

Meditation

by: Ronald L. Dart

Years ago, I was a vice president of a much larger church organization and one of the senior vice presidents hired a gentleman from Pepperdine to come over and do some management workshops and seminars with us. His name was Jim Stark. We had a management book to read between one class and the class the following week, we were to have read it so we could talk about it

One week his assignment to us was, "I want you to keep a time log, of what you are doing every five minutes of the day from now until the time to come back together again." Now you talk about a challenge!

The next week we came back and we talked it over and it was really a helpful discussion, but then he said, "Next week we with do this again, but this time, all you have to keep track of is every 15 minutes, but in the course of this week, I want you to spend one hour in which you do nothing except think. You can't read a book, you can't write, you can't listen to music, you can't do anything except think."

What he hoped we would do was to think about our job and our responsibility.

Take Time To Think

I'll tell you, this was one of the great revolutions in my life. For months, I had been chasing rabbits and putting out brush fires and there was no end of it in sight with the job that I had at that time.

What I did was, I sat there and I thought it through. It was only one hour in the course of the week, but out of that one hour came one of the most important ideas, and as it turned out, one of the most obvious ideas, ever to affect my area of responsibility.

It was a kind of idea that makes you slap your forehead and say, "How come I didn't see this before," but the reason I didn't see it before was, I didn't think. I didn't have time. I didn't take time to sit down, be quiet and just think my way through the problem.

Meditation

Now we have a million-dollar word to describe what Jim Stark told us to do. The word is 'meditation.' Simple, you have heard of it, haven't you?

So what is the big deal about meditation? Why is it that we hear so much about it? Well it is important. There's nothing really special about meditation. All it means is do directed thinking. In other words, be quiet, think and focus on some topic that you wish to think about. That's really about all it is. The problem we have is, we don't take the time. That's the difficulty. We don't take the time and we don't get rid of the distractions.

Since meditation is supposed to be a spiritual exercise and I imagine that you have heard of it as such, maybe we should go and see what the Bible has to say about it. You can do this yourself with the concordance and the first scripture you'll find is Genesis 24 verse 62.

Genesis 24 verse 62, "And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. {63} And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening, and he lifted up his eyes and he saw the camels coming."

Guess who was riding on one of those camels? His wife to be. But that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm pointing out is, that he went out into the field in the evening to meditate.

I take two things away from this: One. He went into the field to withdraw from the world, to get away from the things that would demand his time, and would distract him from what it was that he wanted to think about on this occasion.

The second thing I take away from this is that walking is good for meditation and I certainly have to agree with that. Take a solo walk in the woods, take a solo walk in the country in the fields, these things are great opportunities to think through problems and difficulties that we have.

Certain kinds of driving can be good for meditation, as long as it is not in town. A treadmill with a television set in front it is good for the body. It will do nothing for the soul. It will not help you with regard to what were talking about here. A walk alone in nature is good for the spirit. That's what we want to talk about.

Think About God's Law

The next reference I'll take you to is the first chapter of Joshua verse one, "After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' aide, saying {2} Moses is dead, now therefore you arise, and go over the Jordan River, you and all the people, to the land that I do give them, even the children of Israel." Now verse eight, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do all that is written therein, for then you will make your way prosperous, and have good success."

Now I have a feeling that a lot of people think that there's something magical about this in this regard, that if I will just study my Bible, God will pull some levers and flip some switches and He will give me good success and make me prosperous. That is not what He

was telling him. He is saying that, "If you will take the time, to think, day and night, about my law, my law will make you successful and prosperous."

What it is talking about is the natural result of where your heart and your mind is. Why am I not more successful and prosperous? You probably have not thought very much about it.

Meditate On Something

My next point on this is meditation is about something. Catch that? Meditation is about something. You are not just out there wandering, you know letting your mind wander to whatever is going on. You are there to deal with an issue, something that is on your mind.

Meditation is more than a once a day activity. It is a something that you do day and night. Now I just want to underline this.

Psalm one says, about the same thing, "Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way 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 does he meditate day and night. {3} And he shall be like the tree planted by the rivers of water, it brings forth its fruit and in his season, its leaves shall not wither."

This is the same promise that was given to Joshua, "Whatever he does shall prosper."

Invite God Into Your Meditation

Now the next verse we will find on meditation is Psalm five verse 1, "Give ear to my words, O LORD, and consider my meditation."

There is not much there, is there? Well a little more than you might think. Meditation is not entirely a private affair. The idea here is that we invite God to participate in or to observe or listen in on our meditation.

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

So I'm not just out here meditating in the wind, about my own stuff, all by myself. We are talking about something now, that we think might be of concern to God, that we have turned our heart and our mind to. We ask God to look upon and consider what we are doing and what we are thinking.

It is not that you pray all the time. What you are doing in many cases is just working your way through the implications of what you know the Bible has told you so that you will be able to evaluate so many of life situations that will come your way.

The Hebrew word for 'meditation' is 'hagiyyg', which means to murmur, by implication, it's musing or thought, but it's also like talking to yourself. If someone is watching you meditate,

they might say, "He is talking to himself, muttering as he goes down the road." You have to be careful about that lest they lock you up.

Psalm 19 verse 14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer."

Meditation Can Be Out Loud Or Silent

Meditation can be out loud, or it can be in the heart. One of the best places for the out loud type of meditation is when you're driving your car, but not in traffic. People will think that there is something wrong with you if they see you talking to yourself. But in driving your car, if you are meditating, if you are in the problem-solving mode, if you are thinking your way through mode, you may involuntarily find yourself speaking out loud to God or to yourself or to your car. Whatever it is.

Now, by the way, this doesn't happen if you're listening to the radio. It doesn't happen if you're listening to audio tapes or CDs. It doesn't happen if you're listening to music. It doesn't happen there, but maybe a little bit depending on the music it may be okay, but by and large, this happens when you are quiet and your environment is quiet.

It happened for me on one occasion as I drove on the Oklahoma turnpike, by myself going up to Wagner, Oklahoma. I was going to do a seminar and I didn't have much time to prepare when I got there, so I worked on the whole thing. I turned the radio off. No music or political arguments. And all the way between somewhere around about Paris and Wagner, Oklahoma, I prepared that seminar as I drove the car. Driving the car, tied down that one side of my mind and left the other side of my mind free to work the problems out that I would have to work out in order to present the seminar.

You can talk out loud when you are driving but yelling at other drivers does not qualify as meditation.

Meditation Requires An Objective in Understanding

Psalm 49 verse 3, "My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding."

When you are doing any kind of activity, and meditation is no exception, you need to have an objective that you are going for. And here, one of the primary objectives is to come to understanding.

The objective of my seminar that I was working on all the way to Oklahoma was to try to be sure: A.) that I understood and B.) that I would find a way of helping the audience who listened to me understand what it was that I was working my way through.

One of the goals of meditation is coming to understanding.

What Do You Do When You Can't Sleep At Night?

Now here's an exceptional one. Psalm 63 verse six, "When I remember you up on my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches."

Nobody gets through this life without lying awake some at night. Sometimes I wonder if the body is telling us, that we have something to sort out here, so it is no time for you to be going to sleep. And so we lie there. Well, this is a good time for meditation.

Okay, everything is quiet, and here you are, staring at the ceiling in the dark, not able to sleep, and it comes to your mind, that perhaps you have not been as close to God as you wish you had been, that maybe the relationship isn't what you had wished that it was, and you remember God in the night watches, and you meditate on Him in that period of time.

The time that you are awake in the night is precious. It is a time to think through questions, it is the time to think about God, time to think about His plan that He is working out.

Psalm 77 will give us another help on this. Psalm 77 verse 11, "I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember your wonders of old. {12} I will meditate also on all your works and I will talk of all your doings."

Okay, here I am, I'm lying awake at night and I have absolutely nothing special to think about. I'm not trying to solve some problem. There is nothing worrying me. I'm just awake. It is a terrible thing to be awake sometimes. Terrible in one-way, so if you don't have anything to think about, ask: What has God done? What has He done in my life? What has He done in the process of creation?

How Did God Make That?

Someday when you're sitting on your back porch with nothing particularly to think about, Ask, "How exactly did God figure out how a tree should work the way a tree works? What do you know about the tree? What do you know about how photosynthesis works in the leaves of trees, that power that whole system, that pulls nutrients from the earth and builds that tree out from the center? That is an incredible piece of design.

Sit and think about what God has made? To sit and watch the birds at your birdfeeder and contemplate, I wonder what sequence of thoughts went through God's mind to create a bird that cannot possibly disguise himself in any environment in East Texas? He's red. Why did He do that? Why did He make this bird that way? Why is it that birds are as skittish as they are? Why is it that they don't move their head slowly? Every move that a bird makes is instantaneous. They don't just put their head down and eat, they put their head down and take a bite and they look and they look. Why are they doing that? Because they're spooky, they don't want anything to creep up on them. That how they survive and that is how they stay alive.

"I will remember your works of old. I will remember your wonders of old. {12} I will meditate on all your works, and all that you've done and I'll talk of your doings" (Psalms 77:11-112). Don't talk about what you do.

Singing Is A Kind Of Meditation

Psalm 104 verse 33, "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. {34} My meditation of him shall be sweet. I shall be glad in the LORD."

Singing is a kind of meditation, when you do not have anything else to talk about. One of the reasons we sing hymns over and over and over again is to worship God together and also to implant them in our minds and our hearts so that when we are driving our car down the road we can sing the songs. We can get ourselves a CD that has the music that goes with it and stick it in the player and we can sing along with it. We can do any number of things to sing the praises of God, to sing about Him and it is a kind of meditation that can be especially sweet at times in our lives.

Why Am I Awake?

Psalm 119, verse 148, "My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, so I can meditate on your precepts."

Why am I awake? One reason that I am awake, is so I can meditate.

Seven times in the 119th. psalm, the psalmist speaks of meditating on God's law (verses 15, 13, 48, 78, 97, 98, 148). It was the thing that he spent time thinking about. Now we do some of that. We worry our heads sometimes over whether or not we should go out to dinner and restaurant on the Sabbath day, whether or not we should wash dishes on the Sabbath day? What about making the bed on the Sabbath day?. What about all the many questions about the law of God? And the many questions that you don't have because you don't know what the law says? And if you did know, you would have questions, things you would go ask somebody for a ruling on, that is not what you're supposed to do. What you're supposed to do is to be quiet for a little while, and sit and think this thing through. Why did God say this? How did He expect a man living in the modern world to make it work? You need to ask these questions and work your way through them in a moment of quiet. The Holy Spirit will be with you and it will help you understand.

Jesus said in John 16 verse 13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, it will guide you into all truth." God's Spirit will bring all manner of truth into your memory, so that the process of giving yourself time and quiet to sit and think these things through is the opportunity for the Spirit to come and remind you and to call your attention to and help you to understand.

Meditation In The New Testament

In the New Testament the word 'meditation' is not used a lot, but the idea is there nevertheless.

First Timothy chapter 4 and verse 14, Paul wrote and said, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. {15} Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them; that your profiting may appear to all."

What Paul is saying here is, spend some time meditating and thinking through the gifts that God has given you. You can start with your talents, then consider: how can I serve God? How can I serve His people? How can I serve His church? What has He given me and what should I do with the things that He has given me?

Love Not The World

Now consider for a moment also, what I have told you about the world. Jesus when He encountered the devil after He went into the wilderness fasting and He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights.

"The devil took Him," Matthew 4 and verse 8, "up to an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world," that is of the system, every aspect of this world, of its kingdoms and all the stuff that goes on to make this world, and "he said to Him "All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me."

Jesus said to us, and this is in the 'Sermon on the Mount' in Matthew 5, verses 14 through 16, "You are the light of the world." You are the light of the cosmos, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

We are in it and we can't get out of it. We may from time to time step aside from it, to give ourselves some time for meditation but when we come back from that, we come back into the world as a light.

Consider the parable of the tares. This is found in Matthew 13. There are two parables about seeds being sown. This is one of them.

This is Matthew chapter 13 verse 36, "Jesus sent the multitudes away, and went into the house, and his disciples came to him, saying "Declare to us the parable of the tares of the field." {37} He answered and said to them, "He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man. {38} The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom,""

Think about this. He comes out here and then he sows the children of the kingdom, which God willing is us. He sows us into this system, not somewhere else. Not into the enclave, not

somewhere in a paddock where we will be kept safe from the world. He sows us into the world. The field is the world.

"The tares are the children of the wicked one, {39} The enemy that sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the world," the end of this world, it is not going on forever. "The harvest takes place at the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. {40} Therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so will it be in the end of this world. {41} The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, {42} And shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. {43} Then shall the righteous shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

It is of a passing interest, by the way, that Christ does not establish a new cosmos, a new world. He establishes a kingdom. This one is directed from the top. We are sown like seed, here in the world, and we are expected to bear fruit even in this soil.

There is an interesting Scripture and I think it casts a good bit of light on the world. First John chapter 2 and verse 15. John writes and says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

The world is a system that will keep us away from God if it can. This system for some reason, mindless as it is, does not want us to think about God, it doesn't want us to think period.

Sower And The Seed

There is another parable of Jesus, the sower and the seed. You are familiar with this so I'm not going to take the time to read the whole parable to you, but there is one category of seed here, that we will look at.

This is in Mark chapter 4 verse 18. "These are they who are sown among thorns. They are people who hear the word {19} And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

I can't think of a better expression for what happens to most of us, day in and day out in our lives. The cares of the world is not things we can toss off, we have to do something about them.

"But that the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches," not necessarily even a whole bunch of it, but some, "and the lust of other things."

It is just the desires of the world, the things that the world tries to prompt us to do and that we are involved in, these things just eat us alive and I think this may be our greatest danger,

because it is so subtle. The smothering effects of a society that wants to consume every moment of your time in the trivial things. It doesn't matter as long as the cares of the world leave you with no time for God.

Our only escape, salvation, is to get away from the world for some time every day of our lives. There are no mountains to climb. There are no techniques to master. You don't have to sit cross-legged on the floor, saying the same words over and over and over again as some people suggest meditation is.

Meditation Is Simple

Meditation is simple. You withdraw from the noise and the confusion of the world for a time to be alone with God. Take a walk outdoors, not necessarily trying to get your aerobic exercise in, but to be in nature and to be alone with time to think. Think about something. Meditate more than once a day. Invite God into your meditation.

Meditate aloud, meditate in silence, talk to yourself, talk to God. Meditate to understand something. Meditate in bed and when you can't sleep. Meditate on the works of God, if you're not trying to solve some problem, sing songs as a form of meditation and think about the gifts of God, that He has given to you and the responsibility that comes right along with the gifts that He gave to you.

Think about it, drag on it. Be like a little puppy with his bone, where he has to gnaw it, gnaw it, gnaw it, until finally he begins to get through to whatever he is after.

Give some time and attention to the condition of your soul.

The words keep coming back to mind for me, "Let my meditation be acceptable in your sight."

This article was transcribed with minor editing from a message given by
Ronald L. Dart titled: Meditation (0550) 12/10/05
Transcribed by: bb 2/21/16

Ronald L. Dart is an evangelist and is heard daily and weekly
on his Born to Win radio program.

You can contact Ronald L. Dart at Christian Educational Ministries
P.O. Box 560 Whitehouse, Texas 75791
Phone: (903) 839-9300 — 1-888-BIBLE-44

www.borntowin.net