



Christian Meditation

"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.

— Joshua 1:8

English translations of the Bible contain in excess of 775,000 words from the original Greek and Hebrew, each authored by God. And, of course, we are commanded to obey and put into personal practice His entire Word. How is that possible? Fortunately, one of the unique things about Scripture is that it not only contains God's requirements but explains how to achieve them. In this case, it must be noted that Scripture rarely states to merely **read** God's Word but most often asserts to **meditate** on it. In fact, as we see the commandment provided through Joshua, meditation on God's Word is required in order to successfully "*do according to all that is written in it*". Why does this come as a surprise to so many present-day Christians?

Unfortunately, for the past 50 years or so, our culture has accepted the definition and practices of meditation as provided through Psychology and Eastern Mysticism. We think of it as being something by which we isolate ourselves and exclude all distractions that take away from being alone in a pursuit for a feeling of inner peace and calm. The ultimate goal is often expressed as achieving "nothingness". Biblical meditation differs in that it is excluding all things which distract not just from God's Word, but our personal conversations with God Himself. Its ultimate goal is to achieve peace and calm in our relationship with the Godhead. (This is the basis for the main objection to the concept of "Christian Yoga", something pursuing a non-biblical inner state.)

The Hebrew word for "*meditate*" ("*siah*", #2255) conveys the notion to rehearse or go over something repeatedly in one's mind. This personal contemplation may be performed either inwardly or outwardly but involves our prayer life with the Lord in combination with active use of God's Word throughout the whole process. In other words, as we seek God's voice for our personal situations, we are incorporating that which He has already spoken on the subject. When we do so, how rare it is that we find ourselves experiencing something which God has not already addressed. Like the many examples of David in the Psalms, we find ourselves seeking God to fulfill what He has already spoken rather than instituting something new for us.

A Time for God

*I will meditate **on all Your work**
And muse on Your deeds.
— Psalm 77:12*

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*Make me understand the way of Your precepts,
So I will meditate **on Your wonders**.
— Psalm 119:27*

*On **the glorious splendor of Your majesty**
And **on Your wonderful works**, I will meditate.
— Psalm 145:5*

But one of the ways in which biblical meditation differs from the world's concept is that we are to spend some of that time focusing on all that God has created and performed in the past, both in our personal life and history in general. It reminds us of His faithfulness to do all that He has spoken in His Word to incentivize our faith in our present circumstances. In fact, at some point, it is to become the outward, visible expression of our praise.

*Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;
Speak of all His wonders.
— Psalm 105:2*

Consider that if we consistently revisit God as the Creator and Author of not just the entire physical universe but down to our individual person, we will reinforce our faith that everything is under His control and is, in fact, the only answer to every need and issue. That which God has performed in the past, whether in the course of our short life or the larger scale of all of history past, is something we are supposed to contemplate through the lens of His Word.

When Meditation Becomes Devotion

*O how I love Your law!
It is **my meditation all the day**.
— Psalm 119:97*

*²But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he **meditates day and night**.
³He 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.
— Psalm 1:2-3*

Biblical meditation is not just limited to a specific time set aside for prayer, but if practiced regularly, becomes a lifestyle of devotion. Notice that it expands to “*all the day*” and “*day and night*” because it becomes our steady source of nourishment— “*like a tree planted by streams of water*”.

This total commitment to meditating on His Word was featured in the original commandment to Joshua, “*meditate on it day and night*”. (Josh. 1:8) This was the way to achieve the goals of not allowing Scripture to “*depart from your mouth*” and “*to do according to all that is written in it*” so that then “*you will have success*”. For those looking for the means to achieve spiritual success and perfection, this is as close to a “magic formula” the Bible gets. Our failure and struggles is directly linked to not just casually reading God's Word but forsaking a commitment that leads to meditation on His Word day and night. Such are revisiting the past works and wonders of the Lord, evolving an

authentic attitude of praise and worship, and becoming intimate with all that God has spoken on any given subject.

Achieving this level of commitment goes a long way toward explaining how we can change even the worst sinful habits lingering from our old life. We are constantly confronted with the truth of God's Word and in an unbroken conversation with the Lord concerning this personal issue. When we do not meditate on His Word, we are trying to fight this battle in our own strength and knowledge. Subjecting it to the immersion of God's Word is the means to overcome even the most egregious and practiced sin. It is actually very therapeutic, guiding us towards overcoming any sinful lifestyle or habit.

Hearing His Voice

Anyone desiring to make the argument that the Bible is not essential to their faith in God needs to provide a valid explanation of why the largest chapter of the Bible, Psalm 119, is completely devoted to the organization of and meditation on God's Word. It contains 22 8-verse lessons on how to incorporate His Word into the believer's life, each of which has a parallel Walk with the Word Bible study. (Begin with "[Psalm 119:1-8, 9-16, & 17-24 • Aleph, Beth & Gimel](#)".)

If we carefully study the entire Psalm, we discover that there are 8 categories into which all of God's Word is assigned. A Scripture may qualify for more than one category, even all eight, but they all fit into at least one of them.

*I will meditate on **Your precepts**
And regard Your ways.
— Psalm 119:15*

A "precept" ("piqqud", #6490, used 21 times) is the responsibility God has laid upon His people which are required **AFTER** they have come into a personal relationship with Him. The Hebrew word is derived from a word meaning "to inspect".

*And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments,
Which I love;
And I will meditate on **Your statutes**.
— Psalm 119:48*

A "statute" ("choq", #2706 & *chuaqqah*, #2708, used 22 times) is a specifically prescribed task or boundary of a permanent nature. These are things required such as sacrifices or holy day observances or the establishing of limiting guidelines such as who to marry, who to associate with, etc.

*My eyes anticipate the night watches,
That I may meditate on **Your word**.
— Psalm 119:148*

A "word" ("dabar", #1697 & "imrah", #565a—"speech/utterance", used 18 & 18 times) is a matter or cause spoken of directly by God. The dual use of "dabar" and "imrah" may be describing that what is spoken by God is continuously active whether spoken in general in the past or specifically to an individual in the present.

*But his delight is in **the law of the LORD**,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
— Psalm 1:2*

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A "law" ("torah", #8451, used 25 times). While this most certainly can mean Scripture in general, it is important to note that "torah" is not just the formal name of the Law given through Moses but also means "teaching" or "instruction". One of the amazing things is to consider that God provided Scripture as His instruction and personal teaching on how to live. Some scholars make the further distinction between the "ceremonial" law (the OT rites and ceremonies of worship), the "judicial" law (civil policy of the nation of Israel), and the "moral" law (God's binding of human conduct at all times). (Dt. 17:18-20)

*⁴⁷I shall delight in **Your commandments**
Which I love.
⁴⁸And I shall lift up my hands to **Your commandments**
Which I love;
And I will meditate on Your statutes.
— Psalm 119:47-48*

A "commandment" ("mitsvah", #4687, used 22 times) is that thing which God has spoken which details the responsibilities of human beings to live in a covenant relationship with Him. Especially in the Old Testament, commandments defined how Israel was to live in a covenant relationship with God, this being expanded upon in the New Testament for the Church. It was the means of consecrating God's people to Himself. God specifically states that those who observe His commandments are "*those who love Me*". (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10)

*How blessed are those who observe **His testimonies**
Who seek Him with all their heart.
— Psalm 119:2*

A "testimony" ("edah", #713b & "eduwth", #715, used 22 times) can be thought of in the context of "eye witness testimony". It is a powerful statement about the corroboration of the truth in all aspects of God's Word as provided by His personal witness of their detail, effects, and consequences.

*¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard **Your ways**.
— Psalm 119:15*

A "way" ("derek", #1870 and "orach", #734, used 7 times) in Hebrew refers specifically to a well-traveled path or road. It is a reference to human beings' actions which lead to staying on or straying from God's path. It is the course which God reveals as right such as Christ's admonition to enter the "narrow gate" rather than the "broad". (Mt. 7:13-14)

The studied context of Psalm 119 and its inclusion of the whole Word of God in a believer's life is why you may have heard the old adage, "Prayer is the way we speak to God; the Bible is the way He speaks to us". These categories combine to make it impossible to ignore the fact that our life is to be completely permeated by His Word by constantly meditating on it, seeking it from the heart, and achieving this by incorporating Scripture into every facet of our life, especially in the course of practiced meditation. But can you see that such incorporation of His Word into our every thought and action will not just change us, but re-orient our focus from the world's ways to knowing and carrying out His will and ways? We would know His already spoken Word on every subject.

While You Wait, Meditate

This is the primary activity we should engage in during those times we are waiting on the Lord. As the old saying goes, “God answers all prayer but sometimes says, ‘No’, or ‘Wait’”.

Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD.
— Psalm 27:14

“And now, Lord, for what do I ***wait***?
My hope is in You.
— Psalm 39:7

I ***wait*** for the LORD, my soul does ***wait***
And in His word do I hope.
— Psalm 130:5

The root of the Hebrew word “wait (#6960, “qavah”) does not mean to stop all activity and take up a completely silent position but to be looking for with eager expectation. *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* describes it, “Waiting with steadfast endurance is a great expression of faith. It means enduring patiently in confident hope that God will decisively act for the salvation of his people. Waiting involves the very essence of a person’s being, his soul”.

Yet those who ***wait*** for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.
— Isaiah 40:31

Biblical “waiting” enables us to be “re-charged”, so to speak, to carry out His will and work. An army cannot fight on endlessly without regrouping and resupply under its commander. A pause in the action does not necessarily mean an end to the mission.

A Time of Honesty.

We do not have to manufacture a feel-good praise for God, but when the subject is personally painful, this particular Hebrew word for “meditate” is instead rendered “complain”.

Evening and morning and at noon, ***I will complain*** and
murmur,
And He will hear my voice.
— Psalm 55:17

“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit,
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
— Job 7:11

When we examine the context of when such stellar examples of faith such as David or Job “complain”, they are always expressing the perceived contradiction of their

circumstances to God's Word and ways and it takes the form of a formal complaint in court as presented to the Judge. Biblical meditation involves bringing to God the way we honestly feel, but with the goal of seeking His guidance on how to properly reconcile it to His Word. This is why the incorporation of God's Word is so important as it will speak directly to any condition we experience.

¹³But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time;

O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness,

Answer me with Your saving truth.

¹⁴Deliver me from the mire and do not let me sink;

May I be delivered from my foes and from the deep waters.

¹⁵May the flood of water not overflow me

Nor the deep swallow me up,

Nor the pit shut its mouth on me.

¹⁶Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good;

According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me,

— Psalm 69:13-16

Summary

Any believer who practices biblical meditation by incorporating God's Word as described here is going to find, as a side benefit, that they will become a Bible expert. They will not just become familiar with its structure but know how to practically apply it. And because they eventually master all that it says in order to live like Christ, they will be able to properly handle more advanced concepts such as the prophetic portions of the Bible. Such will be prepared for all circumstances both personally and within the greater context of God's will and ways because their life has been organized around His Word.

In Him,

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