

40 Days of Prayer
Three Lakes Evangelical Free Church
Day 36

Prayer and Meditation
Psalm 5:1-2; 19:14

It is so easy for me to read the Bible and then say to myself, “There, I did my duty for the day,” and off to my activities I go. When I am really spiritual, I read the Bible and then spend some time praying, and then away I go. But there are many times in my “daily devotions” when I seem to have an encounter with God that is special, deep, and meaningful. Recently, I came across a concept that I believe explains this occurrence.

In his book, *Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney suggests that prayer takes on a new dimension when it flows from a three-part sequence of pursuing God – Scripture, meditation, and prayer – in that order. He describes the rich communication of God to us through his Word. Then he reminds us that if we take some time to reflect on that communication, seeking to understand it, apply it, and evaluate our lives by it, we are then moved to prayer and that prayer has a deeper substance and relevance to our lives. Meditation is the middle pursuit between the Word of God and prayer, being connected to both. Notice two thoughts from Puritan pastors of a few generations ago.

“The Word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer. These duties must always go hand in hand; meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer. To hear and not to meditate is unfruitful...What we take in by the word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer...” Thomas Manton

“Meditation is the sister of reading and the mother of prayer...Reading without meditation is unfruitful; meditation without reading is hurtful; to meditate and to read without prayer upon both is without blessing.” William Bridge

Here is how David put it.

¹Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament. ² Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. (Ps. 5:1-2 NIV)

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Ps. 19:14 NIV)

In Psalm 5, the word, “lament,” translated literally is meditation. And in Psalm 19, it is the content of his meditation that forms David’s prayer. The sequence seems obvious – Scripture, meditation, prayer.

Here is how Whitney summarizes the sequence.

“After the input of a passage of Scripture, meditation allows us to take what God has said to us and think deeply on it, digest it, and then speak to God about it in meaningful prayer. As a result, we pray about what we’ve encountered in the Bible, now personalized through meditation. And not only do we have something substantial to say in prayer and the confidence we are praying God’s thoughts to Him, but we transition smoothly into prayer with a passion for what we’re praying about. Then, as we move on with our prayers, we don’t jerk and lurch along because we already have some spiritual momentum.”

Maybe you don’t have time every day to linger over a passage of Scripture in meditation and prayer. I know there are days when I don’t. But I know how important it is to do it, so I have disciplined myself (well, I try to do it as often as I can) to take a time away, maybe a morning or an hour in the afternoon, to practice this sequence. And every time I do, I come away with my heart a bit happier than before I took the time to read, meditate, and pray. Not a bad practice in the life of a follower of Jesus.