

Russell Kelfer

The Miracle of Meditation

(Part 1)

513-B

Series: Promises and God's Word

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

The Miracle of Meditation

(Part 1)

We have been dealing with the concepts of living the Christian life as revealed in the Old Testament, particularly the principles revealed in the book of Joshua. For the last two lessons, we have been studying Joshua chapter 1.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

(Joshua 1:8,9 NKJV)

We have been dealing with the concept why we memorize the Scripture. We dealt with many reasons. First of all, we memorize Scripture because God told us to. It was not a viable alternative to the Christian experience; it was a commandment. We were told “this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth”.

For the last two lessons, we have been going through the ways to get the Word of God into your life. The Scripture says we need to receive the Word readily. We also need to have it immediately available. From observing the alternatives of hearing, reading, studying and memorizing, we found that there is only one viable alternative that puts the Word in your mouth. That is to memorize it.

In the last lesson, we dealt with the concepts of legalism, our weakness and inability to memorize Scripture, our motivation and our priorities. We dealt with what memorizing the Word can do for us in our prayer lives when we are tempted by the enemy, when we are in the process of trying to witness and trying to grow personally and trying to minister to others.

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We ended with the fact that if we are going to memorize the Word, we need three things: a plan, a goal and a helper. There are many good plans. We just need to use the plan God lays on our hearts. We don't need to legalize it; we simply need to use it.

We also need a recognizable goal so that we can know whether we have fallen short or reached the goal. The goal can be a small one that can be expanded over a period of time, but the important thing is to set a goal for your own life. Tell God about it.

The third point is that we need a helper. We need somebody who can come alongside of you. Ecclesiastes tells us that two are better than one because if one falls and there is not another there to help him up, he just lies there. However, if he has another one alongside, the other can help him up, lift him up and give encouragement. Two are better than one. The passage goes on to say that a three-fold cord is not quickly broken. I asked you to get somebody who will listen to your verses and share with you. Together you can encourage one another and continue to be faithful.

We have been told in Joshua 1:8-9 that this book of the law must not leave your heart. It must be placed there in such a way that it cannot get away. It says that it should not depart out of your mouth. It should always be on the tip of your tongue.

What is the reason for this? Why should we memorize the Word? It is not to be an end within itself. Someone may come up to you and say, "I know 150 verses." That in itself is exceptional and exciting, but it may or may not have been carried to its proper conclusion. The goal in this passage says that this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth for a certain reason. The reason you memorize is so you can meditate on it day and night. If you have been memorizing the Scripture for a long time but your appropriation of the principle of meditation is weak, then you have missed most of the blessing of memorizing.

Perhaps you feel more spiritual because you memorize. What makes you spiritual is the Spirit, not what you do. All

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that the Spirit asks is that you put the Word in position for Him to use it, then make ourselves available so that it can be usable. Meditation is the key. This book of the law should be on the tip of your tongue, not so that you can stand up and say that you have memorized it, not so that you can call up your friend or paste some stickers on your wall; but so this book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth for one reason: so that you can meditate on it day and night. That is the reason.

The word “you” means everybody who is being addressed in the passage which was everybody. “You shall” means that it is a commandment. Ye shall meditate therein as often as you feel like? No, that is not what it says. Ye shall meditate therein continuously, day and night. In other words, there ought not to be a waking moment where the Scripture is not at the edge of your conscious thoughts.

For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8c NKJV)

If the goal of memorizing is to meditate, then what is the purpose of meditation? You say, “It makes me more spiritual.” How do you know if you are more spiritual? What does it say?

that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. (Joshua 1:8b NKJV)

This is the reason for meditation. The reason for memorization is to have the availability to meditate. The reason to meditate is so that you can be obedient to the Word of God. That is the goal.

The end result is perfect, implicit obedience. What does this passage say in verses 6 and 7? That you would turn neither to the right nor to the left. That is obedience. Often children, or husbands or wives will say, “I really love you.” Children will tell their parents that. Spouses will tell each other that.

The loved one asks, “Did you do what I asked?”

They answer, “No, I didn’t; but I really love you.”

When someone has been unfaithful or dishonest, they don’t come to the person whom they offended and say, “I just

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want you to know how much I love you. By the way, let me tell you what I did.” The loved one would say, “Is that the way you show you love me?”

I don't know any of you who are parents who have either thought that or said that or both. Yet, we go to the Lord continually, having been unfaithful to Him, and cry, “By the way Lord, I love You.”

The purpose of memorization is to meditate. The purpose of meditation is to become obedient to do the will of God according to the Word of God without question, without argument and without delay.

The end result is to become obedient, faithful and fruitful. Obedient so that you may observe to do according to do all that is written therein. Faithful, then thou shalt have prosperity. Fruitful, then thou shalt have good success. In other words, you will reflect the fruit of the Spirit, and you will bear fruit in your lives. This is the reason you ought to memorize and meditate upon verses that speak to needs in your own life instead of just picking out passages that someone else has memorized or a group of verses that is just handed to you. This is the reason, particularly, as we grow in the Lord that we need to meditate on verses that meet a need in our own lives. Our goal is obedience. We all know there are areas of disobedience in our lives, many of them. Why not treat the illness with the medication that is prescribed? If you have a problem with the tongue, then meditate on passages that convict, convince and transform. That is the goal.

What, then, is meditation? It is a very difficult thing to define. I want to stay as close to the Scriptures as I can. The original Greek word is the same word that is used of a cow as it chews its cud. It means to recall in order to re-digest. It is calling to remembrance something for the purpose of digesting it.

One example is that of a computer. There are three facets to it. Basically, you program or enter information into it, you store it and then you recall it. To program it is to memorize in terms of the mind. To store it is to review it so that it is in its proper place. To recall it is to meditate on it. It is to press

the button and appropriate it.

The goal of meditation is to take the Word and see man's characteristics in the light of God's character for the purpose of change. There are four aspects of meditation that I would like to share with you. When you get a verse or passage that you want to meditate on, let me ask you to consider these four principles.

1- Concentrate. Psalm 119:18 is a passage that I believe we ought to claim before the Lord every time we sit down with the Bible and every time we begin to meditate. Who is it that makes the Word alive? It is the Spirit. In other words, you and I have the Word as an agent. But, we need the Holy Spirit to make it work. Psalm 119 says:

Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from
Your law. (Psalm 119:18 NKJV)

Specifically, by the act of our will, we need to ask God, as we begin meditating, to make it work. Otherwise, we will get locked into a legalistic principle. We will think, "I will be spiritual because I am going to meditate all the way to work today. Lord, aren't You proud of me?"

Who did it? We did it. That doesn't impress God. What we want to do is to say, "Lord, we need You desperately. We need Your Word to change us. Open our eyes, our spiritual eyes."

What does the Word say? Some are hearing and do not hear and seeing but they do not see because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned, neither indeed can he.¹

But you and I have the Spirit, and therefore we can ask the Spirit to open our spiritual eyes.

So the first thing we do is concentrate. That is, to ask the Spirit to make us alive, and then by an act of the will focus our minds on the passage with a goal of transformation. It means that we don't decide to meditate while we are watching television, listening to a football game or carrying on a conversation. It is true that you can keep the Word submerged in your heart and allow it to penetrate, but the

¹ I Corinthians 2:14

concept of real meditation must be done while concentrating.

2- Evaluate. Ask yourself, “To whom was this passage addressed? Are there parallel thoughts in the passage that say the same thing?” Your goal is to behold the Word, the worth, the works and the ways of God. That is what the Scripture does. It reveals what He has said (His Word), who He is (His worth), what He has done and the way, which He performs it (His ways). The purpose of beholding is to reveal His warnings, His commands and the principles that undergird them both.

As you break the verse or passage down, ask God to give you the rich meaning of every word. Most of us do not understand the meaning of many of the words we memorize from Scripture, then we don’t understand why we don’t get anything out of meditating. When you meditate on a familiar verse, you skip over words that you have used all of your life. You think you know what they mean.

3- Reiterate. Ask God, as you review the Scripture, to roll it over in our mind and give you other passages in the Bible that confirm the same truth. There are passages that build on this truth. There are stair-step passages. There are passages that contrast truths, not contradict, but contrast. We will see this in our example.

4- appropriate. This is the fourth aspect of meditation. Concentration, evaluation, reiteration and appropriation are important aspects of meditation. Appropriation is the key to this whole process. When you appropriate, you make it personal and make commitments to the Lord based upon what you have learned. In other words, you put the passage in the first person. Pray your way through that passage in the first person.

Because time is short, I want to ask you to meditate on a verse of Scripture with me so that we can be sure that all of us have some concept of what meditation is. Sometimes we assume that we know how to do this because we use the word so much.

The verse I want to ask you to meditate on is one I trust is not that familiar to most of you. It is Jeremiah 12:5.

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Remember what we are looking for: man's characteristics with a view to appropriate God's character. It goes like this:

“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”
(Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

You may think this one doesn't make sense, and we need to go on to another one. Yes, it does make sense. If we meditate on a verse that is not terribly familiar, the Holy Spirit has a great deal more to work with.

What is the first thing we need to do? Concentrate. Let's bow together for just a moment. “Father, we realize that every word You speak is filled with power. We ask that You would open our spiritual eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. In Jesus' precious name we claim it. Amen.”

We are going to evaluate. I want you to be very prayerful about this. Bow your head and let's just meditate on this verse.

“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”
(Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

Let's ask the Lord to reveal parallel thoughts. We have footmen related to horses. We have the land of peace related to the swelling of the Jordan. Let's prayerfully ask God to reveal to us what those parallels indicate. Do you see it begin to surface? One speaks of present and relatively easy situations that we are now in, the footmen and the land of peace. This verse says that if we are in those situations and cannot cope, what are we going to do when we get in future times of testing that are difficult? How are we going to contend with horses? What will we do when the Jordan swells? What will we do in the midst of crisis? In other words, now things are calm and peaceful, and we can't deal with it. We don't have the proper perspective and we are unable to cope.

As you meditate on this verse, think of things that

happened to you this week. Think of situations that should have been very natural and easy as a believer to handle. Yet, think of your responses that were incorrect and how, in a very relatively simple situation, you came apart or became agitated or became frustrated. What this passage is saying to us as we meditate is, if in that situation you are unable to cope, what will you do when you stand on the banks of the Jordan as they swell to capacity, and you need to cross? What will you do? Your present response to easy situations is but an indicator of what will happen when the going gets tough.

As we meditate on this verse, God ought to bring to our minds situations that we reflect upon that will convict us. We like to become self-satisfied, don't we? We think we are doing pretty well. We haven't slugged anybody this week. We haven't stolen anything, much. We haven't lied too many times compared to everybody else around us. We even had a quiet time 3 out of 7 days, we rationalize. But the Word, as we meditate on it, convicts and convinces and penetrates. What it says is that if in these easy situations we panicked, what will we do when the heat is on?

Now reiterate as we are beginning to meditate on this passage. Let's expand it through the Word as we chew on it. What is the problem? The problem is that man characteristically gets weary. Do you ever get weary? If you've run with footmen and get weary, you've just been on the edge of the battlefield. You've seen a couple of land mines, but nothing has landed close by. You come back to camp and mop your brow. You are weary and worn. You say, "Wow! War is tough." "What will you do in the middle of the battlefield?" the Scripture asks.

You've been in a scrimmage, and you are worn out. What will you do in the game? God never leaves us there. If you have been memorizing and meditating, He will bring to mind other passages of Scripture that will lift your heart up once you have been convicted. Isaiah 40 says:

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,

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Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not be faint.

(Isaiah 40:28-31 NKJV)

Immediately, the picture shifts from our characteristic of weariness to God's character. He is never weary. He is always available to whom? To them who are without might, He increases strength. So all of a sudden, the perspective changes as we meditate on that verse. Sure, we are weary. We haven't made it. We fall apart at the slightest thing. We are convicted that when the battle is really heavy, we won't make it.

We cry out to the Lord, and He tells us that He never wearies. He is totally available, and He is most available to the weak, to those who will admit that they are weak. He says, "Your ability at best is nothing. Even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall collapse in the middle of the game. But they that wait upon the Lord will have an infusion of power and strength in the midst of it so that they can fly and run and walk as the need occurs."

Psalms 27:14 then comes to your mind.

Wait on the Lord;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the Lord! (NKJV)

The verses begin to come to mind one at a time. God begins to strengthen and encourage us. Through the process of meditation, we reiterate these other passages and the whole of God's character begins to evolve. Our characteristic is weariness. God's character is fresh strength. Our job, through meditation, is to appropriate that strength.

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After we have meditated on it and searched it out, it begins to well up within us as other verses surface. We bow our heads as we drive or sit or as we walk and say, "Lord, that is me. I am weary. I get weary at the slightest thing. The kids came up and did something that wasn't exactly the way I wanted it. I became tense and worn out from the pressure. I went to work, and I had a normal day there, but I came home exhausted in spirit. Father, that is me. Please forgive me because that is not Your character. I ask You now to cleanse me and make me strong. Lord, thank you. Thank You, Lord, that You have revealed to me that if I cannot run with the footmen, surely I can't contend with horses. But, Lord, thank You that it's not my strength that I need, but Yours. You have told me that I need not fear because You never get weary. The battle never gets too hard. So Lord, by grace, at this moment, I'm going to ask You for the ability to learn to wait on You, to learn to rest in You and for Your strength to fill me and flood me. Even today, prove Yourself in my life. Father, I give myself to Thee for that purpose, even now."

You meditate again on the verse.

"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?"
(Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

The answer comes:

But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31 NKJV)

You get excited and enthusiastic and encouraged. You begin to break out in praise to God, "Thank You, Lord, for Your strength. Thank You, Lord, for Your power. Thank You, Lord, for Your might. I need not be weary. I can rest in You."

This is meditation. As you do it, you begin to be transformed and translated in ever increasing splendor from one degree of glory to another as II Corinthians 3:18 tells us. It is glorifying to Him. The goal of meditation is transformation. The way it

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is done is by seeing the characteristics of man in the light of the character of God. Then through mediation, we are to appropriate that character. That is living Christianity.

Let's do one more. Do any of you ever worry? Let's look at Philippians 4:6-7. Many of you know this one. You are driving to work. You have already memorized this. You have reviewed it. You know it. You have it pasted on your dashboard. It comes on and off in neon lights when you apply the brakes. We even worry about it because we know the verse, and we worry because we don't apply it. That is typical. What does the verse say?

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)

How many hours have you spent meditating on that verse? Most of us do not meditate on it as much as we ought to. At least once a week we need to get apart before we come apart and meditate on that verse. Every instant that we begin to worry and fret about what is going to happen at the office or what is going to happen at home or what we are going to do because we are out of time, out of money, out of this and out of that, Philippians 4:6-7 ought to come to our minds. We ought to concentrate and say, "Lord, open my eyes and reveal something from that passage."

We then need to evaluate. "Lord, what does it mean to be anxious for nothing? That is a commandment, Lord." That means it is sin to worry. Does it say, "Be anxious for very little things?" No, it says, "Be anxious for absolutely, positively nothing." There is no situation or circumstance, past, present or future that is justification for worry. That is what this passage says.

You say, "Well, Lord, I can sure understand that for other people. But, Lord, they haven't been through what I've been through."

That is not what the Scripture says. It says, there is no

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test taken you but such as is common to man. Oh. “But Lord, You just don’t understand.”

But the Scripture says, He was tested in every point like as we are and yet without sin. He knows everything we go through. Oh.

So we being to meditate, Be anxious for nothing. He says, “I have an alternative solution for you.” Every time you start to worry pray, entering into God’s perspective with supplication, asking specifically of God to relieve the worry and replace it with peace. Then with thanksgiving, before it ever comes to pass say, “Thank You, Lord, for keeping Your Word.”

Then you actively release it into the hand of God. He promises us that the peace of God that passes human understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Do any other verses come to your mind as you meditate on that? Isaiah 26:3 says:

You will keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You. (NKJV)

Not only is God willing to give us His peace, He is willing to submerge us in His peace.

John 14:27 says:

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (NKJV)

John 16:33 says:

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (NKJV)

As we begin to evaluate and reiterate, we ought to be able then to appropriate. “Lord, I’m sorry. I’ve been worrying over things that are not my concern. I’ve been carrying loads that were designed for Your shoulders. I’ve been carrying burdens that I don’t even have the ability to lift. I want to come to You now in the name of Jesus and hand them to You. Lord, there is this burden about the kids. Would You please take

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it? Lord, there is this burden about this job I have to do this week that I know I can't do. Would You please take it? Lord, I'm concerned about the situation with my family. Would You please take it?"

We hand our concerns and worries to Him one at a time. Then we claim the promise.

What is going to happen?

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:7 NKJV)

We meditate, evaluate, reiterate, appropriate, and then we rest. Every time the worry comes back, and it will come back because the enemy is alive, we immediately go back to the Lord and claim that verse. The enemy has absolutely no hold on us because:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper
than any two-edged sword,

(Hebrews 4:12a NKJV)

Because we have meditated on the Word of God, it is now alive in our hearts. That is real Christianity.

God said to Joshua and the nation of Israel,

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth,"

(Joshua 1:8a NKJV)

Instead, you should meditate on it from the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night. You should meditate day and night for one reason,

that you may observe to do according to all that is written
in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and
then you will have good success.

(Joshua 1:8c NKJV)

Be strong. Be courageous. Meditate and let God take over your life.

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