

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life

Series for January 30: A lifestyle of meditation

January 18, 2011

Ask any Christian which is their favorite Psalm and no doubt you will get a variety of answers. Of course, Psalm 23 is going to be at the top of the list, but you will more than likely find some who are captured by Psalm 119, which happens to be crazy long. Nonetheless, it is a beautiful and stirring song of not only being near God but seeking after him.

Some attribute Psalm 119 to King David, who wrote many of the other psalms, because of its special wording and sentence structure. For example, the phrase “your servant” appears throughout this psalm, which in all the other psalms is only used by King David describing himself or others describing him. Also, the first letters of the verses follow an alphabetic acrostic which King David routinely used. Whoever the author is, there is no doubt a deep intimacy felt by him toward God and he seems to hold the keys (principles and actions) to what it is to be near God.

What do you think of when you hear or see the word “meditation”? Is it someone sitting on the ground with their legs crossed, arms gently resting on their knees, eyes closed and taking slow deep breaths? Yeah, that’s culture affecting your mindset of a particular thing or person. And yet look how many times we, as Christians, are encouraged to meditate on God’s word.

The word “meditate” in verse 15 of Psalm 119 means to talk, sing, ponder, study, think about. Well that doesn’t sound too bad, does it? And what Christian wouldn’t want more of that in their life?

There also is a great amount of obedience and discipline we see in verses 11-16. What have you hidden in your heart? You see, you are the one who does the hiding. The psalmist says, "I have hidden your word in my heart" If I hide something, I will know where to find it. Unfortunately for many of us, we hide things and then forget where they are. Anyone relate? But the hiding here is much different, it carries with it the idea that we go back again and again to what we've hidden.

Verses 13-16 are particularly interesting. Here's the pattern: I recount, I rejoice, I meditate, I delight. What do you notice? There is a discipline (recount, meditate) coupled with an effect or result (rejoice, delight) from that discipline.

Go ahead and try to rejoice without thinking about something that causes you great joy. How about this, need to have more joy and rejoicing in your life? Think about God's unfailing love and blessings he has poured out on upon you. Are you afraid or "weirded out" about meditating? Don't be, because it will bring you great delight.

And then at the end of this discipline/result coupling, we are hit with a statement of resolve: I will not neglect your word.

Mark 1:35-39 gives us a snapshot of Jesus' prayer life. He gets up early in the morning, while it's still dark, leaves the house, and goes off to a place where he can be alone. Why? To pray; to talk with his Father and listen to him as well. Jesus does this before it's time to get on with the business and purpose at hand which is proclaiming God's love for his people.

When we don't make the time to pray, it is an indicator we have forgotten our purpose—loving God and loving others. And we are foolish to try and fulfill our purpose without praying. It will become a struggle and a chore, something it never was intended to be. Why not take some time to just be still before God and let him speak to you?

I love Psalm 19:1-6. Take a moment and read it. What is so important that's keeping you from time spent with your heavenly Father? The greatest thing my family needs is for me to be near God, listening and talking to him. If Jesus needed this then surely we do too.

You have a choice: You can either listen to and take the advice from the world, or you can listen to and take advice from God. Sure, the choice is obvious and yet so many times we find ourselves in a bind because we've taken bad advice. This typically happens when we've become distant from God's word and when it isn't on our minds.

Psalm 1:1-3 gives us the results of what it is to listen to and take God's advice. While verse 3 gives us the image of a tree next to a stream, it also brings to my mind an image we are all familiar with. You know the one; it's a picture of an open field or even the side of a mountain that has a tree smack in the middle of it, growing out of nowhere. But the tree has tapped into something that gives it life regardless of its surroundings, a water source, and it is thriving.

The author of Psalm 1 goes a step further and says the tree is "planted." God has planted you right where he wants you to be, and, regardless of the conditions, he has given you access to himself, the Living Water, in order for you to grow and thrive.