

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
February 28, 2016
The Discipline of Scripture Meditation

Memory Verse:

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

Which discipline(s) have you started this past week? Has your progress been as you expected, or is it a lot harder to dedicate the time and effort than you imagined?

THIS WEEK: Scripture Meditation

Scripture Meditation is a way of reading the Bible with the intent of letting the Holy Spirit use the scripture to change us. He (the Holy Spirit) can use the Word of God to cleanse us spiritually, mentally and emotionally. (John 15:3) He can render in us a sense of conviction to confess our sins and repent of them. He can use it to strengthen and add to our faith. (Romans 10:17). Whatever the benefits of this meditation on God's Word, the ultimate end is to become closer to Him spiritually and thus closer to God the Father in the way we think and act.

1. **Meditation:** This is not just an intellectual exercise (John 4:23-24, 1 Cor. 2:14)

John 4:23-24 - "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

1 Cor. 2:14 - "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."

Using disciplines we talked about before, like Solitude and Submission, we can read the Bible and open ourselves up to the influence of the Holy Spirit. We are still creatures of the flesh until the day God makes all things new and totally sanctifies us, so you can expect that we ALL still carry some rebellion in us. Maybe some or most of us don't stiffen our necks and refuse like stubborn mules (although some of us still do!) but most if not all of us can practice the rebellion of excuses. Putting aside and rebellion and excuses for just a short time, through God's help, we can invite His Spirit to touch and change OUR spirit. That spiritual contact is the key to Scripture Meditation. Without it, there's no spiritual change and growth. If you read the Bible intellectually, you can learn a lot about History, Literature, even the human condition. You can even become a great Bible scholar and be able to explain almost any type of Christian or Early Jewish theology, but without experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit, you won't gain any kind of spiritual growth and you will be weak and stagnant as a disciple of Christ.

2. **Memorization: Wisdom in, Wisdom out** (Luke 6:45)

Meditation also uses our hearts. The heart is the seat of not only our emotions, but our wills and our desire. When we memorize God's word, we take it into our minds AND our hearts. What we take into our bodies becomes a part of us. Whether it is food or poison, our bodies digest it and try to store it. The same with our hearts and minds. If we watch and read nothing but violence and sin and hate (and that's just the News channels!), then we shouldn't be surprised if we start to become depressed and calloused and pessimistic. There's a number of phrases that describe this: You are what you eat. What's down in the well comes up in the bucket. Garbage in, Garbage out. Here's a better one:

"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Luke 6:45

This wisdom and goodness that we store in our hearts can allow us to be used of God to inspire and comfort fellow believers and even to witness better to the Lost around us. This only goes to show that God does NOT bless us with His Word SOLELY for our own good, however... (See next point)

3. **Spiritual Warfare**: The life you save may be your own (2 Cor. 10:4)

2 Cor. 10:4 – “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

Scripture Meditation and Memorization are disciplines that can lead to spiritual growth, a closer relationship to God and can even lead to us being used of God to speak the Gospel to the world and give comfort and encouragement to our fellow disciples; however, the Word of God is not just a tool for growth and harvest: it is a weapon, and a much needed one.

([Luke 4:1-13](#), [Matthew 4:1-11](#)) Jesus has just been baptized and confirmed in Love as the Son of God, when suddenly the Spirit calls Him into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil himself for 40 days. We are told of three specific temptations (though there may have been many more in those 40 days) in which the devil tries to attack Jesus' dependence on and faith in the Father. Any wrong step in this temptation and Jesus would have failed not only the test, but in His mission to live a sinless life and be worthy as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. To say the least, this was a high-stakes confrontation. Satan assaulted Jesus' physical needs (hunger), His emotional needs (earthly kingdoms and authority), and finally Satan implicitly attacks Jesus' belief in Himself and His mission (trying to get Jesus to further test the Father's protection and confirmation of Jesus as the Messiah and His Son). In each of these situations, Jesus responds with what? His fists? Sarcasm? Righteous anger? No, Jesus retaliates with something much more powerful. The Word of God. The same Word that we have. Had it been God's will, Jesus could have obliterated Satan with the breath of His mouth. Satan's power was no threat to Jesus' person or existence at any time. However, IF Jesus HAD succumbed to Satan's temptations, then it would have been devastating for Jesus' relationship with the Father. Thankfully, we don't have any need to think about that. What WE need to concern ourselves with is Jesus' example of how to defeat temptations.

If we have committed God's Word to memory and stored it in our hearts, then it gives us the means to combat the devil and his lies. When the world tempts us with money, power, lust, drugs and all the fleeting pleasures it offers, we are challenged with the impulse to seize that pleasure and sin against God; however, with any number of scriptures in God's Word, we can counter that impulse. ([Hebrews 11:25-26](#) reminds us that Moses chose God's way over the world's pleasures because they are “fleeting” or “short-lived”. And [Psalm 16:11](#) tells us that God's way is filled with pleasures that are “eternal”.)

This is just a small, generic example of how the Holy Spirit can call scripture to our attention that can defend us from spiritual, mental and even physical danger to ourselves and others. Scripture can be used to fight feelings of anger, depression, hate, bitterness, suicidal thoughts, loneliness, inadequacy, addiction and many other destructive impulses... but He can't bring up scripture that we haven't memorized and haven't read. So you see, the discipline of Scripture Meditation doesn't make God love you more and it doesn't make you a Super-Christian, but it can cause you to be a blessing and a even a defender to others and yourself, a defender that you could not have been otherwise. In short, it can enhance and preserve your very life... and this is just ONE of the many graces of God.

Take Home:

- This week, resolve to spend some time each day in God's Word. Don't just sprint through the “begats” and call it a day. Find a verse or a selection that speaks to you and spend some time meditating on that scripture.
- Ask God to show you what that scripture has to do with your life or how/where you can embody or make use of that scripture. Submit and give God 15 minutes of your time in reading and meditating on scripture and see what results He gives you.