

BIBLE STUDY LESSON

“THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF DEVOTION TO THE WORD” (PART II)

II TIMOTHY 3:16

Introduction: Last week we mentioned the disciplines of hearing, reading, and studying the Word. Today we are going to discuss three more: memorizing, meditating, and obeying the Word.

4. Memorizing The Word

Why memorize the Word of God? There are many reasons:

- a. To Be Conformed into Christ’s Image: II Corinthians 3:18 (NASB), “***But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.***” If we want to be transformed into Christ’s image, we must behold Him constantly. The way we behold Christ is in His Word. Memorizing Scripture enables you to behold the Lord wherever you are, all the time.
- b. To Have Victory Over Sin: Listen to the words of Psalm 119:9 (NASB) “***How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.***” Psalm 119:11 (NASB) “***Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.***” The word “treasured” can be translated “hid” or “stored up.” Do you want to not sin against God? Then one of the best things you can do is memorize the Word of God. When you are tempted to sin, you can recall it in a moment, and draw strength from it. How did Jesus have victory over temptation in the wilderness? **He quoted Scripture to the devil.**
- c. To Be Able to Share the Gospel with Unbelievers: When we find ourselves with an unbeliever and we sense God wants us to share His gospel, we will usually not have a Bible with us. But if we have hidden God’s Word in our hearts, we can quote Scripture easily and freely. In order to be prepared to share this gospel, I would encourage you to memorize a few verses related to each of these 4 great truths.
- d. To Be Able to Encourage and Counsel Believers: You will often find yourself hanging out with your brothers and sisters in Christ, and someone will share a struggle, a problem, or a situation in which they need wisdom. If you have memorized the Word, you can speak forth God’s Word in that situation and prove to edify others with God’s truth.

e. To Be Able to Meditate on God's Truth Throughout the Day: If we have memorized passages of Scripture, we can meditate on these passages wherever we are. Meditation is extremely helpful in communion with God, as we will see later in this message. However, you don't want to be limited to meditating on the Word only when you have a Bible handy. The Psalmist said in **Psalm 119:97 (NKJV)** "*Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*"

f. To Be Able to Strengthen Your Faith: How often have we sensed that our faith was weak? By recalling God's word, we will find our faith growing stronger. **Proverbs 22:17-19 (NASB)** says, "*Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge; for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the Lord, I have taught you today, even you.*"

So, how do we memorize God's Word? Well, let me give you some practical suggestions.

1. Choose a text. You might want to choose various verses of Scripture relating to a particular topic. For example, if your faith is weak, you might choose some verses on faith. If you are struggling with a particular sin, you might choose verses related to that sin
2. Write out the verse on a piece of paper or an index card. Read the verse out loud several times until you can repeat it without looking at it. Type out the verse and see if you can type it out perfectly. Pull out your card when you exercise, go for a walk, are in line at the bank or post office and review your verse. It usually takes about 100 repetitions before we really get a verse down solid.
3. You might ask your spouse or a friend if you could review your verses with them. Better yet, you could memorize the same verses with them and repeat them to each other
4. You might write your verse on your bathroom mirror, or write down the first letter of each word of the verse on a card. You could also pin up your verse in a place where you know you will be each day, like the kitchen sink, so that you can memorize while you do the dishes. Use your imagination.

In all your memorizing, remember that the goal is not to see how many verses you can memorize. That will lead only to spiritual pride. The goal is store God's Word in your heart so that you can commune with God and serve Him throughout the day.

5. Meditating On The Word

What is Christian meditation? We live in a world in which there are many kinds of meditation, most of which stem from Eastern Religions. When we think of meditation we think of:

- yoga,
- transcendental meditation,
- relaxation therapy,
- New Age Movement. Because there are so many spiritually counterfeit groups and movements, many Christians are very uncomfortable with the whole topic. So, what we want to know, is what is Biblical meditation?

Meditation is to think deeply about Scripture. It is not mental passivity, but mental activity. It is not emptying the mind but filling it with God's truth. It originally meant "to mutter, sigh, or moan." It provides a picture of a man so deep in thought that he goes around muttering to himself. (Example)

It is similar to what the cow does when she chews her cud. A mature dairy cow may consume 100-150 pounds of grass per day! She has four compartments in her stomach. When she first eats the grass, she chews only enough to swallow the grass. Later on, she will bring that partially digested food back up, and chew it some more, until it is ready to be fully digested in another compartment of her stomach. Likewise, when we first read the Bible we are the like the cow that eats the grass. But when we bring that Scripture back to our mind to think about it more deeply in order to apply it to our life, we are meditating.

Let's take a look at what the Bible says about meditation.

Joshua 1:8 (NASB) "*This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.*"

Let me make a few observations from this text:

1. Who? Joshua 1:8 is a command given by the Lord directly to Joshua.
2. What? The Lord gives Joshua the subject matter of what he is to meditate on. He is not told to repeat a mantra over and over, or to empty his mind. Rather he is told to meditate on the book of the Law. This would have included the first five books of our Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Now, Joshua was a very important and busy person. He was the General of God's Army, and the successor to Moses. He was the

leader of 2 million Israelites. If anyone had an excuse not to meditate day and night it would have been Joshua! But God knew that meditation was the way that Joshua would be enabled to accomplish all that He commanded.

3. When? The command is to meditate day and night. Just as a homing pigeon will instinctively fly home from wherever you release it, so too, our minds should fly home to our Father's throne whenever we are released from our earthly responsibilities.
4. Why? The reason God commanded Joshua to meditate day and night on the law was "so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it." The purpose of meditation is the application of Scripture to our lives. We meditate on Scripture in order to obey Scripture.
5. What then? The Lord promises Joshua that he would be prosperous and successful if he would meditate on the law. As we apply this verse in our own New Testament context, it means that if we will meditate on God's Word Day and night, we will be successful in our spiritual lives and will find soul prosperity.

Psalm 1:1-3 (NASB 1995) "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers."

There is a link between "delighting" and "meditating" in this text. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." We think about what we delight in. If you love to go fishing, you will find yourself thinking about fishing. If you love food, you'll think about food. If you delight in your spouse, you'll think about your spouse. And if you delight in God's Word, you'll meditate on it. If we rarely or never meditate on God's Word, the problem is that we are not delighting in it very much. The results of meditation from this text are Stability, Fruitfulness, Perseverance, and Prosperity. Those blessings are worth meditating on Scripture, aren't they?

Psalm 39:3 (NASB) "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue."

What caused King David's heart to grow hot within him? When did the fire in his heart burn? It was while he was musing (meditating). God's Word is like a fire. But sometimes, through our

lazyness and carelessness, the fire can almost go out. How do we fan it into a roaring flame? We blow upon it through meditation, and it bursts again into flame.

Psalm 119:97-99 (NASB) “*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.*”

How did the Psalmist express his love for God’s law? **By meditating on it.** How often did he meditate on it? **All day.** Why was he confident that he was wiser than his enemies and had more insight than his enemies? Was it because he heard or read more of the law than they did? Probably not. The reason was not with his **input** of the Word, but his **insight** into the Word. Meditation is what provides wisdom and insight into God’s Word.

So, how do we meditate on God’s Word? Here are some suggestions:

1. Select a word, phrase, verse or passage. Probably the easiest way to decide what to meditate on is to choose the part of your reading of the Word that most impacted you. I know a guy who says that as he’s reading the Bible, God will ring his bell. In other words, God will get his attention and impress him with something he has just read. Often you will find yourself meditating on something that has personal relevance for your own needs and concerns.
2. Think about every word of the verse. Repeat the verse placing emphasis on a different word each time. For example, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” As you meditate on that verse, you would emphasize each word in that sentence to see what shades of meaning it supplies to you, just as you would turn a diamond to see every facet of its beauty.
3. Rewrite the verse in your own words. Paraphrase that verse in your own words, thinking of synonyms can greatly help to open up the meaning of a passage.
4. Turn the text into prayer. We’ll have much more to say about this next Sunday, but suffice it to say that we need to pray what God shows us in order to commune with Him.
5. Look for personal application of the text. Just as chewing our food is incomplete and pointless without swallowing it, so is meditation without application. Ask yourself what the Holy Spirit would want you to do with what He has revealed.
6. Make time for meditation. If you are in the habit of using all your devotional time in reading the bible, it would be very helpful to read less so that you can have some time for meditation and prayer. Remember that the whole point of these spiritual disciplines is to connect with

God. Read less in order to meditate more. If you only have 30 minutes in the morning, rather than spending all 30 minutes reading the Bible, spend 15 minutes, reading, and then the other 15 minutes in meditation and prayer.

6. Obeying The Word

It really doesn't matter how much time we spend hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word, if we don't **obey it**. The purpose of all Scripture intake is **life change**. If that is missing, then all these other spiritual disciplines are pointless. I've known Christians that were involved in many different bible studies each week but were only taking in more and more information and not being changed by it. Beware of that. The more truth we know, the more responsible we are to obey that truth.

Jesus said at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, that there are two kinds of people – those that hear **His word and acts on it**, and those that **hear His word and don't act on it**. Those that act on His word are like the man who builds his house on the rock. When the rains fall, and the floods come, and the winds blow and slam against the house, it doesn't fall. But those that don't act on His words are like the man who built his house on the sand. When the great storm comes, his house falls. All of us are building a house. Our house is our life. One day there will be a great storm of the Judgment of God. Those who have only heard will be destroyed. Those that have acted on the Word will be saved.

James makes the same point crystal clear **James 1:22-25 (NKJV)** “**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**”

As you are reading and meditating on God's Word, look for ways that you can apply what you are reading. Ask yourself questions like:

- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there something I should praise and thank God for?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?

- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a challenge to face?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a truth to believe?

Jot down those specific points of application the Holy Spirit gives to you. It would be good to seek to come away from your time with the Lord with at least one specific action you will take.

So, will you begin to spend time in memorizing, meditating, and obeying God's Word? Will you follow these paths up the mountain into the very presence of God where you can behold His unspeakable beauty?