

Suggestions & thoughts on...
HOW TO MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE¹

INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS:

“M. A. Rosanoff, long associated with Thomas Edison, had worked futilely for over a year to soften the wax of phonograph cylinders [to make records] by altering their chemical constitution. *The results were negative.* Rosanoff relates how he mused night after night trying to ‘mentally cough up’ every theoretical and practical solution...

*‘Then it came like a flash of lightning. I could not shut waxes out of my mind, even in my sleep. Suddenly, through headache and daze, I saw the solution. The first thing the next morning, I was at my desk and half an hour later I had a record in the softened wax cylinder...this was the solution! I learned to think waxes...waxes...waxes, and the solution came without effort, although months of thought had gone into the mental mill.’*²

Rosanoff learned to think waxes. It was like unrolling a ball of string out of the unknown and night after night pulling it toward his mind, not knowing what might be attached to the other end of every thought or concept. Meditation is the art of hauling in that ball of mental thread.

This is a generation of hustle and bustle. ‘Time out’ for anything except sleep and medical checkups is considered idling your motor when you ought to be in high gear.

Reflection and deep thought in a quiet place is a thing of the past. This idea of taking time to be holy is more often a song we sing than an accomplishment. It takes time to be holy. It takes lots of time to be truly effective for God.

Each of us needs time to ‘think waxes’ [so to speak]. This was Rosanoff’s secret. He daily gave his problem a second thought. It is a mistaken idea that meditation is only for those who have time for it—daydreamers, scientists, novelists, ascetics and cloistered saints of religion.

Giving life a second thought is the need of every man [& woman]. ‘Meditation is the skeleton key that unlocks the greatest storeroom in the house of God’s provisions for the Christian.’ The men who carry this key upon the chain of their daily life come into a knowledge and relationship that the ‘activist’ and the restless ones have never known.

Within the solitude of...meditation [on Scripture] there is produced a quality of life that must be standard equipment for all the Master’s men [& women].” (pp. 3.4)

Jesus said to his busy disciples: “*Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while*” (**Mk. 6:31**-NASV). It’s good advice to follow yet today. We make a serious mistake if we neglect our quiet time and daily meditation on Scripture.

(cont.)

¹ Virtually all of the statements and points contained here are taken verbatim from a small, out of print pamphlet titled “*A Primer on Meditation-How to reflect on the Word of God*” (NavPress: Colorado Springs, Colorado, n.d.). I found it extremely helpful in regard to the subject of meditating on Scripture. Note: material in parentheses () and in italics appears as such in the original. Items in brackets [] and any bolding has been added by me. –Rev. Mike Edwards, St. Vincent, West Indies, mike.edwards876@gmail.com

² Thomas Edison was considered of course to be one of the greatest inventors in all history. He and his co-workers invented such things as the movie projector, the phonograph player, the electric light bulb, and countless other marvels. Yet one of Edison’s most famous sayings was “*Success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.*” He knew that thousands of hours of pondering, thinking [meditation if you please] and failed experiments preceded almost every one of his successes!

“WHAT IS MEDITATION?”

1. “Meditation is *chewing* [*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success*’ **Josh. 1:8**]. It is like the graphic picture of a cow and her process of mastication—brining up previously digested food for renewed grinding and preparation for assimilation. Meditation is pondering and reviewing various thoughts by mulling them over in the mind and heart. It is the processing of mental food. We might call it ‘thought digestion.’ ‘Chewing’ upon a thought deliberately and thoroughly, provides a vital link between theory and action. What metabolism is to the physical body of the cow, meditation is to your mental and spiritual life.” (p. 5)

2. “Meditation is *analyzing*. It is the art of taking a good, long look at a given object as the craftsman does his dazzling jewel—polishing the diamond to reflect all its light and beauty. Meditation on a portion of the Holy Bible is like gazing at a prism of many facets, turning the stone from angle to angle in the bright sunlight. Steady and constant reflection reveals unlimited beauties from the Scriptures which will never otherwise be seen. ‘*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law*’ (Psalm 119:18).” (p. 5)

3. “Meditation is *action* [**Jas. 1:22-25; II Pet. 2:2**]. Someone has described it ‘Making words into thoughts and thoughts into actions.’ It is mental planning ahead with definite action in mind for accomplishing a job. Andrew Murray describes it ‘Holding the Word of God in your heart until it has affected every phase of your life...this is meditation.’” (pp. 5-6)

“Now tie these three thoughts together: **chewing, analyzing and action**. Reflect on each of them before reading any further. Give God time for divine polishing in His secret place in order to more effectually reproduce His glory and beauty in public.” (p. 6)

SOME ENEMIES OF MEDITATION ON SCRIPTURE:

1. **Wasting time on amusements.** “‘*Muse*’ was the name given to an ancient Greek god who spent much time in solitude and thinking. The statue of ‘*The Thinker*’ is the artistic concept of deep concentration and absorption. Add an ‘a’ to the beginning of ‘muse’ and you have ‘*amuse*’—sports, games, television [internet, Xbox, video games] and a score of other tools used by the enemy to keep God’s man [& woman] from concentrating on man’s God.” (p. 6)

2. “**Beware of getting alone with your own thoughts.** Get alone with *God’s* thoughts. There is a danger in rummaging through waste and barren desert-thoughts that can be labeled—daydreaming or worse. Don’t meditate upon yourself but dwell upon Him—seek God in your inner thought life.” (p. 6)

3. “**There is always danger in meditating upon problems.** Develop the habit of reflection upon the Word of God and therein find the answers to your problems. ‘*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches*’ (Psalm 63:5, 6).” (p. 6) Note also Psalm 42:7 ‘*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*’ i.e. the Psalmist, even in the midst of great difficulties and sorrows, still saw God’s hand in all of it, and this gave him the strength to go on! G. Campbell Morgan made some excellent observations on this Psalm many years ago:

“This is the song of an exile and, moreover, of an exile among enemies who have no sympathy with his religious convictions. He cries out after God with all the intensity of one who knows

God and cares supremely for the honor of God's name...In the midst of his grief he appeals to his own soul in the language of hope and confidence. A great conflict goes on within, for he affirms, *'My soul is cast down.'* Notice carefully the heroism of the man. He makes his trouble and disquietude the occasion of remembering God...The result is not deadening his sense of sorrow, but rather setting it in right relationship to God. Trouble has come in floods and waves and billows, but they are all God's own. *'Thy cataracts...Thy waves...Thy billows.'* When sorrow is set in this relationship, there is a consciousness of love in the daytime; there is in the night a song and a prayer. The trouble is still there...but courage and hope and the conviction of coming deliverance continue also."³

TIPS ON HOW TO MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE [Col. 3:16].

1. Emphasize different words. "One of the most helpful approaches in meditation is to emphasize different words within the verse. As you throw them out vocally the Holy Spirit will echo them back to your heart through your ears and mind. [For example] read the first phrase [of the following verse-**Jn. 16:24**] aloud several times with striking emphasis upon the word in caps:

'HITHERTO have ye asked nothing in My Name...'

'Hitherto have YE asked nothing in My Name...'

'Hitherto have ye asked NOTHING in My Name...'

'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in MY NAME...'

2. Personalize the verse i.e. put your own name in the verse repeatedly as you read it and meditate upon it.⁴ For example: "Sandy, hitherto have you asked nothing in my name, ask Sandy, and ye shall receive, that your joy Sandy may be full..."

3. "Put [the verse]... into your own words. Say it over and over, silently, and aloud, until you can communicate it back to yourself in language that has [clear] meaning. Reflect slowly. Don't be in a hurry to reword it—rearrange the words and use your dictionary to look up words you don't understand. Perhaps you will end up with something like this:

'Up to this moment you have not been asking anything in God's authority; go ahead and ask, see if God doesn't love to answer. This is because He wants you to be full of cheerfulness.'"(pp. 7-8)

4. Start asking questions. "Now that you have taken it apart and have paraphrased it so it is your very own, start asking questions. Use the ones the newspaper reporter starts with: who? What? Where? When? Why? And how? Here's how it works on John 16:24:

- Who is Jesus talking to?
- What is He saying? What does He say I should do?
- Where should I pray? Where have I failed in my praying?
- When should I ask? When is my joy full and complete?
- Why does God say I should pray?
- How should I go about asking?

Every question is not equally productive, but by asking such questions, your mind will be focused on the Word of God—this is the beginning of meditation. When you start asking questions, you start to dissect.

³ G. Campbell Morgan, "An Exposition of the Whole Bible" (Fleming H. Revell Company: Westwood, New Jersey, 1959), p. 236.

⁴ I got this idea many years ago during a seminar by the Institute in Basic Life Principles.

Not questions that just bring up facts and doctrine, but also heart-feeding application. Questions and answers to the above put the Scriptures into the bloodstream of your soul.” (p. 8)

5. Apply the verse you’re meditating on to your life immediately. “[For example] apply John 16:24 immediately. **II Timothy 3:16-17** says that all Scripture is profitable in a four-fold function: it is useful in teaching the faith, for correcting error, for resetting the direction of man’s life, and for training him in good living. Tackle John 16:24 once again from these four angles (pp.8-9):

- a. Is there some truth I should know from this verse?
- b. Is there something I should stop doing in light of this verse?
- c. Is there a practice in my life I should change?
- d. Is there a habit I ought to begin?

5. Do this with a different verse every day. “A ‘verse for the day’ can be selected during your quiet time in the morning.’ To begin with it can be done within ten minutes. Try analyzing, dissecting, and chewing over such a verse during odd moments of your day—walking to work, riding the bus [or driving your car], waiting for meals or ‘killing time’ for that appointment. Apply it that very day. Perhaps you will have the opportunity to share it with someone else.” (p. 9)

THE ULTIMATE GOAL:

“The crown fruit of meditation is the changed life. Without the transformed life, meditation is useless. This was the problem Jesus had with the Pharisees of His day. They knew the facts and were experts in doctrine. They were conscientious, sincere and dedicated men. But the Lord called them sons of Satan—*‘Ye are of your father the devil.’* **Why this stinging indictment? All their study of the Old Testament didn’t change their lives. There was no heart application.** They still oppressed the poor, defrauded the widows and pursued doubtful business practices. Beware of meditation that ends in just pious words. **True meditation ends in moral action.** A changed attitude toward God and fellow man is the result. A changed work habit. A changed relationship to your family. **In short—a changed life! Anything less is not enough.** *‘O how I love Thy law; it is my meditation all the day’ (Psalm 119:97).* Bring the fruit of your meditation and offer it to the Lord for His blessing. Ask the Holy Spirit to apply the Word to your heart and enable you to live today in conformity to it.” (pp. 9-10)

*“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight,
O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer” - Psalm 19:14*