

AN APPROACH TO MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

1

INTRODUCTION

- God is a gardener - Genesis 2:8-9
- Israel likened to a garden - Numbers 24:5-6
- Solomon finding meaning in gardening - Ecclesiastes 2:3-6
- Song of Solomon's use of gardening imagery - Song of Solomon 4:16
- Israel's devastation likened to a garden - Isaiah 1:29-30
- Jesus' abundant use of garden imagery - Luke 13:6
- A relationship with Jesus and gardening image - John 15:1-2
- My own experience as a gardener and spiritual lessons from pruning

2

HAVE A PLAN

- **The Meditation Principle:** When meditating on Scripture, seek to be thoughtful and imaginative.
- **The Pruning Principle:** "Before starting to prune, have a plan for the tree and the garden as a whole. Working in stages to accomplish the goal. Respect the plant and make its health the first priority. Removal of large branches and trunks are often best accomplished gradually over time."
- As one gardens and prunes thoughtfully and imaginatively, so read the Word of God

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HAVE A PLAN

[The Scriptures] are words intended, whether confrontationally or obliquely, to get inside us, to deal with our souls, to form a life that is congruent with the world that God has created, the salvation that he has enacted, and the community that he has gathered. Such writing anticipates and counts on a certain kind of reading, a dog-with-a-bone kind of reading. (Eugene Peterson)

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HAVE A PLAN

....Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:22-27)

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HAVE A PLAN

...the Bible is substantially intelligible to the common person and requires neither pope nor professor to interpret it. It is essentially open to our understanding without recourse to academic specialists or a privileged priesthood. (Eugene Peterson)

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FIND THE GOOD

- **The Meditation Principle:** Focus on what's good and understandable, not the problematic.
- What's helpful and accessible? What's beautiful?
- **The Pruning Principle:** "Focus on what is best about a plant and accentuate it. Identifying the essence of the tree is a good starting point. What is it about this particular species that is enjoyable, striking or beautiful? It could be its structure, shape, color, foliage, flowers, fruit, bark or any quality that distinguishes it."

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FIND THE GOOD

Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled. May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:4-6)

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FIND THE GOOD

The goal is not to remove the bad, but to emphasize and enhance the good.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

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COARSE TO FINE

- **The Meditation Principle:** Taking what you glean from scripture and learn to apply to the particulars of your life.
- **The Pruning Principle:** Find a balance between big branches and small branches

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COARSE TO FINE

So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. (James1:21-25)

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UP AND OUT

- **The Meditation Principle:** The Scriptures intend for us to move upward toward God and outward towards people, not to read it only or to stay in ourselves.
- **The Pruning Principle:** "This illustrates the concept that, in most cases, trunks and branches grow from their attachment to their tips in a direction that is generally in an upward and away from the center of the tree kind of way."

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UP AND OUT

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:6-7)

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UP AND OUT

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:16-17)

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TELL A STORY

- **The Meditation Principle:** Remember that every passage of Scripture is integrated into the whole of God's story.
- **The Pruning Principle:** "Each garden tells a story and each feature within a garden has a story that contributes to the overall story of the garden. What is meant by telling a story is fairly straightforward and usually relates to the environment the garden is portraying which provides an explanation for the overall appearance and the appearance of each feature within the garden. Find what gives the garden unity and harmony and honor it."

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TELL A STORY

He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. (Matthew 13:3)

Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. (Matthew 13:34)

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. (Luke 18:1)

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TELL A STORY

Story doesn't just tell us something and leave it there, it invites our participation. A good storyteller gathers us into the story. (Eugene Peterson)

Honest stories respect our freedom; they don't manipulate us, don't force us, don't distract us from life. They bring us into the spacious world in which God creates and saves and blesses. First through our imaginations and then through faith-imagination and faith are a close kin here-they offer us a place in the story, invite us into this large story that takes place under the broad skies of God's purposes... (Eugene Peterson)

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CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

The thoughtful and imaginative attention to Scripture ^[God's revelation]
to inform the mind ^[reason] and shape the heart ^[affections]
for the purpose of personal
and inter-personal transformation ^[with God and others]
as Joyful participants in the Story of God.

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