

## The Power of Meditating on the Scriptures

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • October 27, In the year of our Lord, 2013

### Prelude:

- I. The importance of memorizing Scripture
  - A. I used to type verses on the back of old business cards
  - B. Now, I concentrate upon knowing a passage
  - C. James 1.21-24
    1. Remove the distraction of wickedness
    2. Cement the passage by doing it
  - D. Helps facilitate meditating
- II. This is one of my most important works here
  - A. Everything begins with knowing what the Bible says
  - B. Whatever you think is important in the church, you learned from reading and meditating upon Scripture

### Persuasion:

- I. Meditation Leads to Success
  - A. Joshua 1.7-8
  - B. Psalm 1
    1. You will delight in His word when you love Him
    2. [Illustrate with the note from Melissa]
- II. Meditation Leads to Implantation
  - A. James 1.21
  - B. Mark 7.21-23
    1. Likewise righteousness comes from the heart
    2. However, righteousness cannot come out unless you put it in

C. Proverbs 4.23

D. Psalm 119.9-11

E. Philippians 4.8

### III. Meditation Comes from a Plan to Cover All Scripture

A. Psalm 119.160

B. Joshua 8.34-35

### IV. Meditation Leads to Internal Change

A. Romans 12.2

B. Ephesians 4.23

C. Psalm 119.130

D. Proverbs 2.3-5

E. Personalize Scripture,

1. replacing “sin” in Romans 6 with your sin;
2. replacing “love” in First Corinthians 13 with your name.

### V. The Power of Meditating on Scripture

A. Prosperity – Jos 1.7-8; Psa 1

B. Power – Psa 119.9-11

C. Wisdom – Psa 119.97-100

D. Joy – Psa 63.6-7

E. Faith – Rom 10.17

F. Peace – Psa 119.165

G. Live – Pro 4.4

### VI. Slow Down (with your expectations)

A. You cannot rush everything in life.

B. Can you make your garden grow faster?

1. Reading the Scripture is growing a garden.
  - a) You cannot read it today and
  - b) know it all by tomorrow.
    - (1) Take time daily to meditate in the Scriptures.

1 Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
3 He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.  
(Psa 1.1-3)

- (a) Time in the word is like growing a fruit tree,
    - (b) a longterm investment.
2. The fruit from reading does not show up for years.
  - a) Therefore, take your time and
  - b) in time you shall see fruit.

## VII.Relax

### A. You will

1. understand God's word and
2. become proficient in it.

### B. Do not compare yourself to others,

1. expecting to know what they know without putting in the time.
2. Young adults who expect to have everything dad and mom have

- a) will only frustrate themselves.
- b) Dad and mom have what they have, because
  - (1) they put in the time.
  - (2) It's okay. You will arrive.

C. Paul did not give us an impossible command when he wrote,

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph 5.17).

- 1. Therefore, relax, you *can* understand the will of the Lord,
- 2. provided you have the right attitude as shown by these passages,

11 These were more *fair-minded* than those in Thessalonica, in that they *received the word with all readiness*, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (Acts 17.11).

15 “But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. ... 18 Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him” (Luke 8.15, 18).

- a) Proper spiritual attitude carries more weight
- b) for understanding the word of God
  - (1) than intellectual ability.
  - (2) We need intellectual ability, but
    - (a) it is not the most important thing.
    - (b) God looks at your attitude,
      - i) having designed His word
      - ii) for those who have the right attitude.

VIII. See the Text

A. Word pictures fill the Scriptures.

B. Learn to see those pictures

1. without first trying to figure out the meaning.
2. See and experience the image.
  - a) Then relate that to the point the speaker or writer made.
  - b) For example, what does Psalm 23 teach?
    - (1) God takes care of us.
    - (2) However, David did not say it that way.
      - (a) How did David say it?
      - (b) He used the shepherd and sheep imagery.

## IX. Keep It Simple

A. The people who first heard or read biblical material

B. did not have commentaries, and all the other helps we think we need

1. to be able to understand the Bible.
2. Therefore, come to the text as a person of that time.

C. Do not complicate it.

1. We tend to believe that the biblical message is hidden.
2. We tend to believe that we cannot dig out all that the passage holds
  - a) until we consult tons of other sources.
  - b) Someone persuaded us that we cannot understand the Bible
    - (1) until we know the original languages or
    - (2) consult someone who does.
      - (a) The original languages provide valuable insight, but
      - (b) you do not have to know them to know God's word.
        - i) Therefore, do not complicate the word of God and

ii) do not complicate the *process* for knowing it.

D. Never forget this: God wants you to understand His word.

1. He does not require you to be a scholar.
2. He loves you and
  - a) gave you His word
  - b) that you might learn *of* Him and *from* Him.
    - (1) Therefore, He did not deliver a jigsaw puzzle.
    - (2) He did not give a riddle that only the experts can figure out.

E. We tend towards the Naaman attitude.

1. Second Kings 5 shows a Syrian commander
2. with expectations on how he thought a prophet of God should work.
  - a) The general looked for the complicated and complex, although
  - b) Elisha gave simple instructions for removing the commander's leprosy.

9 Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." 11 But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' 12 Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" 14 So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean (2Ki 5.9-14).

- (1) How much did Naaman need to know to cleanse his leprosy?

- (2) How many commentaries and other helps did he need to read?
  - (a) His own commentary complicated the matter and
  - (b) if he had consulted endless books,
    - i) others would have complicated it for him.
    - ii) The writings of others offer valuable insight, but
      - (1) do not downplay approaching Scripture
      - (2) with a childlike mentality.
        - (a) You are not ignorant for consulting a book, nor
        - (b) shall you be ignorant for not consulting a book.

## **X. Keep Your Eyes on the Text**

A. Often we read a text and look away.

- 1. There is a time for that (when you know the meaning), but
- 2. be sure you truly know what the writer said.
  - a) I often ask people questions based on the text and
  - b) they look up
    - (1) as if they are trying to figure out my question or
    - (2) figure out the meaning of the text, but
      - (a) since they are not looking at the text,
      - (b) they cannot figure out the answer.

B. Look at the Scripture.

- 1. Seeing the words in black and white
- 2. might surprise you with the plainness of God's word.
  - a) You might also be surprised by the number of times
  - b) you believe that a passage teaches something, and then
    - (1) you look at the plain words of the text again, and

- (2) you discover that it did not say what you thought it said.
  - (a) It is not unusual for me to ask what a passage says.
  - (b) The class or person will not look at the text, but
    - i) will start making statements about other passages or
    - ii) statements about the general teaching of Scripture.
      - (1) I will ask several times before someone
      - (2) looks at the text and repeats what it says.
        - (a) The other statements might be true, but
        - (b) we need to know what that exact text says.

C. In Luke 10, a lawyer asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life.

1. Jesus responded with two simple questions,

26 “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (Luke 10.26).

2. Did Jesus ask complicated questions?

a) What did they require the lawyer to do?

b) He just needed to know what the Law said.

(1) Did it take a lawyer to understand the questions of Jesus?

(2) Did it take a lawyer to provide the answers?

3. The lawyer did the right thing and quoted Scripture.

27 So he answered and said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10.27).

a) The lawyer offered no interpretation.

b) He made no commentary.

4. How did Jesus respond to that?

28 And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live” (Luke 10.28).

- a) The lawyer looked at the Scripture and told Jesus what it said, and
- b) Jesus indicated that was all that was needed.

5. Yet, the lawyer fell into the human trap of wanting it to say more,

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10.29).

- a) The lawyer should have been content with
- b) looking at the text,
  - (1) believing what it says, and
  - (2) doing what it says.

## **XI. Consider the Context**

A. In the church, we have been trained to believe

- 1. that the answers to figuring out a biblical text
- 2. are found in other texts.
  - a) Watch what we do when we come to something we do not understand.
  - b) The first thing we do is look at another passage, probably a parallel one.
    - (1) That can be helpful, but
    - (2) use that as a *secondary* approach.

B. Most of the time, the key

- 1. to understanding a difficult passage or
- 2. to learning what the Lord wants you to do
  - a) appears right there in the context.

- b) When a text was first delivered to the people,
  - (1) the writer or speaker expected them to be able to get the message
  - (2) without having to pull out a concordance
    - (a) to search for similar words and expressions
    - (b) throughout the word of God.
- C. Most of the time you can understand the Bible by learning the context.
- D. The context often has three parts.
  - 1. There is the *immediate* context.
    - a) That includes the words, sentences, and paragraph or paragraphs
    - b) that immediately surround what you are studying.
  - 2. There is the *wider* context of that Bible Book.
    - a) Are you studying something in the Book of Romans?
    - b) Why immediately turn to the Book of Galatians?
  - 3. There is the *greater* context of the Bible.
    - a) How does the passage fit into the message of the Bible?
    - b) How does that Bible Book fit into the Bible?
- E. By knowing the context you learn what the Holy Spirit says.
  - 1. Often isolating verses leads to failing to see the truth.
  - 2. When you learn the context
    - a) you will change your opinions and
    - b) you will learn that the conclusions and uses
      - (1) that people make of Bible passages
      - (2) often do not fit the context.

## **XII.A Little at a Time**

- A. A man who was with us for a few months,

1. came into my office, because
2. he was frustrated with his Bible reading.
  - a) He could not remember the whole text or
  - b) did not know what to do with all that he read in one sitting.

B. I am the same way.

1. I like to read through the Bible in a year, but
2. that means I will not get everything I read in a day.
  - a) So, I started looking for one verse to remember for the day.
    - (1) What happened was that as I read,
    - (2) a verse stood out and I kept thinking about it.
      - (a) So, I knew what verse to think about and
      - (b) what verse to write about.
  - b) I wanted to share what I read with others.
    - (1) That is how my e-mail devotionals got started.
    - (2) Therefore, acquiring a little knowledge at a time,
      - (a) helps you construct your spiritual house of knowledge.
      - (b) When a carpenter builds a house,
        - i) does he take all the pieces at one time and build it?
        - ii) No, he takes one piece of wood and one tool and
          - (1) begins the construction,
          - (2) until some time later he has built a house.

C. In Isaiah 28, listen to the criticism the people made of Isaiah's preaching,

9 "Whom will he teach knowledge?  
And whom will he make to understand the message?  
Those just weaned from milk?  
Those just drawn from the breasts?

10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept,  
Line upon line, line upon line,  
Here a little, there a little.”  
(Isa 28.9, 10)

1. Listen to their ridicule in verse 9.
2. They said, “Who does Isaiah think he is teaching? Babies?”
  - a) Verse 10 reveals what they did not like.
  - b) Did he teach them everything all at once?
    - (1) No, it was this precept than that precept.
    - (2) He would give a line and later another line.
      - (a) He spoke a little here and
      - (b) a little there.
3. God knows our nature that we can handle only so much at one time.
  - a) Therefore, that is why He had Isaiah teach the way that he did.
  - b) And that was how the Lord wanted the prophet to continue,

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue  
He will speak to this people,  
12 To whom He said, “This is the rest with which  
You may cause the weary to rest,”  
And, “This is the refreshing”;  
Yet they would not hear.  
13 But the word of the LORD was to them,  
“Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,  
Line upon line, line upon line,  
Here a little, there a little,”  
That they might go and fall backward, and be broken  
And snared and caught.  
(Isa 28.11-13)

D. Therefore, I encouraged the man who came to my office,

1. who was frustrated with his daily Bible reading,
2. to pick one verse or teaching
  - a) that appeared in his daily reading and
  - b) and concentrate on that for the day.

### **XIII. Ask Yourself Questions**

- A. Write down the questions.
- B. Ask yourself what key words appear.
  1. Do the following words appear in the context?
    - a) That
    - b) For
    - c) Therefore
    - d) But
    - e) Also
  2. Look for other words that stand out or the writer repeats.
- C. Almost all of my teaching begins with reading the text and then
  1. I start asking why the writer or speaker said what he did.
  2. I write the question down.

### **XIV. Guarantee That You Will Read**

- A. Read what you can.
  1. If you cannot read the whole Bible in a year,
    - a) find a plan that will take you through the Bible
    - b) in a longer period.
  2. It is better to read a little than none at all.
- B. Have a partner.
  1. You can share things.

2. You know that you will have to have something to say.

C. Schedule a time.

1. Stick to it.

2. You may want to have a single time in the day or

a) read the Old Testament in the morning, and

b) the New Testament in the evening.

B. Remember that the Spirit of God speaks to you through the Scriptures.

### **XV. Wandering and Remembering**

A. Do not try to remember everything that you read.

1. Choose part of the reading that stands out in your mind.

2. Pray about it.

3. Go and do what the passage said.

B. Write down your thoughts about the reading.

1. Tell someone what you have read.

2. This is what launched my e-mail devotionals, starting in 1996,

a) although sporadic at first, but

b) as I read the Scriptures more,

(1) the more I had to tell others what I had discovered.

(2) Now, I send out two e-mail devotionals everyday, and

(a) have written over 6,500 of them.

(b) That is not bragging, but

i) it is telling you what will happen,

ii) if you start reading the Bible daily, and tell others.

C. Love the word because you love the One who wrote it.

1. How eagerly did you read notes from a girl or boyfriend?

2. How eagerly did you read letters from your children or grandchildren?
  - a) It is the relationship that makes the letter special, and
  - b) it is the relationship that makes you want to read it.
    - (1) How would you describe your relationship with God?
    - (2) Improve that relationship by reading what He had written to you.

D. Pray for concentration.

1. Pray without ceasing for it.
2. God will answer your prayer, because
  - a) He, more than you, wants you to focus and to remember His word.
  - b) Try it and see what happens.

E. Read daily.

1. Reading daily makes you familiar with the text.
2. If you are not familiar with it,
  - a) you will not be able to focus, and
  - b) you will not be able to remember.
    - (1) Do you not remember those things that you do habitually?
    - (2) Reading it every year helps the concentration and the memory.

F. Experience the text.

1. See things.
2. Hear things.
3. Smell things.
  - a) Put yourself there.

G. Understand the use of punctuation.

1. One purpose of punctuation is to pause.
2. Without those pauses we miss some of the meaning of the text.

H. Understand the purpose of key words: That, for, therefore, et al.

1. John 3.16 begins with, “For,” but do you know why?
  - a) Let that word be a clue for you to read the verses before.
  - b) Remember that man created most of the verse and chapter divisions.
2. Ephesians 5.25–27 and “that.”

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish (Eph 5.25–27).**

- a) “That” reveals three reasons why Jesus loved the church by dying for her.
  - b) “That” may not always reveal such points, but often does.
- I. Outline the text.
1. Ephesians 5.25–27 is a good example.
  2. First Chronicles 12.8 provides material with which you could parallel NT
    - a) Some Gadites joined David – Jesus is our David
    - b) at the stronghold in the wilderness – The church is the stronghold in the world
    - c) mighty men of valor – Christians stand bravely against Satan
    - d) men trained for battle – We have to be trained
    - e) who could handle shield and spear – The shield of faith, and the spear or sword of the Scriptures
    - f) whose faces were like the faces of lions – We are fierce against Satan
    - g) were as swift as gazelles on the mountains – We are diligent
  3. Someone objects, saying, I am not a preacher.

- a) So what.
  - b) Keep this stuff in a notebook and when you die,
    - (1) your children and grandchildren
    - (2) will go through the material and be fascinated.
- J. Find a style of reading in the Scriptures that captures your attention.
- 1. Enhance your reading skills in that kind of literature and
  - 2. then you can learn concentration and memory.
- K. Read the Scriptures as though you are the first one to receive it.
- L. Pick a time when your mind is not racing,
- 1. thinking about the other things you have to do.
  - 2. Or have paper and pen close, and write down those other things,
    - a) so that you can get back to reading and meditating.
- M. Limit your reading.
- 1. This will prevent racing through the reading,
  - 2. thinking about the next thing that you have to or want to do.
- N. Imagine that you are a narrator for a movie.
- 1. Do you have a favorite narrator?
  - 2. I like to hear Morgan Freeman, or recently I heard Christopher Plummer.
    - a) Imagine your favorite movies that are narrated and
    - b) think how the narrator does it, and
      - (1) do it as you read the Bible.
- O. Create cliff hangers for yourself.
- 1. Stop reading just before something dramatic happens.