

The Way of Christian Meditation
A Musing on Meditation
Psalm 1

Psalm 1:1-6~ ¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

I. Introduction

Good morning, Church. I am so glad to be here with you on this Lord's Day. I just want to share something with you from my heart this morning. Something that I have been pondering on for several months now. And if the truth known, it is something that I have been musing over for several years from time to time. It is very dear to my heart and it is the reason why I went into the ministry. ***So if you would humor me and indulge me, allow me to muse out loud with you.*** This is my raw, unfiltered thoughts just throwing out there. So today, I do not want to give a sermon. I just want you to eavesdrop on my thoughts. So please humor me.

You see, Brothers and Sisters, I love God. And by extension, I love His children. This is the basis of my ministry - love God, love His people. The two go hand-in-hand. You cannot love God without loving His children.

When I first became a Christian, I was enamored with our Heavenly Father. I was "inflamed with love" for Him, if you will. Because of that, I wanted to be a blessing to my brothers and sisters in Christ.

And like a babe in Christ, I just drank the rich, nutritious milk of the Word. I drank and drank and drank every day as much as I can. In other words, I was in my Bible almost every single day. I read it ... I wrote in it ... I personalized it. And when time afforded me, I would sit in silence and solitude, studying the Bible the whole day. I loved every minute of it and enjoyed it immensely.

But also equally important, I attended Church as much as I could so I could be a blessing to my brothers and sisters. I was at Church on Sunday. I was faithfully there on Wednesday mid-service. I was there on Friday youth group. I started a house church on Saturday. Four to five days out of the week, I would be found in Church. I was engrossed in Church and I just wanted to be around God and around His people all the time.

But I noticed something strange ... something out of the ordinary. I noticed that even though I was still a babe in Christ, I knew a lot more ABOUT God, and a lot more OF God, than the seasoned Christians who had been going to Church for many years, if not all of their life. I grew

quickly in the faith and had a deeper relationship with our Father than most of my older brothers and sisters in Christ ... not older in age (although some were), but older in the Faith.

And as a young believer, it should be I who needed to sit at the feet of my older brothers and sisters and learn from them. Instead, they came to me and asked questions about the Bible and about God. The Bible says that the older should teach the younger. Older in age, yes ... but older in the faith for sure. And here I am, the younger instructing the older.

It is a strange phenomenon. But the painful truth is, for those who have been going to Church for awhile would notice, that this phenomenon is not so strange. Sometimes, it is the norm.

I look at my wife, Dawn. In terms of time, she would be considered a young Christian ... younger than me who have been a Christian for 30 year, give or take. But when I look at her and her relationship with God (and I told her this several times to her face), I notice that she is a much better Christian than me.

She knows her Bible, she reads through her Bible more than once. But more critical than that, it is her Christ-like character that I am most impressed with. I think she has a better Christian character than me. I buckle under pressure sometimes, but she won't bend. She is out there serving ... she is out there giving, and disciplining, and comforting, and caring, and encouraging, and praying. It is not just here and there for show. She is out there week after week being a Christian. The younger is ministering to the older. Strange ... but maybe it is not so strange.

Have you ever wonder why some saints grow faster than others? You see, those who advance in their character and conduct for Christ do something differently than those who are stagnant in their growth. I will tell you in a minute what that is.

II. Musing Thoughts of Mine

There are three thoughts that I want to leave with you in this Musing of Mine.

1. First Musing, our gathering together is for us to reach Maturity.

My love for God and love for the brothers and sisters led me to the ministry because I wanted to equip the saints for service. That is the commission of Christ to the Church. It is found in Ephesians 4. I mean, the Great Commission is to make disciples, but to what end? Ephesians 4 tells us to what end:

Ephesians 4:11-13~

¹¹ And he [Jesus] gave
the apostles,
the prophets,
the evangelists,
the shepherds and teachers,
¹² to equip the saints [equip the saints for what purpose?]
for the *work of ministry*,

13 for *building up the body* of Christ,
until we all attain to the unity
of the faith and
of the knowledge of the Son of God,
to **mature manhood,**
to **the measure of the stature** of the fullness of Christ ...

Let me break it down. Jesus gives gifts to the Church. The gifts are seen in certain people whom He has called. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the pastor-teachers. These are gifts from Jesus. And the purpose of these people are two-fold:

- a. One: to equip the saints
- b. Two: to attain to the unity of the Faith

To what end?

- a. One: to be mature
- b. Two: to have and live the full stature of Jesus

The end result is for us to reach maturity. And maturity is to love God and love one another.

We gather together ... we disciple each other so that we can help one another to become mature, to reach adulthood. We gather together week after week so that we can spur each other to love and service ... that is, to become mature.

2. Second Musing, maturity does not come through Sermons.

Sermons have never helped anyone to mature in the faith. Now, sermons are good because they help edify. They encourage. They inspire us to do something. But maturity they do not produce.

Frank Viola and George Barna, in their book *Pagan Christianity?*, noted after their intense research that ...

It matters not how loudly ministers drone on about "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry," the truth is that the contemporary sermon preached every week has little power to equip god's people for spiritual service and functioning.¹

If we rely on the weekly sermon in order to "attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Jesus the Christ", we will never, ever mature.

Unfortunately, however, many of God's people are just as addicted to hearing sermons as many preachers are addicted to preaching them.²

¹ Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?* (Carol Stream, Illinois; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 2012), 98.

² Ibid, 98.

I am not disillusion. I enjoy a good sermon. And I enjoy standing behind the pulpit and preach, hopefully a good sermon. But I know that sermons by themselves do not mature us. There has to be something more in our Christian journey ... more in our forgiven life for us to mature. "Sermon is a swimming lesson on dry land."³ We really are not going anywhere.

Viola and Barna continued in their research noted ...

There are scores of Christians who have been sermonized for decades, and they are still babes in Christ. We Christians are not transformed simply by hearing sermons week after week. **We are transformed by regular encounters with the Lord Jesus Christ.**⁴

Amen to that. And that is what I have notice. Christians who have been going to Church for 10, 20, 30, 40 years (some, all of their life), do not guarantee that they will be mature. In fact, some do mature. And if I can be outright truthful, I have seen many old in age but immature in behavior Christians. They listen to one sermon after another. And yet, their life is never transformed. Their character has not been changed. They have not matured.

How can we mature? What do we need to do? Well, what we need is a "regular encounters with the Lord Jesus Christ" ... a regular encounter. How do we do that? We do that through meditation. MEDITATION!

3. Third Musing, transformed life comes through Meditation.

Now, I am talking about Christian meditation, not the Eastern meditation nor mystics meditation. We will take a look at that next week - the different between Eastern mystics and Christian meditation. But for now, if we want a rich, regular encounter with Jesus, sermon alone is not good enough. We have to start meditating.

Meditation is something that men and women of character and conviction cultivate in their life. Men and women of conscious develop that conscious through meditation. Thomas A Kempis, in his meditation book, *The Imitation of Christ*, wrote a moving eulogy of the great saints for God. He marveled at the example set by the holy fathers of the Faith. This is what Thomas A Kempis wrote about them:

By day they labored and by night they spent themselves in long prayers. Even at work they did not cease from mental prayer. They used all their time profitably; every hour seemed too short for serving God, and in the great sweetness of contemplation [meditation], they forgot even their bodily needs.⁵

³ Ibid, 99.

⁴ Ibid, 99-100..

⁵ Thomas à Kempis. (1996). *The Imitation of Christ* (pp. 30–31). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

It is through prayer and meditation that these great fathers of the faith profited their time to serve God. Meditation prepared them for that service. Meditation is not something that only the Church Fathers did. No. Meditation is an ancient practice. It is found as early as the book of Genesis.

Genesis 24:63~⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening.

The idea is that Isaac does this regularly ... every evening when goes to the field in silent solitude and meditation.

III. Meditation that is Meaningful

Young Joshua takes over the leadership of the nation of Israel. Moses had just passed away. Standing on the edge of the Jordan River, ready to cross into the Promised Land, God speaks to Joshua and instructs him on how he can be successful in the Promised Land.

Joshua 1:8~⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful 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.

God tells Joshua how he can be prosperous and successful. God tells Joshua this. Please note that this comes from the mouth of God Himself. "Joshua, you need to mediate on the book of the Law, and you need to do it day and night." "YOU NEED TO MEDITATE."

Let me give you some final thoughts about meditation.

1. First, meditation means to Contemplate.

Joshua 1:8~⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate ...

Joshua is to meditate on the book of the Law. He is to contemplate on it ... to think about it ... to talk about it. "The Book of the Law shall not depart from your month."

It is not just reading. It is reflecting. It is not just hearing. It is talking about it. Meditation is a deep contemplation on what the Word of God says.

2. Second, meditation is done Consistently and Constantly.

Joshua 1:8~⁸ ... you shall meditate on it day and night ...

Joshua is to meditate day and night. The contemplation is done consistently and constantly. It is not once a week. It is not a sprinkle here and a sprinkle there. It is done "day and night" ... "morning and evening".

You and I must be intentional about our meditation. If you and I wish to grow, we must set aside time daily to read and reflect ... to contemplate consistently and constantly.

3. Third, meditation is followed by Obedience.

Joshua 1:8~⁸ ... so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

The reason why we meditate is so that we can know God's word. And once we know, we follow them. If we stop at contemplating, our meditation fails us.

IV. Meditation That Works

This called to mediation is not limited to Isaac and Joshua, The Psalmist seems to echo God's message to Joshua about meditation.

Psalm 1:1-6~¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

1. One: meditation shows our Desire of God's word

Warren Wiersbe says that:

“meditate” is the imperfect tense and speaks of constant practice. “He keeps meditating.”⁶

Our desire for God will compel us to know more about God. That which we deeply desire we will think about it constantly. I remember when I first met my wife, I thought about her constantly. I wonder what she was doing, where she was going. Even to today, Dawn is constantly on my mind. Why? It is because I desire her.

When we meditation on God constantly, it shows that we desire Him.

2. Two: meditation brings Blessing.

One important thing the Bible tells us to do is to think about God's Word. Our thoughts determine our behavior and so what we think about is very important. And when we meditation, there are many benefits and blessings that come with it.

- We will be refreshed like a tree planted by streams of water
- We will be productive and bear fruits

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). *Be worshipful* (1st ed., p. 13). Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries.

- We will prosper
- We will be known by God

We need to meditate on God's word day and night. So make this your challenge starting this week. Start having a regular time with God.

V. The Blessing

Presider: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

Congregation: And also to you.

VI. Forgiven Life Living

It is time to develop our discipline of meditation. The best place to start is the Bible since we are to meditate on the "book of the Law" day and night. But for beginning, it might be easier to get some help. Here is three simple steps to get us started.

1. First, pick a good meditation book or devotional book.

There are many meditation books out there. Many of them are poorly written and does not challenge your thinking. Pick one that will stimulate your thinking of God's word deeply. Here are some suggestion.

- a. The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A Kempis
- b. My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers
- c. Morning and Evening by Charles Spurgeon

2. Second, be personable and not preaching.

Meditation is to reflect our life with God's word. Be care not to meditate for the purpose of preaching. Instead, be personable. Contemplate on your life and if your life is in line with Scripture. The best way to do this is used the word "I" in our reflection. Avoid using "we" or "you" or "us".

3. Third, write your thoughts.

Journaling helps us to solidify our thoughts. It helps us to focus. And the great thing about journaling is that we can see our progress as time goes on.