

**Life in the Word**  
**Week 3**  
**“Christian Meditation”**

J.C. Ryle (*Bible Reading*) – “Next to praying there is nothing so important in practical religion as Bible-reading. God has mercifully given us a book which is “able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). By reading that book we may learn what to believe, what to be, and what to do; how to live with comfort, and how to die in peace. Happy is that man who possesses a Bible! Happier still is he who reads it!”

Ephesians 3:17-21 – “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Jerome - “The Scriptures are shallow enough for a babe to come and drink without fear of drowning and deep enough for a theologians to swim in without ever touching the bottom.”

**Meditation Scriptures:**

- Joshua 1:8 - “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.”
- Psalm 1:2 – “Blessed...[is the man whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 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 119:23 – “...your servant will meditate on your statutes.”
- Psalm 119:78 – “...as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.”
- Psalm 119:115 – “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.”
- Ps 63:5 – “My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, <sup>6</sup> when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; <sup>7</sup> for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. <sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.”

**What is Christian Meditation?**

- The Hebrew word for meditation in all those verses is hagah – ,הָגָה
  - Means to growl or coo over something, mutter, muse over something
  - You take it in!
  - Meditation involves tasting, eating.
- Revelation 10:9 - “So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.”

John Piper (*A God-Entranced Vision of All Things*) - “The tendency of most Christians in our hurried, overburdened times is to close the Bible as soon as we’ve read it and turn to the next thing on our to-do list. If pressed, we’d usually have to admit — immediately after closing the Bible — that we don’t remember a thing we’ve read. Reading alone will seldom give us the encounter with God, the spiritual nourishment, that our souls need. Reading is the exposure to Scripture — and that’s the starting place — but meditation is the absorption of Scripture. And it is the absorption of Scripture that causes the water of the Word of God to percolate deeply into the parched soil of the soul and refresh it.”

Saint Bonaventure - "To know much and taste nothing, of what use is that?"

## **Scripture Meditation Throughout Christian History**

Puritans - Joel Beeke (*The Puritan Practice of Meditation*) - “The Puritans devoted scores of pages to the benefits, excellencies, usefulness, advantages, or improvements of meditation.”

Jonathan Edwards

- Kyle Stroble (*Formed for the Glory of God*) - “[Edwards saw] meditation [as] an activity of the heart (Ps 4:4; Lk 2:19). As an activity that seeks to unite the understanding and the will to an affectionate knowledge of God...”
- Jonathan Edwards - “When we meditate, then we act as reasonable creatures, then reason acts, then the soul is in exercise. Shall we have souls within us, and let them lie dead without any exercise? We ought to spend much more time in meditation; we ought to meditate on God’s Word day and night (Ps 1:2).”
- “I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence to see the wonders contained in it, and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders”
- “Sometimes, only mentioning a single word caused my heart to burn within me; or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God...”

Charles Spurgeon (*Evening by Evening*) - “Do not many of you read the Bible in a very hurried way--just a little bit, and off you go! Do you not soon forget what you have read, and lose what little effect it seemed to have? How few of you are resolved to get at its soul, its juice, its life, its essence--and to drink in its meaning. Well, if you do not do that--then your reading is miserable reading, dead reading, unprofitable reading; it is not reading at all, the name would be misapplied. May the blessed Spirit give you repentance concerning this thing... We must meditate, brethren. These grapes will yield no wine until we tread upon them. These olives must be put under the wheel, and pressed again and again--that the oil may flow therefrom. In a dish of nuts, you may know which nut has been eaten by a worm--because there is a little hole which the worm has punctured through the shell. It is just a little hole, and then inside there is the living worm eating up the kernel. In the same way, it is a grand thing to bore through the shell of the letter of Scripture--and then to live inside feeding upon the kernel. I would wish to be such a little worm as that, living within and upon the Word of God, having bored my way through the shell, and having reached the innermost mystery of the blessed gospel.”

George Muller (*Soul Nourishment First*) - “Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be

comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experiential communion with the Lord."

### **How do you do it then? Lots of ways. Here's one...**

- Think circular, and not linear, weaving in and out through those four things

### **Read**

- Less is more! Don't take big chunks! Think "bite-sized."
- Be aware of the book's context (intro, surrounding passages)
- Read the passage 3-4 times
- Take your time, read slowly, read out loud, emphasizing different words, rolling them around in your heart, focusing, absorbing
- Not a McDonald's drive through, but a candlelit dinner!

### **Reflect**

- Think about it, taste it, notice the connections between the words, the phrases
- The Holy Spirit will often cause something to stand out. Stay with that, *respond* to that.
- If it's a Bible story or metaphor (egs, OT, Psalm 23, the gospels), see if you can step *into* that story - taste it, feel it, sense it (the emotions, the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches)
- Use your imagination
- Pay attention to what might come up inside *you* in that text, the Holy Spirit working in combination with the Word, searching your heart, convicting, healing, transforming (Is there some resistance in you? Particular emotion? Memory? Don't stuff it. Give it to God.)
- When you reflect, it might help to ask yourself a couple questions:
  - What kind of God would say do this or say this?
  - How does this affect my relationship with God and/or with others?
- If you are confused by something, maybe take a quick look at your study Bible note, but this is not the time to look just at notes and commentaries.
- Swim in the word! Taste the word! Eat the word!

### **Respond**

- Simply respond to God in prayer, a simple lifting of your reflections (your heart) to God as you go
- "Wow, that is so good, Father, tastes so good!"
- "Will you help me, Father, to taste that, help me to *do* that?"
- "There's something in me that resists that, or scares me."
- "That makes me think I'm probably not a Christian, or reminds me of something."
- This is a relationship. And your Father loves you! Give those things to your Father.

### **Rest**

- You just rest in what God showed you, rest in the presence of Christ
- You move beyond words to a quiet communion, where no words are needed.
- I would recommend you just be quiet for a little longer
- Just bask in God's Word