

The Chicken or the Egg?

An Introduction to Christian Meditation and Memorization

As I previously shared, God has wanted me to dig deeper into the Christian practice of meditation and memorization of His Word. It became obvious to me earlier this year that I needed to concentrate on this discipline in my own life.

Like me, I'm sure most of you learned Yochanan 3:16 when you were first exposed to the Gospel message. **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."** ~ Yochanan 3:16 ^(NKJV) Over the years, I have memorized numerous verses or portion of verses, but have never memorized passages more than the six verses in Psalm 23.

As I started this year, I decided to start part of my daily devotions by reading one Psalm each morning. [Ok, true confession time: I took three days to go through Psalm 119.] When I finished all 150 Psalms, I decided that rather than go back and read them again, I wanted to spend the rest of the year memorizing a few of the Psalms that had really spoken to me. I knew portions of Psalm 51 and could recall Psalm 23 if somebody else started to recite it. I could recognize stanzas taken from the Psalms in our praise and worship songs, but I really wanted to memorize some that had special meaning to me.

Two passages of Scripture have really influenced me. The Psalmist writes, **"I told You about my life, and You listened to me; teach me Your statutes. Help me understand the meaning of Your precepts so that I can meditate on Your wonders."** (Psalm 119:26-27 ^{HCSB} emphasis added)

The second passage is from the Brit Hadashah. Yochanan, quoting Yeshua, wrote: **"But the Counselor, the Ruach HaKodesh, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything; that is, He will remind you of everything I have said to you."** (Yochanan 14:26 emphasis added) How can we meditate on the statutes or precepts of the Lord unless we know what they are? How can the Ruach teach us by reminding us of what Yeshua said unless we have already heard what He said? For me, the answer to both questions is to meditate on what God has revealed to us in His Word.

When I came to Psalm 139 while reading through the Psalms, I immediately knew that all 24 verses were something I wanted to meditate on frequently which meant that I better memorize it for immediate recall. The thing that drew me the most to this Psalm is that it speaks directly about God's incommunicable attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

If we want to become more like Yeshua in our daily walk than we really need to understand and emulate to the best of our ability His character. Now these attributes are His alone, but it doesn't hurt to know them. If nothing else, we easily see why He is God and we're not.

Ok, How Do I Start?

Whenever the Lord directs my topics for a blog, I open up my [Bible software](#) and do a word search in my various translations, dictionaries, commentaries, etc. I also do a quick search at Merriam-Webster.com to ensure that I don't miss some synonyms that may help me in my search and understanding of God's Word.

Here is what I discovered on Merriam-Webster.com:

Meditate ~ (verb) *"to give serious and careful thought to."* **Synonyms:** chew over, cogitate, consider, contemplate, debate, deliberate, entertain, eye, kick around, meditate, mull (over), perpend,

pore (over), question, revolve, ruminate ¹, study, think (about *or* over), turn, weigh, wrestle (with).

Related Words muse (upon), reflect (on *or* upon), reminisce; analyze, explore, review; conclude, reason; second-guess, speculate (about); brood (about *or* over), dwell (on *or* upon), fixate (on *or* upon), fret (about *or* over), obsess (about *or* over); believe, conceive, opine; absorb, assimilate, digest, drink (in).

Memorize ~ (verb) "to commit to memory". **Synonyms** con, learn, study.

Related Words hark back (to), mind [*chiefly dialect*], recall, recollect, relive, remember, reminisce (about), retain, think (of); accept, apprehend, comprehend, get, grasp, know, understand; absorb, digest.

As I indicated in the footnote, ruminate is my favorite synonym for meditate. Its definition paints a much clearer picture for me.

Ruminate ~ (transitive verb) "to go over in the mind repeatedly and often casually or slowly; to chew repeatedly for an extended period." {This is actually a key to a healthy eating habit. The more you chew, the less you eat.}

(intransitive verb) "to chew again what has been chewed slightly and swallowed: chew the cud; to engage in contemplation: reflect."

Having lived most of my life near beef cattle and/or dairies, watching cattle graze and chew their cud paints a vivid picture for me of what it means to meditate. Chew it; swallow it; bring the cud back up and repeat.

So, Which Comes First?

The English word **memorize** is actually not utilized in the Bible by most modern translators, except for three occasions:

"Memorize his laws." ~ Deuteronomy 6:6 ^(CEV)

"Memorize these laws and think about them. Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and your foreheads to help you obey them." ~ Deuteronomy 11:18 ^(CEV)

[In both cases, most other modern translations use an idiom of *"storing up these words in your heart."*]

"This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful." ~ Joshua 1:8 ^(NET1) [Most other modern translations use: meditate, think about, recite or study.]

Now we don't have the same problem with the word **meditate**. It is used extensively in the Tanakh and, depending upon your translation, the Brit Hadashah.

In my next post, I will explain why I believe that to memorize any passage of scripture requires you first to meditate on it.

¹ My favorite synonym is ruminate which I explain later.