

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Elements of Productive Bible Study: Meditate

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Psalm 1:2–3

Code: B121003

As we examine and evaluate the spiritual formation movement, we've been considering a key question about how the Lord works in our lives: "If God's Word is the foundation of our faith and the source of our spiritual growth, how do we get the most out of it?"

Last week we looked at the importance of reading and accurately interpreting God's Word. This week I want to highlight a couple more key elements of productive Bible study—the first is *meditation*.

Many spiritual formation gurus would agree that meditating plays an important role in Bible study and spiritual growth. But their concept of meditation is far broader and more introspective than what the Bible calls for, and it has very little to do with actually studying Scripture. Many of them encourage believers to meditate on creation, their own imaginations, and their own subjective interpretations of verses—or excerpts of verses—regardless of their biblical context.

Instead of dwelling on fixed, eternal truth, modern forms of meditation focus on what a verse or passage means to the individual, and what kind of application he can come up with on his own. It's an exegetical free-for-all, where the relevance of Scripture is determined by the reader.

That mystical approach falls far short of the command to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:6-7:

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

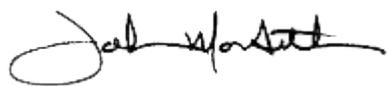
In other words, the Lord wants His people to absorb His truth—to have it running around their minds constantly.

And when you're faithfully reading and studying God's Word, it's easy to keep His truth on your mind throughout your day. A vacant mind is easily caught up in daily distractions—whether it's the allure of temptation or simply a time-wasting departure, failing to dwell on Scripture means you're subject to the interruptions and enticements of the world.

Instead, we need to be like the man described in Psalm 1, whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The Psalmist makes clear the benefits of that kind of devotion to God's Word: "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" (Psalm 1:3).

Like the cow and its cud, believers need to routinely go over God's Word in their minds. It's not enough to read it once and walk away—we need to absorb its truth and dwell on its implications for

our lives. *That's* true biblical meditation, and it's a vital part of how the Lord works through His truth in your life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel W. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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