

Meditating Day and Night on Scripture

Joshua 1:8

Dr. Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

Preached 11/17/13

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INTRODUCTION

1. Please take God's Word and turn with me to the book of Joshua.
2. Our passage of study for this evening is Joshua 1:8.
3. It's here where God commissions Joshua as Moses' successor to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land.
4. For his mission to be successful, there was one activity Joshua needed to involve himself in *day and night*.
5. Listen to what God says in verse 8. Read Joshua 1:8.
6. It is clear in our day and age that people want to be prosperous and successful.
7. Whether you're a believer or not everyone wants success to some degree.
8. The only problem is how do we define success.
9. Do we use some kind of system that will tell me when I am successful?

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10. If you were to ask that question to an unbeliever you would probably get the answer “Yes.”
11. The sad truth in this is many “believers” will answer the same way.
12. And they will use the world’s standards for prosperity and success but “In the life of the Christian believer, prosperity and success aren’t to be measured by the standards of the world. These blessings are the by-products of a life devoted to God and His Word” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Strong*).
13. Our subject matter tonight addresses a practice that is found throughout the Old and New Testament.
14. People today have sought to use this practice but miss it’s point entirely.
15. Some use it as a means of stress reduction or while exercising.
16. To-be mothers use it to help them relax prior to delivering their child.

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17. What is this practice? Meditation.
18. Joshua is told in chapter 1 and verse 8 to “meditate” in the “Book of the Law...day and night.”
19. This is to be a constant practice if he is to have success in leading God’s people.
20. My fear is that this practice is foreign to the church.
21. We want to be “prosperous” in our “way” and “have good success,” but we are unwilling to commit to the process and purpose of meditation.
22. Let’s begin tonight by learning *what it means to meditate*.

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LESSON

I. What It Means to Meditate

D. M. Howard says, “The idea of meditating here is not the one commonly familiar in the late twentieth century, namely, of emptying the mind and concentrating on nothing or on self or on visualizations of various types; much of this type of meditation is indebted to Eastern mystic religions. Rather, the Old Testament concept of meditation involves two things: first, a focus upon God Himself (Ps.63:6[Hb.7]), His works (Pss 77:12[Hb.13]; 143:5), or His law (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2), and second, an activity that was done aloud” (The New American Commentary: Joshua).

Before we look closer at *the object and purpose of meditation*, let’s zero in more on *what it means to meditate*.

Webster’s dictionary defines “meditate” as “to dwell on anything in thought; to contemplate; to study; to turn or revolve any subject in the mind.”

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In short, it is “to focus one’s thoughts on; reflect on or ponder over.”

The Hebrew word, *hagah*, means, “to murmur, whisper; hence the inner whispering of the heart” (Vincent).

The Greek word, *meleta*, means, “to revolve in the mind, imagine.”

We could say then that “Meditation is a talking within the mind, and issues in speech” (Vincent).

It’s what David did in Psalm 103:1-4 when he said to himself:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”

In Philippians 4:8, Paul said to “think on these things.”

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In God's charge to Joshua, he was to constantly "think," "talk within his mind" the "Book of the Law" so that he would "do it."

In other words, *God* was to be *the object of his meditation*. The same is true today:

II. God is the Object of Our Meditation

A. We are to Mediate on God's Word

"The Book of the Law" is a reference to Scripture, specifically here, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

"Simply memorizing or quoting Scripture is not enough; meditation involves mature reflection on the Word of God, and it is the basis for spiritual growth" (KJV Bible Commentary).

John Calvin said, "Whenever [meditation on the Law] is intermitted [ceased at intervals], even for a short time, many errors readily creep in, and the memory becomes rusted" (Calvin's Commentaries: Joshua).

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1. Psalm 1:1-3 reveals this as being the way of the righteous ["in His law he meditates day and night"]
 - a) He "meditate(s) on Your precepts"
(Ps.119:15)
 - b) He "meditate(s) on Your statutes"
(Ps.119:48)
 - c) He meditates on Your "testimonies"
(Ps.119:99)
 - d) He "meditate(s) on Your word"
(Ps.119:148)
 - e) God's Word is the object of his affection:

Ps.119:97 says, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."
2. This is the activity of the preacher (1 Tim.4:15). He is to give constant "attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"

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(v.13). He is to “meditate on these things; give [himself] entirely to them, that [his] progress may be evident to all.”

“Mediate” (meletao) translated “take pains with” in the NASB “carries the idea of thinking through beforehand, planning, strategizing, or premeditating. When not involved in ministry, the excellent minister is preparing, praying, or planning for it” (John MacArthur, 1 Timothy, p.180). In other words, he is “consumed by his work” (Ibid.).

3. This is the activity of the church (Phil.4:8)

The phrase “meditate” or “dwell on these things” introduces an important truth: “Spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks” (John MacArthur, Philippians, p.285).

“Meditate” is the word *logizomai*, here used in the imperative mood. It means “more than just entertaining thoughts; it means to ‘evaluate,’ ‘to consider,’ or ‘to calculate’”

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(MacArthur).

“Believers are to consider the qualities Paul lists in this verse and mediate on their implications. The verb form calls for habitual discipline of the mind to set all thoughts on these spiritual virtues” (Ibid., MacArthur, *Philippians*, p.285).

What are the “these things” that we are to “meditate on?”

“Whatever things are *true*” - refers to reading, analyzing, and meditating on the Word of God.

The Word of God is the repository of what is true. In His High Priestly Prayer Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

In Psalm 19:9 David wrote, "The judgments of the Lord are true," while Psalm 119:151 adds, "All Your commandments are truth." The Bible is true because the "God of truth"

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(Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16; cf. Eph. 4:21) inspired it.

Thinking on whatever is true means reading, analyzing, and meditating on the Word of God.

The remaining seven virtuous categories of thought are all based on the truth of God's Word. All of them are ways to view the truths of Scripture.

Second, believers are to think on whatever is honorable, whatever is noble, dignified, and worthy of respect. *Semnos* (honorable) comes from a word meaning "to revere," or "to worship." In its other New Testament uses, it describes the dignified lifestyle required of deacons (1 Tim. 3:8), deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:11), and older men (Titus 2:2).

Believers must not think on what is trivial, temporal, mundane, common, and earthly, but rather on what is heavenly, and so

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worthy of awe, adoration, and praise. All that is true in God's Word is honorable.

Third, believers are to think on whatever is right. *Dikaios* (right also translated “just”) is an adjective, and should be translated “righteous.” It describes whatever is in perfect harmony with God's eternal, unchanging standards, again as revealed in Scripture. Believers are to think on matters that are consistent with the law of God.

Fourth, believers are to think on whatever is pure. *Hagnos* (pure) describes what God in Scripture defines as holy, morally clean, and undefiled. In 1 Timothy 5:22 it is translated “free from sin.” Believers are to purify themselves because Jesus Christ is pure (1 John 3:3).

Fifth, believers are to think on whatever is lovely. *Prospiles* (lovely) appears only here in the New Testament. It could be translated “sweet,” “gracious,” “generous,” or “patient.” Believers must focus their thoughts on what

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the Bible says is pleasing, attractive, and amiable before God.

Sixth, believers are to think on whatever is of good repute. Euphemos also appears only here in the New Testament. It describes what is highly regarded or well thought of. Believers' thoughts are elevated by Scripture to fix on the loftiest themes.

In summary, Paul exhorts, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The key to godly living is godly thinking, as Solomon wisely observed: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). (Taken from John MacArthur, *Philippians*, p.290).

B. We Are to Meditate on God's Works

1. In Psalm 77:12, a Psalm of Asaph, he says, "I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds."

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2. Then in verses 13-20 he recounts God's "work"

"Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. The waters saw You, O God; The waters saw You, they were afraid; The depths also trembled. The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about. The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook. Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, And Your footsteps were not known. You led Your people like a flock By the hand of Moses and Aaron."

3. David recounted God's work in his prayer in Psalm 143. He says in verses 5-6, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your

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hands. I spread out my hands to You; My soul longs for You like a thirsty land. Selah.”

The purpose for meditating on God’s Word and His works is to cause us to *meditate on God’s majesty*.

C. We Are to Meditate on God’s Majesty

1. Listen to what the David says in Psalm 145. He intermingles God’s works with His majesty
2. God’s majesty is seen throughout His challenge to Joshua in 1:1-9. He states:
 - a) He is giving the land to Israel. “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory” (vv.1-4).

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- b) He will “not leave you nor forsake you”
(v.5)

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.”

He states again in verse 9 that “the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

III. Obedience is the Purpose for our Meditation

- A. The Key to Joshua’s Success is His Obedience to ALL the Law of God
1. God is not interested in *partial* obedience (1 Sam.15)
 2. The reason that “This Book of the Law shall not depart from [Joshua’s] mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may *observe to do according to all that is written in it*. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good

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success.”

The whole point of meditating on God’s Word is so we will *observe to do according to all that is written in it.*

What separates alive churches from dead is this one phrase. Alive churches do all the Word of God. Dead churches are like Saul, living in denial of the truth.

a) Obedience is the duty of the believer

Ps.119:1-2 - “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who *keep* His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!

b) Obedience is the delight of the believer

(1) Ps.119:5

(2) Ps.119:7-12

(3) Ps.119:17, 20, 24

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B. Meditating on God's Word will Protect us from Several Things

1. It will keep us from forgetting God's Word

Ps.119:15-16 - "I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word."

2. It will keep us from sinning against God

Ps.119:11 - "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

William Bridge said, "Meditation will keep your hearts and souls from sinful thoughts. When the vessel is full you can put in no more. . . . If the heart be full of sinful thoughts, there is no room for holy and heavenly thoughts: if the heart be full of holy and heavenly thoughts by meditation, there is no room for evil and sinful thoughts" (Thomas, I. The golden treasury of Puritan quotations).

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3. It will teach us to fear God

Deut.17:19 - “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes.”

C. There is Reward for Obedience to God’s Word

1. God told Joshua by meditating in the Book of the Law day and night and observing to do according to all that is written it, then he would make his way *prosperous* and then he would have good *success*
2. Prosperity and success are tied to meditating and obeying God’s Word
 - a) The prosperity and success that God was referring to was Israel possessing the land God promised them
 - b) Prosperity today is not based on obedience to the Word of God. It’s based

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on giving your money to a false teacher or a false teacher deceiving people in their lies.

The Bible says “they have a heart trained in covetous practices” (2 Pet.2:14).

- (1) The Bible discourages setting your heart on riches

1 Timothy 6:9-10 - “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

- (2) The Bible commands those who are rich “not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things

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to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim.6:17-20).

- (3) The focus of your giving is to be to the church not para-church ministries (I am not saying you cannot give to them but don't let it be your primary giving and you must know and agree with what they believe and teach before you give to them).

CONCLUSION

1. Do you meditate on the Word of God? If you're not memorizing it, you're not meditating on it either.
2. If you want to keep from forgetting the Word, then memorize and meditate on it.

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3. Do it for the purpose of obeying God's Word and contemplating God's works and ways.
4. That should be your *daily* goal – to mediate on God and His Word!
5. Let's pray.