

# MEDITATION VS. STUDY

**Psalm 119:11** I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." I wish I could see his face, but it's been too long. An older brother in Christ said it was his favorite passage. Considering his age, I stored his words in my heart because I assumed they were important. That was a good assumption. The Psalmist's words would sink in more and more as the years went by. God's words were life to this poet. Did he study God's word? Well, yes! But why? Because the creator of life communicated through this word. He sustained, protected, and promised. He shed light. Directed paths. Warned from evil. Made the simple wise and comforted those who were suffering.

Now, I could share some interesting information about Psalm 119. "At 176 verses, Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the entire Bible. Its tremendous length reflects its intricate acrostic structure, with the 22 stanzas corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza contains 8 verses that all begin with the same Hebrew letter."

That's all well and good, but so what? One may argue (and rightfully so), "But that's different than knowing what the Psalm actually says." Yet, one could memorize all 176 verses and even cross-reference certain passages to New Testament principles. I have these cross-referenced in my Bible throughout Psalm 119 (as an example). Imagine if you could cross-reference those by memory.

But would that necessarily draw you closer to God? Would it necessarily lead to you trusting in Him? James said, "Even the demons believe - and shudder!" We could say, "Even Satan quoted God's word," yet we're doing everything in our power not to be like the Devil. No, the poet behind Psalm 119 viewed God's law as precious. He meditated on it day and night. The Psalmist sees God's word as beautiful and beneficial in every way possible. The words are not just facts about God; they're practical and life-giving. They're present through the good and the bad times. They result in a changed life, and they result in seeing God differently and more accurately. The message converts creation to God and His ways.

Last week, we discussed the trap of being like the soil that carries both seeds that produce thorns and grain. The thorns choke out the grain. These people hold on to the wrong thing or have the wrong things holding on to them. They may be physically present, but their hearts are far from the Lord. They put in the bare minimum because they're producing for themselves. Last week was all about genuinely hearing the word of God to make a change. And how do we do that? One primary way we listen to God is to be in His word. But many times, we're overwhelmed. We might need to figure out where to start or how to approach it. My encouragement today is to learn how to meditate on God's word. It's not just about accumulating information. It's about seeing God for who He is and appreciating the "why" behind what you do. Not only can we get the balance off in our lives as a whole, but we can also do it with study.

One of you recently read something that resonated with you, and I'd like to share it. "We need both. Intimacy without theology is rootless. It looks deep, but it's actually wide and shallow and produces no fruit. Theology without intimacy is like a hollow tree: it looks tall and robust, but it falls over when suffering comes. We need both."

I think you find "intimacy" through meditation. This term is mainly used in the OT, particularly the Psalms. It shouldn't surprise you that it's used in poetry. Here's the material typically associated with prayer or set to music. Relationships aren't meant to be cold and transactional. They're to have warmth. Jesus told us to love God with our hearts, soul, mind, and strength.

I remember my father talking about David and Goliath as a child. He would walk through the scene-the valley and hills, the Philistines, Israel, the five stones from the brook, David, Goliath, the whole thing. He would take me there, and you'd think about these people and what it meant for them.

Or when you read one of Paul's letters. You think about who it's to and their history. What's happened to Paul. What motivated him. Or John and the language he uses. How he adopted the language of the Master Teacher - little children. Or Peter, who drops little nuggets in his letter that reminds you he always remembered his time with Jesus - the good and challenging times. The victories and defeats.

For example:

- Garden
  - Genesis 1-3. It was good, but was it perfect? If we're not given into marriage in heaven, then what's this about? If it's not meant to be permanent, then what's it all about? What's the tree about? What's Satan about? What's his story? So, heavenly beings have free will? Does being in God's presence not eliminate free will? Then how is heaven different?
  - Imagine a time when we are at home with God. No longer "very good," but perfect. Consider how the Tabernacle's design depicted scenes from the garden. Consider how the Bible closes with such images. And all because of this seed who would crush the serpent's head. And consider how God has planned this before the foundation of the world . . . so He knew. Think about God's hand in it all. God's part. Our part. Evil's part. Be amazed. Wonder. Think "big picture" and see where you're at in it all. What does it mean to you? Where are you going? What are you looking forward to? Or are these passages only used to combat the theory of evolution or to reinforce God's will on marriage. Do we know how an Israelite would have read these passages so long ago? Do we consider how they point to God as the God of all gods? There's such a blessing in meditating on God's word. Talking to other brethren who meditate and consider. Together, we build one another up and are amazed as we continue to ask, "Who is He?" Do we consider how millions of people are stumped with the question, "How did life begin? What's going on?" You and I have the answer before us, and we're introduced to the Creator. How quickly we forget. And as brilliant as people are . . . we can't create a single seed.
- Moses

- Exodus 3. Can you imagine what Moses was in for? Imagine his upbringing. He's now 80 years old, and God calls him to return home. Try to put yourself in his shoes. Just when you think your past would surely never return. All of a sudden, you are back in familiar places. Can you appreciate the fear and uncertainty? Can you imagine the pressure he felt? And the things Moses would see and experience. The disappointments. Think about his life and then read the one Psalm attributed to him in Psalm 90. Consider his role in foreshadowing the great prophet in passages such as Deut. 18. Think about Moses and the great lawgiver on Mount Sinai. Then think about Jesus . . .
- Jesus
  - Matthew 7:21-23. You know this passage. You've probably used it several times. Do you know when Jesus taught this? Do you know the setting and context? Imagine being in the crowd. What do you think would shock the audience more than anything? That's why you have verses 28-29. Such observations help remind us of who we're learning about. It's not just about what Jesus said (which is important to know), but who said it? And it's not about immediately considering who needs to hear it. It should apply to you. "Am I the kind of person Jesus is talking about? What would that look like today?" Yes, here's our Savior on a mountain teaching His people about the true Kingdom of God. Will these people be different from their fathers? What does Jesus see in us?
- Peter
  - 1 Peter 2:18-25. When you read Peter's letter, do you remember that he was a man like you? He spent time with Jesus. He would have been at the center of Peter's thoughts. In fact, you'll notice in this letter how he continues to come back to Jesus as an example. Think about what Peter may have been picturing when he wrote this portion. How Jesus stayed the course. How He was a sheep led to the slaughter. How Peter fled from Jesus. How Jesus suffered. How Jesus' example emboldened Peter. Or consider how Jesus' example would help Peter as an apostle and shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-5). Billy and Rod, when you read this passage, read it from Peter's point of view. Have you ever thought how you three have something in common? Maybe you three will discuss that one day together?