

# Laying Hold of Truth

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I love God's Word and delight in its truth. Yet too often I find that after reading my Bible or hearing a sermon, the truth, so necessary to the wellbeing of my soul, can too easily slip away. The truth that had for a moment captured my attention and my affections can quietly fade amid the clutter and noise of the day.

One of the best ways to remedy this is to practice the spiritual discipline of **meditating on God's Word**. It is a discipline that takes time and intention, but one that brings great benefit to the soul. We need to carve out time to lay hold of the truth of God's Word.

It is a bewildering paradox of our day that the Bible can be so accessible and yet so marginalized. On the one hand our technology has brought God's Word close at hand. It's on our phones and tablets and computers and iPods. We have almost immediate access to several versions of the Bible as well as a wealth of sermons and commentaries. But this same technology also threatens to distract us and drown out God's Word. We have become a culture obsessed with noise and comfortable with clutter. So many sources are bringing input into our lives: TV, radio, online news feeds, Facebook, Twitter... More than ever we need to make time to meditate, to dwell in God's Word.

Meditation is pondering the Word in our hearts, preaching it to our own souls, and personally applying it to our own lives and circumstances. It is how we sanctify our thinking and bring it into submission to Christ—taking every thought captive. Paul tells us in Romans 12:2

Romans 12:2      Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

In Psalm 77 Asaph uses three verbs that capture the essence of meditation. When he finds himself perplexed and troubled and cries out to God, he determines to steady his soul by looking to God and laying hold of truth. He says in verses 11 and 12:

Psalm 77:11–12      I will **remember** the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will **remember** your wonders of old.  
I will **ponder** all your work,  
and **meditate** on your mighty deeds.

Asaph uses 3 verbs in the Hebrew to describe what it means to lay hold of truth: He says: I will remember, I will ponder and I will meditate.

He begins with **remembering** (*zakar*)—calling to mind “the deeds of the Lord” and His “wonders of old.” He intentionally takes note of truth and draws it back into his thinking. Asaph reflects on what God has accomplished for His people in the past—events and epics like the Exodus and Passover, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the conquest of the Promised Land. He makes an effort not to forget all the Lord has done.

David also speaks of remembering God.

Psalm 63:6                   when I **remember** you upon my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

In Psalm 143, when David is overwhelmed with trouble, he uses the same three verbs as Asaph, beginning with “remember.”

Psalm 143:5                 I **remember** the days of old;  
I meditate on all that you have done;  
I ponder the work of your hands.

We are a forgetful people and God would have us to remember. Meditation begins with remembering, bringing back into our minds the truths and praises and promises of God.

But, second Asaph also uses a word that is translated in Psalm 77:12 “I ponder.”

Psalm 77:11–12            I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.  
I will **ponder** all your work,  
and meditate on your mighty deeds.

This is the verb *hagah* in the Hebrew. It is found in numerous places in the Old Testament and translated as “ponder” or “meditate”:

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.

Psalm 1:2                   but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he **meditates** day and night.

Psalm 63:6                 when I remember you upon my bed,  
and **meditate** on you in the watches of the night;

In Psalm 2 it is used of the nations “plotting” against God.

Psalm 2:1                   Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples **plot** in vain?

The word literally means “to let resound.” It is used in Psalm 92:3 of the sound or tones of a musical instrument as it resonates.

Psalm 92:3            On an instrument of ten strings,  
On the lute, And on the harp,  
**With harmonious** [or resounding] **sound** (NKJV).

It is used also in Psalm 9:16

Psalm 9:16            The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;  
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.  
**Meditation.**  
Selah

It is not entirely clear if the use of the word here is a musical instruction for the musicians to play an interlude—letting the instruments resound—or if it is an instruction to the congregation—let this truth resound within yourselves.

We find the term also at the end of Psalm 19

Psalm 19:14            Let the words of my mouth and the **meditation** of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

In other words: Let the inward tones of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord...

This is how we want the truth of Scripture to fill us and impact us—as we hear it and sing it and pray it—as Paul tells us in Colossians 3:16, let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly! Let it dwell in us in a way that resounds and reverberates in and through our lives.

We see another use of the word in Isaiah 31:4 that helps us understand its intent. Isaiah uses the word in reference to a lion:

Isaiah 31:4            For thus the LORD said to me,  
“As a lion or a young lion **growls** over his prey,

The word for growl or roar is this word for meditation. Have you ever heard a lion when he roars? He does not just use his voice. His entire being reverberates. This is meditation. Letting God’s Word resound from within the very center of our being.

Meditation involves remembering, and resounding, but finally Asaph speaks of **meditating**.

Psalm 77:11–12        I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.  
I will ponder all your work,  
and **meditate** on your mighty deeds.

This word *siyach* means to muse and wonder and dwell on—to think deeply about something. Used literally it means to murmur, mumble or talk to yourself.

In a negative sense it can mean “to complain.” It is the idea that something has so taken hold of your thinking that you can’t stop thinking about it. So on the negative side—it troubles you

and disturbs you and draws out complaint; but on the positive side—it captivates you and enraptures your thinking so that you “dwell on” it. This is the way we want God’s truth to lay hold of us—so that we can’t but dwell on it, so that it captures our thinking and finds its way into our choices and decisions.

The Puritans thought of meditation this way as they described it as “preaching to yourself.” We take the Word of God that we hear and read, and we mull it over in our minds and then bring it to bear upon our lives in personal exhortations.

It is a word that is found often in the Old Testament, especially in the psalms—

Psalm 104:34      May my **meditation** be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the LORD.

Psalm 119:15      I will **meditate** on your precepts  
and fix my eyes on your ways.

Psalm 119:97      Oh how I love your law!  
It is my **meditation** all the day.

When we meditate we think about God’s Word. We dwell on it and then as opportunities arise, we preach it to ourselves. We inject it into our thoughts as we make decisions, as we admonish and instruct our souls to choose right things and walk down right paths.

This is the essence of meditation. It is evoking the truth, embracing it and embedding it in our lives. It is intentionally focusing on recalling God’s truth that it might resound in our hearts and become that grid through which we sift and measure our thoughts and actions.

Meditation is a crucial Christian discipline and a vital means of grace that we must treasure and practice. But it is a discipline that takes time and effort. We need to work at carving out time to remember, time to ponder, time to preach to ourselves. The world around us can too easily choke out what is needful and good for our souls. Don’t allow God’s truth to slip away from you. Be intentional and diligent and your meditation.

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