

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Distracted From Godly Meditation

KEY PASSAGE: Numbers 14:1-4 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Psalm 19:14 | Hebrews 13:5

► SUMMARY

To meditate is to have our thoughts consumed by something.

An anticipated pleasure, a problem, a desire or dream, or even a person—all these and others can be objects of meditation. The question for believers is: Are we consumed with thoughts about the Lord or have we allowed other things to fill our minds and distract us from that which is our highest priority—knowing and loving God?

► SERMON POINTS

Meditation on God's Word focuses our minds on the Lord, strengthens us spiritually, and brings us closer to Him. It's a private time in which we receive His good, righteous, and wise direction for our lives so we can become the person He wants us to be. However, there will also be times when we feel God's conviction regarding sin in our lives that we need to confess and forsake.

Israel's Erroneous Meditation

After spending 400 years in Egypt living as slaves, the children of Israel were delivered by God when He sent a plague in which all the firstborn Egyptians died. Then Moses led the people through the wilderness to the Red Sea. Although Pharaoh pursued the Israelites and thought he had trapped them, the Lord parted the sea so that they could cross over on dry land. Afterward the water returned and drowned the Egyptian army.

When they finally reached the edge of the territory God had promised to give them, Moses sent 12 men to spy out

the land. Joshua and Caleb came back to report that the land was good and that the Lord would certainly help them conquer it. But the people chose to listen to the bad report of the other 10 spies who told them the inhabitants were too powerful for them to overcome.

Instead of meditating on the promises and power of God, the people's thoughts were consumed with fear. Rather than trusting and obeying the Lord, they wanted to appoint a leader to take them back to Egypt to become slaves once again.

This is an example of erroneous meditation. They evaluated the situation based on their own abilities and left God out of the equation. Although Joshua and Caleb focused on the Lord, the people could only think about themselves and the possibility of defeat and loss of life. They chose to depend on themselves rather than on God.

We all have this same choice. Will we depend on the Lord for every aspect of our lives or rely on ourselves? Will we set our focus on the world and its pleasures, pursuits, and fears, or on God and His sufficiency to handle everything?

The Benefits of Meditating on Scripture

- **It quiets our spirit** and calms our thoughts.
- **God enlightens our minds** to think like He does and do what He desires.
- **He increases our energy** with His power, enabling us to obey Him in every circumstance.
- **The Lord purifies our hearts by exposing sin** so we can confess.
- **He enlarges our view of Him.** He is almighty God, and all things are under His control.

- **God increases our love for Him.** As we spend time learning to know Him, our love for Him grows.
- **Our faith increases.** We are able to trust the Lord in the trials of life because we see evidence that He is always with us.
- **We have an increased awareness of God's presence.**
- **The Lord infuses us with joy.** Knowing Him more intimately through His Word produces indescribable joy, completeness, peace, and security.

Godly meditation is a conversation with the Lord. As we read and think about His Word and seek to understand what He is saying and how it applies to our lives, the Holy Spirit guides our thoughts and questions. Without the Lord's presence with us, His Word guiding us, and His Spirit helping us, we would be unable to live righteously in this world.

If we're not listening to the Lord by meditating and reading His Word, we are missing His best for our lives just as the Israelites did when they refused to believe and obey Him. They lost the Promised Land and suffered 40 long years of wandering in the wilderness.

God's Word is His holy, eternal gift to every one of His children. He doesn't want us to think and live like the world around us. His plans for us are more wonderful, righteous, and fulfilling than anything the world can offer. That's why we must listen to the Lord, let the Scriptures sink into our hearts, and let go of everything else that distracts or hampers our ability to meditate on Him.

Wrong Attitudes That Hinder Meditation

- **Bitterness** steals our focus from the Lord and obscures our need to love and forgive others.
- **Anger** becomes stronger when it consumes our thoughts.
- **Hatred** for others makes a right relationship with God impossible.

- **Unforgiveness** is a barrier between us and the Lord because our thoughts are centered on the wrong done to us rather than our own sins that put Jesus on the cross.
- **Hostility** is a desire to hurt others or get even, and this is incompatible with meditation on God.
- **Resentment** is a self-destructive dislike of others based on who they are or what they have.
- **Unbelief** is manifested by doubts that God is interested in our lives and will meet our needs. However, reading and meditating on His Word can increase our trust in the Lord as we learn to know Him more fully.
- **Grudge.** Holding a grudge against someone is linked with other sins like anger, resentment, and hostility, which are spiritually destructive and make us miserable.
- **Fear.** This was the focus of the children of Israel when they faced what seemed like an impossible situation and forgot about the Lord's power. Today fear still grips many people as they react to all the uncertainties and dangers around them and forget about God.

We all meditate on something. The issue is whether we will choose to dwell on God's Word, which is healthy and spiritually uplifting, or focus on ourselves, our fears, or worldly desires. God's blessings await us when we make Him our priority, but if we leave Him out, painful consequences are sure to follow. The Promised Land or the wilderness stands before us. What we choose to dwell upon will determine which way we will go.

► RESPONSE

- What is the focus of your thoughts? Do you tend to dwell more on your problems, plans, or pleasures than on the Lord and His Word?
- How does the focus of your thoughts affect your emotions and attitudes? What effect does it have on your own faith?
- How much time on any given day do you set aside to be alone with the Lord, listening to Him through His Word?

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