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Meditating on the Word of God

*A devotional practice
with powerful implications
and applications*

*May these words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, Lord,
my Rock and my Redeemer.*

Psalm 19:14

ASK NETWORK is founded on the Word of God. The passage in Ephesians 6 describing the Armor of God closes with these verses: **Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.** (Ephesians 6:17-18) **The helmet of salvation** is descriptive of Christians having the mind of Christ. **The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God**, is the full counsel of scripture. **To pray in the Spirit** is to be enlightened, empowered and enabled in our intercession. In ASK Network, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we trust we have His mind as we wait on Him with the Word open, reliant on the Holy Spirit.

THIS BOOKLET is intended to be instructional in the personal devotional practice of meditating on the Word of God; giving some practical suggestions on how to enrich your times of meditation, and how to apply your meditation in ASKing.

THE DEVOTIONAL PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL MEDITATION

If someone develops the practice of meditating on the Word as a personal discipline in their devotional life, they will become practiced in hearing God's voice through His Word. Duncan Campbell taught that it is good to go through the Word, but it is more important the Word goes through us, as it does when we take time for Biblical Meditation. This has been described as the digestive faculty of the soul; which helps us understand the way the Word can become part of us. One way to understand this is to imagine your hand. Think of your fingers as representing ways we learn from the Word of God: maybe Bible Study, Teaching, Memorizing and Singing. You can balance a Bible quite well on four fingers. However, to get a grip you will need your thumb, which can represent the depth of understanding that comes through Biblical Meditation. You could never hold a Bible with just a thumb, but with fingers and thumb together you have hold on the Word of God in such a way it is not easily taken from you.

One definition of Biblical meditation is “the practice of pondering, considering, and reflecting on scripture.”

Jim Packer says this: *Meditation is the activity of calling to mind and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God. Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God and to let His truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart.*

A.W. Tozer describes the devotional practice of Biblical Meditation like this: *It is important we get still to wait on God. And it is best we get alone with God, preferably with our Bible outspread before us. Then if we will we may draw near*

THE NAMES OF GOD

You have exalted above all things Your name and Your word. Psalm 138:2

This booklet has sought to show that the Word of God is a living Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes it like this: *For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.* But in our pursuit of God's truth through meditation on His Word let us not neglect the character of God, the faithful Answerer of ASKing. Here are the names He uses to reveal His character in the early pages of scripture, but throughout the Bible He has many names and descriptions. Do not hesitate to declare any of them and call upon Him as such in your ASKing.

- Yehovah Tzevaot God of Hosts *1 Samuel 17:45*
- Yehovah Elyon Most High God *Psalm 7:17*
- Yehovah Ro'l God is Shepherd *Psalm 23:1*
- Yehovah Yireh God is Provider *Genesis 22: 14*
- Yehovah Nissi God is a Banner *Exodus 17:15*
- Yehovah Shalom God is Peace *Judges 6:24*
- Yehovah Shamah Jehovah is There *Ezekiel 48:35*
- Yehovah Tzidkenu God is Righteousness *Jeremiah 23:6*
- Yehovah Mekadesh-chem God is Sanctifier *Leviticus 20:8*
- Yehovah Ropha-cha God is Healer *Exodus 15:26*
- Elohim God *Genesis 1:1*
- El Elohei Yisrael God, the God of Israel *Genesis 33:20*
- Adonai LORD *Genesis 15:2*
- El Shaddai Almighty God *Genesis 17:1*
- El Olam Everlasting God *Genesis 21:33*
- El Gibbor Mighty Champion God *Isaiah 9:6-7*
- El Elyon Most High God *Genesis 14:18*

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God... — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. Romans 16:25-27

out what you have received with authority, confident that these things have been shown you by God and He wants to answer your ASKing.

- **Thanksgiving.** Close your time of meditation and prayer thanking God for allowing you to see new things from His Word, like fresh bread. Also thank Him that He will in His gracious faithfulness answer your ASKing.

BENEFITS OF BIBILCAL MEDITATION

There are many benefits to meditating in the Word of God. One way to get a sense of how many blessings there are is to read through Pslam 119 where numerous examples are listed. James 1:21 says: *humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.* This is a marvelous truth. As the Word becomes part of who we are, forming us, we can literally be delivered from our own ways to the righteousness of Christ. Hebrews 4:12 Confirms the Word of God *penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit.* The greatest benefit of all is that through His Word we get to know God better and to be in ever-increasingly intimate relationship with HIm.

ASKING WITH THE WORD

The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.
Psalm 119:130

This verse confirms that meditating on the Word of God brings understanding and revelation. If we wait on the Lord, allowing the Holy Sprit to order our meditation, we will find ourselves well prepared to pray according to the will of God. Praying His Word back to Him is a sure way to do that. Isaiah 55:11 declares that God says: *My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Praying His Word with depth of understanding can be even more on target. This is why ASK Network seeks to follow biblical principles in all its activities but also actually bases prayers upon what God speaks out of His Word, which has great impact. As Psalm 29 testifies to the fact that: *The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.* (V.4)

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Here are just a few examples of those who used the words of scripture to speak back to God what was already recorded in His Word, either direct quotations or inferences.

- David — 2 Samuel 22
- Jonah — Jonah 2
- Peter — Acts 2
- Paul — Romans 9
- Jesus — Matthew 27

May ASK Network continue in this rich and powerful history.

to God to begin to hear Him speak to us in our hearts. I think for the average person the progressions will be something like this: first a sound, as of a Presence walking in a garden. Then a voice, more intelligible, but still far from clear. Then a happy moment when the Spirit begins to illuminate the scriptures, and that which has been only a sound, or at best a voice, now becomes an intelligible word, warm and intimate and clear as a word of a dear friend. Then will come life and light, and best of all, ability to see and rest in and embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of all.

It is clear that those who make Biblical Meditation a habitual practice, have deep and rewarding experiences with the Lord. In ASK Network it is our desire to draw close to the Lord, to hear His voice through His Word and by the Holy Spirit, both as preparation for ASKing but also as a means of being Spirit-led in that ASKing. When a person meditates on the Word of God, their mind will be full of deep thoughts about God, His character and His ways, forgetting about themselves. This is very different from Transcendental Meditation that encourages the emptying of one's mind of thoughts but is inevitably self-orientated.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO MEDITATION

There are only 21 explicit uses of the words meditate or meditation in scripture (NIV). Here are some key ones:

- *Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.* Joshua 1:8
- *Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night.* Psalm 1:1-2
- *Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.* Psalm 48:9
- *My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of My heart will give you understanding.* Psalm 49:3
- *May my meditation be pleasing to Him, as I rejoice in the Lord.* Psalm 104:34
- *Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on Your statutes.* Psalm 119:97-99

However, the concept of waiting on the Lord, seeking Him, resting in His presence, communing intimately with Him, considering Him and His words, gathering, seeking, feasting and so on, is woven throughout scripture. Here are just a few examples or images of this:

- *The daily gathering of manna according to need.* Exodus 16

- *I delight to sit in His shade, and His fruit is sweet to my taste. Let Him lead me to the banquet hall, and let His banner over me be love.* Song of Solomon 2:3-4
- *Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.* Ezekiel 3:1-3
- *Disciples on the road to Emmaus: When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"* Luke 24:30-32
- *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.* Revelation 3:20

There are many more examples than this. You can enjoy looking for them for yourself as you read through the Bible. For sure you will find that meditating on the Word of God is thoroughly biblical!

HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE WORD OF GOD

The object here is to offer some steps that can be followed in order to receive from the Word of God. In no way are these guidelines intended to be prescriptive, needing to be legalistically followed; but follow them as the Lord leads and your times of meditation in the Word will become increasingly rich and rewarding. If your meditation time is personal and part of a regular devotional practice, most likely you will not come to the Word with an agenda, rather you will be coming to the Word with the expectation that the Lord will speak as He wants. The only slight difference when you are coming to the Word in order to pray about a specific subject, is that then you will be trusting the Holy Spirit to help you select a passage of scripture that will have truths in it to apply to this prayer focus. For instance, the Letter to the Ephesians is such a rich portion of scripture concerning the Bride of Christ, one would expect that meditating in those chapters would reveal all sorts of wonderful truths to apply in prayer for the Church. In fact Jesus is described as applying the Word to the Church Himself: *Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.* (Ephesians 5:26-27) Therefore, as we meditate we will have the subject or focus for prayer constantly in our minds, applying the Word to that through our meditation first, and then in our ASKING.

Suggested guidelines:

- **Find quietness.** It is helpful to be in a place that is literally quiet, but it is also necessary to ask the Lord to remove any distractions from our minds. Pray for any intrusive thoughts from the world, the flesh or the devil to be removed, and consecrate your mind to receive holy thoughts from the Holy Spirit.
- **Begin with worship.** This can be as simple as acknowledging who God is (see Names of God on page 7) as we worship with singing; that may include singing familiar songs or hymns, but you could also take passages of scripture or psalms and sing them in freeform as led by the Spirit. There is power in declaring who this God is who we are about to ask to do great things. It also prepares our hearts to ask and quickens our faith.
- **Focus for ASKING.** If you do not have a subject for prayer in mind, whether you are praying on your own or with others, be intentional to ask the Lord to show you what it is He wants you to ASK about. As you meditate you will be keeping the focus in mind and applying the truth of the Word to it.
- **Passage of Scripture.** Choose a passage, it might be as short as one verse but probably not longer than a chapter. Look at the context, as this will help your understanding. Read it slowly and repeatedly if need be. Ask the Holy Spirit to begin to highlight what it is the Lord wants to show you, what understanding He wants you to have. You may find one word gets your attention, or an idea or particular verse, the verbs, or someone's name and so on. Stop and ponder that one thing. Allow yourself to think creatively about it. Other verses might come to mind that are associated with it. As you meditate you will have all sorts of wonderful thoughts, understanding and revelation coming to mind. You need to trust the Lord is speaking and you will begin to see why it applies to the focus you have for prayer. It is difficult to explain the wonder of this to someone who has not experienced it, but truly you will see things in the Word of God you have never seen before, even in passages you may be extremely familiar with.
- **Record your meditation.** If you are able you may find it helpful to write down all the thoughts you have. This has many benefits: it helps you order your thinking, it makes it easier to pray through all you have received, and it gives you a record so that you can check later how God answered your prayers.
- **Understanding from meditation.** Once you sense you have completed your meditation and have some specific things to pray you can begin to do so. If you are praying with others you should all share briefly what understanding you have received. You will be amazed at how everyone's meditations fit together giving you all a more complete picture.
- **Application of meditation.** The truths that you gain through meditation will have a personal application for you first. Once you have received that understanding for yourself you are ready to apply it to whatever focus you are asking for. It is like getting a strategy as to how you should be praying. Pray