

“Benefits of Meditation” (God’s Battle Plan for the Mind chapter 10)
2024.01.21 Hopewell ARP Sabbath School

“Eight benefits and blessings of cultivating a life of meditation”

1. Meditation Deepens Repentance

1. Haggai 1:5 (cf. v7), “Consider your ways!” was the means by which God brought them to repentance.
2. Teaching is employed to call people to repentance (2Tim 2:24–26), so we have reason to hope that by meditating upon what God’s Word says, He will bless our meditating unto our repentance.
3. Meditation is a means by which Scripture probes the depths of our heart (cf. Heb 4:11–13).
4. Meditation forces us to face and own our sins before God, and to feel their great evil, so that we are helped to real repentance.
5. Meditation also gives opportunity to bring our will under the shaping effect of God’s will. It lifts our soul heavenward to God so that we will see and commit to the goodness of what He commands.

2. Meditation Increases Resolve to Fight Sin

1. Do we even view sin as something to fight? And for those who do, how strong, steady, and consistent is our resolve to fight our actual sins? We need help! Meditation before God gives help.
2. Meditation brings us before God, so that we will be what we ought to be in private as much as in public.
3. Meditation helps us not only feel that we should fight sin, but also helps us to make concrete plans for how we will fight it.

3. Meditation Inflames Heart Affection for the Lord

1. Spiritual fervor and zeal are easily lost. The Lord uses meditation to return heart affection to the Lord.
2. “Holy thoughts excite heavenly affections”
3. “When we lose our hearts for Him, God desires not only for us to pray for help but to actively focus our minds upon His truth.” Do you use truth to inflame your heart?
4. Meditation can concentrate our thoughts of the Lord to inflame our hearts, like tinder can be inflamed by a magnifying glass that concentrates the rays of the sun.
5. We ought to stir up our feelings toward the things of God to the point that we delight in them.

4. Meditation Increases Growth in Grace

1. Growth in grace is commanded (2Pet 3:18). By implication and inference, use of the means of grace is also commanded.
2. Verbal exercises increase gifts, but it is especially mental exercises that increase grace. Are you in the habit of exercising your mind upon the Lord?

3. Meditation is a help to other duties. How can we dwell much upon God without praising Him and praying to Him? How can we dwell much upon the good without being driven to do it?
4. Meditation makes us familiar with thoughts that come from God and His grace. It helps us against satanic temptation, which comes to stick out by comparison.
5. **Meditation Provides Comfort and Assurance to the Soul**
 1. Ps 119:50, Ps 119:52
 2. We know many things from Scripture that should comfort us, and yet we are not comforted. Why? Because we have not taken that knowledge into our hearts. We know it abstractly but not experientially. Meditation brings us into the experience of the comfort by dwelling upon the truth and being gripped by it.
 3. Ps 42:5, 119:92. Meditation enables us to “out-argue” our troubling thoughts.
 4. Meditation sweetens the heart toward God in its fellowship with Him.
6. **Meditation Creates a Life of Joy, Thankfulness, and Contentment**
 1. The psalms are full of examples of meditation turning a discouraged believer into one full of praise.
 2. Meditation gives “air time” to God’s Word to answer the depressing lies of our fallen hearts.
 3. Meditation upon truth, redemption, and the forthcoming completion of that redemption give us fuel for thanksgiving that overrides discouragement.
7. **Meditation Deepens and Matures a Christian’s Experience**
 1. Meditation helps resist the superficiality of the age by sobering foolish minds and maturing childish reasoning.
 2. In order to experience God richly, one must regularly set heart and mind upon Him, engaging with Him in His truth.
 3. Light Christians blow easily into any opinion or vice like a feather; meditation adds weightiness to truth and virtue in the mind and the heart.
8. **Meditation Improves the Knowledge and Retention of God’s Word**
 1. Our remaining fleshliness resists the truth of God’s Word. It easily escapes us.
 2. Engaging the Word by dwelling upon it and considering it makes it “stick” much more in the memory.
 3. Meditation helps us see the truth more clearly, which helps us remember not only what the Scripture says, but often the path by which the Lord brought us into a right understanding of it.

Praise God. Many of you are. Sites for sore eyes, not just because You have overcome elements to come here but because it's been a while since many of you were well And so we thank God for restoring your help. We thank God for. Bringing our brother Charlie back safely.

Um, We're in chapter 10 of. Battle plan for the mind. And chapter 10 is titled the benefits of meditation. Uh, and it's really one benefit. Of meditation, meditation and that Taking the More

deeply. Into the heart. All of the different. Things that you see on the list, the chapter basically follows an outline, Eight different areas.

In which meditation benefits us? Deepening of repentance resolve to fight sin heart, affection for the Lord growth in Grace. Comfort and Assurance to the Joy, thankfulness and contentment. Uh, maturing the Christian experience. And then knowledge and retention of God's word. Uh, you'll see that six of those eight are things that Happen to some extent when you read your Bible or to some extent.

When you hear preaching, Uh, you know, repent turning from your sin resolving to fight it Etc. Uh, but The moment in reading your Bible or the moment in sitting under preaching and having one of these heart responses, for instance, taking comfort from the goth hole, or being stirred up in your affection towards God.

Or Or a Moment of joy and thankfulness. I hope you often have when you read or when you hear the Bible. Um, or hear it preached? That moment can easily. Uh, can easily be fleeting. And we rise from our reading, or we go out. From the worship or we go into the week.

Sorry. We go into the week and Uh, the repentance or the resolve to fight sin or or that moment of the, the heart being inflamed with love to God or drawing, solid Comfort is lost And suddenly we're not so resolved to fight our sin. We're not living in Repentance, we're barely thinking of God, Uh, we're full of anxiety, instead of comfort.

So, what meditation does? Yes. It is an exercise or a habit of dwelling upon the word of God, through which he gives us all of these things. That the work that he does in us, might penetrate more deeply. And so, number four, and number seven in his uh, eight benefits.

Uh, are really The fruit of or the the result of All of these other ones, the the six other ones that he lists, penetrating more deeply. So growing in Grace Uh, and becoming mature in our Christian experience often, we'll have a theological idea that we That we think. Uh, may be quite clever or novel or Um, Or an application of it, that we Get excited about.

But if we dwell upon that idea. Uh, in the scripture and before the Lord we can, sometimes by God's mercy to us, be brought out of what was really childish, and we just didn't identify it at first, but there's also just the seasoning of repeated meditation. Being someone whose heart and mind are often with the Lord.

That, that is part of how the Lord gives. Christian maturity. And if you think about it, If you think about it, Uh it's really a reflection of what the Lord Jesus teaches in the parable of the soils, isn't it? Some of it, some of the parable of the soils.

Addresses, what happens in the moment of preaching? Right. Is, are we? Uh, listening as someone who is hard. Uh, and the preaching is just bouncing right off of us. Um, or going, you know, through our ears in one ear out the other. Um, But other aspects of the parable of the soils, really addressing what we do with the word after we hear the preaching.

Uh, are we taking it into the heart? Is the seed? Than being nourished and sprouting and growing. Are we dwelling upon his word? At least to the extent that our hearts and Minds dwell upon the pleasures of life or the anxieties of life. You remember that particular seed where either the pleasures or the anxieties?

Of this world are too strong for the the Sprout that comes out, and, and choke it. And so if you have had the experience in your Christian walk, Of many times reading your Bible and and

having a thrilling response to God the spirit blesses. It blesses that portion of his word to you or many times sitting under preaching and having same experience of God.

But it's not carrying out into your life. Well, the parable of the soils and especially Uh, Psalm 119 and all of the reflection upon dwelling upon The, the Lord's word and And having it have the controlling. Interest in what goes on in our minds. And hearts may give you the key that you've been missing.

Uh, you may need, you may need to Set aside time for dwelling upon what you've heard in the preaching or dwelling upon something that has struck you in the reading. And so, take that moment. And you know, this is maybe a little uh two nuts and bolts. It's not a thus saith the Lord just A little Pious advice from your pastor, maybe have a meditations journal.

Uh, and don't be Uh, too wordy in it, just when you're reading your Bible, or when you're sitting under preaching, if there's something with which the Lord strikes, you You know, put down the text or whatever the thought and whatever the thought is from the text, and then bring it back to a time of meditation where you're going to set it set aside time really to dwell on that.

And the best place to start, of course, is the Lord's Day. I suspect many of you are, like, I and my family are it takes a lot of effort once we lead that leave this place to keep our hearts and Minds. In in a proper frame for the Lord's even, we're just going up the hill and Um but if you have something that you have selected to spend time thinking on uh you can take and set aside time for that.

It's also one of the reasons why? Sometimes. Or regularly in the preaching. I'll remind you that you're supposed to be hearing preaching, as an act of worship. Not just getting new information, not just enjoying a connection of ideas but interacting with God in the preaching. Thanking him for the Comforts.

Praising him for his Perfections, receiving his chastenings, or Or rebukes making commitments to him, making vows and then paying your vows. To him. And if you are having that sort of interaction with him, In the preaching. And of course we recommend that you do it in the reading as well.

If you're having that sort of interaction with him, then you're very Then you are primed as it were. Uh, to, you know, get these, uh, eight benefits or eight areas of benefit, when you come back because you've already made a beginning in it. And now, when you come to meditate, Upon his word upon a truth from his word.

Before him, you're continuing something that has begun between you and the Lord. There's a familiarity, there's a carrying on of, of relationship and interaction. Interaction with him. Uh, I I grew up in a church where You would sometimes hear? I don't have a religion. I have a relationship. Um, I don't know if anyone else has ever heard that sort of thing.

Well, the Lord gives us a relationship that is by way of religion. He gives us a relationship that is maintained in morning and evening times with him and Lord stays with him. Uh, in worship. Yes. Is it not streaming? Hello.

He gives us. Relationship that is by way of religion, and one of the most intimate. Of the religion that he has given us. Is this meditating upon his word before him. Um, If you don't have this, Uh, intimate. Uh, interaction with the Lord. Uh, in times of meditation. Uh, then this is something that you need to add to your Christian Life.

Uh, so the eight benefits then. Meditation deepens repentance. Uh he uh, highlights a Puritan work, that's written from haggai, chapter one. Consider your ways. Uh, at the time the people had built and we're enjoying their nice houses. They had instruction from God to build the temple, but they hadn't built the temple and the Lord was frustrating.

Uh, their economics. Uh, and Uh, and It comes by haggai and in chapter 1, verse 5 and chapter 1, verse 7. Uh, he urges them to Consider their ways. Uh and the Lord did bring them to repentance by the prophet's word and their consideration of his ways. And so, if there's something that you have had difficulty repenting of, Uh, mentioned before Owens.

Uh, Owens three Works. And much of that is considering Um, our ways. Uh, you remember recently, I hope in the in Serial readings in Timothy second. Timothy 2 24-26. Uh one of the reasons that Timothy was to engage in this Teaching Ministry was because was in the hope that Those whom he taught would be brought to repentance.

And so teaching and consideration of what is being taught is one of the ways, the Lord brings us to repentance Uh, he says. Uh, at some point. Nobody took up my offer, so I'm Give you page numbers and so forth.

Uh, meditation. As a means by which scripture probes. Uh, the depths of our heart. Uh, so page. H106, I can't find it just now on the page but I'm pretty sure that that's where it was. Meditation is a means by which Scripture probes. The depths of our heart. We expect that.

Because the scripture itself says that his word is living and active and it reveals the thoughts and intentions of our hearts Uh, if you're frustrated. By the thoughts and intentions of your heart escaping, your ability to address them or even identify them. While the Lord has told you, How he does that to us, he says In Hebrews, 4, 11-13 verse 13 says, we're already laid bare to God, The scripture isn't there to lay us bare to God.

He sees everything, doesn't he? And so, if we want to repent and we want help and repentance, he gives his word as a means. By which our our hearts are laid bare to ourselves. Meditation forces us to face and own our sins before? God, it's much easier in conversation with other people to think of sin as something that belongs to others.

Uh, that people generally need to deal with, but when it's just you and God. There's something about the intimacy of that interaction with him that the spirit uses to make us feel the greatness of the evil that we ourselves. Are committing and to help us to Real repentance. Meditation also gives opportunity to bring our will under the shaping effect of God's.

Will the more time you spend with him considering his word and particularly as it touches Touches our sin. Uh, the more you and God are the more you perceive. And participate in your alliance with God against your sin. Uh, this is something that we know in all of our other relationships.

Husband and wife that are dealing with a problem and and their hearts are inclined to be set against one another. Uh in the problem. The problem becomes an occasion for them to be opposed to one another. The more they talk it through with each other. The more they come into an alliance and attack the problem together, Yeah, even if the problem was something between them.

Uh, well. Uh, that which is Is useful. For a healthy marriage, is useful for a healthy relationship with the Lord. Spend time with him in his word about whatever it is that you're dealing with in your life especially a sin that you're dealing with in your life so that you can be brought into line with him and attack the sin.

Apart from meditation, apart from spiritual exercises. We are very likely to continue to hide and nurture sin so long as no other people can see it or detect it. Uh, well, the Lord can always see it and detect it. And meditation is a way of coming. And spending time with him.

Um, There are of course, a a big, quite a collection of quotes from Puritan books and I recommend them all to you. Um, next section. Meditation increases your resolve to fight sin. We actually are in an age in the church, in which Uh, you first have to establish that sin is something to fight.

But even for those who fight sin, Haven't we found that we are not as strong and steady and consistent in our resolve? Uh, to fight it. And so meditation before, God is one of the things by which he gives us help. Uh, if you're fighting sin, Uh, in your individual meditating times with God, Uh, then you will more and more be the same in private as you are in public.

Uh, this is one of the The great problems with superficiality in our walk with the Lord. We tend, if we're superficial with God, we tend to be one thing in front of other people. And another thing when we're by ourselves or just with Our family or maybe not our family, maybe we're trying to keep up appearances for them.

Uh, but meditation then increases our resolve to fight sin and that's very closely tied to the first section Um, third section, meditation Flames, heart affection for the Lord. He not. On page 108. Spiritual fervor and Zeal. Are easily lost. You get, there's Wonderful, quote here from Haywood. Holy thoughts.

Excite wholly effect, Heavenly affections. Uh, the reason I Um, love that quote is, first of all, it follows the truth of the Bible. But second of all, We live in an age in which Christianity is thought to consist entirely of affections. And there are all sorts of things used to produce affections.

But how can we know that those affections are actually Heavenly? Well the Lord in his words teaches us that it's the consideration of Truth. Truth about him who he is. What he's like what he has done, what he is doing, what he has promised. Truth about ourselves truth about others made in the image of God, truth, about my brothers and sisters United to Christ and one with him and in dwelt by his Spirit, there are all of these amazing truths.

We don't need to manipulate affections. We just need to follow the order that God has given us. In considering great truths. And having our holy thoughts. Excite our Heavenly. Affections. Another quote.

This must be from page 109, although I my eyes can't find it right now. When we lose our hearts for him, God desires, not only for us to pray for help. Of course we cry out to him as soon as we're becoming cold and dull. But to actively focus our minds upon his truth And so something for you to think about even now and maybe later.

Uh, do you use the truth to inflame your heart? Meditation increases growth and Grace. This is important because growing and Grace is a command Many of us I'm afraid to teach. Uh, growth and Grace as a Pious, or a religiously. Proper wish something we all wish we did more.

Uh, but it's actually an imperative in second Peter. 318. Uh, drove by the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and if growth and Grace is commanded, then use of the means of Grace is is commanded by implication, isn't it? How are you going to grow growing Grace?

Are you just kind of gonna try and will for more Grace to come out in? You do, do we have it in us? No, the Lord has given us the ways by which he grows us. And so when he commands us to grow in Grace, what is he doing?

But telling you to use those means and to trust that he who gave the means, blesses them. Yeah, if you tell someone it's a command to grow in Grace, Uh they may say well only God can grow you in Grace. After all the word is Grace and it sounds very theological.

Very reformed doesn't it? But God is the one who gave the imperative. And so there's a, there's a sweetness, and trusting and him and depending upon him to bless what he has appointed, that is combined, with this Devotion, to the things that he has commanded. Those two things aren't opposed to one another Uh, and so use the means.

Meditate and grow because God will give you the growth. He has never failed to keep one of his promises. Uh, and he has never been unfaithful. So meditation increases growth and Grace meditation provides comfort and Assurance to the soul. Uh, he gives three texts from Psalm 119, he gives One text Psalm 42, verse 5, but of course it's repeated in 42 verse 11 and 43.

Verse 5, those two Psalms are twins. Uh, with one another. Uh, we could almost just leave number five and just say, Read and think through Psalm 119. Look at how over and over and over again. The psalmist draws comfort and Assurance. Not just from God's word, but the fact that he has God's word, The creator of all things.

The only Redeemer of Sinners has spoken to you. He is given his word, he is for you, and he is with you, he has the old for the old saying broken his mind to you. Um, you know, the way we break bread at the software, well, he gives us a piece of his mind too bad that phrase has such negative connotations.

Now Um, the Lord has divulged himself to us, maybe. As a way of saying that, I think every one of you who struggle with anxiety or or bitterness or hurt, discouragement depression, you probably all know many scriptures that, you know, ought to comfort. You don't you Very comforting scriptures but you're not yet comforted.

And so, what shall you do? You throw up your hands and say, well, I know those verses they didn't work. God forbid, right? And so he gives us meditation upon his word as a means by which, to take in the comfort that we know is already. In in, you know, some some of you have memorized them, Um, Well, take those verses that you've memorized Pull them out once in a while.

Don't just leave them in the safety deposit box. You know take it out and enjoy it, meditate upon it before the Lord, meditate upon him, actually draw the comfort from him in his scripture. That he has given you. Um, Meditation creates. That's a very important one. Um, Uh, 5c there on your outline meditation enables us to out argue our troubling thoughts.

Uh, so notice in the Psalms places like why are you cast down? Oh my soul, hope in God or Psalm 103 bless the Lord O my soul. Places in scripture and especially in the psalter where the spirit teaches us to give our souls commands, Uh, based on the Bible.

So that's what gets covered in that section. Um, Meditation creates a life of Joy, thankfulness and contentment. You know, they've got these laws who are coming into An election season, not sure how much electing actually occurs in these Seasons anymore. But, Um, we're coming into an election season and one of the one of the laws that they have is supposedly, you're supposed to give equal air time for commercials.

Well. Yeah. Government deciding who can do what with, with their uh press. Um, a topic for another day. Uh, but there is a good application of that illustration. Will you not at least give God's word equal air time with all of your anxieties? Send all of, and maybe it's Bitterness or dwelling upon what somebody else is doing or all of these things.

That, that fill up our hearts and get our hearts Well, you're not at least, like, use meditation upon his word. To give what he says equal time. So that his word can drown at those things and fill you instead with joy and thankfulness and contentment. Um, Meditation deepens and matures of Christians experience.

Uh, we have Uh, we've mentioned that already, I Uh, there's a section there.

Bottom of 113 into the top of 114. If we don't meditate upon, if we don't consider and And as we consider his word and his truth, give it weight. Than the things that we believe and the things that we are committed to will be light as a feather to use the the word picture that Watson uses here, he says a light Christian will be blown into any opinion.

Or Vice. You may blow a feather. Anyway, and there are many feathery Christians. When we dwell upon God's word and we start to make those connections, So that our doctrines aren't all kind of separate ideas that are kind of in our Uh, our Lego basket of theological truths. Uh, and I don't know if your house is anything like mine.

There's kind of this Echo from the noise pollution of digging through the Legos. Um, What happens when you meditate and you connect one truth to another is they get they get clasped in together and suddenly you have the this stronghold because all of God's truth is interconnected and it's especially interconnected with who he is, who his son is And this is something, you know, give you a A cheat code that I learned in seminary.

I've hope I've given it to you before, I wouldn't want to be here seven years and not. Um but whenever there's a theological question that is difficult. See if you can't trace it back to where it connects to the, the doctrine of the person and work. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you get that right and you straighten it out all the way back, to whatever it was that you were. You were dwelling upon and trying to figure it figure out because that is the great thing. That is God's priority is his glory in his son. Um, So don't be all light and feathery Christian in the last place meditation, improves the knowledge and retention of God's word.

Obviously that's on page 114. Our remaining fleshliness resists the truth of God's word. That's one of the reasons. Scripture is difficult to memorize. Uh, the Puritans Uh, like any other. Of wise and godly pastors in the history of the church have urged memorization of God's work. Uh, but if your heart is resistant to God's word, you have not only Uh, not only our finite Minds are against us, but even that which remains from our original nature is against us, much more easy to to memorize Um, songs from our youth.

But praise God. Meditation upon his word. Gives you a consideration of each of the words and how they fit together. And you'll have that relational interaction with him, in that word, that builds, that kind of That that neural network of connections. Upon. Upon God's word and you'll find that verses that you have meditated upon Will stick in your mind much more readily.

And much more steadily. Uh, so those are the, the eight benefits that he gives, and uh, in chapter 10, And, Started late. So we're out of time. So, let's pray. Our gracious God and our heavenly father. We thank you and praise you. Forgiving. Relationship with you by means of your word.

Truly O Lord, it is marvelous that you are the God who speaks And we need, Uh, to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. And so we pray that you would help us not just to read and and hear preaching. We thank you for those things especially that we may worship you by those things.

But we pray Lord that by your spirit. You would help us to add to that meditation upon your word that we would take it deeply into our hearts. That it would grow up strong in a way that is able to bear fruit in our lives, 30 and 60 and 100 fold grant that we ask in Jesus name, amen.