

Old School: Meditating, 4/21/20

15 years ago at this time you would have found Shannan and I standing in Bed, Bath and Beyond with a Scanner gun registering for our wedding. Most people get you things on the registry, but there are always those people who say, "I know you didn't ask for this giant bread machine but we thought you would want this to take up half of your counterspace in your tiny apart. Has anyone ever made bread more than once in one of those? Well that happened to us, instead of the tool kit I registered for we got **this pink tool kit**. Now this wasn't a big deal, because for the first few years of marriage we lived in an apartment so we didn't have to fix anything. And then we bought our first house, which was a fixer-upper... now don't let this beard and my hypermasculinity fool you, I'm not Chip Gaines. I was ill-prepared for the repairs we faced in that first year with the tools at my disposal. And when we had our first major leak that flooded our family room and playroom we were ill-prepared.

When disaster hits our lives, when the flood of uncertainty, pain, distress come our way, we will rely on the tools in our spiritual toolkit. Some of us have the equivalent of my pink tool kit at your disposal in the midst of this pandemic and you are feeling ill-prepared and floundering. But be encouraged, in Christ you have been given everything you need for a life of godliness. You have every tool you need at your disposal. That's what this series is all about. **Old School** is all about sharpening our spiritual tools to face the challenges that have come into our lives in such times as this. One of the critical Old School tools is Meditation. From our Scripture reading from Psalm 1 we are going to study **The Promise of Meditation, The Purpose of Meditation, The Practice of Meditation**

The Promise of Meditation

Notice Psalm 1 starts with the word **Blessed**. This word can be translated happy, but it means far more than happiness... we can be happy when we find a dollar between the couch cushions. This is the biblical word that means that the **gracious favor of God is toward us**. The promise of God is that he blesses those **v.2 whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night**.

There is blessing for those who meditate on the Word of God. Now what are those blessings? The psalmist uses the metaphor of a tree to show us two blessings of meditation:

Stability- ***That person is like a tree planted by streams of water.*** A tree that's planted near the water isn't dependent on the climate, its survival and stability isn't determined by whether or not there is a drought because they have direct access to their source of life, the water. But a tree that isn't planted by the water can't be sure if it will survive a drought. v.4 says that person is like chaff that is blown away in the wind. A person of stability isn't dependent on ideal circumstances, when the droughts of life come, like the one we are in right now. Meditation gets us drawing from the water of the Word of God when all other water has dried up.

Flourishing- ***which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers.***

The kind of prosperity he is talking about is not financial or physical per se, but it is that the Word of God in our minds and hearts flourishes and is effectively utilized in all kinds of seasons. The Word of God takes root and grows fruit in our lives so we can know how to apply it to our circumstances, we can encourage people with just the right Word from Scripture, know how to respond, share our faith, have an answer ready...Who wouldn't want stability and flourishing, especially in a time like this! Meditation is the key. That begs the question, what is meditation?

The Purpose of Meditation

Maybe what comes to your mind when you hear meditation is this **GUY**. But you also might think of this- **Yoga Class**. Incredibly popular right now. The eastern concept of meditation is emptying your mind of everything. **Biblical meditation is not emptying the mind it is rather filling the mind and heart with the things of God.**

Literal word "meditate" in the Hebrew is used in the Bible to describe sounds in the low vocal register: Now I'm going to need some help from the kids watching: Bible uses this word to describe the low **growl of a lion** or **low rumble of thunder**. Ok how about one less terrifying- **Cooing of a dove**. Also speaking to yourself in low tones...The authors of the Bible use this idea like a metaphor in a spiritual sense to describe Meditating: **Whispering God's Word to your heart.**

Two Purposes for meditation that we see in Psalm 1.

#1 To Apply God's Word to your Deepest Doubts, Discouragements and Decisions.

The Metaphor of the tree teaches us this truth, the tree not only acknowledges the water, it draws the water up into all of its parts. A tree takes water and produces fruit. Scripture is not just meant to be read, it is meant to be fed. Work it out into all the parts of our lives, especially our deepest fears, doubt, sin strongholds, decisions of life.

A great example of this is David's Psalm 43. David is wrestling with God in prayer because of the injustice he is experiencing. And it feels like God is distant and unresponsive. In verse 5 David stops praying to God, and starts meditating...whispering to God's Word to himself.

⁵Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

David is counseling himself with God's Word, speaking to his deepest fears, anxieties, doubts. What about you? What are your fighter verses, what truth do you need to hear to speak to your deepest doubts, discouragement and decisions?

#2 To Stir Your Desire for God over your Desire for the World

Notice in Psalm 1 the contrast in the first 3 verses.

¹who does not walk in step with the wicked

or stand in the way that sinners take

*or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.*

Walking, standing and sitting are Hebrew poetry's way of saying what you desire, what it is that you delight in, where you tap real meaning in life. The one who is blessed is the one whose deepest desires and pursuits the things of this world but the things of God. See we all meditate. We all whisper things to ourselves. We have an inner dialogue, we fantasize...what occupies the most attention in your thought life? Is it all the things that might happen in worst case scenario? Worry is a form of meditation. The reason some of us are struggling so significantly right now is that we are meditating on the wrong things! Instead, meditating on God's Word is one way that we can stir our heart's affections and mind's attention for things of God instead of the things of this world.

Tim Keller: "Meditation is your way of making the Bible into a burning bush. Where God is speaking to you and you are amazed and you take off your shoes and your feet hit the dirt."

We take the character of God or a portrait of Jesus from the Gospels, or a truth that we need to hear and think on it and speak it to our hearts, going deeper until the flames start to burn for Him and we desire life with God over life with the world. Let me give you an example of Meditation from C.S. Lewis' sermon "The Weight of Glory"

C.S. Lewis: If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures,

fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. *We are far too easily pleased.*

Some of us are making mud pies...Meditation Applies Scripture to our deepest needs and kindles our desire for God.

The Practice of Meditation. What does this look like? I've shared some examples already but...
 v. 2- Day and Night.

Disciplined kind of way.

But also this means do it Slowly. It is not meant to be microwaved and consumed quickly... takes time. I've only been to Ruth's Chris steakhouse once on a gift card and I immediately realized why the **filet mignon** is \$50...when get a Ruth's Chris filet you don't gobble it down quickly like a hot dog. Refined flavors like that are meant to be enjoyed slowly...taking in the sizzling butter on the 500 degree plate, the depth of flavors and savoring the mood that has been created... We should treat the Word the same way...when you read and study a passage of Scripture, don't just be quick to move on...I would rather you spend 30 minutes on two verses in meditation than 30 minutes getting through the most Scripture you can. Think about

that passage through out the day...when while I'm working out, while I'm driving in the car, shaving... prayer walk, mountain bike ride, early mornings. "How does this apply to my work? To my wife? Family? To my sin struggles? My fears? My unbelief? To my resources?

Some Tools for meditation:

- The Bible, A Pen and Paper
- (2 Slides) Look at the Book- John Piper
- Music that Speaks to the Topic in the Scripture
- Don Whitney's Book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. 17 Methods of Meditation on Scripture. Post a link on Facebook. Discussion on Monday.

Two Barriers to Meditation

Barrier #1 Your View of The Bible.

If your view of Scripture is that it is drudgery. That it is a chore, duty, or that it is just an intellectual exercise...you will never meditate. You will not have life changing encounters with Scripture. You will only meditate on the Word if you believe that is it authoritative in your life, that it powerful and alive and God's love letter to you.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What do you believe about this Book?

Barrier #2: Distractions

David Kinnaman, Faith for Exiles- "Deep spiritual longings, which ought to be lovingly tended and skillfully cultivated, are choked to death by binge TV, immersive gaming, and social media scrolling.

Technology is not bad in and of itself, the problem is when technology so greatly outpaces our theology and blitzes our day so completely that we never get around to pursuing the deeper things of life."

Is there a better time to meditate? Some of us are discouraged, depressed, struggling in a number of ways and instead drowning those feelings with busyness, sleep, entertainment or substances, what if you began to read the Word, and work the word deep into your soul? How might God minister his grace and power to the places of your life you need it the most?

The person who delights in the Word of God and meditates on it day and night speaks to his soul like the prophet in *Habakkuk 3:17-18 Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.*