

Pastor Lars Larson, PhD  
First Baptist Church, Leominster, MA  
Words for children: thinking, meditation, heart, mind

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**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life: (23)  
Following Jesus Christ Rightly: #16. Christian Meditation”**

**Introduction:**

Let us begin with the reading of two verses that set the stage for our subject. At the head of the psalms, God had inspired King David to pen these words:

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;  
<sup>2</sup>*But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.* (Psalm 1:1f)

Today we address a very important spiritual discipline that is essential if we are to follow the Lord Jesus Christ rightly. This spiritual discipline is the practice of *Christian meditation*. This is the key that unlocks the full spiritual benefit of the Word of God to us and in us. Not all who hear God’s Word profit spiritually from doing so. With respect to unbelievers, if they hear the Word of God but do not profit from it, they aggravate their condemnation before God. As one once said,

If the Word preached be not effectual to men’s conversion, it will be effectual to their condemnation. The Word will be effectual one way or the other. If it does not make the heart better, it will make your guilt heavier. We pity those who have not the Word preached to them. *But it will be worse for them that have had the Word preached in their hearing, but it did not profit them.* Dreadful is their case that go loaded with sermons to hell. (Thomas Watson)

But sadly, Christians may also forfeit the blessing that the Word of God could have brought to them had they listened to the Word of God taught and preached to them and then applied it to their souls through the spiritual discipline of meditation. Due to a failure to practice this spiritual discipline, true believers may forfeit joy, peace, and fruitfulness in their own souls, and they also may forfeit spiritual power and influence they could bring to others about them.

Spiritual meditation is an important, even a vital matter, that each of us should practice. But if the truth be known, I fear few professing Christians do not do so to much degree or consistency. Meditation is a practice that has fallen into disuse. It is a neglected, even forgotten spiritual discipline. When I had sought a resource for this topic, I went to my *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, but there was no entry for meditation among its 800 articles. But there was a time when Bible believers viewed meditation as vital to a healthy Christian life. I suspect that the failure of believers to practice meditation, as described by the Word of God, is one of the main reasons that many do not profit from God’s Word. There was a time before radio, stereos, and television, that homes were places characterized by quietness. Reading and conversing were the primary activities of free time. Those days were conducive to the quiet meditation upon matters of importance. For Christians, these were occasions they thought much about their life and faith and the cause of Christ.

And yet writers of old also wrote of the fewness of souls that practiced this important discipline. It was the case in the days of **Thomas Watson** (1620-1686). (We will be quoting this great servant a great deal this morning.) He wrote these words,

It gives us a true account why there are so few godly Christians in the world, namely because there are so few meditating Christians. We have known many who have Bible ears: they are swift to hear, but

slow to meditate. *This duty is almost grown out of fashion.* People are so much in the shop that they are seldom on the mount with God. Where is the meditating Christian? Where is he who meditates on sin, hell, eternity, and the recompense of reward, who takes a prospect of heaven every day? Where is the meditating Christian? It is to be bewailed in our times that so many who go under the name of professing believers have banished godly discourse from their tables and meditation from their closets.<sup>1</sup>

In another place he wrote:

The farmer meditates on his acres of land, not upon his soul. His meditation is how he may improve a barren piece of ground, not how he may improve a barren mind; he will not let his ground lie fallow, but he lets his heart lie fallow.<sup>2</sup>

Today we will attempt to set forth what Christian meditation is and why it is important. We will also set forth the ways in which we can practice this spiritual discipline in our lives. And hopefully the Lord will not only instruct us in this matter, but He will motivate us to be more diligent in this most important practice.

## I. What does the Word of God teach us about meditation?

### A. Spiritual meditation is to be the Christian's delight and practice

Let us consider the importance of meditation by reading three passages from the Word of God that speak directly to it. First, let us read **1 Timothy 4:11-16**.

<sup>11</sup>These things command and teach. <sup>12</sup>Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. <sup>13</sup>Till I come, *give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.* <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.* <sup>16</sup>Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. *Continue* in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Let us also read **James 1:19-25**.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, my beloved brethren, *let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;* <sup>20</sup>for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup>*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

<sup>22</sup>But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup>for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. <sup>25</sup>But he who *looks into* the perfect law of liberty and *continues* in it, and is not a *forgetful* hearer but a doer of the work, *this one will be blessed in what he does.*

And then let us read **Philippians 4:8** (NKJV).

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- *meditate on these things.*

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Christian on the Mount; A Treatise on Meditation* (The Northampton Press, 2009), p. 68. Watson, who is my favorite Puritan author, wrote this wonderful book on Christian meditation that has been reprinted and is available. Ron will be obtaining several copies of our book table, Lord willing.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

These passages of God's Word emphasize the responsibility of believers to give great attention to the Word of God. Paul pressed upon Timothy the importance, saying, "in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." Similarly, James wrote to his readers of what was at stake, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

In these passages we read of the great need to be very attentive to the Word and what it teaches. Both Paul and James emphasize the need to *contemplate* on what is read and taught respecting God's Word. Paul wrote, "*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them.*" James emphasized the same idea in a different way, but from the negative side. He used a metaphor of a man who looks into a mirror but as soon as he looks away forgets what he saw. This is a man who hears the Word of God but fails to take it with him, to contemplate upon it, to mediate upon what he heard.

Sadly there are many who hear the Word of God but give little attention to it. They are slow to hear, that is, they are inattentive, rather than being "swift to hear", which means to be eager and desirous to hear and learn. And then many who do hear in a measure, forget what they have heard before long. But the wise person will be one who is attentive to what he hears and he will seek to apply the Word of God to his life, or rather, he applies his life to the Word of God. As James wrote,

But he who *looks into* the perfect law of liberty and *continues* in it, and is not a *forgetful* hearer but a doer of the work, *this one will be blessed in what he does.*

The point that we wish to emphasize is that in order to profit from the Word of God, it is critically important that we *meditate upon the Word of God.*

Let us consider Psalm 1 once again. Notice how meditation is the practice of the righteous man in **Psalm 1**, who set in contrast with the unrighteous man. Here the desires and practice of the godly man is set against the desires and practice of the ungodly man. David wrote:

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;  
<sup>2</sup>*But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>The ungodly are not so,  
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup>For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here we have the righteous man compared and contrasted with the unrighteous man, that is, the distinctions between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian's desire and delight is in the law of God, the Holy Scriptures. He meditates on God's Word "day and night." But the ungodly man does not

have the godly man's interests, delights, or practice. His heart lies elsewhere. What he "chews upon" reveals his unclean heart. **Thomas Watson** set this forth in his typical illustrative manner:

The beasts in the old law that did not chew the cud were unclean; the professor (*i.e.* professing Christian) who does not by meditation chew the cud is to be counted unclean.

Now this is not to say that the Christian thinks of nothing else, that he ponders nothing but the Bible. But the Holy Scriptures do set forth the Christian's interest and delight. The Word of God governs his thinking and directs his steps. The Christian is as Jeremiah, who wrote, "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Here again are the words of **Thomas Watson**:

He who delights in God's law is often thinking on it. What a man delights in, his thoughts are running upon. He who delights in money finds his mind taken up with it; therefore the covetous man is said to "mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). Thus, if there is delight in the things of God, the mind will be musing upon them. Oh, what a rare treasure is the Word of God! It is the field where the pearl of great price is hidden.<sup>3</sup>

## **B. More specifically, what is biblical meditation?**

Christian meditation is fundamentally different than what is often thought to be meditation. It is a sad thing that the very idea of meditation has been largely taken over by proponents of Eastern mysticism, for there is a form of meditation practiced by religious cults and false religions. Buddhists practice meditation. Hindus do also. Muslims meditate. But Christians seem not to do so. **Joel Beeke** wrote,

How tragic that the very word *meditation*, once regarded as a core discipline of Christianity and "a crucial preparation for and adjunct to the work of prayer," is now associated with unbiblical New Age spirituality."<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the meditation practiced by other religions, Christian meditation is fundamentally different. Proponents of meditation of this eastern mystic type seek *to empty the mind in order to try and become detached from the world and connected to what they believe is a god-spirit in the universe*. The meditation described in the Bible does not try to empty the mind, but rather the effort is *to fill the mind and focus the mind on the truth of God*. Is that not what these two biblical writers were advocating? Paul wrote: "*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them.*" And James wrote: "*But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*"

Actually the Bible says a great deal about this subject. Listen to God's instruction to **Joshua**, who was given charge over Israel after Moses died. God said to him,

<sup>2</sup>Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. <sup>3</sup>Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. <sup>4</sup>From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. <sup>5</sup>No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. <sup>6</sup>Be strong and of good courage,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), p. 73. Much of what I relate today is drawn from this book. One of the chapters in this book was entitled, "*The Puritan Practice of Mediation.*" I highly recommend this book.

for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8*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.

We see that Joshua was to meditate upon the Word of God so that he would be able to observe it, or obey it. Here we see one of the important elements of biblical meditation. **Thomas Watson** (17<sup>th</sup> c.) defined the Christian practice of meditation as:

A holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves.

How much time did you spend this week thinking seriously about how to apply the Word of God to your life? People do not do this. They want to be told how to apply the Word of God, but they do not want to contemplate and pray for themselves on how to understand and apply the Word. Most people want a Christianity that involves little effort, little attention, little reflection, little effort at thinking. They just want to be told what to do. I and others can tell you what to do, but if you want a relationship with the Lord that is significant and satisfying, you need to hear from Him what He would have you do as you reflect on His Word that He has brought to you.

We need to understand that *biblical meditation differs from Bible memory*. Memory of God's Word is very important. To be able to recall God's Word at needful times in order to direct one's steps forward is necessary. But meditation brings much more benefit to the Christian than memory. The memory is as one storing food in the cabinet to be eaten later; meditation is sitting down to feast on the meal once it has been prepared.

*Biblical meditation differs from Bible study*. Watson shows how they differ from one another in three ways:

1. They differ in their nature. Study is a work of the *brain*, meditation of the *heart*; study sets the *mind* to work, meditation sets the *heart* to work.
2. They differ in their design. The design of study is notion; the design of meditation is piety. The design of study is finding out of a truth; the design of meditation is the spiritual improvement of a truth. The one searches for the vein of gold; the other digs out the gold.
3. They differ in the outcome and result. Study leaves a man never a whit better; it is like a winter sun that has little warmth or influence. Meditation leaves one in a holy frame: it melts the heart when it is frozen, and makes it drop into tears of love.<sup>5</sup>

## II. The Puritan promotion and practice of meditation

The Puritans were great promoters of meditation. Who were the Puritans? The Puritans were a people of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who first attempted to purify the Church of England of its doctrine and practice shortly after it had severed from the Roman Catholic Church. Later, the Puritans became separatists, who were either Presbyterians, Congregationalists, or Baptists. Many of them immigrated to New England. Puritans advocated conforming of all aspects of life to the teachings of the Bible alone. Most people do not generally

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

think well of the Puritans. But this opinion is largely based upon bias, ignorance, and because they have been maligned by a culture that is opposed to their beliefs, values, and holy manner of life. They were not perfect, but in my opinion there has been no other group of people in history that more fully experienced the blessed kind of spiritual life that the Bible prescribes as did these people, and those people who have followed their pattern.

The Puritans wrote a great deal about meditation. **Edmund Calamy** published a book in 1634 entitled, “*The Art of Divine Meditation.*” He described the spiritual discipline in this way,

A true meditation is when a man doth so meditate of Christ as to get his heart inflamed with the love of Christ; so meditate of the Truths of God, as to be transformed into them; and so meditate of sin as to get his heart to hate sin.

He illustrated the nature of meditation in that if it is to be profitable to the soul, the Word of God must enter three doors: “the door of understanding, the door of the heart and affections, and the door of practical living.” He wrote, “Thou must so meditate of God as to walk as God walks; and so meditate of Christ as to prize Him, and live in obedience to Him.”

The Puritans described meditation as being of two kinds. There is **occasional mediation** and then there is **deliberate meditation**. What is the difference? First let us consider...

#### A. Occasional meditation

*Occasional meditation* (or sometimes called extemporal meditation) refers to that which can take place at any time, in any place, and among any people; this is meditation that can take place on any occasion. This is the practice of the Christian to interpret and reflect on the natural things about him in a spiritual manner. “The believer makes use of what he sees with his eyes, or hears with his ears, ‘as a ladder to climb to heaven.’”<sup>6</sup> As our Lord saw spiritual truths illustrated all about him so that He put them forth in parables, we should see the world daily filled with parables that illustrate God and His ways. **Thomas Manton** (1620-1677), another Puritan, said this,

God trained up the old church (Israel in the Old Testament) by types and ceremonies, that upon the common object they might ascend to spiritual thoughts; and our Lord in the New Testament taught by parables and similitudes taken from ordinary functions and offices among men, that in every trade and calling we might be employed in our worldly business with an heavenly mind, that, whether in the shop, or at the loom, or in the field, we might still think of Christ and heaven.

The Puritans developed a world view--which is a biblical world-view-- in which they saw everything about them every day as revealing or illustrating the nature and ways of God among His people as well as His ways in those who were God’s enemies. It was Augustine’s mother, Monica, who said one day to her son, “Oh! If the sun is so bright, what is the light of God’s presence?”<sup>7</sup> Here is instruction on how to practice occasional meditation:

When you dress yourselves in the morning, awaken your meditation and think thus: “But have I been dressing the hidden man of the heart? Have I looked at my heart in the glass (mirror) of God’s Word? I have put on my clothes, but have I put on Christ?”

When you sit down at dinner, let your meditation feed upon this first course: “How blessed are those who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! What a royal feast will that be that God prepares! What a love feast will that be, where none shall be admitted but friends?”

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<sup>6</sup> Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Christian on the Mount*, p. 77.

When you go to bed at night, imagine thus, “Shortly I shall put off the earthly clothes of my body and make my bed in the grave!”...

When you see a poor man going on the streets, raise this meditation: “Here is a walking picture of Christ! He had no place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). My Savior became poor that I, through His poverty, might be made rich!”

When you walk abroad in your orchard and see the plants bearing and the herbs nourishing, think how pleasing a sight it is to God to see a thriving Christian; how beautiful are the trees of righteousness when they are hung full of fruit, when they abound in faith, humility, and knowledge!

When you eat the grape from the tree (vine), think of Christ, the true Vine. How precious is the blood of that grape! Such rare clusters grow there that the angels themselves delight to taste of!<sup>8</sup>

But not only is there occasional meditation, we should practice...

## B. Deliberate Meditation

The more important kind of meditation was what the Puritans regarded as *deliberate meditation*. This was part of their daily devotion at a set time every day. **Calamy** described this practice as “when a man sets apart... some time, and goes into a private closet, or a private walk, and there doth solemnly and deliberately meditate of the things of heaven.” Do you remember what is said of **Isaac**, when he first met **Rebecca**, who would become his wife?”

And *Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening*; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. Then Rebecca lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, “Who *is* this man walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” (Genesis 24:63-65)

I enjoy walking outside at night when the stars are out, or I meditate while I am in my shop or working on some project. **Jonathan Edwards** use to ride his horse in the countryside of New Hampton. Some of you may prefer **David’s** practice. He wrote of His meditation upon God and His dealings with him:

When I remember You on my bed,  
I meditate on You in the night watches.  
Because You have been my help,  
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.  
My soul follows close behind You;  
Your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:6-8)

Another described four sources of material upon which to meditate in deliberate meditation:

- 1) from Scripture
- 2) reflecting on practical truths of Christianity
- 3) providential occasions (i.e. one’s own experiences)
- 4) sermons

One wrote, “It is better to hear one sermon only and meditate on that, than hear two sermons and meditate on neither” (Thomas White).

Some of the Puritans suggested subjects on which to meditate. They would focus on a particular aspect of life and mull over the biblical teaching respecting the matter from every possible angle. **Joseph Hall** listed 87 subjects on which to meditate. (I have included most of these in an appendix.)

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp. 78f.

Let us consider...

### III. More reasons we should practice spiritual meditation?

Very simply, we should practice meditation because, first, God has commanded us to do so, second, because of the great benefit to us for doing so, and thirdly, because of the great loss to us if we fail to do so.

David, a man after God's own heart referred a great deal of his own meditation. He practiced meditation throughout his life. We read of his practice and the benefits of his meditation expressed in **Psalm 19**.

7The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;  
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.  
10More to be desired are they than gold,  
Yea, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.  
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned,  
And in keeping them there is great reward.  
12Who can understand his errors?  
Cleanse me from secret faults.  
13Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;  
Let them not have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless,  
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.  
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. (Psalm 19:7-14)

All of these expressions of love for God and His Word and the benefits that God's Word brought to David came to him through the meditation of his heart. In another place David expressed, "*O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day*" (Psa. 119:97).

The Puritans gave *reasons* for meditation.

1. We should meditate because God commands His people to do so.<sup>9</sup> According to Psalm 1:2, when we fail to meditate, we are not being godly.

2. We should meditate on the Word as a letter God has written to us.

3. One cannot be a solid Christian without meditating. **Thomas Manton** said, "Faith is lean and ready to starve unless it be fed with continual meditation on the promises; as David saith, Psalm 119:92, 'Unless They law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction.'" **Thomas Watson** wrote, "A Christian without meditation is like a soldier without arms, or a workman without tools. Without meditation the truths of God will not stay with us; the heart is hard, and the memory slippery, and without meditation all is lost."

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<sup>9</sup> Consider these verses: Deut. 6:7; 32:46; Psa. 19:14; 49:3; 94:19; 119:11, 15, 23, 28, 93, 99, 143:5; Isa. 1:3; Luke 2:19; John 4:24; Eph 1:18; 1 Tim. 4:13; Heb. 3:1.

4. Without meditation, the preached Word will fail to profit us. Again, **Thomas Watson**:

“There is much difference between the knowledge of a truth, and the meditation of a truth, as there is between the light of a torch, and the light of the sun: set up a lamp or a torch in the garden, and it hath no influence. The sun hath a sweet influence, it makes the plants to grow, and the herbs to flourish: so knowledge is but like a torch lighted in the understanding, which hath little or no influence, it makes not a man better; but meditation is like the shining of the sun, it operates on the affections, it warms the heart and makes it more holy. Meditation fetches life from a truth.”

5. Without meditation, our prayers will be less effective. “Meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer” (Manton).

6. Christians who fail to meditate are unable to defend the truth. They have no backbone and little self-knowledge.

7. The Puritans taught that such meditation is an essential part of sermon preparation.

Let us consider some...

#### **IV. Obstacles to Christian meditation**

**Objection #1:** “Unfitness or ignorance. Such as say they “cannot confine their thoughts to an object.” Their thoughts are light and feathery, tossed to and fro.”

**Answer:** Disability, ignorance, and wandering thoughts offer no exemption from duty. Your “loss of ability” does not imply God’s “loss of right.” Truth be told, you are probably unfit because you have neglected meditation and have not loved the truth.

**Objection #2:** Busyness.

**Answer:** True religion is not performed merely in leisure time. Great busyness should move us to more meditation, as then we have more needs to bring before God and upon which to meditate.

**Objection #3:** Spiritual lethargy (laziness). They have good intentions, but fail to carry through.

**Answer:** Matthew 11:12 says heaven is the reward of “the violent [who] take it by force,” “Why are you so lazy in spiritual pursuits that can reap eternal rewards when you are not lazy in pursuing secular work in this world, which produces only temporary rewards?” “Spiritual ‘drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags’” (Prov. 23:21). As Manton said, “It is better to take pains than to suffer pains, and to be bound with the cords of duty than with the chains of darkness.”

**Objection #4:** Worldly pleasures and friendships.

**Answer:** “The pleasures of the world discompose our souls, and unfit our bodies for the duties of meditation...”

**Objection #5:** Adverseness of heart. Such say they don’t like to be yoked to such a difficult task. Burdened with guilt, they fear being alone with God.

**Answer:** “Get your conscience cleansed by the hearty application of the blood of Christ” (Manton).

#### **V. The benefits of meditation** (From Beeke’s *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (pp. 92f)

1. Meditation helps us focus on the Triune God, to love and to enjoy Him in all His persons (1 John 4:8)—intellectually, spiritually, aesthetically.

2. Meditation helps increase knowledge of sacred truth. It “takes the veil from the face of truth” (Prov. 4:2)
3. Meditation is the “nurse of wisdom,” for it promotes the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:8).
4. Meditation enlarges our faith by helping us to trust the God of promises in all our spiritual troubles and the God of providence in all our outward troubles.
5. Meditation augments one’s affections. Watson called meditation “the bellows of affections.” He said, “Meditation hatcheth good affections, as the hen her young ones by sitting on them; we light affection at this fire of meditation” (Psa. 39:3).
6. Meditation fosters repentance and reformation of life (Psa. 119:59; Ezek. 36:31).
7. Meditation is a great friend to memory.
8. Meditation helps us view worship as a discipline to be cultivated. It makes us prefer God’s house to our own.
9. Meditation transfers Scripture through the texture of the soul.
10. Meditation is a great aid to prayer (Psa. 5:1). It tunes the instrument of prayer before prayer.
11. Meditation helps us to hear and read the Word with real benefit. It makes the Word “full of life and energy to our souls.” William Bates wrote, “Hearing the word is like ingestion, and when we meditate upon the word that is digestion; and this digestion of the word by meditation produceth warm affections, zealous resolutions, and holy actions.”
12. Meditation on the sacraments helps our “graces to be better and stronger.” It helps faith, hope, love, humility, and numerous spiritual comforts thrive the soul.
13. Meditation stresses the heinousness of sin. It “musters up all weapons, and gathers all forces of arguments for to press our sins, and lay them heavy upon the heart,” wrote Fenner. Thomas Hooker said, “Meditation sharpens the sting and strength of corruption, that it pierceth more prevailingly.” It is a “strong antidote against sin” and “a cure of covetousness.”
14. Meditation enables us to “discharge religious duties, because it conveys to the soul the lively sense and feeling of God’s goodness; so the soul is encouraged to duty.”
15. Meditation helps prevent vain and sinful thoughts (Jer. 4:14; Matt. 12:35). It helps wean us from this present evil age.
16. Meditation provides inner resources on which to draw (Psa. 77:10-12), including direction for daily life (Prov. 6:21-22).
17. Meditation helps us persevere in faith; it keeps our hearts “savoury and spiritual in the midst of all our outward and worldly employments,” wrote William Bridge.
18. Meditation is a mighty weapon to ward off satan and temptation (Psa. 119:11, 15; 1 John 2:14).
19. Meditation provides relief in afflictions (Isa. 49:15-17; Heb. 12:5).
20. Meditation helps us benefit others with our spiritual fellowship and counsel (Psa. 66:16; 77:12; 145:7).
21. Meditation promotes gratitude for all the blessings showered upon us by God through His Son.
22. Meditation glorifies God (Psa. 49:3).

May our Lord enable us to be more faithful and consistent in this most important discipline of the Christian life, so that we might follow Jesus Christ rightly.

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For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not  
to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;  
but to think so as to have sound judgment,  
as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Rom. 12:3)

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## Subjects of Deliberate Meditation from the Puritans

Collected by Joel Beeke

(The number of writers he found that addressed the subject in parentheses)

### Prolegomena

- The sacred Word of God (3)
- The defence of Christianity (1)

### Theology proper

- The nature and attributes of God (7)
- The works and providences of God (7)
- The glory of God as man's chief end (4)
- The majesty of God (3)
- The mercies of God (3)
- God as creator (2)

### Anthropology

- The sinfulness of sin and personal sin (9)
- Corruption and deceitfulness of the heart (5)
- Fall in Adam and estrangement from God (4)
- The vanity of man (4)
- The value and immortality of the soul (3)
- The frailty of the body (2)
- The uncertainty of earthly comforts (1)
- The sin of covetousness (1)
- The contrast between God and man (1)

### Christology

- The passion and death of Christ (8)
- The love of Christ (5)
- The person of Christ (2)
- The mystery and wonder of the Gospel (4)
- The natures of Christ (2)
- The offices of Christ (2)
- The life of Christ (2)
- The states of Christ (1)

### Soteriology and the Christian Life

### The promises of God (7)

- Self-examination for evidences of grace (5)
- The rich privilege of believers
- The grace and person of the Holy Spirit
- The benefits of faith
- Sanctification (2)
- Prayer (2)
- The commandments of God (2)
- Admonishments and threatenings of God (2)
- The danger of apostasy (1)
- The small number of the saved (1)
- Spiritual dangers (1)
- Love, joy, hope (1)
- The Sabbath (1)
- Self-denial (1)

### Ecclesiology

- The ordinances of God (5)
- The Lord's Supper (4)
- Baptism (2)
- Hearing and reading the Word (2)
- The joys and sorrows of the church (1)

### Eschatology

- Heaven (10)
- Death (8)
- Judgment (7)
- Hell (7)
- Eternity (5)

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## A Number of Subjects Suggested for Deliberate Meditation

by Joseph Hall

- |                       |                      |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Fame and greatness | 8. Love of the world | 15. Affliction       |
| 2. Ignorance          | 9. Companions        | 16. Godly warfare    |
| 3. Depravity          | 10. Heaven and earth | 17. Sin              |
| 4. Holy living        | 11. Work and pain    | 18. Success          |
| 5. Gossip             | 12. Riches           | 19. Growing in grace |
| 6. Evil companions    | 13. Heaven and hell  | 20. Pride            |
| 7. God's promises     | 14. Death            | 21. Hatred of sin    |

22. Prejudice
23. Covetousness
24. Prayer
25. Love
26. Blasphemy
27. Nobility
28. Prayer
29. Temptation
30. The use of means
31. Worship
32. Happiness
33. Obedience
34. Repentance
35. Ambition
36. Conceit
37. The shortness of life
38. Self-examination
39. Adversity
40. Affliction
41. Faith and philosophy
42. Pleasure,
43. Sin
44. Faithful friends
45. Schism and truth
46. Grief and worry
47. Fear,
48. Heathen and the Christian
49. The light of the eye
50. The mind and the heart
51. Heartfelt religion
52. Hurting ourselves
53. The heart and the tongue
54. The use of time
55. Cares
56. Providence
57. Love
58. Displeasure
59. Friendship
60. Bargain hunting
61. Reproof
62. Envy
63. Worldly pleasures
64. Following good examples
65. Time
66. Enjoyment
67. Good works
68. Fruitfulness
69. Foolishness
70. Doing good
71. Hermitage
72. A happy life
73. Heavenly correction
74. Heavenly hunger
75. Repentance
76. Spiritual warfare
77. Strength in trials
78. heavenly-mindedness
79. Humility
80. Death
81. Purpose in life
82. Good from evil
83. Madness
84. The practice of meditation

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