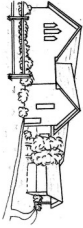


**NORTHWOODS
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



**4723 GRIFFITH AVENUE
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WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. JOHN 4:24

Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart be acceptable in
Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my
Redeemer.
Ps 19:14

THE NORTHWOODS NEWS

Meditation

By

Rich Cesal

Meditation: the act or process of spending time in quiet thought; the act or process of meditating: an expression of a person's thoughts on something

So the idea of meditating is to spend your time thinking about something or someone in quiet. I read an article this morning in our newspaper written by a women pastor from St. Mark's Episcopal Church based on the question, "Where did you see God this week?" What a pathetic question to ask a Christian. The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks in the very first question, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is given, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

"Forever" starts right now. Therefore looking back on the week, we should have known the presence of God more times than suggested by the article's original question. If we are to enjoy God forever, that would suggest more than a casual meeting.

Burk Parsons, the editor of *Tabletalk* magazine, says it this way, "Over time, I have come to see the wisdom of the words to *enjoy God*. They capture the all-encompassing nature of our relationship with God; namely, being chosen by God, called by God, united to God in Christ, justified by God, indwelt by the spirit of God, adopted by God, sanctified by God, and loving God and neighbor to the end that we might glorify God. And although we will not be able to grasp the full meaning of enjoying God until we meet Christ face-to-face, we can know and experience now in part what it means to enjoy God because the Son of God, Jesus Christ, has met us, has dwelt among us, and now dwells within us by the Holy Spirit."

And so, God is not someone we should bring to mind in afterthought but should seek His presence all the time. I have suggested many times that as a Christian we should develop the habit of utilizing a quiet time

every day. This quiet time should consist of reading and meditating on Scripture and having a time of prayer. Some people choose to do this at night before bed and some choose to have their quiet time first thing in the morning. If you put it off till some other time of the day, you may find that there are interruptions. I have always had my quiet time every morning before anyone else is awake. This then is truly a quiet time. I've been doing this since I became a true Christian and have only missed a few days in 38 years and have never had any regrets.

The aforementioned newspaper article gives examples of how you can see God. "The way the leaves swirl around your feet as you go for a walk" or "When you observe a random act of kindness between strangers." To pray you can "recite the Prayer of St. Francis or by reciting a simple mantra like 'Come, Lord Jesus' "

In Psalm 86, David gives a better example of how and what to pray, "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me. . . Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Here are two verses from Romans 12 as given in the J. B. Phillip's translation which is excellent instruction on how to meditate in God's word. "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity." By meditating on Scripture, we can mold ourselves into knowing what is required of us by our loving God.

There are those who say, I can see God in all my surroundings. In looking at the trees or some animals along the way. Yes, you can see God in the events and nature around you but that is hardly a substitute for meditation and genuine worship and seeking God. Meditation is a combination of reviewing, repeating, reflecting, thinking, analyzing, feeling and even enjoying. It is a physical, intellectual and emotional activity—it involves our whole being.

The dictionary meaning of *meditation* would mean meditating on God and spending time thinking about God and what He would require of us as given in His Word, the Holy Bible.

In the Old Testament, God offered His presence to His people in several ways. Adam and Eve heard the Lord walking in the garden. (Gen 3:8). Abraham observed God appearing as a smoking oven and burning torch. (Gen 15:17). Jacob wrestled with God in the form of a man. (Gen 32:24). To Moses as a burning bush, "burning with fire but the bush was not consumed." (Ex 3:2). To the Hebrews in the desert, He appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. (Ex 13:21). Then, in Exodus 25, He gives instruction for the building of the tabernacle.

With the establishment of the tabernacle, the presence of the Lord would be with His people on an ongoing daily basis as His Presence would inhabit the Holy of Holies. During the reign of Solomon, a permanent temple was built. In 586 BC, Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the Jews taken into exile. The temple was also destroyed. After the exiles returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC, they began to rebuild the temple completing it in 515 BC and again God was present among the Jews. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the temple yet again.

The tabernacle, the first temple and then the second were a type of God's presence, dwelling among us, as a forerunner of "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14). His Presence now belongs to us through faith. And we are told that, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb 11:1)

In Contrast to the Roman Catholic dogma that the only persons who can commune with God are the priests, we as believers are told that we are all priests (1 Pet 2:9). We are privileged to be able to enter into the presence of God in prayer and meditation.

Although we have not seen, we do not believe as those who believe in myths. We have the testimony of the Apostles as to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ as recorded for us in Scripture. As R. C. Sproul put it, "We continually measure our faith by the Word of God and make sure we are assenting to reasonable, historical testimony of the prophets and the Apostles to the triumph of Christ. Faith is not mere intellectual assent. We aren't saved simply because we affirm the truth of certain facts but because we trust the Person whom these facts reveal. So, faith is definitely more than knowledge, but it is not less." And how do we get this trust? By meditating on and knowing Scripture.

This cannot be a casual hit-and-miss effort. If it is, the results will be haphazard and hit-and-miss. It is so easy to say, *mañana*. But *mañana* will never or seldom come and nothing will be gained.

There was a song popular in the late 40's aptly named *Mañana*. Some of the lyrics went like this: The window she is broken and the rain is coming in/If someone doesn't fix it/I will be soaked right to the skin./But if we wait a day or two/The rain may go away/And we don't need a window on such a sunny day.

Mañana is never a good policy. After all, when tomorrow comes, we still have Jesus' admonition that "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Another thing to be realized in having a quiet time is when we have our quiet time, we enter into the presence of God. When we meditate on His Word and on Him and His manifold kindness, we are in the presence of God. When we pray to the Father, we are allowed into His throne of grace and into His presence.

We are to have the awareness of being in God's presence continually. Now, this is difficult because we get wrapped up in our daily chores and do not always have immediate thoughts of God. But Paul gives this admonition, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." The more you can do this, the more you will be content. Again as Paul says of himself in Phil 4:11, ". . . for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content."

In the late 70's, *The Campus Crusade for Christ* decided to call every telephone number in the nation, during a campaign entitled "*I Found It*". The person answering the phone was given an evangelical message which was to lead them to proclaim, I found it! As they made a profession of Christ. There was a barber in Laramie on Grand Ave between 2nd and 3rd streets who put the most goofy and silly looking object hanging in his window with a sign hanging from the object that said "*I Found It*" mocking the effort of the Crusade. Ignorance will not be an excuse when someone stands before Christ in the last judgment.

David in Psalm 1:1-2 exclaims, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night."

Matthew Henry commenting on Ps 1:2 says, "This we must do *day and night*; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we

must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor is any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night, but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day and with the repose and slumbers of every night. *When I awake I am still with thee.*"

Jesus gives this admonition in Jn 15:6-8, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." The key words here are "My words abide in you".

Does the Word and His words abide in you? Do you make the attempt to know that which the Lord has provided in the Bible? This is a lifetime conquest. We never reach the point where we no longer can learn from the Bible.

"We can by no means continue to believe in the promises of the Lord if we do not know what they are. Thus, we must return again and again to God's life-giving Word, turning to it both when we feel like reading it and when we find it hard to pick up the Bible. The Lord will bless His people with strengthened faith when they seek to know and trust God's promises, so let us memorize and meditate on His Word." This a comment from *Tabletalk Magazine's* *Coram Deo* remarks. May God bless you always. Ω

The featured hymn this month is *Thinking of Thee, O Lord*, written by Charles E. Orr and published in 1907. The hymn is based on Ps 104:34 which reads, "May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD."

This poem he wrote is a good indication of who he was, 1834-1913.

Oh, home of my soul
In that far away goal,
Each day brings me nearer to thee;
The great throne so white,
And my crown shining bright,
Mine eyes ever longing to see.
A musical strain
From that far distant plain
Now sweeps gently over my soul;
And waves of sweet peace

In my heart shall increase,
While years of eternity roll.
The day will soon come
When we'll all gather home,
As pilgrims no more we shall roam;
Ah, whom shall we see?
And what joy will it be
To meet with the dear ones at
home!

Alone in some secure retreat,
The sky o'ershadows me;
All nature smiles so soft and sweet,
I'm thinking, Lord, of Thee.

Refrain:

Thinking of Thee, O Lord, of Thee,
Musing on things above;
Till every chord within my soul
Is tuned with heav'nly love.

I see Thee in the lonely mount
In silent prayer for me;
Thy tears all night a flowing fount,
I'm thinking, Lord, of Thee.

I hear Thy deep and mournful sigh
In sad Gethsemane;
I see Thee on the reeking cross,
I'm thinking, Lord, of Thee.

Awaking from the silent tomb,
Thy risen form I see;
Thy saints awaiting Thee to come,
Are thinking, Lord, of Thee.

Important Things

Men's Breakfast— At the church, Saturday Morning, July 18, 8:00 AM. What is God's providence for you on this day? To join us in a hearty hot breakfast and a great fellowship time. We are on chapter 5, *Family Affairs* in the study of the book *The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel.

Men's Bible Study— July 14 & 28, 7:00 PM. Meet at the Norgauer home. We are studying the book *The Masculine Mandate*.

Vedauvoo Picnic— Will take place on August 9. We will not have a first Sunday of the month dinner in August.

Nursery Volunteers



- 5 LAURA TWITCHELL
- 12 KAIRA TUNNICLIFF
- 19 HEATHER NORGAUER
- 26 BECKY SHWEN

- Gregg & Stephanie Trujillo 2nd
- Brian & Branda Church 10th
- Ken & Dell Tunnicliffe 22nd
- Matt & Aimee Davison 29th



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- Joshua Anderson 7th
- Harlan Edmonds 9th
- Laura Sackett 26th

Session Report

July 2015 Session Report

As the summer continues we pray that you are able to spend good time with your family and in serving God.

Be in prayer for our nation and our leaders. There are many critical issues in the forefront of the public spotlight today that call people to sin. Pray that God would work in their hearts and our hearts to stand for the truth in love.

A few reminders for you...next month (August) is our annual church picnic at Vedauvoo. Plan to attend. It is a nice relaxing time in the outdoors. The following month (September) is our 2015 Fall Conference with Westminster Seminary president, Dr Robert Godfrey. Brochures are available in the foyer.

Concerning our worship services, the session would like to direct your attention to our dedication to the reading and preaching of the Word. We believe that we are not to come before the Almighty seeking entertainment. We come mainly to sing, to pray and to hear words from Him upon which we will meditate on and apply to our lives. This consists, in large part, of silent hearing accompanied with the active engagement of our hearts and minds. Matthew Henry gives counsel regarding our duties in worship as we sit under the ministry of the Word: "We must diligently attend to the word of God read and preached," and "we must resolve to comply with the will of God as it is made known to us." When we come into the Lord's presence, we should expect the faithful exposition of the Scriptures and we should be purposeful about how we listen.

Proper Meditation

From Tabletalk magazine

"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me" Psalm 119:97-98

We have seen that authentic Christian meditation is not the

emptying of one's mind, nor does it pursue the goal of losing one's personal identity in an undifferentiated union with the divine. Instead, Scripture tells us time and again that the practice of meditation involves not forgetting the Word of God ([Josh. 1:8](#)), reading it, and contemplating it so that it might penetrate our hearts and sanctify us by the power of the Holy Spirit ([2 Tim. 3:16-17](#); [Heb. 4: 12-13](#)).

Many of the Old Testament verses on meditation are found in the Psalms, particularly in Psalm 119, which extols the virtues of the Lord's inspired teaching that makes up the canon of Scripture. Verses 97-104 of this psalm are particularly pertinent for giving us a more thorough explanation of the kinds of things we should think upon as we meditate on God's Word. In speaking of the blessings of the law of God, the psalmist gives us some insight into the practice of meditation.

First, we are told that the commandments of the Lord make us wiser than our enemies (v. 98). It is appropriate, then, as we are meditating on God's Word, to consider why the passage before us is superior to the accepted ways of the world. Furthermore, the psalmist links the continual presence of the commandment with him to the wisdom it provides (v. 99); thus, mulling over a portion of Scripture should include asking how we can make its teaching a perpetual part of our lives.

Second, there is an emphasis in today's passage on hating "every false way" and avoiding evil in order to understand and keep the Word (vv. 101, 104). Achieving the right meaning and application of a text as we meditate on it requires attention to personal holiness. A refusal to repent of known sin and a complete failure to put into practice that which we already know from Scripture will guarantee that we miss the point of what the Spirit wants to teach us in the text.

Finally, meditation should also include a consideration of the text in light of the new covenant in Christ. Since the Word of God gives us wisdom and understanding (vv. 98-99), we profit from it only if we read it with an open eye on Him who is the incarnate wisdom of God ([1 Cor. 1:18-25](#)). By the Spirit and in communion with the church, Jesus gives us the meaning of His Word

Coram Deo

Meditating on a text in light of Christ is more than just thinking on how it speaks to who He is and what He did. In fact, meditating on it in light of Christ means to consider how it speaks to Christian ethics and Christian theology, some of what constitutes those pure and commendable things that we are to think on ([Phil. 4:8-9](#)). Studying these topics can help you meditate more profitably on Scripture.

Meditating Day and Night

From Tabletalk magazine

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous."
- [Joshua 1:8](#)

For those of us influenced by the historical evangelicalism of the Reformation, individual Bible study has become an important part of our personal piety. Yet since we are also creatures of our time, it is likely that we are not as familiar with biblical meditation as integral to our spiritual growth. Unfortunately, Christian meditation is not often spoken of in many churches today. While Bible study and Christian meditation on the Scriptures are closely linked, there are some uniquely beneficial aspects of meditation that are lost when our churches do not teach the practice today.

Today's passage is a key text for what meditation means in a biblical context. The setting is just after the death of Moses, with Israel on the borders of the Promised Land. With the invasion and all its attendant battles ahead, we might expect the Lord to give Joshua detailed instructions on fighting techniques, battle plans, or some other strategy in order to guarantee the success of Israel. However, such things, while important, are not going to be what ensures the victory of God's people. Instead, Joshua is to have the "Book of the Law" on his tongue so as to meditate on it around the clock ([Josh. 1:8](#)).

The "Book of the Law" is synonymous with Scripture, for the law given at Sinai was the only portion of Scripture that Joshua had at that stage in redemptive history. Authentic meditation, then, is not some exercise wherein we try to empty our minds and expunge all desires in order to achieve some kind of mystic experience or melding with the transcendent. In the biblical worldview, rather, meditation is to consider and ponder the Word of God. It is the repetition of the text to ourselves — the reading and rereading of a passage so that its meaning might take root. To keep God's law from departing out of the mouth refers to the audible repetition of Scripture, which is in turn a reference to the reading of the text, since ancient peoples always verbalized the text before them when they read (silent reading to one's self is a recent development). Such reading and rereading helps ensure the text is not forgotten.

Studying the depths of God's Word is important, but at times we can walk away from such study and not remember much of what we

have read. Meditating on the text helps get it in our souls so that we might never forget what it teaches.

Coram Deo

We meditate on Scripture not simply to fill our minds with knowledge, but to prepare ourselves to act rightly even when the text is not before us. A.W. Pink notes in his *Gleanings from Joshua*: Joshua's "mind was to be exercised upon God's Word with a specific purpose and practical end: not simply to rest in contemplation, but in order to be regulated by its precepts, through a serious inculcating of them upon his heart." This should be our goal. Ω

The Practice of Meditation

By Tim Challies
An interview with
Joel Beeke

October 10, 2013

Over the past few weeks Dr. Joel Beeke and I have been teaming up to work our way through a portion of his massive new work *A Puritan Theology*. We have not been reading the whole book, but just the final eight chapters which deal with practical theology, the "so what?" of systematic theology.

This week we read chapter 55 which discusses the Puritans and meditation. I asked Dr. Beeke a few questions related to the Puritans and the way they practiced meditation.

TC: The word "meditation" has found use in true Christianity, in Catholicism, and in many Eastern forms of spirituality. Along the way it has been used to describe many different practices. What did the Puritans mean by it?

JB: In religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, meditation involves breathing techniques, posture, and chanting certain repetitive sounds (a mantra) to empty the mind and achieve a feeling of tranquility and connectedness with an impersonal divine being. Roman Catholicism has promoted meditation especially in the form of imagining the physical sufferings of Christ in a way that stirs sympathetic emotions, or repeating set prayers to Mary and the saints. The Puritan practice of meditation is quite different from any of these.

Puritan meditation engages the mind with God's revealed truth in order to inflame the heart with affections towards God and transform the life unto obedience. Thomas Hooker defined it like

this: "Meditation is a serious intention of the mind whereby we come to search out the truth, and settle it effectually upon the heart." The direction of our minds reveals the truest love of our hearts, and so, Hooker said, he who loves God's Word meditates on it regularly (Ps. 119:97). Therefore, Puritan meditation is not repeating a sound, emptying the mind, or imagining physical sights and sensations, but a focused exercise of thought and faith upon the Word of God.

TC: How deliberate were the Puritans when it came to meditation? Would they ensure they had time in their schedules for deliberate meditation, or did they consider meditation what happened through the course of daily life?

JB: The Puritans did seek to meditate throughout life, as a complement of praying without ceasing. Hooker said that meditation is "the main trade that a godly man drives"—his greatest occupation day and night (Ps. 1:2). Joseph Hall said, "Lord, ... that man is truly holy, whose understanding is enlightened with right apprehensions of thee and heavenly things; whose will and affections are rightly disposed to thee, so that his heart is wholly taken up with thee, his conversation being in heaven; who thinks all time lost, in which he doth not enjoy thee, and a sweet and holy communion with thee; walking perpetually with thee, and laboring in all things to be approved of thee." Thus Hall encouraged people to see all the world around them as a "stage" to see God's wisdom and glory, just as Solomon learned from the ant (Prov. 6:6-8) and our Lord taught us by the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28-30). Thus, Hall said, "There is no creature, event, action, speech, which may not afford us new matter of meditation." This kind of brief meditation that takes place in the hustle and bustle of daily life they called *occasional meditation*. Several Puritans wrote entire books of examples of occasional meditation to teach their church members how to do this.

However, the Puritans also called people to definite times of what they termed *deliberate meditation*, especially in the morning and evening (Ps. 4:4; 16:7; 63:6; 119:147), and on the Sabbath. If two times a day sometimes proved too much, deliberate meditation should be done at least once a day, they taught. Today we have largely lost the Puritan "art of meditation." We need to discipline ourselves to engage in daily, deliberate meditation. Our lives are full, and our minds cannot settle into divine meditations without setting aside time for focused thinking to really benefit from the Bible. William Bates says that a passing glance at the night sky only reveals a few stars, but take time to gaze upon the heavens and you see "the whole heaven bespangled with stars in every part." He reminds us that we aim at "the kindling of a fire in wet wood," and therefore must keep at it until we experience "some sensible benefit," that is, "a flame of holy affections that goes up towards God."

TC: If the Puritans could spend a day with us, what do you think they would identify as hindrances to meditation in our lives?

JB: The Puritans would mention a host of hindrances, such as our love affair with the entertainment media and our physically-oriented world, our worshiping of Hollywood stars and sport-heroes, our worldly pride, and our lack of love for doctrinal truth and the Sabbath. But most of all, they would be concerned about our massive blind spot towards heaven. We think little of it. We are people preoccupied with this world. We surround ourselves with earthly amusements and earthly business. Even ministers tend to be focused on programs and measurable results instead of eternity. Yet Christ, our life, is in heaven, all our solid hopes are there too, and God commands us to set our mind upon it (Col. 3:1-4).

The Puritans made heaven the special focus of their meditation. In the preface to Christopher Love's book, *Heaven's Glory, Hell's Terrors*, several Puritans wrote, "Nothing hath greater influence into a Christian's practice here in this world, than the serious consideration of our everlasting estate in the world to come; the glory and happiness which is prepared for the elect, and those eternal torments which are reserved for workers of iniquity... . It is the greatest folly in the world for men ... to be busied about many things that little concern them, and in the mean time neglect the one thing necessary."

TC: How might one of the Puritans offer us basic instruction in meditation? What are the most important things to keep in mind?

JB: Here is a method for meditation based on Puritan writings. First, pray for the power to focus your mind on the Word with faith. Second, read the Bible and select a verse or two. Third, repeat those verses to yourself in order to memorize them. Fourth, think about what those verses say and imply, probing the book of Scripture (other verses on the same topic), the book of conscience (how you have believed or disbelieved, obeyed or disobeyed), and the book of nature (how this truth appears in experience and the world). Fifth, stir up your affections unto love, desire, grief, hope, zeal, and joy as appropriate. Preach the text to yourself with powerful application. Sixth, arouse your soul to the specific duty which the text requires, making holy resolutions for the glory of God. Seventh, conclude with prayers for divine assistance, thanksgiving for graces given, and singing psalms of praise to God.

In the midst of your efforts to meditate, remember that we do not exercise spiritual disciplines in order to deserve God's grace, but we do these things because of God's grace and under God's grace. We will frequently fail in meditation, and so let us frequently meditate on the blood of Christ which cleanses believers from all sin (1 John 1:9). Ω

Have a Need? Contact one of the officers.

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***May my meditation be
sweet to Him; I will be
glad in the LORD.
Hallelujah, Amen.***