuse fresh power and strength into our lives. As we meditate on the Word of God, the Spirit will quicken us. He will draw us out of our spiritual backsliding and apathy. He will grant us vitality in our relationship to God and to His service. He will remove the spiritual deadness and unleash fresh strength in us.

How Do I Meditate?

You may understand the Biblical mandate to meditate. You see the need. You have a desire to do this. Now you're wondering, "How do I meditate on the Scripture?" There are three basic parts to meditating on the Word.

- (1) *Realizing the truth of God's Word.* This happens when you read, study, and memorize the Word. You cannot separate meditation from these things. These things lead one into meditation.
- (2) *Reflecting upon the truth.* Once you receive the truth, you now need to personalize it. You are to think about how the truth applies to your life. Contemplate the personal implications for your life.
- (3) *Responding to God because of the truth.* Meditation leads to action. Meditation may begin at any place in the Scripture but it always ends at God's throne. It ends when you adore God, confess sin, thank Him, commit yourself to some action, or pray for the grace to change in light of the truth.

You might have meditated without being aware of it. On the other hand, many Christians simply read the Bible during their quiet time – if

they have one. While there is nothing wrong with simply reading a passage of Scripture, meditation makes for a more profitable devotion time with God and His Word. You must realize the truth, reflect on it, and respond to it.

The following are some basic guidelines for meditating on the Word.

- *Select an appropriate passage.* The easiest way to decide what you will meditate on is to focus on a verse, phrase, or word that you encounter in your daily Bible reading. The Holy Spirit, the Author of the Bible, will impress you with a certain part of Scripture because that is the very part that He wants you to meditate on for that day. As you read the Word, meditate on what stands out to you.
- *Repeat it in different ways.* This method assists you in examining every facet of the verse. It helps you to focus on every word and to extract insight from it. An example is Psalm 23:1.
 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
~~The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.~~
 The LORD **is** my shepherd; I shall not want.
 The LORD is **my** shepherd; I shall not want.
 The LORD is my **shepherd**; I shall not want.
 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
 The LORD is my shepherd; I **shall** not want.
 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall **not** want.
 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not **want**.
 The purpose is not to vainly repeat the verse until each word is emphasized, but to think deeply about the truth of the verse as it turns in your mind. It is simple but it is effective. I've found it helpful in my own personal meditation.
- *Rewrite it in your own words.* Rewriting verses helps you to think with a pen in your hand. This then aids you in focusing on the verse while stimulating the flow of your thinking. Rewrite the verse in your own words. You might consider paraphrasing the verse. I have often found *The Amplified Bible* helpful with this. It exists as a valuable tool in assisting you in meditating on the Word.
- *Ask yourself questions.* Think deeply and intentionally about how God wants you to

respond to His truth. As you meditate on a verse or verses, you can ask yourself certain questions to aid you in this process:

Does this text reveal something that I should believe about God?

Does this text reveal a sin(s) that I need to confess and repent of?

Does this text reveal something that I should praise, thank, or trust God for?

Does this text reveal something that I should pray about for others or myself?

Does this text reveal that I should make a decision about something?

Does this text reveal something that I should have a new attitude about?

Does this text reveal an action that I should take for Christ, others, or myself?

By asking yourself questions, it will help you to think deeply about its meaning and application for you.

- *Take your time in meditation.* Don't rush through your Bible reading. Take time to meditate on the truth that you encounter. Schedule in time for meditation along with reading the Word. You may find time during the day to meditate on the Word (**Psalm 119:97**). However, your best meditation will most likely occur when it's part of your daily encounter with the Word of God.
- *Pray through the verse or verses that you are meditating on.* The Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture. Because of this, He is our Guide in understanding the Scripture (**John 14:26**). Meditation is more than just intense human concentration. It is not the exercise of creative mental energy. Meditating on the Scripture requires yielding yourself to the Spirit. He must guide us in the truth. You can submit yourselves to the Spirit through prayer, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (**Psalm 119:18**). Through prayer, you open yourself to the Spirit's leading and increase your spiritual perception. The Scripture came about by the inspiration of the Spirit; pray now for His illumination as you read and meditate.
- *Expect to receive insight.* When you meditate, expect the Spirit to grant you insight. Trust that He will guide you into the applications that you need. God wants you

to hear and obey the Word. You can have confidence that He will teach you when you come to His Word with a submissive and willing heart. The Scripture was written for you as well as for the first recipients. The Puritan Thomas Watson explains, "Take every word as spoken to yourselves. When the word thunders against sin, think thus: "God means my sins;" when it presseth duty, "God intends me in this." Many put off Scripture from themselves, as if it only concerned those who lived in the time when it was written; but if you intend to profit by the word, bring it home to yourselves: a medicine will do no good, unless it be applied." Remember the Bible was written for you; expect to receive insight from it.

- *Write down the insights that you receive.* It is crucial that you write down the insights that you receive from your meditation. First, it will clarify the truth and enable you to grasp it more firmly. Second, it will enable you to hear and do the Word. If we do not write down the insights we receive, we are apt to forget them. It might help you to consider keeping a journal of the insights that you receive as you meditate.
- *Commit yourself to meditating on the Scripture.* You have to learn how to meditate on the Scripture by doing it. It will take time and regular practice. Keep in mind that our enemy Satan will try to hinder you in this. He knows the power of a believer yielding to God's Word. He will put every kind of excuse and obstacle in your way. J.I. Packer describes the spiritual opposition that will come when you strive to meditate on the Word, "If I were the devil, one of my first aims would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible . . . I should do all I could to surround it with the spiritual equivalent of pits, thorn hedges, and man traps to frighten people off . . . At all costs I should want to keep them from using their minds in a disciplined way to get the measure of its message." Determine in your heart that you will meditate on the Word. Don't allow anything to keep you from reading and applying Scripture to your life.
- *Keep in mind the greatness and joy of digging out the truth of God's Word for*

yourself. One of the greatest blessings of the Christian life is being able to read, study and apply the Word of God to one's own life. John Bunyan wrote, "Although you may have no commentaries at hand, continue to read the Word and pray; for a little from God is better than a great deal received from a man. Too many are content to listen to what comes from men's mouths, without searching and kneeling before God to know the real truth . . . Even old truths are new if they come to us with the smell of heaven upon them."

- *Pray that God will renew your love for the Word of God.* Devotion to God's Word will stir you to dig out the truth for yourself through reading and meditation. George Washington Carver labored for years to explore the value of the peanut. After countless hours of painstaking experiments, he discovered more than 150 products that can come from the peanut. He also helped revolutionize the economy of the South. When asked how he accomplished so much with the peanut, he replied, "Anything will yield its secrets if you love it enough." Love for the Word will motivate you to understand and apply its truth to your life.
- *Call on God to teach you how to meditate.* Only God can teach you how to meditate. Occasional thoughts of God and His Word are not meditation. The Puritan William Bridge wrote, "A man may think on God every day and meditate on God no day." He writes on, "Friends, there is an art, and a divine skill of meditation, which none can teach but God alone. Would you have it, go then to God, and beg of God these things." Plead with God to teach you how to meditate. Call on Him to help you understand and apply the truth of His Word to your life. This prayer delights the Father and you can count on Him to answer you.

What Do I Meditate On?

The Bible teaches that believers have four basic objects of our meditation:

- (1) God's Word (**Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2, 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148**);
- (2) God's Creation (**Psalm 143:5**);
- (3) God's Providence (**Psalm 77:12, 119:27, 143:5**);
- (4) God's Character (**Psalm 63:6, 145:5**).

All meditation has to focus on what is revealed in Scripture or what is informed by Scripture.

As I said earlier, I want to encourage you to meditate on the truth you encounter in your daily Bible reading. Yet, you do not have to limit yourself to this. In fact, I encourage you to consider variety in your meditation. Variety in meditation will energize and strengthen your meditation.

The following are some suggestions on how you can develop variety in your meditation.

- ✓ *Meditate through a book of the Bible verse by verse.* This can help you understand the message of a particular book of the Bible. It will enable you to see the flow of a book.
- ✓ *Meditate on verses centered on certain topics.* You might find verses that speak to a particular topic – forgiveness, anger, speech, or parenting. This will help you gain insight into Biblical teaching concerning a particular subject.
- ✓ *Meditate on verses concerning doctrinal theme.* You might develop a list of verses that teach about a particular doctrine. An example is the deity of Christ. As you read and meditate on the verses concerning this truth, you will gain greater insight into who He is and how you are to respond to Him. The following is the basic outline of the verses that I meditated on concerning the deity of Christ.

Jesus' Claims To Deity:

Matthew 10:40, 11:27

John 3:35, 5:17-18, 22-23, 8:19, 58, 10:30, 36-38, 12:44.

New Testament Claims To Jesus' Deity:

John 1:1

Philippians 2:6

Colossians 1:19, 2:9, 3:1

1 John 2:23, 5:20

The Sinlessness of Jesus Christ:

Matthew 27:3-4

John 7:16-18, 8:29, 46, 50

2 Corinthians 5:21

Hebrews 1:9, 4:15, 7:26-28

1 Peter 1:19, 2:22-23

1 John 3:5

The Glory Of Jesus Christ:

Luke 24:26

John 1:14

1 Timothy 3:16

Hebrews 1:3

2 Peter 1:16-17

The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ:

Matthew 28:5-7

Mark 16:6-7

Luke 24:5-7

John 20:26-27

Acts 1:2

The Exaltation Of Jesus Christ:

Psalm 89:27

Acts 2:33, 5:31, 7:55

Ephesians 1:19-22

1 Peter 1:21

By meditating on the deity of Christ, I have increased my understanding of Christ and stirred my devotion to Him. These are the goals of meditating on Scripture centered on doctrinal themes – light for the mind and fire in the heart!

Rekindling The Flame

Perhaps your time in the Word isn't what it used to be. Maybe you have grown sporadic in your reading and meditating on the Word of God. On the other hand, you may not have a commitment to seek the Word of God daily. The time has come to renew your commitment to God and His Word.

Evangelist John Blanchard shows us the necessity of daily reading and meditating on the Word of God. He writes, "Surely we only have to be realistic and honest with ourselves to know how regularly we need to turn to the Bible. How often do we face problems, temptations, and pressure? *Every day!* Then how often do

we need instruction, guidance, and greater encouragement? *Every day!* To catch all these felt needs up into an even greater issue, how often do we need to see God's face, hear His voice, feel His touch, and know His power? The answer to all these questions is the same, *every day!* . . . We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day as we need it."

The following prayer can help you rekindle your passion for God's Word. Pray then until a passion for the Scripture burns within your heart – a passion that drives you to read and meditate on God's unchanging, infallible truth each day.

Holy Father, I thank you for Your Word. I acknowledge and confess that the Bible is Your

holy Word. I acknowledge and confess that it is without error and is totally trustworthy. I ask You to create within me a hunger and a thirst for the Word of God. I ask in Jesus' name that You will cause me to desire Your Word more than anything in this Word. Your Word is a hammer; shatter my indifference and apathy. Your Word is a lamp and a light; lead me and teach me how to meditate on Your Word. Your Word is living and eternal; transform me by Your Word. O God, enable me to hear and do the Word. Help me to walk in Your Word; guide my steps according to its truth. Deliver me from being deceived; don't let me live as a careless hearer of Your Word. I plead that Your Word will fill my life. O God, kindle afresh in me a burning passion for Your Word. Amen.



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