

Russell Kelfer

Day and Night

#1205-B

Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Day and Night

If you've ever been to school, you are aware that tests are not fun. They create apprehension and pressure and often require intense preparation if they are taken seriously. But without them, neither the pupil nor the teacher ever knows whether or not the student really understands what is being taught.

God apparently tests us for the very same reasons. In varying degrees (depending on our ability to understand the material), He allows things to come into our lives to see how we will respond. That way, He can prove to us if what we have claimed to have learned has made its way from the head to the heart.

The Bible confirms this and explains in the process two very important principles about tests. The first is found in I Corinthians 10:13. It literally says,

Nothing that comes into your life is peculiar only to you. No temptation; no test. But you have a faithful God, He will not let anyone test you beyond your understanding; if He lets it happen, there will be a way to pass.

In other words, if God lets the enemy at you, it's because you know enough to say no to the temptation. It's a true or false test. If you say yes to the temptation, it's not because you don't know better; it's not because you don't have the power to give the right answer; and it's not because you haven't been taught the material.

The second truth is found in Hebrews 12:11. Paraphrased, it says this:

Now, none of God's tests or His discipline of us is ever fun. It hurts. We don't enjoy it. We're not supposed to. Ah, but afterwards, the reason for it all becomes apparent. We profit by the testing, if we're willing to respond graciously.

God is saying that tests aren't supposed to be fun. It's natural not to look forward to them, but afterwards they prove to be fruitful to those who accept them graciously.

I- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Now with those two principles in mind, I'm going to give you a test to see what you've learned about meditation. In line with principle #1, the quiz will be on what we have already studied, and the purpose will be to see what we know. In line with principle #2, it probably won't be enjoyable, but it'll be a relief when it's over and may even be helpful (if you accept it graciously).

A- Questions

So, pencil in hand... The subject is meditation—and here are the questions:

- 1- One option for spiritual transformation is meditation. (T/F)
- 2- In order to have the Scripture on the “tip of our tongues” so we can meditate, we need first to _____ it.
- 3- Meditation is closing your eyes and opening your mind to your inner thoughts. (T/F)
- 4- To be effective, meditation should be done at least three times a week. (T/F)
- 5- A good time to meditate is when you're in trouble. (T/F)
- 6- Meditation will make you wise. (T/F)
- 7- Meditation prepares you for persecution and suffering. (T/F)
- 8- Meditation guarantees you spiritual success. (T/F)
- 9- Scripture says nothing specific about meditation at night. (T/F)
- 10- Meditation is like chewing on the Word over and over. (T/F)
- 11- God notices when Christians meditate, and it pleases His heart. (T/F)
- 12- I meditated on Joshua 1:6-9 all of last week as I was asked to do. (T/F)

B- Answers

Now the answers to the first eleven questions are all found in the Word of God. Let's take them one at a time and see how well you did.

1- One option for spiritual transformation is meditation. (T/F)

Answer: FALSE.

Meditation is not optional in the Christian life, if the believer is to grow into the likeness of God. Joshua 1:8a says,

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth; but you shalt meditate in it day and night, (Joshua 1:8a NKJV)

It is a commandment, not an option. The fact that most of us do not obey does not make it any less of a commandment, but rather simply makes our disobedience more disheartening to God.

2- In order to have the Scripture on the "tip of our tongues" so we can meditate, we need first to _____ it.

Answer: MEMORIZE.

Before we can meditate on God's Word, it must be placed on the tip of our tongues; "it must not depart out of our mouths". Your ability to meditate continually will be diminished to a fraction of God's desire if you can only meditate on passages you have the time and occasion to stop and look up. It must be in the heart to be called to the mind.

3- Meditation is closing your eyes and opening your mind to your inner thoughts. (T/F)

Answer: FALSE.

Meditation is opening your heart to the Word of God. It does not matter whether or not your eyes are closed, but it does matter what you are meditating on. Only the Word of God qualifies. God told Joshua, "This Book of the Law must not depart..." The world's definition of meditation is to open your mind to your inner being". Satan loves that. Only one thing can cleanse you, strengthen you, and give you courage, according to Joshua 1:7-9. The Word of God. Only one thing can, by meditation, turn you into an evergreen tree according to Psalm 1:2. The Word of God.

4- To be effective, meditation should be done at least three times a week. (T/F)

Answer: FALSE.

Day and Night

To be effective, meditation must be done constantly, all day long, all night long. It must be a pattern of thought life that supersedes all other thoughts. The key to its effectiveness is that it is always on the tip of our tongues, because it is always on the edge of our consciousness. Three times a week, even three times an hour is far less than God's commandment to Joshua and to us.

5- A good time to meditate is when you're in trouble. (T/F)

Answer: TRUE.

Psalm 119, verses 23 and 78 list two occasions when meditation changes a believer's perspective. Both are times of impending crisis. The best time to meditate is all of the time. But times of testing are times to accelerate and accentuate the process.

6- Meditation will make you wise. (T/F)

Answer: TRUE.

Psalm 119 beginning with verse 97 reads like this:

Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. (Psalm 119:97-99)

Wisdom comes when information through personalization becomes application. Meditation is God's way of purifying the mind of the Christian and making him wise.

7- Meditation prepares you for persecution and suffering. (T/F)

Answer: TRUE.

Psalm 1:2 teaches us that the one who meditates day and night in the Scriptures will not be destroyed when the heat comes or the drought comes. Still the fruit will remain. Why? Because meditating on the Word will have transformed him into the image of Christ, whose very life manifests itself in the fruit of the Spirit, which are nine ways God exalts Himself through the Christian in the world...most of them being most evident in the storms of life.

8) Meditation guarantees you spiritual success. (T/F)

Answer: TRUE.

Joshua 1 again promises us that when we meditate day and

Day and Night

night, observing to do all that is commanded in the Scriptures, then God will make our way prosperous; then we shall have good success. As we noted in the last lesson, however, prosperity and success are measured in terms of character, not fame...in terms of God's freedom to accomplish His will in us, not our ability to achieve security on this earth, where "moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:20).

9) Scripture says nothing specific about meditating at night. (T/F)

Answer: FALSE.

Scripture indicates that nighttime is one of man's best times to be quiet and let the Scripture speak to him. Psalm 63:6, Psalm 119:149, and Psalm 4:4 all speak of spending the "night watches" on the "bed" meditating on the Word of God. The reason it is so much more effective then, is that the distractions of life have faded, and God, at least for a moment, has our undivided attention.

10) Meditation is like chewing on the Word over and over. (T/F)

Answer: TRUE.

Meditation comes from a word which means to talk to oneself; or to recall and re-chew a thought or a word. The Word of God is Heavenly Spearmint, and you can more than double your fun as the ad says by chewing it night and day until the flavor of it penetrates your entire life. Unlike real chewing gum, the more you chew the Word, the better it tastes.

11) God notices when Christians meditate and it pleases His heart. (T/F)

Answer: TRUE.

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

(Psalm 5:1)

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my
redeemer.

(Psalm 19:14)

I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my
God while I have my being.

May my meditation be sweet to Him;

(Psalm 104:33,34a NKJV)

God hears us when we chew on His Word, and as we personalize and pray it back to Him, it brings great joy to His

Day and Night

heart, and our thoughts become acceptable to Him, because we are literally breathing His very own words.

12) I meditated on Joshua 1:6-9 all of last week as I was asked to do. (T/F)

Answer: Only you can answer that.

That was a part of your assignment for this lesson. But if you didn't, you are not prepared for today's lesson. You are being a "hearer" of the Word only; and not a "doer", deceiving yourself.

If you missed any of the first eleven questions, take off five points for each. If you answered "false" to question twelve, and you were aware of the assignment, take off 45 points. The purpose of the test was not to depress you, or even to elate you, but to reinforce you and remind you of what meditation is and of the seriousness of it in God's sight.

Meditation is what we are studying as we attempt to lay a foundation for this new series. Our objective is to spend ten to twelve weeks meditating on the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22,23. Before we can do that, however, we have to be certain that we understand both the Biblical precepts and the practical concepts of meditation. Then, beginning with our next lesson, we will proceed with our study in Galatians. Today's title and outline, then, are as follows: Day and Night,

I- Questions and Answers

II- Reminders

III- A Pattern to Follow

IV- A Trial Run

V- Another Assignment

II- REMINDERS

Meditation: is it the most overlooked source of spiritual power in the Christian world? It could be. Is it like a giant reservoir with an exclusive connection to the heart of every believer, whose valve is frozen shut from not being used? It might be. Is it like a mammoth television set that is only waiting to enlarge and project on its screen the nature and the plan of God but is sitting covered with dust and never turned on? For many, it is.

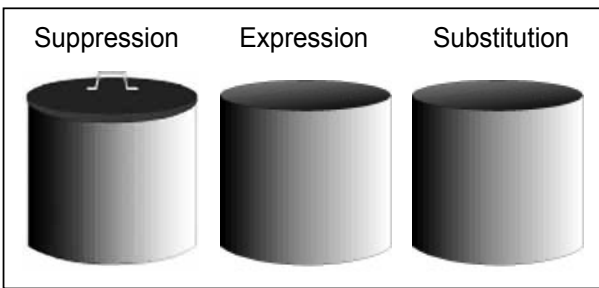
Let's briefly review: Meditation...it is not an option; it is a command. The only thing it asks for is the Word of God memorized, on the tip of the tongue, ready to be used. It is not

Day and Night

wallowing in our own thoughts; it is breathing the Word of God. It is not a weekly assignment; it is a minute-by-minute experience. It will lift you from depression, give you unspeakable wisdom, prepare you for suffering and persecution, give you the capacity to obey, and guarantee you spiritual success; but it requires your continual response for it to work.

That's what meditation does, but what is it? It is the recalling of the food of God as a cow chews its cud. It is heavenly Spearmint that gets richer and more flavorful the longer you chew it. It is the pump that cleanses the bloodstream of the heart. It is contemplation by examination. It is the transfer of the thought patterns into the hands of God. It is a safe and sure arrangement by which God becomes God experientially. It is the process of transferring the Mind of God to the will of man. It is b-r-e-a-t-h-i-n-g the Scriptures.

The reason it is so important is that you and I simply must transfer the garbage that is stored in our minds into something eternal, if we are to be transformed into Christ's image. You and I become the products of the world we live in. Our minds become storehouses for the ways, the works, and the wonders of Satan. We think, we live, we act as the world acts. But the Bible says when Christ comes in, we come to possess the Holy Spirit and in that instant gain the potential to become a new person. How do we do it? There are three ways, and only one of them works.



The first is suppression. Suppression means you simply clamp the lid on tight. The Bible says don't lie, so when you are tempted to lie, you grimace and groan and "discipline" yourself until you don't. You may want to lie. In fact, you may live a lie, but at least on the outside you are not viewed as a liar. But what's inside the container hasn't changed. You just haven't let it escape. The problem is, that sooner or later, the pressure from pretending

Day and Night

to be what you aren't will cause an explosion; the lid will fly off, and you will be seen to be who you really are. Suppression is a temporary tool to control behavior, but as a permanent solution it is dangerous.

The second is expression. In today's theological circles, this is in. It simply means you cannot help what you are, and God understands, so if it feels good, do it. God is love, anyway, people surmise. He sees the heart, and He hates hypocrites, so why not behave as you feel, hoping that getting it out in the open will "free" you to become the new man God intends you to be. The problem is that all you have left once you've let out all that stuff is empty space to be occupied by more garbage, or as the Scripture indicates, more room for the enemy to move back in and take over the vacated heart.

The Scriptural solution, however, is called substitution. Substitution takes place when you continually place something into the mind which forces out the garbage and replaces it with something permanent and eternal. It is a constant "Word in... world out" exercise. You pour the Word into your heart with such intensity and such application that the habits and thought patterns that have dominated you have no place to stay. They are replaced by something better. The Bible calls that process meditation. It is the process of replacing the old nature with the new by chewing on the Scriptures until the flavor of it literally permeates the life, dislodging the filth and the anger and the selfishness and the greed that are characteristic of the old you.

Read Ephesians 4 again. It is a portrait of the transformation that must take place through the process of replacement. Verse 25a says, "Wherefore putting away lying, every man (each one) speak truth with his neighbor...". You don't just stop lying. You stop lying by telling the truth. You replace lying with truth. Verse 28 adds, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has a need." It isn't enough to seal the lid on and stop stealing. Unless you replace that habit with God's counterpart, you haven't effected transformation. You stop stealing; you start working, and you give away part of what you earn to those you used to steal from. That's transformation. Verse 31 tells you to "put away" bitterness, wrath, quarreling, and evil speaking. But you don't stop there. The next verse says, instead of doing those things you become "kind to one another,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ also forgave you.” The whole of the Gospel is a message of substitution. You put off the old man, but only so you can put on the new. And you do that by taking the Spearmint of the Word of God and making it your constant companion. You chew and chew and chew on the Scriptures, personalizing them and appropriating them until they take the place of all that held your mind captive before.

A PATTERN TO FOLLOW

Just how do you do it? Is there a pattern to follow? There are two dangers. The first is that we will legalize the concepts and give them equal billing with the precepts. The precepts are the absolutes of Scripture that tell us we must meditate if we are to be evergreen trees, if we are to be successful spiritually. The concepts are the ways in which we implement obedience, and what works for me may not work for you. But the second danger is as great as the first. It is that in an effort not to be legalistic, we'll not explore ways to meditate and be left with little more than a command, but no understanding of what to do with it. So here is a pattern for you to follow as a beginning. Once meditation becomes a habit, God will vary the method to His design for your life. But for now, try this:

Engraving

The first step is to engrave the Word of God on your heart. The Psalmist said,

Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalm 119:11)

So first memorize the passage, and as you are reviewing it, begin asking yourself what it means.

Examining

Step two is examining the passage as you chew on it. To examine means to visualize and paraphrase it, asking yourself in more depth, “What does it mean?”

Exploring

Exploring the passage comes next. As you visualize it and paraphrase it, you begin asking, “What does it mean to me?”

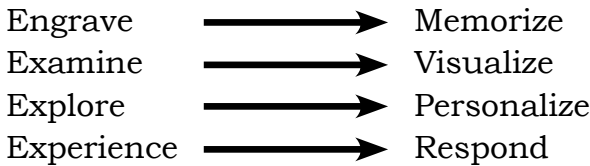
Experiencing

The final step is experiencing the passage and responding to it. There are many ways to respond to the Word, depending on what God is calling you to do, but here are a few of them:

- 1- Commitment: “Lord, by Your grace, I will...”
- 2- Surrender: “Lord, here I am; change me...”
- 3- Rest: “Thank you, Lord, for being in control...”
- 4- Worship: “Lord, I praise you...”
- 5- Burden: “Lord, please reach out and touch my child, my parent, my friend, etc...”

So the pattern is engrave, examine, explore, experience. Or another way to put it might be like this:

A Pattern to Follow



IV- A TRIAL RUN

Let’s take a short passage of Scripture now and meditate on it together. Suppose you are contemplating a job change, and you are fearful and anxious about the future. In Philippians we read this,

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:6,7 NKJV)

Step one is to engrave or memorize the passage. Many of you already have done that. As you memorize it, look up the key words and if you can, paraphrase it, or put it into your own words. If you do not know how to do that, take the Living Bible, or another paraphrase, and use that to help you understand, for instance, that “anxious” means “worry”; that “supplication” means “making needs known”, etc. Suddenly, certain parts of the verse will become more personal, because the words will fit into

Day and Night

patterns of words you use every day. Then, try to put it in your own words. The Living Bible says,

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7 TLB)

Now visualize that verse. Picture someone in your mind who is worrying. See them fret. See them fearful. Then picture them taking that problem to God's throne, telling God about it honestly, and then leaving it there. Visualize them actually unloading a great burden at God's feet, and walking away relieved and at rest. Then think of other passages that say the same thing. Isaiah 26:3 is a good one. John 16:33 is another. Pray those passages back to God and begin to praise Him for such marvelous promises. Watch your spirit begin to soar as you concentrate on Him instead of your problem.

Now personalize the passage. That means put it in the first person. You might translate it like this,

"I, (John Smith), am hereby instructed by God without exception that worry is sin. You are saying to me, Lord, that I am never to worry. Instead, anytime I am tempted to do so, I am to talk to you about it, worshipping you first, then explaining the problem, then thanking you as I leave the problem there. Lord, I'm worried about (my job situation). Lord, I can't handle it, only You can. Here, You take over. I refuse to worry any longer. I'll do everything I'm supposed to do, but I'll leave the outcome to You."

Now start praising God. If you're alone, sing. If not, "make melody in your heart". Thank Him that the thing you simply couldn't handle was never yours to handle in the first place. Now, here's the key: the worry will return; Satan will see to that. But if you continue to meditate and praise as you drive to work, or as you work in the office, or as you do the dishes, God may well bring to your mind Matthew 11:28 which says,

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

As you visualize that passage see yourself once again, giving up

Day and Night

to Jesus all the cares you possess, which may well bring to mind I Peter 5:7,

Casting all your care on him; for he careth for you.

Soon Satan will get weary of badgering you, for your mind is no longer in neutral waiting for his onslaughts; it is captivated and energized and occupied with the very Word of God that negates what the devil is saying. But should he persist, meditate the more. Praise the more. Worship the more. That is experiencing the passage. In the midst of the onslaught, the Word becomes the Sword of the Spirit to slay the enemy.

In the next lesson we'll look at how to weave a "thread" of verses into a package so that each one will have a key word that leads you automatically to the next, until you virtually have the Mind of God on the subject you are concerned about. But for now, just practice taking one or two short passages that you already know or can commit to memory quickly, and begin to meditate on them throughout the day, throughout the night.

That, of course, is the crux of it all. Once or twice simply won't do the trick. It must become a constant exercise of meditation and praise. This "Word of the Lord" must not depart from your mouth. It must never leave the tip of your tongue. You must instead chew on it day and night. That means as you shower, as you fix breakfast, as you walk to the car, as you run to catch the phone, as you go up the elevator, as you drive to lunch, as you wait for the doctor, as you wait for your children, in the still of the night when you are awakened and, in particular, as you enter into situations that would lead you into temptation.

But for certain, if you are John Smith, and you go for a job interview, all the way there, meditate on Philippians 4:6,7. Praise God in advance for that peace that passes understanding. Thank Him ahead of time that you're not going to be nervous because you've given the problem to Him and the outcome is His. Instead, you'll simply be at rest, waiting to see what He does.

V- ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT

I would like us to take that passage, Philippians 4:6,7, along with Matthew 11:28 and Isaiah 26:3 for this week. As we chew on those verses, let's ask God to call others to mind, or let's use a concordance and trace other verses with identical key words, so we can spend a delightful week becoming prosperous

Day and Night

(meeting God's specifications) and successful (seeing life from His perspective). In our next lesson, we will review these principles and begin to look at the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit through the lens of meditation. So you might want to read Galatians, chapter five, especially verses 19-25, in preparation for that study.

Our goal is to spend the rest of our lives chewing on God's Heavenly Spearmint, the Word of God. We want it to literally captivate our lives because...

THE WORD IS OUR LIFE

The Word is our life, Beloved,
It's all the strength we need,
Its very power transforms us
When its commands we heed.

If we but stop to meditate,
It will God's Mind bestow
And as His Word becomes our life
Into His Likeness we'll grow.

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PO Box 782256, San Antonio, TX 78278
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
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