

The Necessity of Meditating on Scripture (Part Two)

By Jay Wegter

Meditating upon the truth destroys the lies which fuel sin

The secret to overcoming the controlling power of sin is in ‘deconstructing’ the lies that drive lust and temptation. Hebrews 6:11-12 tells us that we must show the **same diligence** as the saints who have gone before us—so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. We can only run the race set before us with stamina if we fix our eyes on Jesus and lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us (Heb 12:2). We **‘fix our eyes’ upon Jesus by meditating upon His excellence and perfections.** The lusts that seek to hold us are animated by lies. Scripture refers to these lie-driven lusts as “the lusts of deceit” (Eph 4:22).

We use Scripture to unravel the lies that energize temptation. But it is precisely at this juncture where we tend to be are lazy thinkers. We hesitate to actually exert the mental energy necessary to ‘out-truth’ the lies behind the lusts—but we must do this in order to succeed against sin. The world has always offered itself as genuine source to satisfy our soul’s thirst. Scripture compares the world to a leaky cistern (reservoir) which can hold no water (Jer 2:13). (I think of a nearly empty stagnant reservoir with a few yellow-green puddles of scum-covered water—not what you’d want to drink from.)

God tells us that if one is a *friend of the world; he is an enemy of God* (James 4:4). To be a *friend of the world* is to believe the lie that the world is one’s true source of fulfillment and security. So antithetical are God and the world in terms of *source* that to regard the world as one’s source is to be an avowed enemy of God. “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

In our meditation we preach the truth to ourselves with enough conviction to drown out and expose the fallacy and danger of the lie. The Christian must be on the offensive in this matter. He has no choice. “For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead **even expose them**; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret” (Eph 5:8-12).

This pattern of lust operating by deceit is only broken when work is done in the recesses of the soul. The lie must be excavated, exposed, and refuted through Scripture meditation. The Christian will have to preach to himself the boundaries which God has erected to safeguard personal holiness. **Tear down the temple of lust with truth in order to build the edifice of purity—the latter replaces the former.** Progress in personal holiness is always through replacement of wrong thoughts with the truth—replacing wrong desires with righteous ones—replacing sinful actions with holy ones: “And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he

will have *something* to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:24-29).

Solid biblical thinking is formed during Scripture meditation. Happy is the believer who knows the ways of the Lord, and wise is the man who knows how sin operates. Iniquity has a kind of life of its own—it permits no competitors; accepts no truce. It wants complete dominion. ***Sin has the personality of Satan: it can’t wait to initiate a coup; a hostile takeover; it wants to corrupt and slay its host.*** It will slander God in order to sustain its existence. It will publish the most horrific lies about God in order to seduce one sinner by its promised charms. Sin is *parasitic*; like the cuckoo which lays its eggs in other birds’ nests. The cuckoo chick, upon hatching, pushes all the eggs of the natural mother out of the nest so that the parents’ food and energies go completely into raising the alien parasite chick.

Sin behaves in a similar manner. It seeks to eliminate any competition for its host’s time, talent, and affection. Wise is the man who knows that sin never abides in a static position; it is either being conquered; or is conquering. We either overcome it or are overcome by it. By the power of enabling grace, it is the former for God’s child. Those who meditate on the Word are promised victory. “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (Ps 1:2-3).

Sin gets its foothold by our doubting God. Our perception of our circumstances can so easily crowd out our view of His promises. This is why it is so important to watch over one’s heart with all diligence (Prov 4:23). Our spiritual disloyalty or ‘treason’ begins with our thought life—for the activity of the mind is where our desires are formed and strengthened. It’s hard to surpass this bit of prose for illustrating the importance of thoughts: *Sow a thought; reap an action; sow an action; reap a habit; sow a habit; reap a character; sow a character; reap a destiny.* R. C. Sproul reminds us, “*right now counts forever.*” Or as one pastor quipped, *today you are becoming what you will be five years from now.* ***Meditation is indispensable to our spiritual arsenal—enabling us to ‘get the victory’ in the battle for the mind.*** The evil one’s most common entry point is to tempt the saint to doubt the goodness of God—THEN, once we doubt the goodness of God, the tempter offers the lusts in the world as a source of ‘comfort’. The world as a ‘spurious’ source is described as ‘bogus bread’ (of false bread) in Isaiah 55:1-2.

The maturing Christian has learned through Scripture meditation to be a ‘physician’ to his own soul. He knows the particular kind of *distemper* into which he is prone to fall. He knows how to preach to his own heart. He sees temptation at a distance; he is aware of his vulnerability. ***Through meditation he has learned the appropriate biblical remedies for each disorder—whether they be our laxity, guilt, presumption, self-righteousness, or despair.***

The growing believer has learned to feed his soul on the precious things of God through meditation. He goes to God each day for delight. He feeds on grace so that he will never lack courage to run to God for new installments of love, acceptance, mercy, and grace (Heb 4:16). ***He keeps ‘building a case’ for obedience by focusing on the benefits of obedience.***

Those benefits of obedience include the 100’s of promises found in Scripture that are addressed to those who trust and obey the Lord. “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO

THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:6-10).

The believer who meditates on the Word nourishes his soul on the excellence of heavenly things—the things above (Col 3:1-2). This puts ‘steel’ in one’s backbone to resist temptation. He knows that to behold God’s glory by faith puts resolve in the will—it enables a man to trample upon all the world’s offers. Therefore he is intentional, he keeps reviewing his riches in Christ and keeps going to Scripture to meditate upon God’s glory. *“But a time is coming—indeed, it is already here—when real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and reality, for the Father is looking for just such worshippers”* (Jn 4:23).

True worshippers learn to worship through meditation

What is it that captivates us about God so that we are highly motivated to worship Him for who He is? How would you answer those who say that they worship God out of duty? The human condition, by reason of sin and satanically inspired darkness, is one in which the matchless glory of God is hidden from the creature. **Only the saint can “see” the glory of God. When we draw near to God to worship Him by “beholding” His glory, we are changed in the process.** As an exercise in Scripture meditation, consider why beholding the transforming splendor of God changes us into God’s likeness. “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). Grace and glory go together, for in the promises of the gospel we see God’s character engaged to take us from dust to glory—from a state of alienation due to sin to a state of right-standing and glory before Him forever (2 Thess 2:14).

Worship is a function of knowing God as He truly is. The redeemed creature, by God’s Spirit, has been created anew, he has been endowed with a new capacity to know God and worship Him. When God is contemplated as He truly is, there will be a “reflexive” response of worship. In response, the child of God will gladly ascribe to God the honor due His name.

Let’s consider the reasons why meditation upon Scripture is indispensable to true worship. Through meditation upon the truth of God in His Word, we can experience the joy of spontaneous worship—the creature’s highest activity is to be lost in wonder, awe, love, and praise; beholding God as He really is. As an additional exercise, reflect upon Psalm 145. Look for the connection between Scripture meditation and worship. Why does Scripture meditation precede speaking of God’s greatness?

One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
On the glorious splendor of Your majesty
And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.
Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts,
And I will tell of Your greatness.
They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness
And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness (Ps 145:4-7).

Saved men and women have been “remade” after the image of Christ. The redeemed are God’s workmanship (Eph 2:10). Thus, God’s glory is bound up in His redemptive purpose to call out a people for Himself (Titus 2:11-14), and conform them to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). This called out group will have as their mission, their habit, and their practice, the privileged task of declaring the excellencies of God. “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

God’s revealed purpose is to glorify His grace, thus the redemption of sinners through Christ is the key revealer of the Godhead (Eph 1:6ff.). As trophies of His glorified grace, our worship always has in it the element of, “*Let me tell you what the Lord has done for my soul!*” It is a form of worship when we proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us from darkness to light.

The *magnum opus* sermon of Jonathan Edwards is about “*The End for which all Creation Exists.*” Edwards reminds us that there is not one truant molecule in the universe. God has set precise boundaries on sin, and He fully intends to punish it comprehensively—to hang it on the gallows forever and publicly display it as lawlessness and folly. But sin does not frustrate God’s purposes. As Edwards so eloquently states, it is unthinkable that our infinite God should create this universe for His glory out of nothing, and then fail to make it realize the end for which it was created. **God will get the glory from the works of His hands.** The entrance of sin, evil, and rebellion cannot overturn that purpose.ⁱ

“If, by this means of biblical meditation, thou dost not find an increase of all thy graces, and dost not grow beyond the stature of common Christians, and art not made more serviceable in thy place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning persons; if thy soul enjoy not more communion with God, and thy life be not fuller of comfort, and hast it not readier by thee at a dying hour: then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me forever as a deceiver” (Richard Baxter).ⁱⁱ

“It will not be enough for you to hear or read of Christ, you must do your own thinking and consider your Lord for yourselves. The wine is not made by gathering the clusters, but by treading the grapes in the wine vat, under the pressure the red juice leaves forth” (C.H. Spurgeon).

For Further Study:

Scripture meditation ‘educates’ our desires and affections, for God’s truth cannot be held in a theoretical manner. Divine truth will not order, rectify, and structure your life unless your highest satisfaction and delight are in God.

In Romans chapter nine, the believer is described as a “vessel of mercy . . . prepared for glory,” but taken from the same common lump of defiled clay. As you learn to be a more consistent worshipper through Scripture meditation, consider how the contemplation of sovereign mercy and majesty may move you to worship. Set your mind on God’s purposes to form a holy people through the Person and work of Christ.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Jonathan Edwards, “The End for which God created the World,” *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, Banner of Truth, pp. 94-121

ⁱⁱ Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter: Select Treatises*, Baker, 1981, p. 90