

The Simple Discipline of Meditation

Joshua 1:8

The key to spiritual growth is called meditation. The key verse on this spiritual discipline is Joshua 1:8.

Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your 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 success.

For a moment think about Joshua and then ponder his habit!

Have you ever wondered how there was ever such a thing as an Old Testament SAINT? I don't mean how they got saved, but how did they live a godly life?

I mean, think about it – they lived with minimal revelation, difficult communication, continual temptation, and conditional Spirit fullness.

- **The Scriptures:** they were kept in that old, black goat hair covered Tabernacle Tent far from most people.
- **The Fellowship:** there were no churches to choose from to get a good message from God's Word. There were no army of godly organizations that focused upon missions, education, discipleship, and evangelism.
- **The Worship:** localized mostly to the Tabernacle and later Temple There were no bookstores to pick up a Bible, Study Bible, solid doctrinal book, or worship tapes. The airwaves and electronic realms were not crowded with messages in audio and print form from the Lord.
- **The Culture:** mostly distant from God, and evil. In the words of the prophets the Old Testament world was a hard place to live for the Lord – "God's Word was scarce in those days", "every man did what was right in his own eyes", "and God saw that the imaginations of mankind's hearts was ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY."

So how did they do it?

How were those with so little, able to live such godly lives in such an evil world?

How did they live through so much trouble, hardship and adversity?

Why is it that just hearing their names prompt us to admiration and challenge us to devotion; names like Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Hannah, David, Elijah, Ezra, and Daniel?

One habit sets each of these apart from the rest of the world. They each practiced **the Simple Discipline of Meditation**. How did they do it? Were there keys books, seminars, tapes, study guides...no, they just grasped a truth from God and wouldn't let go of it. They had depth to their spiritual lives. They had a deep well, deep foundations, deep resources – from meditating upon God's Words. Richard¹ Foster's words penetrate:

“Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep People.”

What is the pathway to deepening our walk, filling our lives with God's Word?

FINDING: First, we must be Cultivating the Discipline of Simplicity by COMING TO GOD THROUGH HIS WORD.

Jeremiah 15:16a **Your words were found**, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

EATING: Secondly, we must be Cultivating the Discipline of The Simplicity by MEMORIZING FROM GOD'S WORD.

Jeremiah 15:16b Your words were found, **and I ate them**, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

Memorizing God's Word is recording the voice of God into the memory of our very own minds. Lifting it off the pages of the Bible, writing it down upon the pages of our heart.

DIGESTING: Thirdly, we must be Cultivating the Discipline of Simplicity by MEDITATING UPON GOD THROUGH HIS WORD.

Jeremiah 15:16c Your words were found, and I ate them, **and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts**.

This is the secret of all of God's great warriors. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission, conquered immense hardships by daily meditation on God's Word. Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor record this in his biography:

It was not easy for Mr. Taylor, in his changeful life², to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Well do the writers remember traveling with him month after month in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow with the

¹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebrating of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & row, 1978).

² Hudson Taylor's *Spiritual Secret* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p. 235.

poorest of inns at night. Often with only one large room for coolies and travelers alike, they would screen off a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then, after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was poring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand. From two to four a.m. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God.

Meditating upon the Word brings us immediately into the intimate presence of God, but too few are willing to pay the price.

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither” (Psalm 1:1–3).

D.L. Moody³ has it right when he said, “The Bible wasn’t given for our information but for our transformation.” God did not give us the Bible to tell us what happened in the past but to equip us to live in the present in light of the future.

What exactly does God want? It is pretty clear. Meditation is not optional – it is commanded! Turn with me to Colossians 3.16. Listen to what God wants with me and then – lets do it!

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

So how did they do it?

How were those with so little, able to live such godly lives in such an evil world?
How did they live through so much trouble, hardship and adversity?

Why is it that just hearing their names prompt us to admiration and challenge us to devotion; names like Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Hannah, David, Elijah, Ezra, and Daniel?

One habit sets each of these apart from the rest of the world. They each practiced ***the Simple Discipline of Meditation***. How did they do it? Were there keys books, seminars, tapes, study guides...no, they just grasped a truth from God and wouldn't let go of it. They had depth to their spiritual lives.

Meditation meant Enoch “walked “ Genesis 5:22, 24 After he begot Methuselah, **Enoch walked with God** three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. And

³ Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, The 7 Laws of the Learner How To Teach Almost Anything To Practically Anyone! Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1992, 141-164.

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. **Who do you think was following whom? Do you really think that this means that a big glowing cloud of Shekinah glory tailed Enoch? I don't think so. Actually it means that God was invited into every part of Enoch's life. All day long at every meeting, every stop, every call, every situation – The Lord Himself was a part of it all. Has the Lord been invited into every part of your life?**

Meditation meant Noah “did” Genesis 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did. *What God had said -- Noah remembered. What God had said -- Noah kept thinking about. What God had said -- Noah obediently did! Have you remembered, thought about, and acted upon THE LAST TRUTH YOU LEARNED when God spoke to you (through the voices of His apostles and prophets in God's Word)? Were you listening to God or just reading?*

Meditation meant Job “feared” Job 1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns (turns away; puts aside; departs from) evil?” *Job knew what God wanted and did it. Job knew what God hated and avoided it. Job knew God was watching and acted like it. Have you found and done that from God's Word*

Meditation meant Abraham “built” Genesis 12:7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built (established; constructed) an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. *Abraham marked out reminders of what God had revealed to him. Abraham wanted to remember what God said. He made special time consuming efforts to never forget what God has done, what God had promised, what God expected. Altars marked the big events of his walk with the Lord. Do you listen and mark clearly God's plans for you. Are you remembering or forgetting?*

Meditation meant Moses “sought” Exodus 33:13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.” *Moses knew the Lord because he sought the Lord. God told him ‘you will seek and find Me when you seek with (what) ALL your heart’. And Moses did seek with all his heart to know the Lord. And Moses did find and know the Lord like no one else. God sits day after day ready to speak to you and me as long as we will listen. Just pick up the receiver, open the cover, turn your eyes onto the pages of God's Word and hear His voice. Are you seeking Him with ALL your heart?*

Meditation meant Joshua “stayed” Exodus 33:11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle. Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your 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 success. Joshua 24:15

And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” **Joshua stayed on with the Lord. He loved to hang around the Tent of Meeting with God. He loved God's Word to stay on his mind and in his mouth. And he purposed that no matter what any other family did, his was staying faithful to the Lord. Now that resolve only was possible because of the first two. Are you lingering in God's presence as He opens His Word to you? Are God's Words stuck to your heart, your mind, your mouth? That is what the Lord wants!**

Meditation meant Ruth “clung” Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.” Ruth was going to hang on for dear life. She found the truth. She met the God of Heaven. Everything else – family, friends, future – everything else peeled away. One thing stayed – the revelation of God. That was what she clung to, sought for, and wouldn't give up – for anything. Is there any doubt why God made her the great –grandmother of the Man after God's own heart David? I guess we can say as the New Testament says Jesus is the son of David. And if so then Jesus is the great-great grandson of Ruth. Just think what unbelievable things God will do with you if you decide today to cling to Him.

Meditation meant Hannah “immersed” – in prayer :1 Samuel 1:10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish; and in the Word (she quotes 6 Old Testament passages in one prayer quoting from Job 36; Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 4, 8, and 32 twice) 1 Samuel 2:1-10 And Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

- **2 “No one is holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.** Exodus 15:11 “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? Deuteronomy 4:35 To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him. Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.
- **6 “The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.** Deuteronomy 32:39 ‘Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.
- **7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.** Deuteronomy 8:17 then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

- **8 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, And He has set the world upon them.** Job 36:7 He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; But they are on the throne with kings, For He has seated them forever, And they are exalted. Job 38:4-6 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,
- 9 He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. “For by strength no man shall prevail.
- 10 The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

Here is a woman in a difficult home situation, far from spiritual help, missing out on the greatest joys of life because she was childless – and she channels all that potential grief and self-pity into seeking God. Here is a woman with limited resources, limited time, limited exposure to God's Word who immerses herself in God. She seeks for and gets 7 verses and meditates on them so long that they spill out into her prayers. And beyond that, the truth she discovers by her meditation is captured by the Spirit of God and recorded in God's Word. And this woman who immersed herself in God in the Old Testament become the role model, hero, and mentor of the greatest woman of the Bible – Mary mother of Jesus. In Luke it is Mary who quotes Hannah who quotes her meditations upon God in prayer. Are you immersing yourself in God's Word? Are they spilling from your life?

David Psalm 63:1-2 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek (***to seek early or earnestly, look early or diligently for***) You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs (***to long for, faint, faint with longing; The word⁴ seems to mean “has gone blind”, or “gone dark”. How vivid Hebrew poetry is! Then seek is a most revealing verb. Basically it means longing for the first light of the dawn.***) for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

Elijah

Ezra “prepared” Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared (***to establish, set up, accomplish, make firm; to direct toward (moral sense); to arrange, order***) his heart to seek (***to resort to, frequent (a place); to consult, to investigate, to ask for, require; to practice, study, follow***) the Law of the Lord, and to do (***to observe, celebrate, to acquire***) it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

⁴ Psalm 63 notes by Knight, George A. F., *Daily Study Bible Series: Psalms, Volume 1*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2001, c1984.

Daniel “purposed” Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed **(to put in place, set, appoint, make; to direct toward; to establish, determine, fix, to bring to pass)** in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Often however we don’t hear the voice of the Lord in His Word because our lives are too full and too complex. One of the best ways to experience the discipline of meditation – and the immense rewards that it will bring to our lives, is to practice a spiritual fast.

Fasting in the Bible is always described as withholding something that is a proper part of daily life. The saints sometimes fasted from ‘pleasant foods’ or from ‘the kings wine and meat’. Each fast was for focusing intently upon the Lord. What is a spiritual fast? It is fasting from non-material things that affect, distract, and touch our spiritual lives. This type of fast is the most powerful way to impact deeply your spiritual life. Fasting disciplines and focuses us. Here are some ways to help us fast from influences that distract our minds, or crowd our hearts, or blur our perceptions as we walk with the Lord:

- TV. Television is so captivating. It is predictable, it is available, it is captivating. Usually we can be at the cutting edge of the events, the weather, the finances, the culture, the products, and the pleasures of the whole world – from our personal window on everything, the TV. A window opens up a wall so that we can see things. TV is a window that opens our sight to the WHOLE WORLD. We can see the good and the evil, the profitable and the unprofitable, the useful and the useless. A great way to clear your mind from distraction is to take a TV fast. Try a week without any television and invest the same time slots in reading, learning, and meditating upon God’s Word. If you can make it for a week, and actually devote equivalent time – your entire life will be impacted by God.
- NEWS. Try to go a day with no news just substitute the time you spend online, in the paper, in the magazine, on the radio catching up with the news. Substitute the “new news” for the “old news” of the Truth of God. The Bible is so current that it actually has the future described. The Bible is the ultimate news source. Remember there is nothing new under the Sun. If you meditate of the Scriptures you will be way ahead. Note Psalm 119:97-104. God says you would be much wiser, smarter, skillful, and so on in any field by time spent meditating upon His Word!
- RADIO. Now we are getting revolutionary. Try a week where instead of having the radio on in the car – you pray. Pray aloud for every request you can think of. Then try the Wall of prayer guide. Pray for every missionary Tulsa Bible Church supports. Then pray for all the elders, the deacons, then the choir, then the orchestra, the teachers... see it is endless what you can do with the time we often unconsciously waste. If you run out of requests do what I do – pray through every family in the directory. Ask God to make them grow in Christlikeness, stir their hearts to turn from evil, cause them to hunger for the Word. That week will be one of the most spiritually refreshing weeks of your life.

- MUSIC. Fast from all secular, non-Christian music for a day or a week and substitute only soothing, heart quieting music that reflects God's character, draws you to worship Him, and mirrors His Word. Seek especially music that is based on Scripture, sound doctrine, worship Psalms and so on. If you have proper music your heart will be flooded with peace and your mind will be focused upon the Lord of the Word.
- MAGAZINES. Try fasting for a month from ALL magazines. News, craft, technical, travel, sports, financial and so on. Substitute equivalent time and attention upon God's Word and see what happens.
- VIDEO. Try a month without any videos, DVDs, or movies.