

Thursday Afternoon: “Meditating on the Word” – Joshua 1:8

Introduction: Have you ever stood on the edge of impossible? Has there ever been a task handed down to you, or a dream you held in your heart, that you would never happen? This is surely how the people of Israel must have felt as they made their long exodus out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

God made a covenant with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. Jacob, also called Isarel, had 12 sons. One of those sons was mistreated by his brothers, and sold into Egyptian slavery. What they meant for evil, God meant for good, and through a series of events recorded at the end of the first book of the Bible, Joseph rose into power as the second in command over all of Egypt under Pharaoh. Due to a great famine in the land, Jacob’s family came down to Egypt where they prospered greatly and became a great nation. So much so, that one of the new kings, who did not know Joseph, oppressed and enslaved the Israelites for fear they would revolt and overtake them.

So God raised up a leader, Moses, who led the people on an Exodus out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land. Tragically, their failure to keep God’s commands manifested itself through grumbling, idolatry, and distrust of God’s care and provision. One story that highlights this is found in the fourth book of the Bible, Numbers chapter 13. God told them to send twelve spies to evaluate the land he was giving them (v.2). Rather than being filled with faith, they returned and said, “The people are so strong, and their cities are very large and fortified, and it is filled with warrior people who appear to be impossible to overtake. They even said, “we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes and appeared so to them as well.”

Because of their lack of faith in God’s promised, he made them wander in the desert forty years until that generation had died off. All of the leaders died before entering the land except two. Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies who said they should trust in God and take the land.

Even Moses, the great leader of the people was not allowed to lead the people into the land, and that’s where we pick up in the book of Joshua, chapter 1 where the people are once again, forty years later, standing on the edge of the impossible.

Read 1:1-9. Joshua is called to lead God’s people into the land he had promised them, and he gives him two primary commands. The first is expected and it is repeated three times. Verse 6, “Be strong and courageous;” verse 7, “Only be strong and very courageous;” and then in verse 9, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.” There is no doubt: Joshua needed incredible strength and unflinching courage in order to lead them into battle and take the land.

But then, though we might expect God to say, Be strong and courageous and train your military leaders in the art of war for three years. He says, “Be strong and courageous;” *and* “be careful to keep my word.” Look again at *verses 7 & 8.*

God’s people in God’s Place under God’s rule experiencing God’s blessing.

So God promises his covenant presence and commands covenant obedience and fidelity. In this context, the specific command of meditating on the Book of the Law is given. This morning, as we set out on the second week of our study of the spiritual disciplines which we are calling “rhythms of grace,” I want us to focus on . . .

**“The Rhythm of the Word”
Joshua 1:8**

“But where is the meditating Christian? Most people live in a hurry. They are so distracted with the cares of the world that they can find no time to meditate.” (Thomas Watson, 1669)

“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 good success.” (Joshua 1:8)

The Point: Meditation is a commanded lifestyle that will produce much fruit to the glory of God.

My goal is to make this as practical as possible... A lot of suggestions...

Six observations from this text concerning meditation... First, we need to

I. Understand the *content of meditation*.

- **“This Book of the Law”**

- Law... Given by God.

Explain doctrine of revelation

Explain doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy...

- Do you want to know God? Pick up this book and swim! Pick up this book and marinate...
- Like most men, I love to grill. There is almost nothing better in the summertime than throwing a slab of meat (chicken, pork chops, steak)... The only thing that is better is throwing a slab of meat that has been marinating overnight... Mom’s Italian chicken.. Interns Grill out...
-

So if God has revealed himself through his Spirit-inspired and inerrant word, then we should not be surprised by the vast benefits contained within.

Do you need some encouragement to get in the Word? I’ll let the Word speak for itself!

Images of Scripture w/ Corresponding Benefits

- **The Word is a lamp and a light (Ps. 119:105).**
- **The Word is like a mirror (James 1:22-25).**
- **The Word is like a fire (Jer. 23:29).**
- **The Word is like a hammer (Jer 23:29).**
- **The Word is a sword (Heb 4:12; Eph. 6:17).**
- **The Word is like bread (Mt 4:4; Deut 8:3).**

Benefits of the Word (UNPACK EACH... PRACTICAL EXAMPLES)

- The Word Counsels us (Light & Lamp)
- The Word Sanctifies us (Mirror, Fire, Hammer, Sword)
- The Word Gives us Life (Bread)

So think about the power of the Word. Do you need another reason to wake up and dive into this treasure? Do you need another reason to be here on Sunday every chance you get?

Right now, you might want to look out, because the Word is guiding you, it's showing you where you look good and where you don't look so good, it's purifying you and it's chipping away that which does not look so godly. It's a sword that cuts to our souls and a it is our very life!

After the Israelites renewed the covenant, a short time before the death of Moses, Moses addressed the Israelites by saying these powerful words: **"Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."** (Deuteronomy 32:45-47)

Trans: Now, lets look at what we do with the Word of God. #2... We need to . . .

II. Keep the *command of meditation.*

- **"shall not depart . . . but you shall meditate."** The NIV is even more emphatic as they start verse 8 by saying, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from you mouth, but meditate on it day and night"
- This is a command, not suggestion. This is not for people in ministry or super-Christians. This is for all of God's people. So many times we approach God's commands as though they are nice options for us to consider. Maybe I'll get around to that when it's convenient for me...
- **Donald Whitney says in his book, *The Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*: "No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word."**

Ways to Consume the Bible

- **Reading:** Daily Bible Reading Schedule (esv.org). 15 minutes a day will allow you to read the Bible through in a year. Do this individually, but get together with a friend (1 to 1 Bible Reading)
 - **28 Days in the Word.** (Read it. Pray it. Apply it. Share it.)
- **Studying:** "Reading gives us breadth. Study gives us depth." – Jerry Bridges Take a book and read it and reread it. Grab a commentary.. Study Bible (ESV)
- **Hearing:** This is worship.
 - Hearing the Word... Tips... (listening – expository listening..)
- **Meditating:**
- **Memorizing:**

Trans: Next, we need to . . .

III. Practice *the manner of meditation.*

- What should meditation look like? How do we actually put it into practice?
- "from your mouth"
- Danold Madvig writes, ""The phrase 'from your mouth' refers to the custom of muttering while studying or reflecting. The Hebrew word translated 'meditate' (*hagah*) literally means 'mutter.' When one continually mutters God's Word to himself, he is constantly thinking about it."
- This idea of muttering reveals how we should meditate from time to time. We should actually recite the words to ourselves. (Galatians 1:1-10)

- This does not mean that you always have to mutter it out loud, but there should be occasions where we implement this practice.
- Meditation involves constant, repetitive exposure to the text of Scripture
- Ex. Worry... Opposite...
- Eastern Meditation – yoga empty your mind...

Trans: That how we are supposed to meditate, but how often should we do so? Joshua 1:8 also helps us

IV. Observe the extent of meditation

- This Book of the Law should not depart from our mouth, but we should meditate on it “day and night.”
- The phrase day & night is a “merism.” A merism is a literary device that expresses totality by referring to contrasting parts. Here the phrase day and night means “all the time!”
- The word should always be in our thoughts. We should always be seeking to grow in our understanding of God’s Word.
- What we are after here is a lifestyle, not a weekend, not a couple of months, a lifestyle of devouring the Word.
- This should be one of the greatest passions of our lives, to know God in his Word. Do you prioritize the Word? Do you consistently pursue God in his Word?
- **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2)**

Testimony//Story – Spectrum???

Where are you now/today? Where do you want to be? What will it take to get there? It is good to have a plan as to how you will receive the Word of God and meditate on it.

- This does not happen overnight..

1) Mornings belong to God. (Daily commitment)

- 2) Sacrifice something you love.
- 3) Setting a goal
- 4) Welcoming accountability.

How can we do this? How can you read the Bible daily for the next 28 days or memorize 1,000 verses in 3 years?

DEPENDENT DISCIPLINE

Trans: Why do we do meditate on the Word day and night? So that we can

V. Fulfill the *purpose of meditation.*

- **“so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it.”**
- The purpose of meditation is to put the truth into practice. We must live it out.
- Ex. – Pilot, Boat Captain, Police Officer

- It really does not matter how much Bible you know. You may be able to quote a thousand verses and explain the ins and outs of the weightiest theological topics, but that does not impress God.
- The one God esteems is the one who trembles at his Word (Isaiah 66:2).
- I love what **Octavius Winslow** says about the difference between knowing a lot in your head and actually seeing that transferred to our lives. He said, **“The religion of the Lord Jesus is valuable only as it its power is experienced in the heart.”**
- {P} What is all our knowledge if it does not evidence itself in a love for God and a love for people? Paul says in 1 Cor. 13: I can have prophetic powers, understand all mysteries, have all knowledge and a faith that can move mountains, but if I have not love, “I AM NOTHING.”
- What is more: James 1 tells us that if we hear the Word, but do not practice what it says, we are self-deceived and Jesus says at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, if you hear his words and fail to put them into practice, you are like a fool who builds his house on sand.
- The point of biblical meditation is devotion to God. We receive the Word because we love God. We are careful to do all that is written in it because we love God.
- This whole series is really about our pursuit of godliness through a HEART that is enflamed for God. That is why last week was so important (Philippians 2:12-13): Work out ... FOR it is God who works in you to WILL and to work.
- Here’s the beautiful thing: when we know the Word really well, and more importantly, when we put it into practice consistently, we point to the greatness of God.
- PIC: It’s the difference between an actor reading a script for the first time and a script being ready for production. The first time reading through a script it’s probably going to feel and sound quite foreign, choppy, and mechanical, BUT when it’s time to pull back the curtain or go to filming, the script is in the actor’s hear to the point where he or she is one with it. There is an internalization that takes place to the point where he is oen with the character! (expound...)
- That’s how we want to be with the Bible. It’s just part of us. It’s wisdom is evidenced in our words, actions, and conversations,

Trans: This is why we meditate, so we can glorify God in our actions. And when we do, we will . . .

VI. Enjoy the *fruit of meditation.*

- **“For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”**
-
- **“He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1:3)**

Sanctified Progression of Exposure to the Word

(I thought about this several years ago walking around the neighborhood in seminary.)

- **Expose yourself to the Word. (Consume it!)**
- **Allow the Word to expose you. (Live it!)** (mirror/obedience)
- **Then others will be exposed to the Word through you. (Share it)**

Why would there be a week that goes by, even really a day, that we don’t take what God has revealed to us and share that with someone else? Here’s some treasure. Free fire. Have a some bread that will really change your life!

“Does the Word of God stop with you, or does the Word of God spread through you?” – David Platt

This is the link between biblical meditation and the Great Commission. What is our job as Christians? Make disciples!

Conclusion

- **“If your growth in godliness were measured by the quality of your Bible intake, what would be the result?” – Donald Whitney**
- What happens if our church begins to love the Word and consume the Word in a way that we’ve never loved or consumed it before? Answer. Gospel renewal!
- **“Gospel renewal or revival is an intensification of the normal operations of the Spirit (conviction of sin, regeneration, sanctification, assurance of grace) through the ordinary means of grace (preaching the Word, prayer, and the sacraments).”**