

Formed in Christ: A Study of the Practices of Following Jesus

Week 2: *Word: Reading, Memorizing & Meditating*¹

REVIEW

“Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort” (Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*).

INTRODUCTION

I. **READING the Word**

a. **What is reading the Word?**

“No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 28).

b. **Why read the Word?**

“**16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17)

c. **How do we read the Word?**

i. **Make the time.**

1. Pick a realistic time of day.
2. Pick a realistic amount of time.

ii. **Find a Bible-reading plan.**

1. **M’Cheyne One-Year Reading Plan**

- a. Daily OT, NT, Psalms or Gospel (Psalms & NT 2x every year)
- b. http://www.gnpccb.org/esv/mobile/devotions/one_year.tract/
- c. http://www.esv.org/assets/pdfs/rp.one_year.tract.pdf

2. **The Daily Office Lectionary**

- a. Daily Psalms, OT, NT, Gospel
- b. <http://www.gnpccb.org/esv/mobile/devotions/bcp/>

3. **Daily Reading Bible**

- a. Daily OT, NT, Psalm
- b. http://www.gnpccb.org/esv/mobile/devotions/daily_reading.bible/

4. **Through the Bible in a Year**

- a. Daily OT & NT

¹ Works consulted: Willard, *The Great Omission*; Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*; Cunningham, “Lectio Divina”; Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*; Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*; Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*.

b. <http://www.gnpcb.org/esv/mobile/devotions/through.the.bible/>

5. Other ESV options:

<http://about.esvbible.org/resources/reading/>

II. MEMORIZATION of the Word

a. What is memorization?

“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.” (Josh 1:8)

“11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” (Ps 119:11)

“16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.” (Eph 6:16-18).

‘4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”’ 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”’ 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.’ (Matt 4:1-11)

b. Why memorize Scripture?

“As a pastor, teacher, and counselor I have repeatedly seen the transformation of inner life and outer life that comes simply from memorization and meditation upon Scripture. Personally, I would never undertake to pastor a church or guide a program of Christian education that did not involve a continuous program of memorization of the choicest passages of Scripture for people of all ages” (Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 150).

“Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to—and of course I don’t have to—choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life and take only one, I would choose Bible memorization. I would not be a pastor of a church that did not have a program of Bible memorization in it, because Bible memorization is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what they need” (Willard, *The Great Omission*).

i. Memorization enables conformity to Christ.

ii. Memorization provides strength in temptation.

iii. Memorization enables ministry (both evangelism and counseling).

iv. Memorization is a means of God’s guidance.

v. Memorization aids communion with God & abiding with Jesus (John 15:1-9).

vi. Memorization increases our joy in God and His Word.

“7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” (Ps 19:7-11)

vii. Memorization stimulates meditation.

c. What are the challenges, difficulties, objections to memorizing Scripture?

d. How do we memorize Scripture?

i. Ask God to help you.

ii. Have a plan.

1. Memorize topical verses.

a. NAVs verse pack:

http://www.lighthousepacifica.com/wp_wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/biblememorysystem-1.pdf

2. Memorize whole sections or books of the Bible.

a. P2R iPhone App

b. Memory Moleskin:

<http://theresurgence.com/2010/12/20/partnering-to-remember>

c. Suggestions: Matt 5–7; John 14–17; 1 Cor 13; Col 3

iii. Find time by “filling in the corners.”

iv. Fight discouragement by continually returning to the gospel.

v. General Memorization Helps from Andy Davis:

1. MEMORIZE WORD-PERFECTLY

2. REVIEW OLD VERSES

3. REPETITION OVER TIME

4. MEMORIZE THE REFERENCE & VERSE NUMBERS

5. PHOTOGRAPH THE VERSES WITH YOUR EYES

6. SAY IT OUT LOUD
7. WEED THE GARDEN

III. **MEDITATION on the Word**

a. **What is meditation?**

Lectio Divina: “Practicing the presence of God as we pray Scripture” (Cunningham).

“Let’s define meditation as deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application and prayer” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 48).

“Our task is not so much to study the passage as it is to be initiated into the reality of which the passage speaks...Always remember that we enter the story not as passive observers, but as active participants” (Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 30).

“Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation” (Bonhoeffer, *The Way to Freedom*, 59).

“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.” (Josh 1:8)*

“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.” (Ps 1:1-3).*

“5 *My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, 6 when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night” (Ps 63:5-6)*

“36 *Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!” (Ps 119:36)*

“97 *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.” (Ps 119:97)*

“111 *Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.” (Ps 119:97)*

“19 *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19)*

Calvin on this passage: “Thus, on the example of our Lady, we learn to listen so well to what is taught to us by the Word of God, and to read it with zeal, to make such room for it in our hearts that there it takes root.”

b. **Why meditate on Scripture?**

c. **What are the challenges, difficulties, objections to meditating on Scripture?**

d. **How do we meditate on Scripture?**

i. Lectio Divina: A Four-Course Feast²

1. APPETIZER: *Silencio* (silence) “Come to the table...”

- a. Prepare yourself for communion with God.
- b. Find comfortable, quiet place & time.
- c. Calm & quiet yourself.
- d. Detach from busyness.

2. 1ST COURSE: *Lectio* (reading) “Take a bite...”

- a. Lectio is a “listening” kind of reading. Pray asking that God would speak to you through His Word. Approach the text reverently and expectantly.
- b. Read the scriptural passage slowly, attentively several times. Try reading both silently and out loud. Don’t over-intellectualize it.
- c. Note the words, images or phrases that “jump out at you.”

3. 2ND COURSE: *Meditatio* (meditating) “Chew it thoroughly...”

- a. Zoom in on what struck you and ponder & chew on it.
- b. Try repeating it emphasizing a different word (Whitney 53):

John 11:25

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

“I *am* the resurrection and the life.”

“I am *the* resurrection and the life.”

“I am the *resurrection* and the life.”

“I am the resurrection *and* the life.”

“I am the resurrection and *the* life.”

“I am the resurrection and the *life*.”

- c. Relate and apply it to your life.
- d. Engage emotionally with it. How does this impact your desires?
- e. Do this *Coram Deo* (before the face of God)
- f. Attend to God’s presence through the Holy Spirit

4. 3RD COURSE: *Oratio* (praying) “Enjoy the dinner conversation...”

- a. Pray. Converse intimately & honestly with God.
- b. Reflect on what stood out to you & why and bring that to God in prayer.
- c. Engage God.
- d. Be ‘present’ with God.
- e. Affirm the love between you and God.

5. DESSERT: *Contemplatio* (communion with God) “Savor it...” Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! ~ Psalm 34:8

- a. Enjoy God
- b. Contemplate God
- c. Joyfully rest in Him.
- d. “Glorify God & enjoy Him forever”

ii. Bonhoeffer: One text per week.

iii. Select one verse, phrase or word in the course of your daily reading and meditate upon it.

² From John Cunningham’s lecture, “Lectio Divina.”

Questions for Reflection

- How would you characterize the way you tend to read? How has the way you read Scripture been influenced by your reading habits in general?
- What are your main obstacles/fears to reading, memorizing and meditating on Scripture?
- What concrete steps can you take today or this week to overcome these obstacles?
- How might your communion with God increase through these practices?

For Further Reading

Chs. 2-3, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney
pp. 172-178, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun