



In our first “Stepping Up” series of the year, Shawn and I have addressed four topics that are familiar to every Christian: prayer, Bible reading, worship, and obedience. I think all of us would agree that these are basic, foundational practices essential to our spiritual lives.

In the fifth and final sermon in this series, I’ll be examining a topic that I believe is no less important, but that is much less familiar. It is the subject of meditation. Biblical support for meditation is widespread. The word itself is used in 23 different places in the ESV, and the concept is commonplace throughout the Bible. It’s fair to say that meditation is no less important to our spiritual welfare than prayer, reading, worship, and obedience.

Nonetheless, I think brethren often don’t recognize how important it ought to be to them. Many of us don’t associate meditation with Christianity at all, and that’s something we need to work on. This morning, then, let’s consider how we can step up in meditation.

First, let’s ask WHAT MEDITATION IS. If I asked most of you, you’d probably come up with a mental image of some Buddhist monk sitting there cross-legged with his eyes closed, making the sacred sign with his hands. However, that’s not what

Biblical meditation is about. Instead, consider what Paul writes in Philippians 4:8. Other translations here will say, “think on”, “dwell on”, or even “meditate on”.

In short, Bible meditation is when we take some wholesome, spiritual thought, and we spend some indefinite amount of time turning it over and over in our minds. Along with studying the word and reading the word, meditating on the word is supposed to be one of the main ways that we interact with it.

Nor does this even necessarily have to be about the Bible directly. You ever find yourself singing a hymn over and over to yourself, thinking about the words as you’re singing them? That’s meditation too. The same is true when we’re thinking about people we know who have revealed the word in their lives and considering the godliness of their actions.

This isn’t a high-intensity activity. Instead, it’s the opposite. Ideally, “thinking about these things” is what we find our minds doing whenever we aren’t using them for something else. We’re at the sink washing dishes, and lo and behold, we start meditating on the things of God! It’s not some fancy spiritual discipline. Meditation is as everyday as getting out of bed in the morning.

However, for all its everydayness, meditation is something we can’t do without. Let’s consider, then, WHY MEDITATION MATTERS. Look at Joshua 1:8. The logic here is very simple. If you talk about God’s word, meditate on God’s word, and obey God’s word, God will bless you. If you omit any of those steps, you won’t get the result.

Let’s put it this way. You ever known somebody who went to church faithfully, but was just as mean and hateful as they could be? People like that probably have a meditation problem. They hear the word, but they don’t take that word home and think it over. It just goes in one ear and out the other. As a result, when it comes time for them to make a moral decision, they don’t have the word in their hearts to guide them into godliness. The word has not changed them because they did not give it the opportunity to change them.

We have to do the opposite. We have to meditate on the word we have been taught so that it will change our hearts and our lives. Otherwise, it’s like trying to get bread to rise by dumping a bunch of yeast on top of the bread dough and letting it sit there. What happens if you do that, ladies? You get a floury, watery mess that doesn’t rise, that’s what! If we don’t knead the yeast into the dough, it can’t do its work. Meditation is kneading God’s word into our hearts. Unless we do that, we rob it of its power to transform us.

I want to spend the remainder of the sermon talking about HOW TO MEDITATE. First, we have to PUT TO DEATH THE EARTHLY. Let’s read here from Colossians 3:5-8. Notice that Paul isn’t merely warning us here about ungodly actions or ungodly speech. He’s warning us against ungodly thoughts. The problem is that it’s

possible for us to meditate on evil things too, and when we're working those into our hearts, they will surely corrupt us.

Let me give you an example. Like any of us, I face temptation, and one of the temptations I most struggle with is holding a grudge. My fleshly self wants to carry a grudge until it dies of old age, then have it stuffed and mounted!

That's a problem not just because we're supposed to be tenderhearted and forgiving, but because of what that grudge-holding will do to me or any of us. When I'm going around meditating on that grudge, first of all, it's keeping me from thinking about whatever is true, honorable, just, and so on. All that good stuff has been blocked out.

Instead, I'm dwelling on evil things—the wrong that I think has been done me and the anger that I feel about it. I'm hardening my heart against other people, and I'm becoming more and more convinced of my own self-righteousness. Brethren, that kind of meditation is spiritual poison! None of us can afford to dwell on things like that!

Instead, we must STORE UP THE WORD IN OUR HEARTS. Look at the words of the psalmist in Psalm 119:11. We've said that meditation is thinking about godly things. Well, if we want those things in our heads to think about, we have to put them there in the first place, and we have to love them enough to dwell on them.

Meditation isn't a self-starting activity. You don't just say to yourself, "I'm going to meditate on the things of God for the next 15 minutes!" I don't know. Maybe that would work for you, but it would feel very unnatural and weird to me. Instead, I've found that the key is packing my brain so full of spiritual things that I can't help but think about them.

That starts with our Bible reading. You know, it's amazing that every one of us has in our possession at least one complete copy of the word of God. Our first-century brethren would have turned green with envy! What a priceless opportunity every one of us has, every day, to put that word in our hearts so we can meditate on it!

The same is true with other sources of spiritual wisdom. I know people who keep hymnals on their bedside tables and read a hymn or two every night before turning in. Among our hymns are some of the most beautiful things ever written in the English language. They're perfect for meditation! If that's not enough, we need to spend more time with strong Christians whose words and conduct will give us good things to dwell on. The more time we spend with these things, the more we will learn to love them, and the more we will meditate on them.

Matt Bassford