

“Planted By Streams of Water”:
Prayer & Meditation on Holy Scripture
Sermon Notes

➤ **At the end of the day, the Apostle Paul is exactly right: we are transformed by the renewing of our minds**

-Romans 12:1-2

1. Scripture is shameless in pointing us toward an irresistible vision for spiritual maturity (vv.1, 3-6)

2. Prayer-filled meditation on God’s written word is the unmistakable pathway toward spiritual maturity (v.2)

Next Week: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 - “When You Come Together”:
The Lord’s Supper & Mound Free

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of September 6th-12th

For this week's study, we have the privilege of taking in an interview with some of the world's experts on the topic of meditation on Scripture: the 17th century English Puritans.

So, pull up a chair, listen, learn, and join in the conversation with your family or community group!¹

Interviewer: Thank you, gentlemen, for joining us today for this important discussion on meditation according to the Bible. Let's start here. Thomas Watson (c1620-1686), I wonder if you might start us off by offering a biblical definition of meditation.

Thomas Watson: “[It is] a holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves.”

Interviewer: That's a helpful (and for a Puritan – surprisingly concise!) definition. Edmund Calamy (1600-1666), anything you'd add?

Edmund Calamy: “A true meditation is when a man doth so meditate of Christ as to get his heart inflamed with the love of Christ; so meditate of the Truths of God, as to be transformed into them, and so meditate of sin as to get his heart to hate sin.”

Interviewer: Wow. Now we're cookin'. You just said a mouthful. So, if I'm hearing both of you right, meditation on God's Word is designed to point us toward Jesus, affecting our desires for him, and so assisting us in turning from sin as we are transformed into Christ's image. Excellent. That's crystal clear. Thomas White (c.1577-1620), you're known for commending meditation not just on Scripture but also on expository sermons we've heard on the Bible. Would you say a little more on this practice?

Thomas White: “It is better to hear one Sermon only and meditate on that, than to hear two Sermons and meditate on neither.”

Interviewer: Ha. Well put. I suppose you're right. Thomas Manton (1620-1677), as you well know, the Bible is brimming with invitations to meditate on its truths (Deuteronomy 6:7; 32:46; Psalm 19:14; 49:3; 63:3; 94:19; 119:11, 15, 23, 28, 93, 99; 143:5; Isaiah 1:3; Luke 2:19; John 4:24; Ephesians 1:18; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 3:1). But could you give us a practical sense of why meditation on God's Word is so mission-critical for a Christian?

Thomas Manton: “Faith is lean and ready to starve unless it be fed with continual meditation on the promises...[as our brother Thomas Watson says] ‘A Christian without meditation is like a soldier without arms, or a workman without tools. Without meditation, the truths of God will not stay with us; the heart is hard, and the memory slippery, and without meditation all is lost’.”

¹ Each of the quotations in this study guide come from: “The Puritan Practice of Meditation”, Chapter 55 in Joel R. Beeke & Mark Jones' A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life. Reformation Heritage Books: Grand Rapids, MI. 2012.

Interviewer: Boom. That's what we call a mic-drop in the 21st century, Thomas. You're on a roll, man. Keep going. Talk to us a bit about the relationship between meditation and prayer. They seem similar, but different. Can you help to sort this out?

Thomas Manton: "Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the word and prayer, and hath respect to both. The word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer; we must hear that we be not erroneous, and meditate that we be not barren. These duties must always go hand in hand; meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer."

Interviewer: Thomas, given how foundational meditation is to both Bible reading and prayer, it's a wonder that we don't teach on this topic more than we do. How vital would you say mediation is for the Christian life?

Thomas Manton: "A man that is a stranger to mediation is a stranger to himself...It is meditation that makes a Christian...Thus you see the necessity of meditation...we must resolve upon the duty, if ever we mean to go to heaven."

Interviewer: That's sobering. Thank you for your candor. Given that this is such serious business. Let's get practical. William Fenner (1600-1640), what does meditation look like in action? How would I take a verse of Scripture and begin to apply it to my life through meditation on it?

William Fenner: "Dive into thy own soul; anticipate and prevent thy own heart. Haunt thy heart with promises, threatenings, mercies, judgments, and commandments. Let mediation trace thy heart. Hale thy heart before God."

Interviewer: John Owen (1616-1683), one of the sweetest books of yours is entitled: Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ. Why did you write it?

John Owen: "If I have observed anything by experience, it is this: a man may take the measure of his growth and decay in grace according to his growth and decay in grace according to his thoughts and meditations upon the person of Christ, and the glory of Christ's kingdom, and of His love."

Interviewer: Go on.

John Owen: "The revelation made of Christ in the blessed Gospel is far more excellent, more glorious, and more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness, than the whole creation and the just comprehension of it, if attainable, can contain or afford. Without the knowledge hereof, the mind of man, however priding itself in other inventions and discoveries, is wrapped up in darkness and confusion."²

Interviewer: The floor is yours, brother. Keep talking.

² The final three quotations from Owen are drawn from his final treatise: Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ (1683). It can be read online for free here: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/glory.html> .

John Owen: “[Jesus Christ] deserves the severest of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and our utmost diligence in them. For if our future blessedness shall consist in being where he is, and beholding of his glory, what better preparation can there be for it than in a constant previous contemplation of that glory in the revelation that is made in the Gospel, unto this very end, that by a view of it we may be gradually transformed into the same glory?”

Interviewer: None better. In fact, I’m going to turn to meditation now. Thank you Thomas Watson, Edmund Calamy, Thomas White, Thomas Manton, William Fenner, and John Owen for your insights. Grace & Peace!