

Meditate on These Things

True Christian Meditation

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Most people in mainstream Christianity rely very heavily on tradition, rather than truth, for their personal belief system. They readily prefer to follow the popular culture bandwagon, rather than to have to bear the unpleasantness of being contrary to society, by standing up for what is true.

Telling the truth—seeking the truth—contemplating the truth, is not taught in schools or anywhere in our society. Telling the truth is ridiculed in the media and entertainment, and is shunned by politicians. In contrast, lying is made to seem desirable and clever. Even in churches, truth is low on the priority list. Loose private interpretations lead to replacement of the truth with distorted politically correct beliefs and perverted and deceptive language. Self-interest groups promote their own agendas, sweeping truth under the philosophical carpet. You might think that the subject of my sermon is on truth. It is not, but truth is a huge factor involved in this.

The apostle Paul was inspired by God to tell the Philippian church that, "Whatever things are true, ? meditate on those things."

The world is very familiar with the term "meditation." Although many people see little or no value in meditating, it seems everyone has his opinion on how to do it or how to sit or stand when doing it. The 'Meditation Society of America' currently lists 108 meditation techniques. Many of these meditation techniques have websites. If you go to the 'Meditation Society of America' website you can just click on whatever meditation technique you want to try for that day. Their little note says, "constantly increasing the number of techniques."

I am going to read just a few to illustrate the chaos that drives this illusive thought process.

1. Visualize Perfect Self— $E=Mc^2$ —Little Buddha, Big Buddha—I Am
2. Preparing to Reincarnate—Inner Bathing in Ultra Violet Light—Right Eye, Left Eye
3. Filling the Mind to Empty the Mind—Have no Head—Third Eye Meditation
4. Space Between Atoms—Cosmic Consciousness—Being Here, Now
5. Unnatural Positions—Concentrating on Spot—Witnessing Impermanence
6. Creating an inner guide—Becoming an animal—Wall of answers
7. A to Z, Z to A, 1 to 100, 100 to 1—No-Mind—Blank Screen—TV—Alternate

Nostril

That is just a sampling of what is on that list. There is quite a bit of chaos in this nation, and in this world, having to do with meditation. It is our goal today to get the right perspective on meditation.

Meditation is a lost art for many Christians, but the practice needs to be cultivated. It is not something that comes naturally.

I Timothy 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

One reason for such rejection of God's truth is that most people neither read, nor believe, nor meditate on the only real source of truth—the written Word of God. We in God's church know that all things in life can be evaluated for their value and accuracy by comparing them directly to the Bible.

How important is it to take the time to contemplate what the Holy Scriptures say? It is especially important for God's ministers. Speaking to Timothy, Paul said a minister must be careful with how he distributes God's truth.

II Timothy 2:14-16 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

True doctrines should be preached, and plans formed, and a manner of life pursued, as God wills. To do this demands study or care. There are many temptations to the opposite way of life. There are many things that may tend to lead a person to seek popular favor rather than God's approval. If we please God, it will result from deliberate intention and a careful life and meditation is part of that.

The Greek word rendered "rightly dividing," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means "to cut straight, to divide right;" and the allusion here seems to be to a steward who properly and honestly distributes God's truth to each one under his care as such things as his office and their necessities require. It means rightfully and skillfully teaching the word of truth.

The idea seems to be, that the minister of God must properly teach the word, adapting his instructions and illustrations to the circumstances and needs of his audience or hearers.

It is easy to recognize that Satan has designed this society in such a way as to encourage

people to be shallow in their thinking. There are so many distractions, that there is little or no thought, and rarely any deep thought, about the true God, and His way of life. Satan is constantly nipping at our heels, with this or that distraction. Buy this cell phone, not that one; watch this TV program, rather than that one; shop here for a better deal, or there for a cheaper price. Even driving a car is distracting, as we pass one sign after another.

There was a song that came out in the Seventies titled, "Signs". I do not think it was written to express the distractions of this society, but it does show an aspect of how "in your face" this society is and that there are all types of distractions. One stanza went like this:

"Sign, sign everywhere a sign
Blockin' out the scenery, breakin' my mind.
Do this, don't do that, can't you read the sign?"

I give that to you just as a simple illustration of how many distractions we have hitting us when we leave our homes. Sources of distractions in this society are sometimes overwhelming. If the radio or television is not on, there is still the telephone ringing. The only reduction of distraction in recent history is the decrease in telemarketers calling now that there is that national "Do NOT Call List." I have already been enjoying that bit of peace.

Instead of distraction, we need concentration and spiritual depth to become like King David of Israel—a man after God's own heart. In Psalm 1 David described the man who meditates properly.

Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary defines meditation as: "a private devotional act, consisting in deliberate reflection upon some spiritual truth, accompanied by mental prayer and by acts of the affection and of the will, especially formation of resolutions as to future conduct. Meditation is a duty that ought to be performed by everyone who wants to improve himself spiritually. It should be deliberate and continuous."

Simply put, meditation is the quiet contemplation of spiritual truths.

Meditation must please God. David meditated on things that glorify God. He took the time to think calmly and deeply on those things.

Psalm 19:1-4, 14 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, Let the words of my mouth and the meditation

of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

The meditation David described in verse 14 was mainly about God and His law, His greatness and His power, His plan and all the things that He is doing here on earth and throughout the universe.

The psalmist closed with a prayer in verse 14 that shows a link with the beginning of the psalm by the repetition of "words." The heavens declare without the benefit of human speech; yet they speak clearly—through the language of nature—of the glory, power, and wisdom of God. God revealed His word in speech and written forms accessible to people. In turn the psalmist prays that his expressed and unspoken words are acceptable to his God.

The word 'meditation,' or its verb form, 'to meditate,' is translated from the Hebrew word "*hagah*" which means: "to murmur, "a murmuring," "sighing," or "moaning."

Hagah also expresses the "growl" of lions mentioned in Isaiah 31:4 and the "mourning" of doves in Isaiah 38:14. When the word is used in the sense of "to mourn," it apparently emphasizes the low sounds of mourning, as seen in this parallelism found in Jeremiah 48:31: "Therefore I will wail for Moab, And I will cry out for all Moab; I will mourn [*hagah*] for the men of Kir Heres."

The idea that mental exercise planning often is accompanied by subdued talking seems to be reflected by Proverbs 24:1-2: "Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them; For their heart devises [*hagah*] violence [King James Version has there 'studieth destruction'], And their lips talk of troublemaking." You see another side of the word meditation here.

The meditation of a true Christian must be such that God approves of it, is pleased by it, is satisfied by it, and agrees with it. God has such control over all things, that if we ask according to His will He will help us have righteous thoughts and words. Proper meditation must involve words and thoughts that are right and pure. Our responsibility is, not to please ourselves, or to please other people, but to please God.

In Galatians 1:10 Paul said, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." Our meditation should be such that it pleases God.

The world, under Satan's influence, has a lot of foolish concepts about meditation as I mentioned earlier. Oriental-type meditations are especially popular. Simply letting your mind 'go blank' or 'conjuring up' a feeling, or emotion, or mood where resistance to outside influences is let down, is not Christian meditation. It is foolish, even very dangerous, because it opens a door of your mind to demonic influence.

The Bible makes little, or no, distinction between meditation and contemplation. True meditation is none other than valuing and internalizing righteous acts. It is also taking the time to recognize the sovereignty of God in secret. Sometimes that involves a little muttering to ourselves to verbalize and to help us to understand and remember.

We should meditate on God's Law as I mentioned earlier. When God commissioned Joshua, He instructed Joshua to meditate on the book of the Law for the purpose of obeying all that was written in it.

Joshua 1:1-9 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. "From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe 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. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Verse 8 is the theme verse of Joshua. Throughout the rest of the book, the author draws illustrations from this crucial period in Israel's history to demonstrate that God blesses His people when they obey Him. The book may have been written in a period of apostasy and national disaster in an effort to call the people back to obedience. It is interesting that meditation was part of that.

As I mentioned earlier, the phrase "from your mouth" refers to the custom of muttering while studying or reflecting. Muttering is speaking in low, indistinct tones without much movement of the lips. That is the official dictionary definition.

When I worked as a Mechanical Designer for a Consulting Engineering firm in the early 1970s, there was a man who sat across from me at another drawing board. This man talked to himself all day long. It used to drive everyone in the office crazy. He would sit there, drawing away, muttering to himself. He narrated his every thought and every action during the course of the day. He barely took a breath other than to smoke on a cigarette, or to drink his coffee, which is so well known in engineering offices. He would sit there drawing and muttering. If he was thinking about the Baltimore Orioles Baseball game he would recap the game to himself, in his own little world. "It is a full count, and the pitch, strike three!" He would be over there

supposedly drawing and working and running through the course of life.

Most of the time his muttering involved mathematical calculations, sometimes logarithm calculations on the slide rule, and sometimes heating and cooling related calculations on a Psychometric Chart.

His muttering was just loud enough to hear every third or fourth word, which as you can imagine would drive you crazy. And it was contagious—before long we all found ourselves muttering our way through life, and it took a while after I left there to break the habit.

When we meditate, God does not want muttering that disturbs others, or that does not set a good example to those around us. We sometimes wondered if that man was a little kooky—maybe a little mentally disturbed—but we were never quite sure. That is the image that muttering in public gives. We have to set a good example as God's people and not go around muttering to ourselves as we sometimes see in society.

On the other hand, when one is quietly muttering God's Word to himself in private, he is constantly thinking about it. This may be a tool that some may want to use in balance and in private. For some people it is easier for them to remember if they repeat it out loud.

The law of God is to control all thought and action. The law of God, in one sense, equates to self-control based on righteousness. There should be self control in all acts.

We should meditate on God's statutes. We display joy and happiness in His commandments in every way possible. We do this by outward expressions, and by deep and calm contemplation when alone; in daily activities, in solitude, or at night when we are in bed.

Psalms 119 continues the elements of prayer and commitment. You will notice an important attitude necessary for proper meditation stated here—that of love.

Psalm 119:41-48 Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD—Your salvation according to Your word. So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I have hoped in Your ordinances. So shall I keep Your law continually, Forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts. I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, And will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in Your commandments, Which I love. My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, Which I love, And I will meditate on Your statutes.

The psalmist promised to speak God's statutes unashamedly, even in the presence of kings. He was so full of love for God, and so filled with joy in the prospect of salvation, that he concluded this section with a strong statement on love and delight as he prayed and meditated. This is certainly an attitude that we should try to emulate.

We should meditate on virtues. In Philippians 4:8 Paul described the right kind of meditation. Paul's goal was to recommend that they contemplate holiness and righteousness. They were not only to meditate on one branch of righteousness or virtue; they were to meditate on

everything by which they could honor God, be good to their neighbors, and be a credit to themselves.

Philippians 4:6-9 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, Whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

We should keep on thinking. and doing, what is morally and spiritually excellent. This involves centering our minds on exalted things and then putting into practice what we have learned from God's inspiration of Paul in his teaching and example. In verse 8, Paul confirmed, in unforgettable words, virtues for every Christian to meditate on.

Let us look at the list:

The first word is "True" - this has the sense of being valid, reliable, and honest—the opposite of false. It characterizes God and should also characterize us as the elect of God. We must be true to our engagements; true to our promises; true in our statements; and true in our friendships. We are to maintain the truth about God and His way of life. Truth is a representation of things as they really are; and we must constantly live under the correct impression of things. This is why meditation must be on true things, not fantasy.

The next word is "Noble"—this is used in the New Testament only by Paul—in I Timothy 3: 8, and in Titus 2: 2. In these verses it refers to church officers — it is a quality that makes them worthy of respect.

William Barclay makes the observation that,

"When used to describe a man, it describes a person who ? moves throughout the world as if it were the temple of God." He goes on to say, "?the word really describes that which has the dignity of holiness upon it. There are things in this world which are flippant, cheap and attractive to the light-minded; but it is on the things which are serious and dignified that the Christian will set his mind."

A true Christian should meditate on noble things—things that have the dignity of holiness.

The next word is "Just" - this refers to what is upright or just, conformable to God's standards and therefore worthy of His approval. The just person is he who gives to others what is their due. There are those who seek pleasure to a point where it controls their mind. They seek

comfort at any cost. But our thoughts must be on our responsibility to others and our responsibility to God.

The next word is "Pure" - this emphasizes moral purity, and includes in some contexts the more restricted sense of "chaste." Things that are pure are things that are undefiled. When this word is used ceremonially, it describes that which has been so cleansed that it is fit to be brought into the presence of God and used in His service.

Many people in the world concentrate on things that make their minds filthy, soiling everything they think. But, we should concentrate on things that are pure. Our thoughts should be so clean that they can stand even the scrutiny of Jesus Christ and God the Father. This can only be accomplished with the cleansing nature of the Holy Spirit.

Meditation provides an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to cleanse our minds of the filth of the world, not by emptying the mind, but by replacing the distracting cares of the world with the way of God.

The next word is "Lovely"—this occurs only in the New Testament. It relates to what is pleasing, agreeable, and amiable. The original Greek word may be paraphrased as *'that which calls forth love.'* Many people in this society constantly have their minds set on vengeance and extortion, as a result, they cause resentment and dread in others. This resentment often comes from destructive criticism.

Our minds should be concentrating on lovely things—kindness, gentleness, sympathy, and longsuffering. We should be pleasant and endearing.

The next word or phrase is "Of good report"—this indicates what is praiseworthy, attractive, and what rings true to the highest standards. It literally means fair-speaking, but in the ancient Greek world it was especially connected with the holy silence at the beginning of a sacrifice in the presence of the gods. It may describe the things that are appropriate for God to hear.

This present society commonly uses words that are harsh, filthy, and false. These are vulgar words designed to pervert, and politically correct speech designed to deceive. But, we should speak words that are acceptable to God. One of the things God changes in people in the millennium is from impure words to a pure language for the purpose of serving Him in unity.

Zephaniah 3:8-9 Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy. "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord.

God finds words and language very important.

Meditation is the private devotion to deep, continuous, purposeful reflection of the mind on a single theme. We should have a thoughtful, constant concern focusing on God's way of life, turning it over and over in our minds, its causes and effects and the words that come out of our

mouths and their causes and effects.

Toward the end of Philippians 4: 8, Paul went on to say, "if there be any virtue." In classical Greek the original Greek word translated 'virtue' described every kind of excellence. This is the best summary of all of those virtues in Philippians 4: 8. It could describe the excellence of the ground in a field, that is the Greek word that it is translated from. It could describe the excellence of a tool for its purpose, the physical excellence of an animal, the excellence of the courage of a soldier, and the virtue of a person. Christian meditation focuses on excellent things. That is the simplest way to put it.

Finally, in Philippians 4: 8, Paul says, "if there is anything praiseworthy." In one sense it is true that we should never think of the praise of people, but, in another sense, it is true that every true Christian is uplifted by the praise of other true Christians.

Paul urged Timothy to meditate, or take pains with, the instructions he gives regarding his ministry. Paul mentions some of the same things to meditate on as he had listed in Philippians 4: 8 and he adds a few more here in Timothy 4.

I Timothy 4:12-16 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Paul told Timothy that he must remember the duty of concentration. The danger for a minister is that he may allow himself to be distracted with things that may not be sinful, but that are not central to his duty to serve God and the brethren.

Some ministers have allowed themselves to become distracted by their computers, the Internet, building houses, or in numerous other ways. While these things, of and by themselves, may not be sinful, by giving improper or unbalanced attention to them, a minister may be neglecting his duties. The same holds true for the elect of God in general. This is one of the problems that happened to Worldwide back after Mr. Armstrong died. The ministers got very wrapped up in their computers, to the point where they were neglecting their congregations. There was a lot of complaints coming from the congregations that they did not see their ministers very often because they were so busy on their computers. This is something that all ministers have to constantly fight, especially in this modern age that we are in.

Especially with telephones and email so readily available to everyone, a minister is pulled in many directions by the normal duties, and confronted with the claims of many areas of service. It is very hard for a minister to find the time to concentrate with the bombardment of secular and religious responsibilities.

It is easy for a Christian leader to be busy here and there, and to let the central things go.

Contemplation and meditation is a prime duty of the Christian leader and it requires a great deal of concentration. Many years ago, I saw a sign on front of a church that read, "If Satan cannot make you sin, he will make you busy." It may be more accurate to say, "If Satan can make you busy, he can make you sin." We all, as members of God's church, have to constantly fight those things that are distractions to us, and the minister especially being so busy, has to as well. I want to qualify this by saying, do not ever hesitate to call us, because we love talking to you, it is just that we have other areas that we have to fight with for time.

Philippians 4:9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

The thinking or meditation (of which the apostle Paul spoke) on his list of virtues was not abstractly theoretical. It was not just something nice to hear, but things to apply. It was thinking with a purpose, and that purpose involves action.

True Christians hear. They meditate until they understand. Then they act upon it, putting it into constant practice.

The learning and receiving of which the apostle speaks here in verse 9, represents one idea; and the hearing and seeing the other idea. Paul and others had taught the Philippians the virtues summarized in verse 8, and they had accepted them and were trying to do them.

The apostle Paul had exemplified these virtues in his own daily conduct. The Philippians had heard about this from various sources and by the mouth of messengers who came through their city. Even by means of this letter to them, they were hearing about Paul's virtues, which were in reality God's virtues given to Paul and Paul being helped by the Holy Spirit.

Both on his first visit, and on subsequent stopovers, they had seen these virtues displayed in Paul.

Look back one chapter to Philippians 3, Paul had a right to say what he said in verses 17-19.

Philippians 3:17-19 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

In Philippians 4:9, the result of such constant Christian practice is stated in the words, "the God of peace will be with you." The expression 'the God of peace' complements and brings to a climax the phrase 'the peace of God' in Philippians 4:7. True Christian meditation brings to the person God and His peace. Meditation is very important for God's elect.

I want to look at seven areas that show the value of meditation. There are more but these seven are the ones I chose to use.

1. Meditation is valuable for considering God's law and attributes.

We touched on this a little before. As we read of the examples of the patriarchs, such as Abraham, who was told to sacrifice his own son as a test from God; of Noah's long preparation for the flood and the long persecution he received; of the faith of Moses in leading the Israelites out of Egypt; and of those who by faith overcame Satan, human nature, and the world—we find that they thought deeply about God's law and His attributes.

David is such a wonderful example of meditation and prayer. David took the time to meditate on the law of God in great detail, contemplating God's attributes over and over in his mind. He thought about God's plan and purpose and how it impacted him and the rest of Israel. He pondered the care that goes into God's creation, and the glory of God seen in it.

Psalm 8:1-5 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

Meditate about what creation looks like from God's perspective and why His Creation is important. Think about what you would do in any given situation in your own life and then ask yourself what Jesus would do. We are doing this in the way of meditation, contemplation and thinking about God's law and how it applies in our lives.

2. Meditation is valuable for thinking through the right application of God's way of life.

Think through all of the applications of God's law and teachings as they apply to your life and to today's society. We have to talk about and think on God's commands when we rise up, when we sit down, when we are in bed, and when we walk.

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. "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.

The principle here is that we should meditate and think on these things at all times.

In stark contrast, if we watch a lot of television our minds begin to pick up the attitudes displayed there—impudence and presumptuousness. We begin to meditate on what the world has to offer, because our minds begin to pick it up subliminally. Television and the Internet can encourage meditation through visual forms of stimulation, as beneficial or derogatory information pours into our minds and into our hearts.

Knowing how knowledge would increase at the end time, God provided such commands as Deuteronomy 6 to help and encourage us to think about them and to meditate on them, and to continually talk about the words of God.

3. Meditation is valuable when things go wrong and when making well-founded decisions.

When things go wrong ponder on what laws or principles of God were violated by you and others, but start with yourself. You know that whatever we ask of Him we receive, because we keep His Commandments and do those things, or follow those ways that are pleasing to Him. Not just the Ten Commandments, but God's whole way of life, involving the kind of food we eat, the way we entertain, the kind of music we listen to, and the kind of friends we have.

Psalm 119:9-15 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes! With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.

Meditate, in verse 15, has the sense of a wise, pensive concentration. The example here for us, is that we should quietly meditate on what God expects of us, controlling our emotions as an expression of absolute dedication to God. Emotions may, at times, cloud our minds from truth. But, meditation must be based on what is true, if it is not it is worthless.

When an important decision is about to happen, or long-range planning is needed in your life, meditate on what would manifest and produce righteous character. All teens and young adults need this planning ahead for their future, their career, their marriage, and their lives. Think through carefully the spiritual pros and cons with respect to God's standard of righteousness. Do not act without sufficient analysis of the right and wrong—pros and cons of what you are about to do.

Proverbs 16:9 "A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."

Proverbs 19:21 "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand."

4. Meditation is valuable for taking spiritual account and examining ourselves.

Take spiritual account of the growth that you have experienced. How have you used and redeemed your time? What can be improved upon, what can be overcome? This takes diligence and commitment.

II Peter 3:14-18 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

In verse 15, Paul is saying that we may conclude that God's longsuffering with the world is a proof that He desires all to be saved. Consider and meditate on God's mercy and forgiveness toward us.

Examine (meditate on) yourself, whether you are in the truth, whether you are producing spiritual fruit, whether you have the mind of Christ. By meditating about righteous behavior, know ahead of time what Christ would do.

II Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

Meditation must be a major and vital part of a Christian's life. A Christian cannot go through life without it.

5. Meditation is valuable for understanding.

Psalms 49, according to the psalmist, is important and pertains equally to all mankind. The psalmist called for undivided attention because this was important. The truth he declared did not pertain exclusively to any one nation, or any one group of people — all should be interested in it.

Psalms 49:1-7, 12 Hear this, all peoples; Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, Both low and high, Rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom, And the meditation of my heart shall give understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will disclose my dark saying on the harp. Why should I fear in the days of evil, When

the iniquity at my heels surrounds me? Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any
means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for
him—Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; He is like
the beasts that perish.

The term here rendered "world" means "duration of life, lifetime." It represents the world, considered as made up of the living, or the passing generations. It takes into account all human beings past, present and future.

The psalmist called on all of the nations to pay attention to what he was about to say. The idea is that he had meditated on the subject, as to what was real wisdom in the matter, and that he would now speak on the result of his meditations. We see there the value that comes out of meditation.

It was not wisdom in general, or intelligence, or understanding on which he decided to express the results of his thoughts, but it was only regarding the proper value and importance of wealth, and the fear it caused in those who did not have it. But, by meditating on the truth of the matter, he was able to understand that man is temporary and physical wealth has no long lasting value.

6. Meditation is valuable for spiritual satisfaction.

David enjoyed fellowship with God. Psalm 63 is a Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. He was under great duress. God was in all of David's thoughts, in dark contrast, to the wicked person who never thinks of God.

Psalm 63:1-8 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your loving kindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

David expressed his longing for the Lord in the metaphor of wilderness and thirst. He reflected on God during the "watches" of the night. According to Old Testament practice, the night was divided into three watches of four hours each. He remembered God's past activities and drew comfort during the night when the shadows of adversity haunted him.

He meditated by opening the record of God's acts in his spiritual reflection. He said, "I meditate—I think of You." Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the

mind, but they should be abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind. We should spend time on meditation.

David found protection in the Lord. The metaphor "in the shadow of Your wings" in verse 7 expresses God's acts of fellowship and protection. The Lord has promised to be close to His own (which we are), but He also expects us to draw close to Him. One of the ways that we do that is by meditating on His way.

The expression "my soul follows close behind You" should be our response to God's invitation to hold fast to Him. We must know God is true to His promises. We should rejoice while meditating. We have to learn to be cheerful while awaiting God's help and deliverance. Meditation involves cheerfulness but there is a balance and there is a time for sad meditation.

We should use our time in this way to meditate, and meditate at different times throughout the day. There is no right or wrong time of day.

7. Meditation is valuable for superior knowledge.

David inexpressibly loved the word of God. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law itself, and delighted in it in his inner most being. What we love we love to think of; by this it seems that David loved the word of God and that it was his meditation.

Psalm 119:97-99 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.

The love of God's law comes out of the love for God, the Teacher.

Psalm 119:102 "You Yourself have taught me."

Rejecting God's instruction, means rejecting God Himself.

Meditation is a form of devotion to God Himself, therefore it should be done on a regular basis—all day long. This should give us delight in our understanding of God's law as we consider our devotion in relation to our enemies and to our teachers.

The comparison is not a prideful assertion of superiority, but a form of exaltation in God Himself, whose wisdom is more direct and superior. The word of God, together with divine illumination, is superior to any human interpretation. It is something to be rejoiced in.

Nevertheless, in setting forth the excellence of divine revelation, the psalmist was not so arrogant as to shun instruction from the teachers and elders! We see an element of humility in meditation.

Faith must be based on truth, and meditation must be based on faith and truth. Without "confidence" in God, without confidence in His truth, His wisdom, and His promises, it is impossible to please God.

It is impossible for a child to truly please his father unless he has confidence in him. It is impossible for a wife to truly please her husband, or a husband to truly please a wife, unless they have confidence in each other. If there is distrust and jealousy on either part, there is discord and misery.

The same thing is true of God. He cannot be truly pleased with anyone who has no confidence in Him; who doubts the truth of His declarations and promises; who does not believe that His ways are right, or that He is qualified for universal rule.

The requirement of faith or confidence in God is not arbitrary; it is just what we require of our children, our spouses, and our friends, as the indispensable condition of our being pleased with them.

Hebrews 11:5-6 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Though the Old Testament does not say that Enoch had faith, the author of Hebrews goes on to explain why he can speak of it so confidently. It is impossible to please God without faith, and Enoch pleased God. So it is clear that he had faith.

The author of Hebrews emphasizes that faith is absolutely necessary. He does not say simply that without faith it is difficult to please God; he says that without faith it is impossible to please Him! There is no substitute for faith.

The author of Hebrews goes on to lay down two things required in one who comes near to God in worship. First, he must believe that God exists, and that is the most basic part of the requirement. Without it there is no possibility of faith at all. But, it is not enough of itself. After all, the demons can know that sort of faith.

There must also be a conviction about God's moral character, belief that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. For us to have faith we must believe, not only that God exists, but also that God cares. Without that deep conviction, faith in the biblical sense is not a possibility.

II Peter 1:5-10 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

Part of doing those things is meditating on those things. It says to be diligent about those things.

Everything goes back to faith. For Peter, faith is the conviction that what Jesus Christ says is true, and that we can commit ourselves to His promises and act on His demands. It is the unquestioning certainty that the way to happiness, peace and strength on earth, and in heaven, is to accept Him at His word.

In Hebrews 11:1, "faith" means "reliance" or, "trust." There "faith is the substance [or the guarantee] of things hoped for, the evidence [or convincing proof] of things not seen." This is sometimes interpreted as if faith, in the author's view, were, in a sense, an ability of second sight, a mysterious intuition into the spiritual world.

But, chapter 11 shows that the faith illustrated (for example by Abraham and Moses) was reliance upon a God, known to be trustworthy. Such reliance enables us to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.

Such relying faith empowers us to act as if God's plan for the future is so sure that it is as if it has already happened, and to perceive that the invisible is more real than the visible—the spiritual is more real than the physical. In short, the phrase here, "faith is the evidence," is parallel in form to our familiar saying, "Knowledge is power."

In meditation, faith is the substance and evidence needed to properly contemplate truth. Faith is the guarantee and convincing proof necessary to correctly ponder reality. Simply put, meditation is quiet contemplation of spiritual truths. Meditation precedes action. It requires faith as the guarantee and convincing proof of things hoped for and not seen.

Malachi prophesied to Israel how important it is to meditate on the name of the Lord. The people complained harshly against God and He lectured them. Their error may certainly be taken-to-heart by every member of God's church.

Malachi 3:13-15 "Your words have been harsh against Me," Says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.'

Sometimes, those who eventually come to fear the Lord are those who had previously complained against Him, but later take His rebuke, and begin to encourage each other to renewed faith. This groping after faith, is listened to, and heard, by God. Malachi spoke of a book of remembrance that records the names of those who fear the Lord and meditate on His name. Like Abraham, they believe God, and in doing so, find themselves accounted righteous.

This book of remembrance represents God's faithfulness not to forget any of His saints. In Malachi 3, Malachi's assurance is that God knows and cares for those who fear Him—those who express their love and reverence for Him. God's people are His own and He will spare us. He

judges justly and He makes a distinction between those who serve Him, and those who do not. One of the ways of serving Him is to meditate on His ways.

Malachi 3:16-17 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him."