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FROM MEMORY TO MEDITATION

CULTIVATING THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL MEDITATION

FROM MEMORY TO MEDITATION

CULTIVATING THE PRACTICE OF
BIBLICAL MEDITATION

Mount Calvary Baptist Church
Man of the Word
Spring 2018

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FROM MEMORY TO MEDITATION

THEME

God's Word promises special blessings for those who will *meditate* on Scripture. Our theme this cycle focuses on moving beyond the *reading* and *memorization* of Scripture and Scriptural truths, to the intentional practice of Biblical *meditation*.

THEME PASSAGE

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.
The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1

TIME

9 weeks: January 27 – March 31, 2018

GOALS

1. Develop a mutually edifying relationship with my prayer partner through prayer and encouragement.
2. Develop, recover, or strengthen the discipline and *delight* of Biblical Meditation in my own spiritual walk.
3. Equip myself with scriptural truth and practices to incorporate Biblical Meditation into family and personal worship.

MY PRAYER PARTNER (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick, Pastor John Tipton, and Chris Baker, elder. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President	Malcom Evans
Vice President	Jerry Broere
Treasurer	Ken Brackbill
Food Director	David Baker
Project Coordinator	Jesse Keck
Manual Director	Timothy Hughes

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

PREFACE

This booklet is a nine-week study designed both to kindle in our hearts a desire to practice Biblical meditation and to give us tools and ideas to better practice this essential Christian discipline. Each week's resources consists of:

- SCRIPTURE READING – A passage pertaining to the week's article to be read and considered throughout the week (and perhaps used during family worship)
- TRUTH FOR MEDITATION – A verse or passage of Scripture that deals with Biblical Meditation
- BOOK READING—
 - *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* (Reformation Heritage, 2016)
- QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION – A motivational quote from the book we are reading that underscores the goals for this cycle
- M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2015 using the M'Cheyne system
- ARTICLES – Testimonies and devotionals on the theme, by Mt. Calvary Baptist Church men

Don't let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can't keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

May God use this emphasis to kindle in our hearts—and in our families—a delight in meditating on God's Word!

Timothy Hughes, January 2018

OPEN OUR EYES

A PRAYER

O GRACIOUS LORD,

Open our eyes,
And show us wonderful things from Your Word.

Your Word is perfect,
And able to turn our souls away from sin.
It is sure, firm, bedrock truth;
And even though we are simple people,
It gives us wisdom.

Your laws are true, just, and right,
And they cause our hearts to spring up for joy!
Your commandments are pure,
Enlightening our eyes to see good and evil the way You see them.

Teach us what you mean,
Give us understanding,
And help us to hear Your voice
In Your laws, Your poems, Your histories,
In Your warnings, parables, songs, proverbs, epistles,
In Your prophecies and promises—
All Your words.

Help us to see Your hand of providence directing our way,
And always giving us what we need.
In hard times and in pleasant times, help us always to connect
Your Word to our circumstance, to really know You in all our ways,
To view all of life through the lense of Scripture.

Open our eyes, Lord.
Show us more of Christ, of His love for us.
Show Him to us in the Old Testament, every page a burning beacon
Pointing through the shadows to the Savior.

Show Him to us in the New Testament, too—
Every page a bright and glorious witness to His saving power.
Show us more of Calvary, Lord, as we meditate on Your Word.

Show us Your promises,
And give us faith to believe every one of them.
Shows us the meaning of Your words, as we meditate on preaching;
Give us grace to obey them, as we hear them explained to us.

And show us more of ourselves.
We tremble to think that You will,
Because there are dark corners in the human heart,
And we fear to see sometimes what is in our own.
Use Your Word—believed, meditated on, obeyed—
To cast down every evil imagination, and every thought that exalts itself
Against the Lordship of Your Son, King Jesus.

As we meditate on Your Word,
Use it to make us more like Your Son.
As we hide it in our hearts,
Use it to keep us from sinning against You.

In all of this, we plead for the help of Your indwelling Holy Spirit
To guide us, illumine us, teach us Your words, and point us to Christ.

We, the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church,
Commit to value Your words—all of them—more than great wealth.
We will taste them and confess them to be sweeter than honey.
Help us to treasure them as we should.

Let the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our hearts,
Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer.

Open our eyes, O Gracious God,
And show us wonderful things out of Your Word.

WEEK 1

WEEK 1

January 28 – February 3

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 119:1-8

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.*

Psalms 119:18

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)

1-10 “The Definition, Nature, and Kinds of Meditation”

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“The most important kind of meditation is daily, deliberate meditation, engaged in at set times.” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 8)

“A set and deliberate Meditation, is a serious applying of the mind to some spiritual or heavenly subject, discoursing thereof with thy self, to the end thine heart may be warmed, thine affections quickened, and thy resolutions heightened to a greater love of God, hatred of sin, etc.” (Thomas Gouge, quoted in *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 9)

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Jan 28	Gen 29	Matthew 28	Esther 5	Acts 28
Jan 29	Gen 30	Mark 1	Esther 6	Rom 1
Jan 30	Gen 31	Mark 2	Esther 7	Rom 2
Jan 31	Gen 32	Mark 3	Esther 8	Rom 3
Feb 01	Gen 33	Mark 4	Esther 9-10	Rom 4
Feb 02	Gen 34	Mark 5	Job 1	Rom 5
Feb 03	Gen 35-36	Mark 6	Job 2	Rom 6

WHAT IS BIBLICAL MEDITATION?

TIMOTHY HUGHES

To meditate on God's Word is to *think* about it. Not just to read it. Not just to hear it. Not just to possess a copy of it. To meditate is to focus on a part of the Word, to pray over it, to ponder words, phrases, verses, paragraphs, chapters, stories. Meditation is not disinterested examination. It is passionate exploration. Nor is *Biblical* meditation a mentally passive exercise—instead it's a very mentally active spiritual discipline! Meditation is an active treasuring of, searching out, and seeking for the meaning of God's Word in order to help me love God more, experience the riches of His Word better, and embrace its implications for my life more thoroughly and more genuinely. Meditation involves dependence on the Holy Spirit and the intent to take the Word and make it my own. Meditation, as Pastor Minnick has taught us, involves "mental conversation with myself and with God about the applications of His words to my ways." **Meditation is a discipline that binds Bible reading and prayer together.** And it is a God-given gift that helps take Scripture from my *head* and put it into my *heart*, and then to my *feet* as it works its way through my life.

Though there are many Scriptural *topics* for meditation (this booklet will explore a few general categories to help you get started), there are two basic *kinds* of meditation.

First, there is spontaneous meditation throughout the day, a returning of my mind to the Word, often prompted by circumstances. It is impossible to do this kind of meditation without previous memorization of Scripture.

Second, there is intentional, focused meditation that should be part of personal daily worship, perhaps at a set time. This kind of meditation can take God's words and drill them deep into our hearts. Very often, we will find that it is nearly impossible to meditate long on a passage without discovering that we've begun to memorize it in ways that will enable us to carry it with us throughout the day!

On a practical note, if you have trouble getting started with meditation, *start by asking questions.* For **spontaneous meditation**, learn to prompt yourself to think in Bible terms. You could ask yourself, *What does the Bible say about this kind of situation?*; or, *What is true about God that I need to remember given what I am facing today?*; or, *Does the Bible have anything to*

say that would guide me in this decision?; or even, What truth about God does this beautiful scene remind me of? **For deliberate, focused meditation in set-aside time for personal worship**, you can begin by asking questions about the passage. You might ask, *Why does God use this particular word?; or, What truth about God does this passage reveal?; or, Is there a warning in this passage for me?; or, How does this verse apply to me today?; or, How does this verse connect with the previous verse? or, How can I turn this passage into a prayer back to the Lord?; or, This verse says to cast all my cares upon the Lord—what are the cares I am right now holding on to that I need to commit to the Lord?; or, This verse teaches that the Lord is the Beginning and the End—what does that mean—and how can I live joyfully in light of that truth today?; or, This verse is identifying a sin in my life—what is the antidote it prescribes for that sin?; or, This verse says to let my life be free of covetousness, and the next verse reminds me of God’s promise to always be with me—what is it about God’s promised presence that should cure me of covetousness—and how does this tie in with the Bible’s teaching that covetousness is idolatry?* Allow the questions of one passage to be answered by another. Seek, as you grow in meditation, to bring more memorized Scripture to bear as you encounter questions in a less familiar passage. Ask God for wisdom and illumination. As part of your meditation, think about how the passage applies to your life and your situation. And remember, this is a time for your *heart* be engaged along with your head. Otherwise, it’s not really meditation.

For more ideas and teaching on what meditation is and how to do it, I hope you’ll pick up the recommended book for this cycle. It’s very short, very inexpensive, and very helpful. But even if you aren’t able to do that, just keep asking questions, and thoughtfully and prayerfully looking for answers in Scripture. You may be surprised at the truths God will open your eyes to and let you see! Be ready to write them down, in a journal or perhaps on a card you can carry with you to prompt spontaneous meditation throughout your day. These moments of meditation could be some of the richest moments of your Christian life. Don’t you want that?

Let’s let this be a life-changing few weeks for us. Let’s ask the Lord for illumination. Let’s commit, or re-commit, ourselves to this spiritual discipline of Biblical meditation. And let’s do so with a spirit of anticipation, knowing that the Lord truly will delight, *these weeks, and throughout our Christian lives*, to open our eyes, and to show us wonderful things from His Word.

WEEK 2

February 4 – February 10

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:9-16

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD
And to meditate in His temple.*

Psalm 27:4

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)
10-13 "The Duty and Necessity of Meditation"

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

"We should meditate on the Word as a letter God has written to us. 'We must not run it over in haste, but meditate upon God's wisdom in inditing, and his love in sending it to us,' wrote Thomas Watson." (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 10)

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 04	Gen 37	Mark 7	Job 3	Rom 7
Feb 05	Gen 38	Mark 8	Job 4	Rom 8
Feb 06	Gen 39	Mark 9	Job 5	Rom 9
Feb 07	Gen 40	Mark 10	Job 6	Rom 10
Feb 08	Gen 41	Mark 11	Job 7	Rom 11
Feb 09	Gen 42	Mark 12	Job 8	Rom 12
Feb 10	Gen 43	Mark 13	Job 9	Rom 13

MOTIVATION FOR MEDITATION

PETER DAVIS

What are the Biblical motivations for meditation?

Actually, everyone meditates already. A person's mind can't *not* meditate on something. So, I'm actually asking, what motivates me to resolve to meditate on *Scripture* instead of just letting my mind wander? Why should I bother to take time to write a verse on a 3x5 card and have it often before me? There are a number of reasons:

Motivation #1—Application to Real Life

I recall times I was meditating on scripture and a specific truth intersected with a specific need in life. The application of Scripture, and the power of Scripture, gave victory, insight, and growth. It met the need of the moment. Yes, life actually does work the way Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17, KJV).

Motivation #2—To Be Obedient and Prosperous

*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

Notice the phrase "so that you may be careful to do." How careful am I to obey? Fully obeying Scripture requires more than just instant understanding. We meditate so that we can "be careful to do according to all" that God is asking. Only then does God promise the prosperity and success.

If you've given your life to do God's will, God wants you to prosper and be successful. But meditation is essential for success, or He wouldn't have commanded meditation as He did here.

Motivation #3—To satisfy my soul

*My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips,
When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches*

Psalms 63:5-6

O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Psalm 119:97

Haven't you known the soul satisfaction of God's Word? Don't we all want that more often. When someone has eaten steak, the satisfaction itself is enough motivation to make him want it again. Recall those times and turn your mind to the Word again. It is like honey to the soul.

Motivation #4: To please God with my thoughts

Let my meditation be pleasing to Him

Psalm 104:34

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight

Psalm 19:14

... Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

My heart is deceitful and desperately sick (Jer. 17:9). Does that scare you? If I don't resolve to turn my mind to God's Word, I will probably start thinking the wrong thing. You can't root out sinful thoughts by just creating a vacuum in your mind. We fill our minds with Scripture, and that pushes out sinful thoughts.

Motivation #5: To have greater understanding

I have more insight than all my teachers,

For Your testimonies are my meditation.

Psalm 119:99

The implication of this verse is that without meditation, your understanding is not as good. When you go about your day meditating on Scripture, God's truth intersects with multiple practical issues of life. This gives a breadth of understanding that you just can't get any other way. The psalmist is saying that someone who does this can have more understanding even than his *teachers* who fail to meditate on God's Word (of course, a teacher *who meditates on the Word* is a great blessing!).

May the Psalmist's prayer be ours:

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,

To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.

Psalm 27:4

WEEK 3

February 11 – February 17

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:17-24

TRUTH FOR 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

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)

13-19 “The Manner of Meditation”: Frequency and Time, Preparation

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“If Joshua, as a busy commander, was ordered by God to meditate on His law day and night, shouldn’t we also delight in meditating on God’s truth every morning and evening?” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pgs. 13-14)

“Treasure up a stock of scriptural texts and spiritual truths. Seek grace to live out David’s confession in Psalm 119:11: ‘Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.’” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pgs. 17-18)

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 11	Gen 44	Mark 14	Job 10	Rom 14
Feb 12	Gen 45	Mark 15	Job 11	Rom 15
Feb 13	Gen 46	Mark 16	Job 12	Rom 16
Feb 14	Gen 47	Luke 1:1-38	Job 13	1 Cor 1
Feb 15	Gen 48	Luke 1:39-80	Job 14	1 Cor 2
Feb 16	Gen 49	Luke 2	Job 15	1 Cor 3
Feb 17	Gen 50	Luke 3	Job 16-17	1 Cor 4

MEDITATION ON PURPOSE

DAVID MINNICK

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

1 Timothy 4:15-16, KJV

“The hardest part of meditating is remembering to do it,” I recall remarking to a friend several years ago. “My mind is nearly always distracted with other things.” Executing the solemn task of meditating on God’s Word requires more than just a knowledge that you should engage in it. Meditation never occurs by accident; it only ever occurs *on purpose*. Meditation requires intent. You must make it your solemn intent to meditate if you are to succeed in it. It requires discipline. The structure of 1 Timothy 4 makes this point clear. The chapter has three major sections. In verses 1-6, Paul describes for Timothy the oncoming rush of a great apostasy. Men will actually abandon the faith to welcome demonic doctrines in its place! In view of this coming apostasy, Paul exhorts Timothy to discipline himself for godliness (vvs. 6–10). Terms denoting purposeful exertion appear throughout this section: “discipline,” “bodily discipline,” “labor,” “strive.” Each of these words calls Timothy to an *active* and *disciplined* pursuit of godliness for this is the only real means of self-defense against the coming apostasy. The third section of the chapter (vss. 11–16) specifies the means by which Timothy may guard himself and his congregation against this apostasy: a ministerial example of Christian maturity, attention to the public reading of Scripture, employment of spiritual gifts, meditation, and self-watch. Our concern in this article is with meditation (1 Timothy 4:15).¹ In view of what Paul says to Timothy in this chapter, we can confidently arrive at

¹ In verse 15, the NASB translates the command as “take pains with these things.” The only other time this Greek verb occurs in the New Testament is in Acts 4:25 which is a quotation of Psalms 2:1. The Hebrew verb in Psalm 2:1 is the same as “meditate” in Psalm 1:2. One Greek lexicon gives the following definition for the verb: “to keep on giving serious consideration to something—‘to ponder, to let one’s mind dwell on, to keep thinking about, to fix one’s attention on’” (LN 30.20).

the following principle regarding meditation: Any spiritual leader who does not purposefully exert himself toward godliness by means of meditation is defenseless against apostasy and is ill-equipped to defend those under his spiritual care.

Two obstacles most directly impede a man who knows he must meditate upon Scripture. First, since meditation occurs in the mind, a man must put the Scripture into his mind before he can meditate upon it. Once there, a man must discipline his mind so that it constantly returns to Scripture as its default. Crossing both of those barriers requires hard work and constant purpose. Several practical measures have helped me to begin to meditate upon Scripture more consistently. The discipline of Scripture memorization is the first and foundational step toward consistent meditation. If you are not actively working to memorize Scripture, you are short-changing yourself in the pursuit of godliness through meditation. I use an electronic todo list (Todoist) to keep myself on track. For several years, I have been adding daily tasks to my todo list that include the text of the verses I want to memorize that week. Last week (as I'm writing this), that was Ephesians 1:5–8, and this week, that's Ephesians 1:9–12. The same task with the Scripture text appears 10 times each day on my todo list. This means I will read through those verses at least ten times each day this week. It also means I am reminded at least ten times throughout the day to meditate upon those verses. It also means that at the end of the week, I have read through them enough times to have memorized them. This practical step has meant for me that I am reminded to meditate as often as I look at my todo list. It also provides a simple means of Scripture memorization. I have also found that an audio Bible on my phone allows me to redeem time when my mind could turn to other things such as when driving. As frequently as I return to my phone, I am reminded that I could be spending my “down time” listening to Scripture rather than letting my mind wander. The iOS apps *Bible.is* and *YouVersion* both include many free audio Bibles including KJV, NIV, NASB, and ESV. Audible.com has several excellent audio Bibles for purchase.

The man who purposes to pursue godliness through meditation is best positioned to defend himself as well as those under his spiritual care

against apostasy. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul is as equally concerned that Timothy escape the coming apostasy as he is that Timothy actively guard those upon his spiritual care from it. Throughout the chapter, Paul's concern for the Ephesian congregation Timothy pastors comes through quite explicitly (vss. 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16). As the shepherd of the sheep, Timothy's own self-disciplined pursuit of godliness *through meditation* will go a long way toward ensuring the spiritual success of those under his care. As husbands, fathers, and church members, each man who reads this article has the responsibility to discipline himself to meditate upon the Scripture not only for the spiritual success of his own soul but also as a means of preserving those around him from spiritual decay.

Many of you could share practical means you use to execute your resolve to meditate, and the Lord is faithful to aid us by bringing the Scriptures to mind in our times of need. The blessed promise to those who do purpose to meditate is that their spiritual profiting will be universally evident. But, a corollary benefit of disciplined pursuit of godliness through meditation is that it forms the solid defense against apostasy for you as well as for those under your spiritual care (1 Timothy 4:16).

WEEK 4

February 18 – February 24

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 119:25-32

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes.

2 Corinthians 1:20a

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)

19-25 “The Manner of Meditation”: Guidelines

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“Select subjects that are most applicable to your present circumstances and that will be most beneficial to your soul” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 20)

“Consider various aspects of your subject: its names, causes, qualities, fruits, and effects. Like Mary, ponder these things in your heart. Think of illustrations, similitudes, and opposites in your mind to enlighten your understanding and enflame your affections.” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pgs. 20-21)

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 18	Ex 1	Luke 4	Job 18	1 Cor 5
Feb 19	Ex 2	Luke 5	Job 19	1 Cor 6
Feb 20	Ex 3	Luke 6	Job 20	1 Cor 7
Feb 21	Ex 4	Luke 7	Job 21	1 Cor 8
Feb 22	Ex 5	Luke 8	Job 22	1 Cor 9
Feb 23	Ex 6	Luke 9	Job 23	1 Cor 10
Feb 24	Ex 7	Luke 10	Job 24	1 Cor 11

MEDITATION ON GOD'S PROMISES

SCOTT JONES

A *promise* is a vow or pledge, the giving of one's word, whether orally or in writing, to another, concerning what he will or will not do. By such word the promisor produces expectation in the promisee. Paul shows in Ephesians 2:12 that God's covenants are of promise. When God establishes a covenant He is making a promise. Catechism 30 shows five covenants God has made: "the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Davidic, and the New." What should you do with these promises of God? You must ground yourself with God's promises by meditating over them until your heart is made sweet with them. There must be deliberate thought concerning each of them and your relationship to them. Such meditation will accomplish several goals in your life.

Meditation on God's promises builds steadfast faith. Faith in God's promise is what God expects, and Abraham had such faith (Rom. 4:3, 16-17). Your meditating on God's promises will produce your unwavering confidence in the faithfulness of God (Heb. 10:23), regardless of contrary circumstances or instructions of God which seem to work against their fulfillment (Rom. 4:20-21; Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham so grounded himself with God's promise that he was enabled to do *everything* God commanded, trusting in God's power, not his own.

Meditation on God's promises cultivates a heart of obedience. Paul explains in Ephesians 6:2 that the fifth commandment is "the first commandment with a promise." God encourages obedience to this command by promising wellness and long life to the one who honors his father and mother (6:3). This compels a youngster to meditate on how this command should be worked out in his youth and in his adulthood. But there are other promises God makes to those who will persist in Christ: God's pleasure and salvation from destruction (Heb. 10:35-39).

Meditation on God's promises sanctifies the heart. Paul's use of God's promises in 2 Cor. 6:14-18 brings him to exhort the Christians of Corinth to sanctify themselves to the Lord (7:1). This shows one major effect of your meditation upon the promises of God is your growth in holiness, marked by a growing distaste for sin along with a growing desire for purity.

Meditation on God's promises builds hope for the future. God has made promises to Israel and Judah; the days are coming when "the righteous Branch of David," Jesus Christ, will "execute justice and righteousness

on the earth" (Jer. 33:15). This promise builds hope for all who have placed their full faith in Christ alone. The Savior will reign on this earth! Let the woes of present regimes spark your meditation on Christ's future reign. Further, Peter reminds you of the promise of the "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" and uses this future hope to encourage your present holy manners (2 Pet. 3:11-14).

Meditation on God's promises yields praise to God. (1) For the Gospel: Jesus our Savior came according to God's promise to the fathers, fulfilled by His resurrection so that forgiveness of sins and justification could be made available to all who believe (Acts 13:23-39). (2) For the Holy Spirit: our Father promised the Holy Spirit, and Jesus sent Him forth upon His disciples (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4-5), as well as to all who believe in Christ (Acts 2:33, 38-39; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13). The Gospel is our means of forgiveness and justification with a perfectly righteous God, and the Holy Spirit's indwelling signifies our reconciliation and favor with God. These truths should move you to magnify Him!

The lack of meditation on God's promises exposes you to a hardened heart. The LORD promised Israel the land of Canaan (Num. 14:16), but this promise obviously was not the focus of their meditation, especially when they waited for the spies' report of the land. Instead of faithfully obeying they rebelled, fearing man instead of the Almighty God who worked marvels in their presence (14:9, 11). They "acted arrogantly; they became stubborn and would not listen to [the LORD'S] commandments" (Neh. 9:16). Yet, God exercised faithfulness to them in the wilderness, graciously provided for them, and brought the second generation into the Promised Land (Neh. 9:17-25). However, they responded with a repetitious cycle of disobedience (Neh. 9:26-30). Israel's history shows that a lack of meditation upon God's promises yields a stubborn heart and a sinful life.

Meditation on God's promises can begin now. God's lovingkindness provides the opportunity to begin meditating upon His promises. God's faithfulness to Israel was behind their opportunity to return to the Land. Those who returned considered the history of their fathers' behavior, and they covenanted to walk in God's Word (9:38-10:31). Begin to meditate on God's promises. Begin with the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants. Ask God to show you the meaning and blessing they are to you. Meditate upon these and other promises until they are established in your heart and you experience their sweetness. Such meditation allows you the blessings of spiritual growth and a softened, obedient heart.

WEEK 5

February 25 – March 3

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:33-40

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

James 1:22-24

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)

25-30 “The Subjects of Meditation”

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“Every sermon is but a preparation for meditation.” (James Ussher quoted in *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 28)

“Why so much preaching is lost among us, and professors can run from sermon to sermon, and are never weary of hearing or reading, and yet have such languishing, starved souls, I know no truer or greater cause than their ignorance and unconscionable neglect of meditation.” (Richard Baxter quoted in *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 28)

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 25	Ex 8	Luke 11	Job 25-26	1 Cor 12
Feb 26	Ex 9	Luke 12	Job 27	1 Cor 13
Feb 27	Ex 10	Luke 13	Job 28	1 Cor 14
Feb 28	Ex 11:1-12:21	Luke 14	Job 29	1 Cor 15
Mar 01	Ex 12:22-51	Luke 15	Job 30	1 Cor 16
Mar 02	Ex 13	Luke 16	Job 31	2 Cor 1
Mar 03	Ex 14	Luke 17	Job 32	2 Cor 2

MEDITATION ON PREACHING

BRIAN COLLINS

Phillip Henry, father of the famed commentator Matthew Henry, was notable for meditating on the preaching he heard. His son, Matthew Henry, recorded in the *Life* of his father, "Besides his frequent preaching of the lectures about him, he was a constant and diligent attendant upon those within his reach, as a hearer; and not only wrote the sermons he heard, but afterwards recorded in his diary, what, in each sermon, reached his heart, affected him, and did him good; adding some proper, pious ejaculations, which were the breathings of his heart, when he meditated upon and prayed over the sermon." Matthew Henry, who followed his father's example in this matter, observed the great benefit that this practice had on his father's walk with the Lord: "His diligent improvement of the word preached contributed, more than any one thing, as a means to his great attainments in knowledge and grace (Matthew Henry *The Life of Rev. Philip Henry*, ed. J. B. Williams [1698; 1828; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974], 49, 52).

Listening to sermons week after week does do a person good even if he cannot remember from week to week the details of what he heard. The repeated exposition of God's Word is bound to have a transforming effect on the way a person thinks if he gives a good and receptive ear and heart to the preaching. Meditation on what has been preached afterward, however, can multiply the effectiveness of the word, as Matthew Henry testified of his father.

There are any number of methods that can be employed to aid meditating on sermons. Philip Henry modeled one approach. He wrote out, as he listened to a sermon, the sermon itself. This was probably not a word-for-word record of the sermon, but it was written out in sufficient detail for Henry to have the sermon before him at a later time for meditation. Philip Henry also recorded in his diary the effect the sermon had on him. Someone who is considering this approach for sermon meditation might buy a notebook into which he records sermons along with the particular aspects of the sermons that most impressed themselves on him. This notebook, especially if pocketable, could then be used throughout the week as an aid to meditation.

Other people may prefer to keep their sermon notes in the margins of their Bibles or in a notebook arranged by biblical book and chapter. The

benefit of this method of note-taking is the ability to recover pastoral teaching on those passages when one returns to them in personal study. Thus, for those using this method of note-taking, a different method from Philip Henry's is necessary to recapture the sermon for meditation.

I take sermon notes in a (digital) notebook arranged by biblical book and chapter. To aid in sermon meditation, I have begun to record the text of the morning and evening sermon in a document each Sunday evening, along with prayer requests from Sunday School, recent catechism questions and answers, and notations of each day of the week at which I can record meditations from daily personal worship. I then send the document to my Kindle, which gives me access to my meditation document in personal worship and throughout the day. (I use a Kindle rather than a computer or phone because in personal worship I don't prefer to use devices that have access to distractions such as the web or email.)

Though my particular method relies on recent technology, it can easily be adapted to the technology of pen and paper. A meditation notebook in which the same information is recorded would serve the same purpose if it is small enough to be carried throughout the day. Or a person could transfer the sermon text and some notes from the sermon from his Bible to a 3x5 or 4x6 card which he carries with him each day.

Psalm 1 instructs us to meditate on the instruction of the Lord day and night. What better Scriptural instruction to meditate on than the instruction received through the Word preached each week. The results of this meditation, according to the Psalm, is the flourishing of the believer like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season and not withering under affliction.

There is, therefore, great personal benefit to meditation on Scripture. There is also the possibility of benefiting others. Meditation on the Word preached gives us a something ready at hand for spiritually edifying conversation. If the conversation is with a fellow church member who has also been meditating on the week's sermon, the opportunity for mutual edification from meditating on the same text is even greater.

WEEK 6

March 4 – March 10

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:41-48

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*Great are the works of the LORD;
They are studied by all who delight in them.*

Psalm 111:2

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)
31-34 “The Benefits of Meditation”

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Meditation enlarges our faith by helping us to trust the God of promises in all our spiritual troubles and the God of providence in all our outward troubles.” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 31)

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 04	Ex 15	Luke 18	Job 33	2 Cor 3
Mar 05	Ex 16	Luke 19	Job 34	2 Cor 4
Mar 06	Ex 17	Luke 20	Job 35	2 Cor 5
Mar 07	Ex 18	Luke 21	Job 36	2 Cor 6
Mar 08	Ex 19	Luke 22	Job 37	2 Cor 7
Mar 09	Ex 20	Luke 23	Job 38	2 Cor 8
Mar 10	Ex 21	Luke 24	Job 39	2 Cor 9

MEDITATION ON PERSONAL PROVIDENCES

ETHAN HAMILTON

As we recently learned on catechism card 27, *God's providence is His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all His creatures and all their actions, to His own glory*. His providence is His *providing* for the accomplishment of His purposes and His *guiding* them to fruition in the affairs of the world. This provision extends to *all* God's creation (Ps 145:15-16)—but this article focuses on His preserving and governing of the spiritual and physical needs of *His children*.

Our heavenly Father provides uniquely for our needs whether physical or spiritual. To those who love Him, He gives the promise of a special provision, of good in the outworking of everything that concerns them (Rom 9:28). That good is this: His conforming of our character into the image of Christ by the use of all our circumstances. Isn't this our greatest need—and isn't it, then, God's most gracious provision for us apart from the gift of His Son? We must notice, however, that we often experience physical want in the outworking of this "good," so that the goal of Christ-likeness may be achieved (8:29). A few verses earlier, Paul acknowledges "suffering in the present time" (v. 18). Throughout our life, discomforts will accompany us while God does this blessed work. Lest this dishearten anyone, Paul goes on to say that these pains of earth "are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us," that is, "the redemption of our body" (vs 18, 21, 23). Our sonship in Christ remains veiled for now, but it will be revealed (v. 19)!

While spiritual needs take priority in the outworking of God's provision for us, truly we do experience *daily* the Lord's bountiful provision for our physical necessities, as well. God's spiritual priorities move forward whether we live in physical want or abundance. Paul says, "*all things work together for good.*"

As the article title makes clear, I am putting before us the exercise of meditating on God's providences in our lives whether physical or spiritual. I doubt anyone reading this believes this exercise accomplishes nothing, but as with most spiritual disciplines, we need encouragements and rebukes to help us continue in them. So, let me provide a short list of reasons for *why* we should meditate on God's works.

- Remembering God's works is commanded (Ex 13:3; 1 Chron 16:12).
- Forgetting God's works is condemned (Neh 9:17; Ps 78:42; 106:7).

- Ignoring God's works characterizes wicked men (Ps 28:5).
- Ignoring God's works eases the way to sin (Neh 9:17; Ps 78:7, 10-11).
- Reviewing God's works of discipline provokes obedience (Deut 24:8-9).
- Meditating on God's past works in our lives:
 - ...revives confidence in how God will work in the future (Ps 71:16-20; Ps 78:34-35).
 - ...reminds us of lessons already learned (Deut 8:2-3).
 - ...assures us that God acts according to His committed love (1 Chron 16:8-13, 34).
 - ...reminds us of God's faithfulness to His Word (Ps 105:8-45)
 - ...provokes thanksgiving (1 Chron 16:34).
 - ...causes meditation on God Himself (Ps 63:6-7).

Our natural question, then, is *How do I meditate on God's works?* Several months ago, I picked up John Flavel's *Mystery of Providence* and found an extended section on how to meditate on God's providences. He treats this subject so thoroughly and practically that I will merely summarize his outline below. Take this tool as a guide and allow Flavel to walk you through the process of meditating on God's providences *to you!*

- I. Identify *all* personal providences in your life.
 - a. Consider the timeliness of God's provision.
 - b. Consider the kind way in which God dealt with you.
 - c. Consider the results, what the personal providence led to.
 - d. Consider the means or method by which God worked.
 - e. Consider the end toward which God provided.
 - f. Consider the answer this providence was to your prayers.
- II. Determine the Scriptures fulfilled in your personal providences.

"Let us...consider what Word of God, whether it be of threatening, caution, counsel or promise, is at any time made good to us by His providences."

 - a. Carefully obeying the Scriptures is wise (Deut 4:5-6).
 - b. Living disobediently is unprofitable (1 Sam 12:21; Prov 3:5).
 - c. Sin brings about pain and sadness (Num 32:23).
 - d. Trusting in man is forbidden (Ps 146:3).
 - e. God will not forsake His children in difficulty (Heb 13:5; Ps 91:15).
 - f. God's Word alone upholds and comforts (Ps 119:50, 92).
 - g. Surrendering everything to God is in our best interest (Prov 11:24-25; 19:17; Is 32:8).
 - h. Aiming at pleasing the Lord is the best means of acquiring man's favor (Prov 16:7).

- i. Rolling perplexing circumstances onto the Lord maintains a quiet heart (Ps 37:5-7; Prov 16:3).

III. Regard God as the “author and orderer” of your personal providences.

- a. See God as the “author” of “comfortable providences”
 - 1. See His “care for you.”
 - 2. See His fitting provision of mercy for your condition.
 - 3. See His abundant favor to such a wicked sinner as yourself.
 - 4. See His lowering of Himself to answer your request.
 - 5. See His purpose in giving “comforts” to you: “to quicken and enable you” to joyfully carry out your work (Deut 28:47).
 - 6. See the death of Christ as the “channel” through which all comforts come (1 Cor 3:22-23).
 - 7. See the unmerited and yet more favorable way in which God deals with you above others much better than yourself (Heb 11:37).
 - 8. See His restoring comforts as preparatory for better ones to come!
- b. See God as the “author and donor” of “sad and afflictive providences.”
 - 1. Recall God’s “sovereignty” to which you owe obedience.
 - 2. Recall God’s “grace and goodness.”
 - 1) Consider His “sparing mercy” in this life.
 - 2) Consider His “saving mercy” in the life to come.
 - 3. Recall God’s “wisdom” in the choice of “afflictions” for you.
 - 4. Recall God’s faithfulness to you “in the saddest providences.”
 - 5. Recall God’s “sufficiency” for you in all “affliction.”
 - 6. Recall God’s unchanging character toward you.

IV. Stir your heart to “affections” appropriate to each of your personal providences.

- a. “Exercise” a sorrowful and lowly spirit in trials.
- b. “Exercise...spiritual joy and comfort in God” in all trials (Hab 3:17-18).
- c. “Exercise” an eternal focus in all providences.
- d. Remain “content” in all providences.

WEEK 7

March 11 – March 17

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:49-56

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:18

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)

34-37 "The Obstacles to Meditation"

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

"True religion is not performed merely in leisure time. Great busyness should move us to more meditation, as we then have more needs to bring before God and to meditate on." (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 35)

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 11	Ex 22	John 1	Job 40	2 Cor 10
Mar 12	Ex 23	John 2	Job 41	2 Cor 11
Mar 13	Ex 24	John 3	Job 42	2 Cor 12
Mar 14	Ex 25	John 4	Pro 1	2 Cor 13
Mar 15	Ex 26	John 5	Pro 2	Gal 1
Mar 16	Ex 27	John 6	Pro 3	Gal 2
Mar 17	Ex 28	John 7	Pro 4	Gal 3

MEDITATION FOR INTERCESSORY PRAYER CONTENT

JERID JONES

Recently, one of our believing children began to come to Michelle and me with what would turn out to be an extended spiritual struggle with fear. We thank the Lord that this child was transparent and persistent enough to keep bringing their concerns to our attention and it provided us a treasured opportunity to help this particular child through their spiritual battle. But, as is often the case, I noticed that the Lord was also teaching us lessons through this trial. The Lord was exposing a need in me that we all have: the need to meditate on Bible content for the purpose of praying that content on behalf of other believers. Paul, under the power of God's Spirit, expressed it this way, *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view (thinking on this), be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,"* Ephesians 6:18. Here is the discipline that God was focusing on: **Meditation on Scriptural/Spiritual content for the purpose of praying in the Spirit for the saints.** Our delightful obligation to our fellow believers is to think about Bible content for the purpose of turning the content into prayers for them.

For our child, my primary burden was that I would discover how to pray in a way that was divinely ordained to help our child, rather than in a general way or with ideas sourced in my own thoughts. The question before my mind was, "What does God desire or expect me to pray regarding these specific needs?" The burden to pray content divinely tailored for our child's fears produced meditation on God's speech which then provided the opportunity for the Spirit to reveal the finest and most accurate words to pray for my child. In other words, I was asking my Heavenly Father to bless me with knowledge of **His intentional words for this specific situation.** Shortly after meditating and praying this way, I was reading "The Mystery of Providence" by John Flavel and was directed to Psalm 57. While reading Psalm 57, I recognized that the words were the answer to my prayer for this child. God's Spirit was directing me to the "active and living" words of that passage to be used as communication with my Heavenly Father on behalf of our fearing child. Part of God's eternal purpose for Psalm 57 was not only that I could share these truths with my child within their personal struggle but **to pray these Spirit-ordained words for this child's situation.**

God was using the above experience in our lives as an illustration of the broader spiritual discipline that God desires to develop in each of us, namely, that **we should meditate for the purpose of praying in the Spirit for all the saints**. This discipline begins with a yearning to scrutinize the Word of God, also known as the sword of the Spirit, to supply us the content of our praying for other people. How often do we experience the agony and helplessness of learning about the afflictions and trials of our brothers and sisters in Christ and then not knowing what we can do to help? Frequently, perhaps, we begin to intercede for this person and immediately we are aware of a frustrating feeling that we are not praying deeply or specifically for this person. Romans 8:26 recognizes this limitation we struggle with when it says, *"we do not know how to pray as we should."* But, we are given this precious promise, *"but the Spirit intercedes for us...He intercedes for us according to the will of God."* We have every reason to lift our heads up in rejoicing because our Heavenly Father has made provision for our weakness. He has given us the very content/words to pray! Our Bibles are a treasure chest of powerful prayer material for just these types of occasions. Not only do we have the privilege of thinking the Spirit's thoughts after Him but of praying the Spirit's thoughts back to the Godhead.

After meditating on the first two verses of the Psalm, my praying could sound something like this: "Precious Father, be gracious to my dear fearing child. Teach them to allow their soul to take refuge in You. Yes, Lord, make them to believe that in the shadow of Your wings they can take refuge until their feelings of destruction pass by. Please enable this one to know the comfort of crying out to You, Most High God, in their times of fear and know that you are close to them and accomplishing all things for them."

Brethren, let us meditate so that we will be ready to plead Spiritually for one another.

WEEK 8

March 18 – March 24

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:57-64

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

BOOK READING

How Can I Practice Christian Meditation? (Beeke)
38-41 “Conclusion: Self-Examination”

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Once you learn, with the Puritans, that meditation is the ‘half-way house’ between Scripture reading and prayer, you will not be able to stop meditating on a regular basis, and you will find your meditation time will naturally augment itself both in time and in quality. You will then not be able to restrain yourself from telling your Christian friends that spiritual meditation is one of the most important spiritual disciplines a Christian is called to engage in.” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 41)

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 18	Ex 29	John 8	Pro 5	Gal 4
Mar 19	Ex 30	John 9	Pro 6	Gal 5
Mar 20	Ex 31	John 10	Pro 7	Gal 6
Mar 21	Ex 32	John 11	Pro 8	Eph 1
Mar 22	Ex 33	John 12	Pro 9	Eph 2
Mar 23	Ex 34	John 13	Pro 10	Eph 3
Mar 24	Ex 35	John 14	Pro 11	Eph 4

MEDITATION AND PARENTING: TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO TREASURE GOD'S TRUTH

DAVID W. BOYD, JR.

Some of the things in life that I can do with some level of confidence I learned from my father or another man that took special interest in me. I can change the oil in my car, replace the brakes, and replace parts on the engine—like the water pump. I've never had any formal training as a mechanic, but as a child my dad had me with him when he was working on the car. A man in my church was an expert carpenter and he would sometimes ask my parents if I could help him on Saturdays. That typically meant that he needed someone to clean up after him, but he also taught me the basics of finishing carpentry so that I can put together cabinets or properly install crown molding.

Now I'm at that stage in life when I can pass on much of what I learned from my dad to my own children. I try to make sure that they are with me when I'm doing tasks around the house like changing the oil, replacing a faucet on the sink, or installing a new ceiling fan. I could get the work done much more quickly if I didn't have a child or two with me, but the time I spend showing them and allowing them to help me enables them to learn basic skills and giving them confidence to do these kinds of tasks when they become adults.

Most men have a pretty good ability of teaching our children skills like hunting, fishing, basketball, soccer, being a fan of a favorite team, etc. However, I have found that the spiritual mentoring of my own children doesn't come as naturally. Maybe you have the same experience. I don't know why this is true. Do you?

We've been learning in this cycle of the Man of the Word program about the spiritual discipline of meditation. How are you doing? I know that I have felt many times that I would like to have someone show me or guide me so that I could develop more quickly. I've read books and I've tried much of what has been recommended. But I haven't had the same help that I did as a young person when it came to cutting the right angle on the crown molding or using the right amount of plumber's tape on the shower head—someone showing me how to do those things.

As a father, I have the great opportunity to show my kids how to meditate. Even though I'm not satisfied with my own level of meditation, I am further along than my children (maybe). Here are some ways that I've tried to help my children:

- During Sunday lunch, we discuss what each person learned in Sunday School that morning. Ideally, we would then discuss how to apply that lesson to their everyday life.
- During family worship, we review what was preached on Sunday and ask the children to make application to themselves.
- In our normal, every-day conversations I try to make mention of a passage I am meditating on and how it is helping me that day. Then I ask them about what they read that morning.
- When doing just about anything (watching a ball game, going to a music concert, working on a project around the house, fishing, washing the dishes—you get the idea) I conscientiously try to apply the truths of God's Word to what we are doing and ask them to do the same.

Much of what I am trying to do with my children is the result of meditating on passages like Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up." I'm trying to teach my children how I have been meditating and I'm also assessing their own thoughts and helping them develop in the spiritual discipline of meditation. It takes intentionality, but not a lot of preparation. It takes developing the spiritual discipline yourself and helping your child to grow along with you.

We have a family friend who has been an encouragement and good example to me. He frequently comes to our home for meals or just to play with the kids. In almost any situation he points my kid's attention to a biblical truth or a particular Bible passage. What I've found out is that it is just a normal part of who he is. My kids have learned to do the same thing to some extent. He is displaying to my kids how to meditate by thinking God's thoughts about every situation. They are not turned away from it; they love it!

What if you don't have children? Just about everything discussed above should be part of your life as a mentor of another man. A couple years

ago we had Pastor Gary Bill preach at our men's retreat. One takeaway was every man is further along in their spiritual walk than someone else and we all should be mentoring another man. Show another man how to meditate.

Teaching our children to meditate comes down to these basics: develop the spiritual discipline of meditation and then show them how to do it. When they are raising your grandchildren, it will come as naturally to them to teach this skill as it would be basic skills we all learn.

WEEK 9

March 25 – March 31

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:64-72

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*

Psalm 90:14

BOOK READING

Consider revisiting the portions of the book that you found most helpful, inspiring, or challenging.

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“Conclude with prayer, thanksgiving, and psalm singing. ‘Meditation is the best beginning of prayer, and prayer is the best conclusion of meditation.’” (*How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 24)

“Singing God’s praise is a work of the most meditation of any we perform in public. It keeps the heart longest upon the thing spoken. Prayer and hearing pass quick from one sentence to another; this sticks long upon it.” (John Lightfoot quoted in *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation?* pg. 25)

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 25	Ex 36	John 15	Pro 12	Eph 5
Mar 26	Ex 37	John 16	Pro 13	Eph 6
Mar 27	Ex 38	John 17	Pro 14	Phil 1
Mar 28	Ex 39	John 18	Pro 15	Phil 2
Mar 29	Ex 40	John 19	Pro 16	Phil 3
Mar 30	Lev 1	John 20	Pro 17	Phil 4
Mar 31	Lev 2-3	John 21	Pro 18	Col 1

MEDITATION AND PRAISE

SAMUEL HAWKEY

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

Psalm 150:6

Praise fills Scripture, the word and its derivatives occurring nearly 300 times, over half in the Psalter itself. The morning stars sang God's praises at the beginning (Job 38:7). Revelation declares that we will sing His praise for all eternity. Right now, during our lifetime, we are rehearsing to praise Him forever. Why not learn to do it better? Perhaps you have had this experience: you are singing in church or reading Scripture, but your heart is not feeling warm toward the Lord. Perhaps what is missing is meditation for the purpose of praise. Praise bubbles up naturally when the heart is filled to overflowing with meditation on God himself. We would like to say with the Psalmist, "My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my verses to the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45:1).

What does praise-filled meditation look like?

As you focus your mind to meditate on God's truth, your heart is eventually warmed and stirred, leading to a desire to praise God. This kind of meditation is not a quick "warm fuzzy feeling" like instant coffee, but takes time. You could think of it more like spiritual "heart-burn," in a good sense, that eventually follows digestion of God's truth (no antacid required!). The disciples on the road to Emmaus would describe it like this: "And they said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:32)

Praise that arises from a heart that has been meditating on God and His wonders is so rich and glorious! We will experience much more warmth this way than if we just do it as an act of our will (which we all must do sometimes). Poetry and song are two natural culminations of praise-filled meditation. Poetry expresses heart-felt emotion in a poignant way. Put theologically rich poetry to music and you have a paramount expression of praise. The Psalms and other Scriptures are filled with references

to it (Ps. 105:2, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). Revelation concludes the chapters of history with angels and all the redeemed singing His praises.

What is the content of praise-filled meditation?

The most obvious content of praise-filled meditation is **Scripture**. Look through a concordance and you will find praise due to God on account of His majesty (Ps. 96:1), glory (Ps. 138:5), excellency (Ps. 148:13), greatness (Ps. 145:3), and on the list goes. We can also meditate on God's **creation**. Psalm 8 is perfect example of this in action. "O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!" Finally, we can meditate on **God's blessings** to us personally. Keeping a journal of thanksgiving will enable us to reflect on God's blessing over and over.

Practically, how do I experience praise-filled meditation?

I say the *experience* of meditation on purpose—it is far more than a mechanical practice. It is something your heart becomes caught up in, with great delight. Here are several practical things that may help.

Begin by **humbling yourself** and pray for God to help you. Proud hearts won't stoop to praise. Meditate frequently on **Psalms and heaven**, as the Puritans did. As you meditate, **visualize** what you are reading. For example, don't just read Revelation 5, but imagine yourself singing praise to God with the heavenly choir. **Write** in a journal or compose your own poetry to express your praise. This can be a treasure chest to remind yourself of experiences you've had. **Sing** whenever possible. Meditate **day and night** so your heart is tuned to sing His praise. Do it spontaneously during the day. Do it with your family. **Listen** to good music while driving in the car or when beginning your time of devotional meditation. Spend time out in God's **creation**, which can be especially refreshing during a devotional time. Creation is the subject of meditative praise in the Psalms, and also gives praise to its Creator. Perhaps most important, **persevere** in this effort, because it takes time to develop. Our hearts are prone to wander instead of prone to praise. Don't give up just because you are not having a mountaintop experience every time you open your Bible. The following is a helpful illustration from *How Can I Practice Christian Meditation*: "Bates said that meditating is like trying to build a fire from wet wood. Those who persevere will produce a flame. When we begin to meditate, we may first garner only a bit of smoke, then perhaps a few sparks, but at last there is a flame of holy affections that goes up towards God. Persevere until the flame doth so ascend."

We want God to teach us how to meditate upon His glorious truths until praise bursts uninhibited from our hearts!

*Turn your gaze from vanity,
Look on Him until you see
Splendor unsurpassed,
Beauty that will last.*

*Praise him from a heart of love,
Tuned to sing of things above,
Freed from earthly noise,
With its empty joys.*

*Babies babble forth His praise,
As the brook in meadow plays,
For this He does ordain,
Just as He sends the rain.*

*Creature and mankind must praise Him,
Let all creation shout!
For if the living would refrain,
The rocks would then cry out.*

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 success.

