

**“And this Gospel ,”
shall be preached...”**
Matthew 24:14

Sermon Summaries from Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

THE CHRISTIAN ART OF MEDITATION

by Roderick C. Meredith

Every major denomination and many sects have left their moorings as their people began to read more and more of their own internal literature and less and less to read the Bible itself. How vital it is that we read the Bible ourselves and just drink in deeply of it!

But to really profit from Bible reading, even from diligent Bible study, we must deeply understand the meaning, in terms of personal application, of what we read and study. We must make it literally a part of us. And we can only do this by harnessing the power of meditation.

That's something many of us don't do. And something we likely don't even understand today. And that is why many of us lack the depth and the stability in our own Christian lives we ought to have.

Barred from Deep Thought

We can recognize this society is designed by Satan the Devil to keep our thinking shallow and to prevent deep thought about the true God and His way and His purpose, and about the decisions and the changes we ought to be making in our lives.

Take television. It's always there, waiting, tempting, and its programming is just absolutely damnable. Murder and violence, implicit fornication and filth, and rottenness of every possible description. Most people cannot or will not control

it. And so it just ruins our minds, projects into them false values and false standards, and continues to divert our attention. And of course, movies tend to do the same thing. And when even those things aren't distracting us, the telephone will ring.

Instead of distraction, we need concentration and spiritual depth, to become like David, a great man, a man after God's own heart. Sang David, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).

David Meditated

David took time to meditate on the law of the Great God in great detail, over and over and by the hour, out under the stars at night, out on the battle field pacing back and forth before the campfire, and at other times—certainly in his later life after the sufferings he had gone through and the mistakes he had made in his earlier life.

Notice more from this great man—and about his attitude (Psalm 8): "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger [showing how God uses those who

of themselves might be very weak]. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, [I think] what is man . . . ? (verses 1-4.)

I have sat quietly on the edge of the crown of Mt. Whitney, the tallest mountain in the United States proper. You can see way out across the Sierras from there, clear on down to Death Valley—the lowest part of the United States. There was no one else around and no highway up there yet (you have to hike up). And you feel kind of small up there at 14,496 feet. You realize that you're just a little pygmy in this vast expanse of mountains and valleys and canyons and whistling winds.

Or out under the stars at night, in some lonely place, you consider these things:

“What is man that thou art mindful of him [that the Great God should be mindful of us]? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (verses 4-6). Potentially, the entire universe has been placed in our power. If our attitudes are right, if we're meditating on God's law, asking Him to fashion us and mold us and work with us and make us like He is—sincerely from the heart—we will have that power because that's what God wants.

Now Psalm 19: “The heavens declare the glory of God”—showing His creative power, His absolute magnificence, the design that demands a Designer, the laws that demand a Lawgiver, and the power that demands a Source of all that great power—“and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice [their instruction] is not heard. Their line [rule, direction] is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world . . .” (verses 1-3). David meditated on those things. He took time to think calmly and deeply of those things.

We can and should pray like David: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart [as we are to meditate before God], be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer” (verse 14). And of course, the meditation he described was mainly about God and God's law, God's greatness and power,

God's plan and all the things He is doing here on earth and throughout the universe.

Godly vs. Ungodly Meditation

The world under the influence of Satan has a lot of childish concepts about meditation. TM and other Oriental-type “meditations”—simply letting the mind go blank or conjuring up a certain feeling or mood where Satan or a demon can grab the mind—is not godly meditation at all. That kind of meditation is frankly stupid, and very dangerous.

The right kind of meditation is described in Philippians 4:8. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true [and we just read that God's law is true], whatsoever things are honest, and whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely [things of beauty], whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Do you see what this means? Think on these things, turn them over and over in your mind. Examine the various facets of them. “Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do . . .” Paul continued. That's meditation. “And the God of peace shall be with you” (verses 8-9).

Some people like a definition, so let me give you one: Meditation is the private devotion to deep, continuous, purposeful reflection of the mind on a single theme. In other words, you have a profound constant concern focusing in on a theme or problem, turning it over and over in your mind, its causes and effects, its facets and uses, asking yourself questions like: Why was this good? Why was this part of it bad? How can it be better next time?

God spoke through Moses to ancient Israel about meditation in Deuteronomy 6:4-9: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Why? To help and

encourage them to think about them and meditate on them, to continually talk about the words of God. And I think most of you know that the “Deuteronomy version” of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5 just preceded this.

You too should constantly meditate on God, God’s laws, and God’s ways, or as sure as the world, if you start watching television your mind begins to pick up the attitude displayed there—saucy, sassy carnality and rebellion, sexual lust, hate, violence. You begin to meditate on that because your mind begins to pick that up. TV is a visual meditation pouring into your mind and into your heart, and much if not most of it is bad.

Use and Misuse

I’ll give you an example of meditation. Back in the early 50s Mr. Armstrong began to say to us, “Fellows, I’ve begun to realize how the Creator God is and how God says that everything reproduces after his kind. And the physical was created as a type of the spiritual. We all reproduce after our kind, so would not God reproduce after His kind? And if my sons are human like I’m human, why would not God’s sons be God like God is God? But,” he said, “I don’t know. This concept comes into my mind. It’s almost like God put it there. But I’m sort of afraid of it because it sounds blasphemous. We’ve never believed that before.” He brought up some examples, and he said, “Well, let’s keep thinking about it and discussing it from time to time.”

So that’s how we came to understand the doctrine of man’s incredible potential of becoming very God, through a process of meditation where Mr. Armstrong first simply fastened his mind on something, as the definition is, “in private devotion to deep, continuous, purposeful reflection of the mind on a single theme.”

And so meditating on God’s character, purpose and plan is a fantastic experience, with all the ramifications of what it means to become God, and it’s something you could spend the rest of your life on, and in one sense you probably should, because the whole thing is concerned with your goal and your future in the Kingdom of God.

Let me show you a more mundane application of meditation. Notice I Corinthians 6:15, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?

shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.” And yet as you watch any number of these TV shows, they make it funny, and humorous, as the various males and females jump in and out of bed with different people. It is a horrible, horrible thing.

“What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh” (verse 16). You see, in marriage, sex and marriage pictures the very eternal relationship of love and total giving and total surrender between Christ and the Church, that He was willing to give His very life for the Church, and that the Church is to give herself in total submission to Him. But if you drag anything through a sewer pipe, it’s going to stink.

God says, “*Flee* fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body” (verse 18). He does that in the sense that he’s using his body, his emotions and his nervous reactions in an unnatural manner, as a vital instrument in sin.

Verse 20: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit”—in “the spirit in man,” and in the very attitude and thoughts of your mind. Get your mind cleaned up by meditation on right and good and clean things. Then when a problem arises, you’ve already thought through in advance what you’re going to do. And it’s not some strange situation, to catch you off guard.

Proverbs 6:32 says, “. . . whoso committeth adultery . . . lacketh understanding.” But in the original Hebrew, what it’s really saying is, he lacks *mind*. Because he lacks meditation on it, he doesn’t understand that woman was not intended as just a sex object, but the wife and the mother of a man’s children, his sweetheart, his companion, the embodiment of his plans and hopes and dreams—everything that makes life worthwhile! It is also to picture the very relationship between Christ and the Church. He who lacks this understanding is a dumb dolt and an ass and a rebel against God, unless and until he gets understanding and deeply and bitterly repents.

When to Meditate

As you study the Bible, take time to visualize the beginning and the end. As you’re reading, for in-

stance, the story of Abraham, picture yourself and how you would do if God told you to get up and get out of your home and your land, and away from your family and all you've ever known, and go out into a distant place where you have heard there are wild men living. Meditate by living the story in your mind and your heart. Visualize and think about it, turn it over in your mind, and then apply it to your life today.

Another good time to meditate is in prayer, one of the main times I prefer the best. Ask God to help you to think things through as you are there on your knees, and talk over with Him in prayer and in meditation the details and the phases and facets of a particular situation.

Another time to meditate would be walking in the woods or out under the stars. Another is when you wake up and you can't get back to sleep. Notice in Psalm 63 King David's example: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsts for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is [a world cut off from knowledge of our Creator]; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee . . . when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (verses 1-3, 6).

Use your time in that way to meditate, and meditate at different times through the day. Learn to do that. I would also suggest you set aside a particular time each weekend, preferably on God's Sabbath day, because this is part of its purpose, on Friday evening or Sabbath morning, or whenever, when you can meditate, so it becomes habit and you can think through the past week: How far have I come the past week? How have I grown? Have I prayed as I should? Studied? What mistakes have I made? Where did I fall short? How can I do better next week? The Sabbath is a wonderful day to have a weekly reexamination and reorientation.

Five Ways to Meditate

1.) Think through all the applications of God's law and teachings as they can apply to your life and to today's society. Remember Deuteronomy 6, an instruction to "think on these things when you rise up, when you sit down, when you're in bed, when you walk by the way."

2.) When things go wrong, ponder on what laws or principles of God were violated by you and/or others, but start with yourself. You know that whatever we ask of Him we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things or follow those ways that are pleasing in His sight (I John 3:22; 5:14)—not just the direct Ten Commandments, but the whole ways of God, involving the kind of food we eat, the way we dance, the kind of music we listen to, the kind of companionships we keep, etc., etc. In all those things we ought to meditate on and practice the ways of God.

3.) As you read of the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of David, of Christ and so on; and as you read of Abraham being told to sacrifice his own son as a test from God, or to leave Ur of the Chaldees; or of Israel being told to go out into a desert place, not knowing how they were going to eat, and how God was going to take care of them; or as you read of David's determination to remain loyal to Saul, even under difficult circumstances; think through, in your mind, how you yourself can learn and apply these lessons to your life. Think what you would do—and then what you ought to do through the mind of Christ, and then plan steps to improve your future performance. As you meditate, literally plan steps right then to improve your future performance.

4.) When a big decision looms, or long-range planning is needed in your life, meditate. A lot of young people need this in planning ahead for the future, their career, their marriage, everything. Think through carefully the spiritual pros and cons in the light of the Bible. Don't act without sufficient reason, just on the basis of an untried thought or idea, or an impulse, without really thinking.

5.) Weekly, perhaps on the weekly Sabbath best of all, take spiritual inventory of the growth that you've experienced. How you've used your time, the problems you've experienced, why you've had the problems, how to overcome them, how to do better next week.

6.) Finally, II Corinthians 13:5. "Examine yourselves [that is, *meditate*] whether ye be in the faith; prove [test] your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Make meditation a major and a vital part of your life.