

Introduction: Weak Tea

In 2015 a study conducted in Britain revealed that, “A worrying majority of Britons aren’t brewing their tea properly...” As a nation the Brits take their tea rather seriously. An average of 60.2 billion cups are consumed each year however up to 80% of Britons are doing it wrong. Professor Mark Miodownik comments, “This may be controversial, but the British do not understand how to make tea! Or at least they’re not doing it properly.”

The problem? People are not allowing their tea to brew for the recommended five minutes. They dip their tea bags in and out of the hot water but do not allow time for the brewing process to fully take place. Again, Professor Miodownik says, "Expediency is causing us to throw chemistry out of the window; we’re not allowing our tea to brew for long enough to release the flavors properly.” To make tea it takes time for the flavor of the tea to be infused into the water. It takes time for the various notes to be released so that you have a deep rich flavor.

This past Spring Pastor Brett and I spent some time in England with our overseas missionaries. While we were there the topic of meditation was raised and one of attenders brought up this study. She said, “You know, meditation is a lot like brewing tea.” Right? You have to allow time for the truth of God’s word to change you. You see, many of us have dipped in and out of the word of God. We even consume large numbers of sermons and Bible studies, but often we have failed to take the time to soak in the Word of God so that our lives take on the flavor of that Word. We have failed to think about what we have heard and to apply it to our lives.

This approach to the Word of God has created thin Christians. Christians who have not taken on the depth and maturity of faith that we so long for and need. And while we might want to be physically thin, we do not want to be spiritually thin. For, to be spiritually thin means that we have very little understanding of our faith, the Bible, and how it applies to our lives. To be spiritually thin means that when we encounter difficulty we quickly succumb to despair or anger or confusion. To be spiritually thin means that we may know much about God, but we have failed to know God personally.

And if any word could describe the state of Christianity in American today it would be thin. A thin veneer of Christianity that has very little effect on the way that we think, and the way that we live. The irony is that we have never had more opportunity to know the word of God. There has never been a time in the history of the world that Christians have had as much access to good teaching and training and yet every indication shows that Christians know less and less about the content of their faith and how the truths of God’s word should effect the way that they live. Indeed, the curse God spoken through Isaiah is true of our time that we are a people who, hear but never understand; see but never perceive. We are a people who have taken on the color of tea but not the flavor.

Yet this thin Christianity need not be the case. We need not be anemic. There is a clear path toward a robust, solid, fruitful and mature Christianity that is laid out for us in the word of God. As we turn our attention to Psalm 1 what we will see is that the one who is blessed with such a mature faith is the one who chooses to meditate on God’s Word.

So what I want to do this morning is to take some time to define meditation from a Christian perspective, to deal with some barriers to Christian mediation, and encourage you with the fruits of practicing meditation.

Defining Meditation (v 2)

The central point of Psalm 1 is that the man who meditates on the word of God will be blessed. Do you want maturity? Do you want fruitfulness? Do you want blessing in your life? Then you must meditate on God's word.

In Psalm 1 the word translated meditate means a deep reflective thought that occurs over and over again. It means to focus one's mental attention onto a particular object with the hope of understanding it better.

Therefore, when we read...

on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalms 1:2 ESV)

...we understand that the man who is blessed is the man who takes time to think deeply about the law of God throughout the day and even into the night.

Now this biblical concept of meditation has been high-jacked by Eastern religious practice that seeks to empty the mind. Clear your mind to achieve enlightenment. Or another approach is to seek the answers from within. Meditation, they say, is looking deeply into your own soul. Yet Biblical meditation is not an emptying of the mind nor is it looking for answers from within your own heart. Rather it is the focusing of the mind on the Word of God.

The main object of meditation is to pour over the word of God with all your mental power. Sometimes that means quietly sitting and thinking, but other times it means brainstorming over the word of God. Making connections between his word and your life.

Donald Whitney illustrates the meaning of meditation when he writes, "Hearing God's Word is like one dip of the tea bag into the cup. Some of the tea's flavor is absorbed by the water, but not as much as would occur with a more thorough soaking of the bag... Mediation is like immersing the bag completely and letting it steep until all the rich tea flavor has been extracted."

Meditation is a protracted focus on the word of God for the purpose of spiritual growth. It is where you digest the food of God's word. It is in meditation, it is in taking time to think about God's word, that the truths of his word begin to influence your life and guide your way to blessedness in Christ.

Barriers to Mediation (v 1b)

Yet so often we treat the word of God like a quick cup of tea. We dip in and out of sermons, and Bible studies, and Christian music and media but wonder why we are not growing. The reason that we fail to grow and mature despite the fact that we are exposed to so much is because we fail

to take the time to properly absorb what we have been given. The nutrient rich word of God must be meditated upon if we are to grow. Why is much of Christian culture so shallow? Because we will rarely take the time to sit quietly and allow the word of God to infuse our hearts.

Yet why is this? Why don't we take the time to meditate on God's word? What are the barriers to meditation? While we might point to several obstacles to meditation, I want to highlight two this morning. Look at verse 1 of our Psalm. It says,

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;” (Psalm 1:1 ESV)

A contrast is being made between the man who is blessed and the man who is not. And in verse one we see that the man who is not blessed is the one who takes up the counsel of the wicked. Now this image is of a man who is absorbed in the advice or the instruction of the wicked. This is what he meditates upon. This is what he thinks about. His mind is filled with the thoughts of this world and not with the thoughts of God.

The first reason we don't meditate on the Word of God is because we are too busy with the things of this world. I want you to ask yourself, “Where do my thoughts go when everything is quiet?” When my mind is free to think what do I think about? Do I think about the things of this world? Is my mind filled with envy or greed? Is my mind filled with lust or coveting? Do I despair or grow anxious? Is my mind filled with self-righteousness — litigating everything I did throughout the day to ensure that I was in the right?

The reason why we don't meditate on the word of God is because we meditate on the counsel of the wicked, the way of sinners, the seat of scoffers. And the mind that is absorbed in the things of the world will not be infused with the truth of God's Word.

However, there is another barrier to meditation. The truth is most of us rarely ever allow ourselves to think about anything very deeply at all. When was the last time you gave yourself an hour not to listen to any music, not to watch any TV, not to read a book, not to check email? When was the last time you sat with nothing but your own thoughts for one hour? Or 30 min? 15 min? 5 min? —

My fear is that most of us have not allowed ourselves to be alone with our thoughts in a long time. It used to be that such a practice was unavoidable. Before TV if you woke up in the middle of the night there really wasn't much else to do besides think. If you walked to work, you did not have a Walkman or a car radio. Believe it or not it wasn't that long ago that if you were waiting in line at Walmart you couldn't check Instagram or Twitter or Snap-Chat. You just had to wait and think.

However, every second of our lives have now become filled with input. Information that we dip in and out of. An endless stream of stimuli that keeps our minds from meditating on anything. And so, we read Facebook posts that we will never remember. We take quizzes like, “Which Super Hero Are You?” but never remember the results. We watch football and baseball games that seem rather important, but we forget the results of within a week or two. We watch political

news almost nonstop but fail to know the details of any one political candidates' agenda. We hear a year's worth of sermons on 1 Peter and we fail to know the major themes and key verses of the book. And it is not because we are not intelligent. You are all very intelligent people. The reason we can't remember any of these things is because we haven't taken the time to think about them. We haven't meditated on them in any systematic or consistent manner. We dip in and out so quickly, moving from one bit of information to the next never allowing anyone thing to change us.

To grow as a Christian, you don't need to attend another Bible study. You don't need to watch another Christian movie. You don't need to read another book. You might not even need to read more of your Bible than you are reading right now. You don't need to listen to more sermons than what is offered here. You don't need to listen to more Christian music. What you need to do is meditate on what you have received. You need to meditate on what you do hear on Sunday. And you need to stop meditating on the things of this world. You need to stop the influx of endless information. You need to turn off the TV, put down the phone, switch off the computer, and give yourself some time to ponder God's Word. The reason 21st century Americans don't meditate on the word of God isn't because we don't have enough it is because we have too many other words coming into our minds. The blessed man walks not in the endless counsel of the world, but his delight is on the law of the Lord and on it he mediates day and night.

The Fruits of Christian Mediation (1a, 3-4)

So then why should we take time to mediate on the word of God? Why should we set aside time to think over the scriptures and the weekly sermons? In a world that has adopted expediency as a way of life meditation seems like a waste of time. Prayer is hard enough but at least I am doing something. But in meditation it feels like I am not accomplishing anything.

The reality, however, is that you are doing more in meditation on the word of God than you are doing at any other time. For the fruit of meditation is a blessed life. Look at verses one and two,

"Blessed is the man [whose]... delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:1-2 ESV)

The fruit of meditation is blessedness. It is the favor of the Lord. We see this blessedness illustrated in our Psalm through two contrasting images. One is a picture of a mature fruit bearing tree and the other is of thin and useless chaff.

Look at verse 3. It says,

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. (Psalms 1:3 ESV)

Let us take a moment to think about this tree. First it is a tree that is planted. This tree has been placed in this particular location for a reason. Why? Because it is by streams of water. As you could imagine in the heat and dry of the middle east a fruit tree needs to be planted in a location

that has plenty of water or the tree will just wither away. Now what is the result of this care? It yields fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither.

Meditation on the word of God is like planting yourself by streams of water. For as you rest in his word it will bring you the refreshment and health that you need in this harsh world. Meditation makes one resilient to the hardships of life.

Yet it also makes you fruitful in season. That is, it leads you to holiness and obedience. As we read in Joshua 1:8,

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful 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.” (Joshua 1:8 ESV)

Look at the end of verse three. It tells us what happens to the man who meditates on the word of God day and night. It says,

In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalms 1:3 ESV)

Meditation will lead to prospering. It will lead to a life lived well. It will lead to a faith that is applied. It will lead to a walk that is mature. It will give you resiliency against the hardships of life, and fruitfulness in your calling.

Do you feel a lack of depth and power in your spiritual life? Then give yourself to meditating on God’s Word. For those who lack such meditation are as verse 4 says,

like chaff that the wind drives away. (Psalms 1:4 ESV)

Chaff is the thin outer covering on grain. It is the husk or hull. It is that thin piece of the kernel that gets stuck in your teeth when you eat popcorn. To separate the chaff from the wheat they would throw the wheat into the air. And as it fell back down the thin little pieces would be carried away by the wind. There was nothing to them.

Oh, Christian do not allow your soul to be so thin and fruitless. But meditate on the word of God. Allow his Word to be infused into your soul so that you might grow in holiness and fruitfulness.

The End of Christian Meditation (vs 5-6)

Yet the final and highest purpose of Christian meditation is not fruitful living, as blessed as fruitlessness is. The final and highest purpose, the end of meditation is to be known by the Lord. To be known by the Lord.

Look at the end of our Psalm in verse 6 we see the result of the blessed life,

*“for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”
(Psalm 1:6 ESV)*

Why are we so prone to filling our lives with endless streams of information? Why don't we allow ourselves the privilege of meditating on God's Word? I believe we don't meditate because we are scared that we won't find anything or more to the point we won't find anyone there. The reason that people will text while they are driving. The reason that you will listen to the radio for hours on end. The reason that you will keep the TV on even when you are not watching it is because you are scared that if you turn it all off there will be nothing there. So instead of dealing with that you turn something on; the voice of Bill O'Reilly, the antics of Dr. Who, the posts of a high school friend on Facebook., an Instagram post, a Tweet. They all help us to avoid what we so fear; that if all is quiet, we will be alone.

But Christian in that place of quiet you do not go to enter into nothingness and loneliness you go there to come to know the one who already fully knows you. This is what Paul means when he says in 1 Cor 13,

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12 ESV)

Meditation is looking into the mirror of God's word and coming to know more and more him who has already known you in Jesus Christ.

For God's word gives us great confidence that we can come to God because we have been known by God. When we go to His Word, we learn that there is no hope for coming into his presence and knowing him apart from the work of Jesus Christ.

For the blood of Jesus shed on the cross has opened the way for sinners to be cleansed and to come into the presence of God. By his death and resurrection, he has opened the way of truth to all who come to him in faith.

And when we come to him in faith and enter into his presence what we will find is not a God that we have found but a God who has found us. Not a God that we have first known but a God who has known us; even before the foundation of the world. As we read in 1 Timothy,

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” (2 Timothy 2:19 ESV)

And in Galatians 4,

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God (Galatians 4:9 ESV)

Conclusion

Why give yourself over to meditation? To know God and to be known by God. We fail to understand the power and the intimacy of Christ in our lives when we neglect meditation. However, when we give ourselves over to a life of delighting in, a life of meditating on the word of God we will come to the joy of being fully known at last, and in being fully known we will come to see that in Christ we are fully loved.

So, will you not now give yourself to knowing and being known through daily meditating on the word of God?