

## Meditating on the scriptures

The Hebrew word translated "meditate" speaks of what a cow does after grazing all day. As she chews the cud over and over again, she extracts every nutrient. In other words, to meditate means to ponder a section of the Word day and night, extracting more from its inexhaustible supply each time (Jon Cursor).

Joshua 1: 7 – 8 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

### 1) The importance of meditation

- Biblical meditation isn't the emptying of your mind to try to find peace. On the contrary it's the filling of your mind with the Word of God, drawing all that you can from it for it to nourish your entire being.
- We can know the authority of the scriptures, the usefulness of the scriptures, the guidance of the scriptures, and can even study the Bible to know and understand it, but unless we apply it to our lives all that means absolutely nothing.
  - Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to DO everything written in it.
- Meditation is the pondering, thinking through, chewing over scripture to internalise it in such a way that its effects are noticeable in our practical lives.
- This application is in how we behave, but it also affects our thinking and attitudes.
  - Meditation allows us to get perspective on our lives and in the world in which we live.
  - It makes us think through who God is and how acts in our lives in the way of directing, guiding, commanding, comforting, upholding, reprimanding and even judging.
  - It shapes our thinking to godly thinking.
- It's through the scriptures that we get to know the character of God, how he relates to us and us to him, and how we measure our character against his.
  - Meditation makes us sit and think through our lives against his character as our plumbline.
  - Psalm 143: 5 I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.
- Although it's important to take time out, preferable in the mornings, to pray, read, and meditate on God's Word we should always have God's Word on our mind influencing every part of our lives.
  - That doesn't mean that we have to always be thinking of or mentally reading scripture in our minds. We have other things to think about during the day. It means that scripture should be absorbed into our beings so that all our decisions, actions and reactions will be guided and directed by the Word of God.
  - As with everything it takes discipline for that to happen.
- We meditate on God's Word, not as an act of duty but an act of love for God and His Word.
  - Matthew 22: 37 – 40 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
  - Psalm 119: 97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

### 2) The outcomes of meditation

- Meditation gives us strength and courage. (Joshua 1: 7)
  - Psalm 119: 27 – 28 Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds. My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.
  - It's not just knowledge that gives us strength and courage. It's knowledge of what God says about our situations. About the hope that he gives. About the promises that we know that he will keep because he is faithful.
- Meditation gives us the knowledge of God's will for our lives
  - Joshua 1: 7 Do not turn from it to the right or to the left
  - How will we know what we shouldn't turn from if we don't know the scriptures and aren't able to apply them at times of decision?
  - These times of decision could be a practical decision that you have to make in your life, or a response to someone, or an attitude within a particular situation.
  - Are we able to keep on the narrow road of His Word that will lead us to life?

- Meditation leads us into wholesome lifestyles
  - Joshua 1: 7 & 8 ...that you may be successful wherever you go... Then you will be prosperous and successful.
  - Sin leads to our downfall. It leads to brokenness and sorrow. It leads to anxiety and hopelessness.
  - Although sinful people are many times prosperous and successful in this life they have all the above mentioned. No wholesomeness of life.
  - Jesus didn't come to give us prosperity and success in this life. If we receive that it's a bonus not a right.
  - He came to give us life in abundance – a life that even the poor will enjoy because it isn't dependent on the prosperity and success of this world.
  - It comes from deep within.
  - Galatians 4: 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."
  - Righteousness is being right with the Father through Jesus and leads to a wholesome lifestyle

### 3) Methods of meditation

- Biblical context meditation
  - Biblical context meditation looks at the verses in the context in which they were written to keep to the original meaning
  - It then allows you to apply the original meaning of the verse to your specific context.
- Method
  - Read a portion of scripture
  - Prayerfully ask God to show you which verses to meditate on
  - Choose a verse, or a couple of verses to meditate on. Some passages, like parables, should be meditated on as a whole and not select verses from them.
- Questions to ask about the verses
  - What do these verses say about God?
  - What do these verses say about man (people)?
  - Is there a sin to avoid?
  - Is there a command to obey?
  - What do I need to do according to these verses?
- Example of Biblical context meditation
  - Galatians 4: 8 – 11 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God —how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.
  - God is knowable and wants to be known
  - People are slaves to things that aren't god. What is enslaving me?
  - If we turn from God we will be enslaved again. Do we want that?
  - Know God and turn from what formerly kept us enslaved.
- Topical meditation
  - Topical meditation looks at a topic to meditate on from the scriptures
- Examples of topics
  - Love – 1 Corinthians 13 (The chapter on love)
  - Forgiveness – Matthew 18: 21 – 35 (The unmerciful servant)
  - Dealing with suffering and pain – 1 Peter 4: 12 – 19 (Suffering as a Christian)
  - Dealing with injustice – Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37 & 45)
- Biblical context forces us to meditate on aspects of scripture that we would normally be uncomfortable with.
- Topical meditation has the danger of only choosing the topics that we're comfortable with and leaving out areas of our lives that we know we need to deal with.

It takes discipline to meditate on the scriptures. Take time and do it for the Word of God that we may receive courage and strength, know the will of God, and live wholesome lifestyles pleasing to God.