

# The Spiritual Disciplines

## *Memorization & Meditation*

*To Consider: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." God*

The goal of both memorization and meditation is obedience. James clearly teaches that hearing God's Word is necessary but not sufficient for living a godly life (**Jm 1:22-25**). We must be doers of God's Word and not merely listeners. Of course we cannot obey what we do not know or understand. Therefore, memorization and meditation are not ends in themselves; they are tools to inform our thoughts with God's thoughts, thus moving us closer to obedient living.

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### *Memorization*

Everyone can memorize. It takes no special skill. It's often the case that we don't memorize Scripture, not because we can't, but because we haven't experienced the value of it in our lives. Of course, we don't experience the value of it because we've not done it, and so the cycle goes. However, the difference between memorizing Scripture and knowing Scripture is the difference between consuming a good meal and merely tasting it. When we consume food we receive all the benefits of the nutrients and gain strength. **Jer 15:16** says, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart."

### *The Benefits of Memorization*

- *Memorization supplies spiritual power over sin.* The Psalmist tells us that he "stored up" God's Word in his heart "that I might not sin against you" (**Ps 119:11**). When tempted, Jesus immediately applied God's Word as the primary weapon against the Devil (**Mt 4:7, 10**; see also, **Eph 6:17**). Moreover, God's Word gives us an authoritative basis to deny false teachings, just as Jesus did when Satan misapplied Scripture (**Mt 4:5-7**).
- *Memorization helps us distinguish right from wrong.* God's Word sheds moral light on life, giving us wisdom and discernment (**Ps 119:24, 104-105; Rom 7:7; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12**).
- *Memorization provides a basis for meditation* and gives us a way of setting our "minds on things above, not on earthly things" (**Col 3:2**; also **Philip 4:8**). The psalmist proclaims, "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day" (**Ps 119:97**).
- *Memorization demonstrates we value God's Word in our lives.* God told Moses and us to take his Word seriously. **Deut 6:6-9** reads, "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Though this text is likely to be applied metaphorically and not literally, the notion is clear that God's Word must permeate our thoughts, attitudes, and behavior.
- *Memorization emboldens our witness for Christ.* Peter quoted from Scripture when testifying to God's grace at Pentecost (**Acts 2:14-40**). In Pisidian Antioch Paul quoted Scripture repeatedly showing the truth of Christ as Lord and Messiah (**Acts 13:13-41**). When attacked by the Jews one week later, Paul again quoted Scripture to substantiate God's truth (**Acts 13:44-47**). See also **Acts 4:31; 16:32; 2 Cor. 10:4-5**.

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- *Memorization sustains us against a world that resists God.* Although **Ps 1:1-3** speaks to meditation, the implantation of God's Word via memorization is presupposed, and is a beautiful picture of the stability and prosperity that the Word of God brings. "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. 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."

### Meditation

Biblically, meditation is the prayerful, willful, and persistent focus upon the works of God or the Word of God that results in a sense of wonder and amazement at the movement of God.

Consider:

MEDITATION IS NOT . . .	MEDITATION IS . . .
Emptying your mind of all thought	Filling your mind with God's thoughts
Visualizing your own reality	Focusing upon God's reality found in Scripture
Fantasizing about your hopes & dreams	Resting in God's faithful promises from His Word
Involving only one person: You	Involving two persons: You and God
Passively waiting on any thought or feeling to be revealed to you	Actively pursuing God's thoughts and feelings already revealed to you in Scripture

- *Meditation first and foremost moves the soul to gain spiritual insight into the wonders of God's glory.* Meditation gives us "spiritual insight that moves the mind and soul from admiration to adoration of God's excellencies. Persons who are 'spiritually enlightened . . . [do] not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but [have] a sense of the gloriousness of God . . . There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness' (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. II, Sermon I, p. 14). Spiritual insight is having a profound sense of God's perfections and beauty. This Spirit-ed illumination does not stop at the corridor of the mind but moves deep into the caverns of the soul where authentic spiritual worship takes place." "My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night" (**Ps 63:5-6**).
- *Meditation gives us an objective basis for truth.* When meditatively praying before his crucifixion, Jesus asks "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (**Jn 17:17**). Paul exhorts Timothy to rightly handle the "word of truth" (**2 Tim 2:15**) and the Psalmist exclaims "the sum of your word is truth" (**Ps 119:160**).
- *Meditation helps us recall God's activity in creation and redemption.* "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands" (**Ps 143:5**). Or again, **Ps 77:12**, "I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds."
- *Meditation seeks to align our hearts with God's heart.* "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight" (**Ps 19:14**; also **104:34**).
- *Meditation keeps us focused on God rather than our defense during times of trouble.* Jesus instructed his disciples not to spend undue time on their response to persecution (**Lk 21:14**; see also, **Ps 119:23**).

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- *Meditation on God's Word, more than any other discipline, accommodates obedient living.* True success (not always materially, but certainly spiritually and morally) is promised to those whose thoughts are governed by God's thoughts. **Joshua 1:8** explicitly affirms a direct connection between meditation and prosperity. The goal of meditation is obedience and the result of obedience is blessing. If you're not experiencing spiritual blessings, then look at the obedient factor in your life. If you're failing in obedience, then take a serious look at your thought life!

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### *Reflection/Direction/Decision*

- What are some of the things that occupy your mind regularly when you're driving to work, sitting idly, or waiting in line? How could you use this time for memorization or meditation?
- If you've not memorized more than a few verses in your Christian life, do you think this may reflect the value you put on God's Word? What might you change to add the disciplines of memorization or meditation?
- After finding a quiet place where you can be alone, read the following passages slowly. Consider memorizing and meditating on some or all them.
  - **(Deut 31:6, 8)** Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you ... It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.
  - **(Ps 4:8)** In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.
  - **(Ps 34:17-18)** When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
  - **(Is 12:2-3)** Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
  - **(Pr 29:25)** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.
  - **(Is 40:28-31)** Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
  - **(Mt 11:28-30)** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
  - **(Lk 12:25-26)** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?
  - **(Rom 8:18)** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
  - **(2 Cor 4:7-10)** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to

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despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.