

Class Notes – The Intake of God's Word for the Purpose of Godliness – Session 2

“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15

BIBLE INTAKE – Do not think about this important discipline with a “horizontal viewpoint,” but rather a “vertical view”. Each level we will discuss will take you deeper and deeper into your mastery of the Word of God so that as you utilize the Word of God with ever increasing competency – you will be going deeper and deeper in your grasp of the mysteries of God. However, these matters do not come easily – they require discipline.

Hearing God's Word

Reading God's Word

Studying God's Word

Memorizing God's Word

Meditating on God's Word

Applying God's Word

Each of these disciplines will take you to a deeper understanding of the Word of God so that you will handle it with both competence and confidence. If you “settle” for hearing God's Word – that will be great, but you will never break the surface of understanding and move to the depths of understanding to which you are called. If you hear and read – that's better, but barely breaking the surface – we must first hear, then read, then study and then press on with memorization, meditation, and application. When we get to application of God's Word, then we are actually applying Kingdom principles to real life situations and circumstances. We are thinking Kingdom thoughts, we are speaking Kingdom wisdom, and we are responding the way Christ responds to circumstances – in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

1. MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

Memorization Supplies Spiritual Power

When Scripture is stored in the mind, it is available for the Holy Spirit to take and bring it to your attention when you need it the most. That's why the author of Psalm 119 wrote: *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you”* (verse 11) It is one thing, for instance, to be watching or thinking something you know you shouldn't, but there is added power against the temptation when a specific verse of scripture can be brought to your mind, like Colossians 3:2: *“Set your mind on things above, and not on earthly things.”*

Memorization Strengthens your Faith

Who does not want their faith strengthened? Discipline yourself to memorize Scripture. Walk through Proverbs 22:17-19, which says, *“Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge; for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the Lord, I have taught you today, even you.”*

To “apply your minds” the the “words of the wise” spoken here and to the “keep them within you” certainly pertains to Scripture memory. Notice: The reason given here for keep the wise words of Scripture within you and “ready on your lips.” It's so that your trust may be in the Lord.

Memorization and Witness and Counseling

On the Day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter was suddenly inspired by God to stand and preach to the crowd about Jesus. Much of what he said consisted of quotations from the Old Testament. The memorization of Scripture can prepare us for unexpected opportunities to witness or counsel.

A Means of God's Guidance

The psalmist wrote, “Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.” (Psalm 119:24). Just as the Holy Spirit retrieves scriptural truth from our memory banks for use in counseling others, so also will He bring it to our own minds in providing timely guidance for ourselves.

Memorization Stimulates Meditation

One of the most underrated benefits of memorizing Scripture is that it provides fuel for meditation. When you have memorized a verse or passage, you can meditate on it anywhere at anytime during the day or night. If you love God's Word enough to memorize it, you can become like the writer of Psalm 119:7, who exclaimed, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long!”

You CAN Memorize Scripture

- Have a plan
- Write out the Verses
- Draw Picture reminders
- Memorize the Verses Word-Perfectly
- Find a method of accountability
- Review and meditate every day.

2. MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

The kind of meditation encouraged in the Bible differs from other kinds of meditation(worldly) in several ways. While some advocate a kind of meditation in which you do your best to empty your mind, Christian meditation is filling your mind with God and truth. For some meditation is an attempt to achieve complete mental passivity, but biblical mediation requires constructive mental activity. Worldly meditation employs visualization techniques intended to “create your own reality.” And while christian history has always had a place for the sanctified use of our God-given imagination in meditation, imagination is our servant to help us meditate on things that are true (Philippians 4:8). Furthermore, instead of “creating our own reality” through visualization, we link meditation with prayer to God and responsible, Spirit-filled human action to effect change.

JOSHUA 1:8 AND THE PROMISE OF SUCCESS

There is a specific scriptural connection between success and the practice of meditation on God's Word found in Joshua 1:8. As the Lord was commissioning Joshua to succeed Moses as the leader of his people, He told him, “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from you mouth, meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

PSALM 1:1-3 – THE PROMISES

God promises in Psalm 1:1-3 regarding meditation are every bit as generous as those in Joshua 1:8. We THINK about what we DELIGHT in. When we delight in God's Word we think about it, that is, we MEDITATE on it, at times all through out the day and night. The result of such meditation is stability, fruitfulness, perseverance, and prosperity. One writer said it crisply: “The usually thrive best who meditate most.”

SELECT AN APPROPRIATE PASSAGE

The easiest way to decide what to meditate on its to choose the verse(s), phrase, or word that impresses you most during your encounter with Scripture. All of you are involved in a daily reading program, to read through the Bible in a year. A good way for you is to practice meditating on some aspect of your reading. You don't have to meditate on a different verse or passage every day – you might meditate of a single verse or passage all week.

Verses that conspicuously relate to present concerns and personal needs are clearly targets for meditation. If you are struggling in your thought life you may need to meditate on Philippians 4:8.

REPEAT IT IN DIFFERENT WAYS

This method takes the verse or phrase of scripture and turns it like a diamond to examine every facet. A meditation of Jesus' words at the beginning of John 11:25 looks like this:

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

“I *am* the resurrection and the life.”

“I am *the* resurrection and the life.”

“I am the *resurrection* and the life.”

“I am the resurrection *and* the life.”

“I am the resurrection and *the* life.”

“I am the resurrection and the *life*.”

Of course, the point is not simply to repeat vainly each word of the verse until they've all been emphasized. The purpose is to think deeply upon the light (truth) that flashes into your mind each time the verse is turned. It's simply, but effective.

REWRITE IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS

From his earliest home-school days, Jonathan Edwards' father taught him to do his thinking with his pen in hand, a habit he retained throughout his life. This practice helps you to focus your attention to the matter at hand, while stimulating the flow of thinking. Paraphrasing the verse(s) you are considering is also a good way to make sure you understand the meaning.

LOOK FOR APPLICATIONS OF THE TEXT

Ask yourself, “How am I to respond to this text?” What would God have me do as a result of my encounter with this part of His Word?”

PRAY THROUGH THE TEXT

This is the spirit of Psalm 119:18: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” The Holy Spirit is the Great Guide into the truth. (John 14:26).

Meditation is more than just riveted human concentration or creative mental energy. Praying your way through a verse of Scripture submits the mind to the Holy Spirit's illumination of the text and intensifies your spiritual perception. The bible was written under the Holy Spirit's inspiration: pray for His illumination in your meditation.

DON'T RUSH—TAKE TIME!

What value is there to reading one, three, or more chapters of Scripture only to find that after you've finished you can't recall a thing you've read? It is better to read a small amount of scripture and meditate on it than to read an extensive section without meditation.

3. THE VALUE OF APPLYING GOD'S WORD

The bible promises the blessing of God upon those who apply the Word of God to their lives. The classic New Covenant statement on the value of integrating the spiritual with the concrete is in James 1:22-25.

EXPECT TO DISCOVER AN APPLICATIONS

Because God wills for you to be a doer of His Word, you may be confident that he wants you to find an application whenever you come to the scriptures. Therefore, open the book expectantly. Anticipate the discovery of a practical response to the truth of God. It makes a big difference to come to the Bible with the faith that you will find an application for it as opposed to believing you won't.

UNDERSTAND THE TEXT

A misunderstanding about the meaning of a verse leads to misguided applications of it. For instance, some have applied the injunction of Colossians 2:21 – “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch.” --to prohibit just about everything imaginable. And while there may be good reasons to abstain from some of the things this verse has been used against, the text is misapplied when used that way because its meaning is misunderstood. When taken in context, it's clear that these words were actually the slogans of an ascetic group the apostle was denouncing as an enemy of the gospel.

MEDITATE TO DISCERN THE APPLICATION

If we read, hear, or study God's Word without meditating on it, no wonder “applying Scripture to concrete situations” is so difficult.

ASK APPLICATION-ORIENTED QUESTIONS OF THE TEXT

Asking questions of the text is one of the best ways to meditate. The more questions you ask and answer about of verse of Scripture, the more you will understand it and the more clearly you will see how to apply it. Here some examples of application oriented questions:

- Does this text reveal something I should believe about God?
- Does this text reveal something I should praise or thank or trust God for?
- Does this text reveal something I should pray about for myself or others?
- Does this text reveal something I should have a new attitude about?
- Does this text reveal something I should make a decision about?
- Does this text reveal something I should do for the sake of Christ, or others or myself?

RESPOND SPECIFICALLY

An encounter with god through His word should result in at least one SPECIFIC response. In other words, after you have concluded your time of Bible intake, you should be able to name at least one definite response you have made or will make to what you have encountered.

APPLICATION

Will you begin a plan of memorizing God's Word?

Will you cultivate the discipline of meditating on God's Word?

Will you prove yourself an “applier of the word of God”?