**Diligent Meditation**

“Your Word have I laid up in my heart ***THAT*** I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:110, AMPC) (emphasis added)

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**Introduction:** When I began a series on “Diligent Bible Study” on September 16, 2021, I talked about one reaction to our world’s current turmoil. I wrote:

Are you feeling the same sense of urgency to be about our Father’s business? As godlessness increases day by day, desire to do my part in the battle intensifies. I hear reports of revival fires already springing up and I eagerly await the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost that prophets have said is coming soon. I want to be doing my part now, and I want to be ready for what is coming.

For months, prophets have urged us to draw closer to God—now. We need ears that hear Him clearly when He starts judging the evil and evil-doers now seeking to destroy all that is godly. Deep, diligent Bible study is essential to develop hearing ears. . . Why, you may ask, is diligent Bible study so essential right now? (September 16, 2021, www.wordsofhopeandhealing.com)

I wrote in that blog post that diligent Bible study is essential—NOW---because: (1) God says to. (2) We need God’s peace to withstand the evil that is attacking our nation and our world. And (3) we all must be ready as the third great awakening begins – ready to share God’s truths with fledgling converts and returning prodigals. And that requires faith that comes from understanding God, what He says and how He says to live.

Two months later, the need is even more urgent. As I write this booklet, I would add the words “diligent meditation” to the sentences from that September 16 blog post. I have learned, in writing about diligent Bible study, that diligent meditation is not an option for believers earnest about their walk with God. They will have God’s Word on their mind and in their heart all day long as they go about daily life. They will *mediate on the move*.

**Meditating on the move.** *“The Lord is good to those who depend on Him, to those who search for Him. So, it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. Lamentations 3:25 and 26. (NLT)”*

I looked once more at the half sheet of paper, folded it in half once more so it fit into my purse, then walked out the door, repeating “*The Lord is good to those who depend on Him, to those who search for Him. So, it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. Lamentations 3:25 and 26. The Lord is good. . .”* As I walked down the stairs, my frayed blue and white paisley gym bag, the one my daughter Sharon had used in high school, banged against my knee.

*“Hmm..”* I half moaned as stiff hips complained. *“Lord, thank You that I live on the second floor. That gives more exercise for the hips and low back. Help me, Lord, not complain!”*

A slight breeze moved cool morning air over my face as three chestnut brown sparrows flushed into the dense bushes bordering the sidewalk, chirping in chorus as they flitted from sight. I put my gym bag in the back seat, my purse in the front, pulled out my verses and read them again, slowly, before backing the car up.



*“It is making a difference, Lord, it really is. Your Word pops into my mind so often now when the enemy shoots thought arrows of fear and discouragement.”*

*“The Lord is good to those who depend on Him. . . uh. . . “The Lord is good to those who depend on Him. . . uh. . . mmm.”* Up and down the little hills on First Street I struggled to remember the next phrase. Finally, at the stop light, I glanced at my paper. *“to those who search for Him. So, it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. Lamentations 3:25 and 26.”*

*“Ah! Yes, that was it! 'The Lord is good*. . . '” During the five-minute sprint on the interstate, where there were no stoplights, I managed to repeat the whole passage in my mind. During the next hour of stretches, weights and recumbent bicycling, I repeated that passage and talked silently with the Lord about it.

“*Well, Lord, that says to me that You want me to depend on You and wait for You, with patience, and to keep searching for You. So, how do I depend on You today, right now? If I am depending on You, then I will not worry about . . . “*

That scene happened more than two years ago, on a morning in April 2019. That was the year God dramatically healed my life-long struggle with depression and anxiety. What brought about the healing, when nothing else had worked? **Taking God's Word like the medicine He says it is healed depression and fear and renewed my mind. (Romans 12:2, Proverbs 4:20-22.)**

Since I began diligently meditating God has kept me in His peace, even in these troubling times. Yes, I’ve stumbled a few times but God always gets me back in peace as I get my mind back on Him. If meditating is a daily habit, I rejoice with you! However, many are, like I was, far from God’s mark regarding meditation.



*So far from the mark.*That morning back in April 2019 God began unveiling this invincible weapon that Satan had hidden for most of my life as a believer. I was ignorant of what God means by meditation and taking his Word like the medicine it is until I was actually doing it.

Some reasons we fail to follow God's clear commands about meditation are:

* Meditation does not come naturally. Forming new habits requires discipline and self-control. We may not even know how important it is. How often do you hear about meditation?
* Our enemy knows how dangerous and powerful the Word in the mouth of a believer is and he sets roadblocks using lies, distractions, and our flesh. How often I said, “I just do not have time” or “I just cannot remember” or “I tried but it will not work for me.”
* Pride blinds the eyes of the heart. 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns us, “So, if you think you are standing, be careful that you don't fall!” (NIV)

Comparisons also blind us to the truth. It is tempting to think we are doing fine because we are “doing more” in some areas of spiritual life than someone else. We are unwise if we compare ourselves with others and use ourselves as the standard of measurement (2 Corinthians 10:12b, NLT). A piano tuner uses a tuning fork, not another piano.

* I had to confess a very ugly, very bad attitude. I remember thinking that constantly thinking about God's Word was for people who are “far out” there with God. Wow was I in danger! Fortunately, God convicted me, I confessed and turned away from that attitude, and by His grace, I do the same thing that I, to my great regret, spurned for so long.

**[2] So what is meditation?** To meditate is “to dwell on anything in thought; to contemplate; to study; to turn or revolve any subject in the mind.” (www.webstersdictionary1828.com). Synonyms include to ponder, muse, brood, concentrate, be lost in thought, think deeply and carefully upon--and my favorite—to chew the cud! Cows chew their cud up to eight hours a day, chewing each mouthful 40 to 60 times so the grass will be digested properly and absorbed by the body. The cow eats the grass and then, later chews it. We read the Word, and then, later, we think about it until it is digested.

<<Meditation on the Word changes us from the inside out.>> To meditate means to ponder and think about a verse or passage so long that it becomes part of you. Grass, properly chewed, becomes part of a cow. The Word, properly meditated upon or thoroughly chewed and swallowed, becomes part of who we are. The Word changes our innermost being. It renews our mind (Romans 12:1-2).

Meditation is NOT yoga. When we meditate, we do not repeat a mantra. We are thinking about and talking with the God Who made heaven and earth, the Most High, and His Word to us. We are purposefully thinking, not trying to turn off our thoughts. We are pondering on, contemplating, thinking about God’s law – His instructions to us on how to live.

**[3] Meditation can heal your heart and your life.** *The power of God’s Word will “fix” your heart whether your problem is addiction, anger, self-control, loneliness, depression, or fear. Then, as your heart changes, your life will change.* Hebrews 4:12 says God’s Word is alive and full of power, and that it “*judges the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (*NIV) That phrase means to me that God’s Word in my mind enables me to discern, or to judge, whether thoughts and feelings in my heart are good or bad, true or false, beneficial or detrimental, holy or corrupted, whether they are from God or from the devil, and whether they lead toward life or lead toward death.

<<The light of truth chases the darkness of lies away, just as dawn chases the darkness of night away (Proverbs 4:18).>> While deeply depressed and cowered down by fear, most of my thoughts were negative. The enemy and my own downtrodden heart generated thoughts and feelings of hopelessness and discouragement, day after day. *Only when I began studying the Word for myself in my areas of need and then consciously kept those verses in my mind minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, did healing begin.*

<<As God’s truth increases in your heart, lies and darkness decrease.>>When we meditate on God’s truths, truth begins occupying more space in our thoughts than lies, and truth becomes dominant, or foremost.  You eventually make salt water drinkable if you add enough pure water. Really, it is more like a desalinization plant because the salt, or lie, is actually removed, not just diluted!

I believe that is one reason God tells us, many times, to think about His Word all day long. As we keep His Word in our mind, hour by hour, day by day, we begin to think about life and situations like God thinks about *because we have more of Truth about life and those situations in our hearts.* We start to walk in truth, to live in truth, to think like God and to act in more godly ways.

As we keep diligently studying the Word, treasuring up truths in the storehouse of our mind, we grow spiritually, we step into Satan’s snares less often, and strongholds constructed of his lies crumble. Meditating on the move.

**[4] Why do we meditate?** First, God tells us to. That is enough for me!

The second reason is that God promises blessings if we meditate on His Word. Joshua 1:8 gives a succinct summary:

This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night, that you may observe *and* do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely *and* have good success. (AMPC) (emphasis added)

So God is saying that talking and thinking about His Word all the time will lead us to obey His laws and then—*because* we obey His laws--that will make us prosperous, be wise and successful. This same promise is repeated in Psalm 1. Part of the godly life described in Psalm 1:1 is to “desire His law and find delight in it and to “habitually meditate (ponder and study) by day and by night on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God.) (paraphrased)”



If we live that godly life in verse Psalm 1:1 and meditate by day and by night—constantly:

* We will have a constant supply (“like a tree firmly planted [and tended] by the streams of water”),
* we will do the right thing at the right time (“ready to bring forth its fruit in its season”);
* Our “leaf also shall not fade *or* wither” and
* we will be successful in all we do (“everything he does shall prosper [and come to maturity].” (Psalm 1:2, AMPC)

One more benefit of meditation is wisdom. Slowly read Proverbs 1 through 8. See how important wisdom is for the believer! Pondering verses 8:34-36 tells me that seeking and finding wisdom daily leads to life and God’s favor. To miss wisdom, is to hurt ourselves and “court death.”

*<<How God feels about meditation.>>* For more proof of how strongly God feels about meditation, consider the entire sixth chapter of Deuteronomy. In the opening chapters of Deuteronomy, after they had wandered in the desert forty years because of doubt, unbelief and rebellion against God, the children of Israel were finally about to enter the Promised Land. At that point, in Chapters 1:6 through 5:34, Moses reviewed the history of God’s goodness to them in spite of their doubt and rebellion and he “expounded the law”.

In his second address, Moses urged the people to follow the decrees and laws of God, repeated the Ten Commandments, again urged the people to obey God so that they and their children could prosper, and then he tells them that for God's blessings to continue, each must “. *. . love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV). Then the very next thing in verse 6 through 9, *Moses explains how to do that****—***by meditating – all day long.

*“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. “(Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV).*

*<<Meditating is part of loving God.>>*The fact that God’s command to meditate comes immediately after His command to love Him with all our heart means to me that keeping His Word constantly in my mind is part of how to love Him with all my heart and soul and strength. Let’s look at God’s commands in these verses in more detail.

*“These commands . . . are to be on your hearts.”* If something is on my heart, it colors everything I do. When my loved one is sick, he is on my heart, in the forefront of my thoughts, all day long. I am preoccupied with his well-being. I cannot get him off my mind. That is how we are to be about God's laws. If I have been trained in the laws of good manners, those laws are *on my heart*, and I will say please and thank you in every situation, all day, every day. It will be natural for me to do so.

“*Impress them on your children*.” Israel was instructed to impress God's laws on their children. That means to imprint or fix God's laws in their minds. How to do that? By talking about God's laws ALL DAY LONG, which means at home and away from home, from getting up to going to bed. Then God says put reminders of His laws on your hands (so that as you reach out to do anything, you will think how God's law applies to what you are about to do) and on your forehead, symbolizing that your every thought is to be controlled by God's law. Furthermore, God said write them on your doors and gates so that you see them when you enter your house and when you come and go from home. That will also be a reminder and witness to your children and others.

Chapter Six concludes by telling parents that when their children ask what the laws of God mean, they are to explain how God delivered them from slavery “with a mighty hand” to bring them to the promised land, how He commanded them to obey all His laws and to fear Him so they would “. *. . always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today*.” (V 24) Parents were to tell their children that “*If we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”* That way, when the children hear their parents talk about God's law and when they see the visible reminders, they will also remember that God promises blessings for obeying. God was working to ensure that each succeeding generation would give Him and His Word first place in their hearts. He put that there for you and me, too.

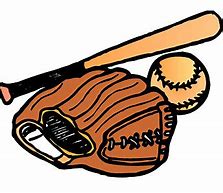
**[5] HOW to mediate – Start with what you need.** Are you worried? Meditate on verses about peace. Do you have a temper? Ponder verses on self-control and anger. God wants you to use His Word to help you have an abundant life. His Word covers every need humans have and every situation we encounter. If your arm is broken, you do not put the splint on your leg. God’s Word contains all we need for life and righteousness. It is THE operating manual for human life. You will find verses about what you need—and you need those verses! You may already know what the biggest need in your life is. If not, pray and ask God to show you. Meditating on what you need gives motivation, and when you see your need starting to be met, motivation will increase even more.

***[6] HOW – Practice and persist in your practice.*** *Practice, even though you “fail”, until you find the “right” way for you, then persist in your practice. Meditation takes practice---and practicing the “right” way.* Like learning to manage money wisely, developing the habit of meditating takes time and much practice. And you may feel like you fail many times along the way, even though you try desperately. When I finally began studying the Word for what I needed and meditating upon it, I failed at first. Be assured that the enemy will try to lure you away from meditating because he knows the power of the Word in the mouth and mind of a faith-filled believer. I hope the following list of reasons I failed at first help you avoid the same errors. So why did I fail?

* First, I was not diligently studying God’s Word when I first tried to meditate. (More about that in a minute)
* Second, I had not allowed Holy Spirit to teach me the truths in those Scriptures and personalize them for me. That would have happened during diligent study.
* Third, I was trying to meditate on lists of single verses about my needs. I read those lists over and over but the verses would not stick in my mind. Again, I was not studying diligently.
* Fourth, I deeply doubted I could meditate “the right way” and I had doubts, subconsciously, about “using” the Word.
* Fifth, I did not know how to meditate.

*<<Those dastardly doubts—no doubt from the devil!>>*Why the doubts?First, I felt so inadequate compared to teachers I was hearing. Comparisons are dangerous. Don’t do it! Second, I was a relatively new believer when the “name it/claim it” teaching reached its zenith. There is power in speaking and believing the Word of God with faith--OF COURSE!!--but unfortunately the enemy led many believers, Bible teachers and pastors into extremes, into the error of trying to use the power of God's Word for selfish ends.

This was also called the “prosperity gospel”, and many believers, like me, backed so far away that we got off balance. So, when I tried to start meditating many years later, those same doubts remained. Subconsciously, I felt meditation was “using” God’s Word for my own ends, but that is just what He wants us to do – when what we seek is in accordance with His will!!!



<<To succeed at any task, skill, or habit, things must be done correctly.>> The biggest reason I failed was that I did not know how to meditate. I can watch one baseball game, then try to play shortstop but until someone tells me specifically to throw the ball to first base to get the player out, I may throw to second base. I may try to bat, but until someone tells me, I will not know what and where the strike zone is. There are steps, procedures, and rules to follow in any process.

Please hear me clearly, dear fellow pilgrim: I dare not and do not presume to know exactly how God wants us to meditate. I just know what did and did not work for me. Seek the Lord--for yourself---about how to meditate. God’s way for you may be similar to mine or different. You will know it by the fruit, the result, of your efforts. However, you will have to keep trying, patiently, as God guides you into His way for you. And HE WILL GUIDE YOU!

**[7] HOW - Diligent study first, then diligent meditation.** Only after diligent *study* was I ready for diligent *meditation*. In March 2019 emotional distress led me to sit down with my Bible and begin finding verses for myself, in the area of my needs. That is, I sat down with Holy Spirit and the Word—no writings by anyone else--and began looking up verses about fear and peace. I thought I was following God’s instructions but I was just copying verses from the concordance or lists of verses someone else had compiled and trying to repeat them constantly. That did help but just barely.

However, when I engaged in truly diligent study---for myself-- I was finally following God’s instructions on how to take His Word like medicine (Proverbs 4:22). For an excellent teaching on diligent study, see God’s Medicine Bottle by Derek Prince. This pamphlet was instrumental in leading me into diligent study.

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*<<Truly diligent study made meditation easier.>>* Gradually, I began studying truly diligently. I read the whole chapter a verse was in, read it in other translations, followed up the cross references, and wrote the verse down in long-hand, and often the passage containing the verse, and made diagrams of it. I did that with each verse before moving on to the next one listed in the concordance.

For a few days, I felt little. But, desperation, so often a blessing, kept me at it. Gradually, I began hearing Holy Spirit speak through the Word. He put such clear thoughts in my mind as I studied, and I began seeing cause/effect linkages. As I thought about what God was saying—the if-thens—I felt hopeful about getting free. With hope, faith began to grow. Hope and faith produced strong motivation to keep those verses in my mind, all day long because when I thought about them, I was okay.

So, I tried, sincerely, desperately, to keep my mind on the truths I had diligently studied. I kept my little list of if-then verses with me all day. However, there were still hours when I could not look at my verses, like when driving, cooking, shopping, working, etc. That is when I began diligent meditation – by Divine accident.



***[8.] HOW – then diligent meditation.*** I never heard the term “diligent meditation” (though surely someone used it before) until I was struggling to write this. I vaguely knew that diligent meant hard-working, conscientious, and careful in one’s work, but taking time to look up synonyms turned on the lightbulb about what meditation really means. When pondering synonyms like meticulous, pain-staking, exacting, careful, thorough, and tenacious, I realized that God had, in His great and loving grace, taught me not only how to *study* diligently but also how to *meditate* diligently in the spring of 2019.

<<<God led me into diligent meditation as I persisted in trying to memorize my special verses. >> PLEASE DO NOT STOP READING because I started talking about memorizing! I backed into *meditating diligently, therefore* successfully, precisely *because I was trying to memorize*, to keep the security blanket of my special verses wrapped around my heart. Both meditation and memorizing involve similar processes. So, if you oppose memory work or think you cannot do it, please let me explain.

<<Countless repetitions.>> In those first desperate weeks, with emotions raw and mind so cluttered, I had to repeat each phrase of a verse I had diligently studied over and over and over again. In doing those countless repetitions, I was being meticulous, thinking about each word in the phrases I was repeating. I was being painstaking and exacting. I carefully and thoroughly thought about the phrases in a verse, and then the whole verse and why it was in the place it was in the passage that contained it. I was diligently meditating *because* I was trying to memorize those verses. And it involved countless repetitions.

I started the habit of carrying pages of printed verses with me everywhere – to the gym, the grocery, sitting on a park bench watching my grandsons play. I repeated a phrase over and over and over until I could say it. And as I did so, God always showed me what that phrase meant or showed how it linked to another one. Then I would repeat another phrase over and over and then link the two together, repeating the two verses over and over. It sometimes took an entire week to memorize a long passage. Even getting one phrase firmly in my mind sometimes took an entire day, but I kept at it. And, praise God, once I had it “hidden” in my heart, I could think about that verse or passage all day long. Those verses began popping into mind when dark thoughts threatened.

Below is another example of what a person’s thoughts might be while they are “diligently meditating”, this time using Hebrews 13:5.

Let your [a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245a)]character *or* moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245b)]Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you *nor* [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245c)]give you up *nor* leave you without support. [I will] not, [[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245d)][I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless *nor* forsake *nor* [[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245e)]let [you] down ([[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245f)]relax My hold on you)! [[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30245g)]Assuredly not!]

*“Okay, Father,”* I prayed*, “that must mean I can be content in any situation, including still feeling depressed, still having such a struggle. That next phrase, that next promise from You where you said, “I will not in any way fail you or give you up or leave you without support.” You said you will not fail me in any way. That must include right now, having the strength just to walk through this next hour when I feel so afraid I just want to cry. You say You will not fail me in any way so that means You can keep me calm, and Ha! That is part of what Isaiah 26:3 means, isn’t it? It must mean that as, or in proportion to how I keep my mind on You, You will keep me in peace. . . and support means that you will give me support, or help, in every detail, including how to stay in peace when I take the boys home and come back to that empty condo . . .*



It still takes countless repetitions before something is hidden in my heart. Think about it – to hide a treasure in the ground, you spend time digging a deep hole, shovel by straining shovel. So it is with hiding God's Word or planting His seeds of Truth in your heart. *It takes effort.* As we repeat His Word by intentional, conscious effort, His Word, which is alive, carves out a place in our mind and heart and spirit where the Word will stay covered so it can grow. And it does grow, first a sprout, then a tree, then fruit!

*<<Meditating and memorizing both help hide the Word in your heart. >>*

*<Meditation and memorization both involve countless*

*purposeful, thoughtful repetitions. >>>*

The process of meditating is very similar to the process of memorizing in that when you memorize something, you repeat it over and over in your mind or out loud. The same holds with meditating – you think about a statement or a word over and over, trying to understand it, asking Holy Spirit to show you. It is what we do when someone we love sends a message. We think carefully about what they said – because we love them and what they say to us is important.

*I did not talk about “memorizing” at first in this article because I did not want to scare you off.*

Let’s not get hung up on terms. As you have just seen, I was not able to successfully meditate all day long until I began intentionally trying to memorize my personalized verses I desperately needed. So, I say meditate with the intent to memorize or else try to memorize and you will be meditating in that process. *Don’t stumble here!* Just take a verse phrase by phrase, think about what it means, and repeat that phrase again. Think about what each word means. Be patient with yourself and refuse to listen to any self-criticism or doubts about your mental abilities.

For me personally, diligent meditation ***is*** memorization, or as close as I can humanly accomplish. God will show you what diligent meditation means for you – and I earnestly pray it is hiding His Word in your heart.



*<<Diligently meditating—constantly--gives us the chance to “practice” applying God’s Word.>>**Many passages, including Psalm 1, Philippians 4:8,**make it clear that we are to meditate all day long.* I think one reason God says to keep our mind on His Word all day is that when we face situations we have trouble with and we remember to use the Word, we develop skill and strength in those situations. A coach can tell a batter “Practice hitting low, inside balls” but if there is no ball coming at him, what good will it do? Some skills must be practiced in real-life circumstances. Imagine trying to learn piano by practicing on a keyboard drawn on plywood.

God knows we need genuine practice, so He lovingly puts us in genuine situations. We have real health problems, we have real unexpected bills, our loved ones really disappoint or hurt us. In all these, **IF** we have our sword in hand—if we have the Word in our mind--we will gain experience in battling darkness as we think and speak God’s truths about those situations.

I have found God consistently puts me into situations that provide real-life practice using whatever verses I am working on. God is a good, good, good Teacher!

**[9] How does God’s Word renew your mind?** We act and feel based on Who is in our innermost being and what beliefs and truths are stored in our innermost being. Our actions, thoughts and feelings are

* primarily determined by Who controls and is in our innermost being—God or Satan?
* greatly determined by our beliefs and truths we know and believe, and
* also determined by external factors (environment, physical health, brain chemistry, etc.)

*<<The Word heals hearts because it renews our mind.>>* Getting God's truth into our innermost being changes our beliefs. Then thoughts and feelings follow in accordance with those beliefs. Romans 12:2 operates in our life as God’s Word makes our mind new.

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)*

<<What creates beliefs>>> Experiences in the world, innate tendencies, and the enemy can create beliefs about ourselves, the world, and God that are simply lies. For example, someone may believe “My life has no purpose.” If such a person studies the Word and starts filling mind and mouth with truths like Jeremiah 29:11 (that God has plans to give him a future and a hope), the light of the Word will penetrate the darkness of the heart and tear down that stronghold of lies the enemy built. In its place, the good seed of the Word, faithfully tended, will grow and produce good fruit. That person will begin believing God really does have a purpose for his life. Feelings change. The work of the devil is destroyed!

During months of deep depression, I consistently had thoughts like “I am hopeless. I will never get over the depression and fear. It is getting worse. No one really likes me or understands me. No one is going to help me because they are tired of being around me. I am a failure. My life is ruined.” UGG!!! Thoughts like that bubbled up into conscious awareness—and created destructive feelings--because I truly believed those lies. The enemy had repeated them countless times in that long slide into the miry pit. But by diligently searching out truths for those specific hurts and continually thinking about and speaking them, God replaced each lie with Truth. God renewed my mind, and the truth—now my belief–bubbles up into consciousness during daily life.

Consider the arrival of an unexpected bill. My old, unrenewed mind and heart reacted with “Oh, no! I can never pay this. I am not going to have enough money for food and rent.” But now several truths come to mind before fear can take hold, truths like “My God shall supply all my needs” “Nothing is impossible with God”. These truths are now my beliefs because I have meditated on them and God’s Word has done its work deep inside, the work that He promises in Hebrews 4:12.

<<Exposing and judging lies>>> I believe it is accurate to say the Word goes into the subconscious mind, that “deepest part of our nature” where the enemy builds strongholds made of repeated lies.

**2**For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hebrews+4%3A12&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30025a)]breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing *and* sifting *and* analyzing *and* judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12, AMPC)

Holy Spirit uses the Word as the sharp spiritual sword it is to penetrate your inmost being. God’s truth—the light that comes from His Word:

* exposes the dark lies you believed about a situation,
* sifts through lies buried deep and isolates your most important beliefs about that situation, so that you can see them,
* analyzes as God’s Spirit, in your spirit, moves your mind to carefully examine the now exposed details of that situation,
* and finally judges, forms an opinion about, the situation, and you decide whether something is true.

I know, from experience with God, that the enemy flees as I speak the Word of truth. My innermost feelings and beliefs about God, myself, and the world are daily being renewed as I take up my spiritual weapons. With God-given power to resist the devil, the world, and my flesh, I am shaken from a stance of faith only seldom and only until I get my mind back on God and His Word. That is a miracle.

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*<<As food changes the body, the Word changes and heals the heart.>>*When we chew food enough times to swallow it, and then we digest it, that food becomes part of our body. That food changes the composition of our body, with both immediate and long-term effects. When you feed a starving person, light-headedness and weakness go away. With enough food, they gain strength. When we eat the Word, by repeatedly chewing on it (meditating!), and then digesting it, that Word, that Truth, becomes part of our innermost being. It changes the nature of heart and mind. That truth in our mind and heart equips us to live like God says and shields against enemy attack and weaknesses of the flesh.

*<<Until God’s directions for how to live indwell our heart, our relationship with God and the world fall short of His design and we suffer consequences.>>*

**[10] Mediatate with the intent to . . . MEMORIZE! Yes, I actually said memorize.** Unfortunately, I have heard some say “You don't have to memorize. God understands if you just can’t.” I emphatically disagree! Nothing is impossible for God! Ask and He will help you. And then give it your whole-hearted effort – and do not quit until you see fruit! ***If*** you diligently meditate, you will come close to memorizing those verses anyway. So, press on a bit as you meditate and get those truths hidden in your heart where the enemy can never steal them and so that they can lead you out of any darkness you stumble into.

Having what God’s Word says about life’s situations available in memory is powerful. Having God’s Word in your heart is having a Gibraltar of a body guard with you 24/7. With the Word planted in your mind, Holy Spirit, our perfect Guardian and Protector, brings Scriptures to mind when needed. *Truth keeps the enemy out of your mind.* The deceiver may shoot flaming arrows of all kinds, but even the worst of his thought arrows bounce, harmless, off the shield of Truth.

As described earlier, if you ponder on one verse a day, phrase by phrase, going over each phrase many times during that day, you will nearly have it memorized. If it is not fixed in memory during that day, focus on that same verse another day and another if needed. Memorizing God’s Word weaves it into the fabric of our very being so that it guides our actions. A child who has been told often enough to “Say thank you” finally starts doing so automatically. Hiding God’s Word in our heart works the same way. It helps keep us acting as God wants. Hiding His Word in our heart keeps us from sin (Psalm 119:11)

*<<How the Amplified helps>>* As you try to memorize, you are actually **diligently** meditating, being thorough and pain-staking, paying attention. The Amplified helps because it automatically makes you dive deep into the meaning of each word and phrase. The Amplified uses the New American Standard text, including, after certain words or phrases, clarifying details. These details make clear shades of meaning speakers of the original language would have automatically understood. These “amplifications” are enclosed within parentheses, brackets, and dashes. They intensify the meaning.



Reading the AMPC slowly and thoughtfully is indeed one way to meditate almost automatically. When you meditate on anything, you are thinking about, pondering, considering, trying to understand what someone said or someone wrote. You think about that one thing they said over and over, wondering “What did he mean when he said that? When you read the Amplified, you are thinking through the shades of meaning in the words God used. You are thinking “What did God mean in this verse?”

This slows the mind down. It also guides the thought process so that your ponderings come closer to how God thinks. Here is an example.

If I meditate on Isaiah 26:3 in the NIV or the NKJ, for example, I will come up with my own ideas about what “perfect peace” and a “steadfast mind” and “trust” mean, but the amplifying words are, I believe, the first thoughts we should dwell on as we meditate on a word or verse or passage because they are, I believe, levels of meaning that God intended when He inspired the writers of Scripture.

Consider the word trust in Isaiah 26:3-4. Isaiah 26:3 tells us to trust in the Lord and verse 4 defines trust in the clarifying words, the words between dashes. Verse 4 says “So trust in the Lord—commit yourself to Him, lean on Him, hope confidently in Him—forever. . .”  In reading those words, I perceive that when God uses the word trust, He means “to commit myself to Him, to lean on Him, and to hope confidently in Him.”  Using my own thoughts, I did not think of those three layers of meaning.

In using the Amplified, I believe you are thinking like God thinks because your mind is reading what was meant in the original language. If you keep steadily meditating/memorizing, you will find that when thinking about Biblical terms, such as blessed, the full original meaning comes to your mind. For example, when you read that we are to “Bless (affectionately land gratefully) praise God” in Psalm 103, Holy Spirit will remind you that “blessing God” includes “affectionately and gratefully praising Him” whenever you see or think about this phrase. I never heard that until I read it in the Amplified.

Additionally—and especially important for me—the Amplified makes cause/effect or if/then statements clear.

**[11] Seeing God’s laws through “Peter Marshall note taking”.** What can also be called if/thens or cause/effect statements are actually God’s laws. These could also be called His promises. I began diligently meditating (which for me is memorizing) passages where I saw God promise that if I did x, then y and z would follow. For example, if I fulfilled the conditions of the first two verses of Psalm 91, then I would receive the blessings of the rest of the psalm. This is also a statement of cause (my obedience) and effect (God’s reward for that obedience). And it is a law because it shows how God says things work and the consequences--“His decisions against and for particular lines of thought and conduct.” FIND REF



If I obey the laws of my city, the city police will protect me. If I disobey, or break the law, by for example, driving dangerously, the city police might give me a ticket or put me in jail. If we clearly understand God’s laws, that understanding will guide our conduct. One way to find and highlight God’s laws is to diagram these if/thens using what I call the Peter Marshall method of note taking to diagram the Amplified text.

Peter Marshall was a Scottish-American pastor and preacher and was appointed Chaplain of the United States Senate. After his early death, his wife, Catherine Marshall-LeSourd wrote a book about him that included many of his sermons. The sermon notes were written in a distinctive style.

Using this style, start a new line with each main idea and wit each added point about that idea, indent again. You can break a passage down based on whole sentences or in more detail, as the Lord leads YOU. Here is an example, using Isaiah 26:3-4 (AMPC.)

[3] “You will guard him and keep him

in perfect and constant peace

whose mind

[both its inclination and its character]

is stayed on you,

**Because**

he commits himself to You,

leans on You and

hopes confidently in You.

[4] **So,**

Trust in the Lord

(commit yourself to Him,

lean on Him,

hope confidently in Him)

**for**

the Lord God is an everlasting Rock

[the Rock of Ages].

(emphasis added)

Do you see the causes and effects, the words that diagram the if/thens—“because”, “so”, and “for”? Do you see how the phrases after “trust in the Lord” in verse 4 explain what God means when He says trust? Do you also see that if you indent each amplification, it highlights definitions given in the text?

Taking time to diagram verses or passages this way shows me how to apply the Word and also helps me remember it more easily. Gazing at the diagram imprints it in the mind.

Please give this kind of note-taking and meditation an earnest and diligent try. Do not fret if it feels awkward at first or worry you might get it wrong. There are many ways to diagram any verse or passage. It depends on what Holy Spirit is showing you at that moment. Holy Spirit is your teacher and He loves it when we seek to study His Word diligently. Would a human father not teach his child how to toss a ball? Would he not smile when the child catches the ball, after five misses? How much more must our loving Heavenly Father rejoice as we learn to meditate! We are taking time to be with Him, and that delights His heart.

[12] In **summary.** If you have read this far, dear friend, I believe you are going to give meditation, yes even meditation-with-the-intent-to-memorize, a thorough try.



Let me give one more nudge in that direction and a promise of pure gold from God: if you approach His Word like He says, *studying the Word will become* ***very*** *pleasant to you*. Slowly, carefully read all of Proverbs 2 below and see what else Holy Spirit shows you.

My son, **if** you will receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you,

**2Making** your ear attentive to skillful *and* godly [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+2&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-16436a)]Wisdom *and* inclining and directing your heart *and* mind to understanding [applying all your powers to the quest for it];

**3**Yes, **if** you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,

**4If** you seek [Wisdom] as for silver and search for skillful *and* godly Wisdom as for hidden treasures,

**5Then** you will understand the reverent *and* worshipful fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of [our omniscient] God.

**6For** the Lord gives skillful *and* godly Wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

**7**He hides away sound *and* godly Wisdom *and* stores it for the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with Him); He is a shield to those who walk uprightly *and* in integrity,

**8That** He may guard the paths of justice; yes, He preserves the way of His saints.

**9Then** you will understand righteousness, justice, and fair dealing [in every area and relation]; yes, you will understand every good path.

**10For** **skillful and godly Wisdom shall enter into your heart, and knowledge shall be pleasant to you.**

**11**Discretion shall watch over you, understanding shall keep you,

**12**To deliver you from the way of evil *and* the evil men, from men who speak perverse things *and* are liars,

**13**Men who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness,

**14**Who rejoice to do evil and delight in the perverseness of evil,

**15**Who are crooked in their ways, wayward *and* devious in their paths.

**16**[Discretion shall watch over you, understanding shall keep you] to deliver you from the alien woman, from the outsider with her flattering words,

**17**Who forsakes the husband *and* guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.

**18**For her house sinks down to death and her paths to the spirits [of the dead].

**19**None who go to her return again, neither do they attain *or* regain the paths of life.

**20So** may you walk in the way of good men, and keep to the paths of the [consistently] righteous (the upright, in right standing with God).

**21For** the upright shall dwell in the land, and the men of integrity, blameless *and* complete [in God’s sight], shall remain in it;

**22**But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the treacherous shall be rooted out of it. (emphasis added)

**What do you want your life to be?** The Word clearly says that the course of our life is determined by our heart.Proverbs 4:23 cautions “*Guard your heart above all else for everything you do flows from it” (*NIV). I have found that diligent meditation *guards* my heart but p*ersistence* in diligent meditation *builds a garrison* round about it. My earnest prayer is that you will find the same, in whatever way Holy Spirit guides you.

With His love and earnest prayer,

Freda