

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG300 – Meditate on God's Word

Welcome. Today I want to share with you in this podcast how you can use meditating on God's Word to draw the spiritual strength and faith that you need in your daily walk and relationship with the Lord. It is something that we all need, and it is something that is crucial to our growing and maturing in our relationship with God. This is something that I personally learned in the Scriptures from Joshua the son of Nun. It is a lesson that to me has been beneficial constantly for my relationship with God.

We are going to look today in the book of Joshua, starting in chapter 1 at verse 8. Now when we go to this Scripture, we find that Israel is in a huge transition. Moses is dying, and God is replacing him with Joshua. God is speaking to Joshua and talking to him about how he is going to walk and function with the Lord. And for us I just think that sometimes the Scriptures can seem, you know, maybe not that relatable, but the truth is that they really are relatable to our personal daily walk with Him. Joshua was facing many things, the children of Israel were facing many things, it was a transition time. And your life is filled with all kinds of needs that you have for the Presence of God to be with you and for the strength of God to be with you as you are going through just your normal day.

Many times our day seems maybe mundane in comparison to the Scriptures. But, again, I believe that we are living a life in God that is very much like the figures in the Bible faced, and we too need to know and understand how to draw upon His Presence, how to draw His strength, how to appropriate all that He has for us and all that He is to us in order to get through the day, in order to accomplish His will in our lives, in order for us to be good parents and good husbands and wives and friends and relationships within our community. And so, yes, Joshua was facing some really dangerous times. He had to go in and fight the battle with the Canaanites to take the Land. He had to face stepping into Moses' shoes – that could not have been too easy to do, if you think about who Moses was and what he did, and what he moved in. My gosh, to have to replace Moses could not have been easy.

Sometimes we also face in our lives stepping into situations at work or into situations in relationships with other people that are not easy to do. It was not easy for Joshua to do; and it is interesting to me that the Lord keeps speaking to him, saying, "Be strong and courageous! Do not be fearful." He keeps repeating that to Joshua. "Be strong, be courageous. Do not be afraid, I am going to be with you." So you see that Joshua faced these things in his life, and what he needed, with what he was getting ready to go into and what he was facing, were the things from God that would strengthen him. He needed what would show him that God was with him in every one of his days and in what he was going through.

That is the way we are. We need to know, "God, You are with me." We need to have the ability to draw the strength, the courage. We need to be able to throw off the fears and those things that we really wrestle with as we are walking through this life that has many trials, many temptations, many things that we face as we go on with life. And so, what we are talking about today is this idea of meditating on the Word of God to bring answers that we need. I believe that in the strength of our meditation on

God's Word, we will have the capacity to draw and appropriate all the provisions that the Lord has made for us. So I want to read out of verses 8-9 in Joshua the first chapter. It says,

“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 success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous!”

Again, He gives him that admonition of how he is to be. But I believe that in this idea of meditating on the Word, God was giving him the solution that Joshua himself needed in his own heart and mind for what he was facing; and I believe, honestly, that this is also a solution for us, this idea of meditating on the Word of God. I love the word for meditate in Hebrew. It is *hagah*, and it means more than what we probably would normally think of as meditation. Many times today we think of meditation in an Eastern sense that we have become so familiar with. But God is speaking about a different type of meditation, and we find that in the very definition of the Hebrew that He uses. The word in Hebrew means “to mutter, to growl, to moan, to utter, or to speak.” So He was telling Joshua that as you go through your day, what I want you to do is I want you to mutter constantly these words of the Law. I can just see Joshua walking around through the camp of Israel, not necessarily that anybody could hear him, but probably under his breath muttering all of the things that Moses had instructed him to do.

Remember, Joshua was in the Tent of Meetings as Moses was meeting with the Lord, and many times even after Moses would leave the tent, Joshua would stay back behind in the tent and just remain in that Presence of God. (Exodus 33:11) So there were many things that Joshua heard between God and Moses of instructions, and I know Moses had instructed Joshua. All of these instructions that Joshua had, all of these things that he had heard, he was to continue to mutter them, to repeat them. And I love, again, the expression of the word *hagah*, because it gives several different ways to express what he was saying. He could at times just mutter it walking along. Other times he could growl it out, or he could moan when he was grieved in his spirit. I am sure there were times that he moaned before God in his meditation. Sometimes he spoke, you could almost see him prophetically voicing it aloud with a force behind what he was saying, as though he was creating it afresh as he had heard God speak it from the beginning.

So it has all these expressions. But Joshua was to continue to think about, to meditate, to remember, to mutter, to groan, to moan over what God had spoken to him in the Word of the Lord. And what I am encouraging us to do today is to realize that what we need in our lives is God's Word, and an expression of it that brings out of it and imparts to us all that we need in our walk with Him.

I want to share with you what I do. I am not saying this is what is right for everybody; I encourage you to find, as this makes sense to you, those verses of Scripture that apply to what you specifically need in your life. But I am going to give you some verses out of Philippians the fourth chapter, and I will show you how I actually accomplish this on a daily basis.

So first, let me read these verses to you out of Philippians, in verses 4-7 of chapter 4, NASB 1977. It says,

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension [or understanding], shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

I love this one. I find that in these verses, especially right now, I am able to draw all of the fullness and assistance that I need to be receiving from the Lord. Let's start back at verse 4. First we "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" This is really emphasized. What is rejoice? Rejoice means "to be joyful, to be happy, to have an expression of joy," and I encourage us to do this. One of the things that I find is helpful is when you arise, when you wake up, the first thing you do is to sit up on the edge of your bed and begin rejoicing, begin worshiping in the Lord.

Rejoicing is different than thanksgiving and thankfulness. We will get to that, but I am talking about just pure joy, pure rejoicing. David said, "Return to me the joy of Your salvation." (Psalm 51:12) There is a joy that we should have in our salvation, there is a joy that we should have in our relationship with the Lord; and it is that joy that we need to express back to Him. Be joyful. Be altogether rejoicing. Sing something to Him, worship Him, just be thankful in an expression of joy: "I am joyous to You. I am filled with joy because You have grafted me into Yourself and grafted me into Your promises, and You have given me these great and precious promises that by them I might be able to walk in the fullness of all that You have promised. You have provided everything for me relative to my health and my life, and so I want to be joyful that I have all of this. I just want to be filled with Your joy." I want the joy of the Lord to be my strength, and that is how I want to start my day; and all through my day I want to keep returning to that joy that is a strength in the Lord that I need as I am going through my day.

So we "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men." It says "your *forbearing* spirit" in this translation, but one of the translations says "your *gentle* spirit." "The Lord is near." I love this, because it is almost like God is telling me I have a gentle spirit. Sometimes I wonder, when I get frustrated with my day, when I am going through things, when I am facing challenges, I do not necessarily feel all the time like I have a forbearing or a patient or a gentle spirit. So I am reminding myself in the Lord that I have a gentle spirit. It begins to tell me how to react in the situations I find myself in. I need that gentleness to come through. I need to answer people with gentleness; we need to work with our families and our children in a way, we need to have this atmosphere or air about us at work, that there is a gentle, calming spirit in us. The Lord is near. He is right here with us. He is imparting to us His gentleness, and He is watching over our shoulder to see how we are responding and relating to everybody; and He is right there when we get frustrated and when we are dealing with things that are difficult to go through.

Listen, life is not easy, and the Lord knows that. He created us, He placed us here, and He knows what we experience. The Lord was the Son of Man who experienced everything that we experience, and He went through some very frustrating, difficult days. But when we read the Gospels, we always see about Christ this gentleness that was ministering to those who were in need around Him. So remember, the Lord is near, and we should express constantly our gentleness of spirit that is an expression of Christ.

He goes on in verse 6 to say, "Be anxious for nothing." He kept expressing to Joshua, "Do not be afraid." To me, anxiety is different than fear. I know we face fears, but most of the time I realize that the stress of the day just causes an anxiety in me; and if I stop for a minute as I am muttering these verses back to myself, or maybe moaning them back, it depends what is going on, I feel this reality that I am anxious.

I just feel wound up or keyed up, and that is different than fear. I want to be anxious for nothing. I do not want the stresses of the day to cause in me an anxiety. Anxiety and stress are not good for us, for our mental health, and they are not good for our physical health; they bring changes about in our body that we do not want to have happen. So this is a way that we can appropriate. It is a way that I appropriate dumping the anxiety, saying, "Okay Gary, stop it! Knock it off! Stop being anxious. Cast that on the Lord. The Lord is here. He is near. Cast onto the Lord all of your problems and your cares, because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) We do not need to carry this sense of stress and anxiety about our day, but instead of expressing and feeling anxious, we should pray. "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

I find that when I am anxious, I am anxious about something specific that is taking place around me or something that I am facing. So what I do is I take that and say, "I am not going to be anxious. I need to put my finger on what it is that is stressing me, and then do something effective with those feelings of stress. Let me take them to the Lord. Let me pray, let me enter into supplication before Him, and keep the thanksgiving." Why thanksgiving? Because I know He will answer me. I know if I cast my cares upon Him that He will answer my prayer, and He will take those cares. I know if I take on His yoke that His yoke is easy, and I will have a whole different atmosphere and air about me and a mental ability to deal with these things. (Matthew 11:29-30) So if I pray to Him, if I enter into my requests to Him and I have this thankfulness, Lord, You are going to take care of this. This thing that is bothering me, that is making me be anxious, that is stressing me right now, You will take this if I simply, in my prayer with thanksgiving, deliver it to the foot of Your throne and allow You to be the one in my life who is carrying the things that I am not strong enough to carry, or that I do not have the understanding to work out in myself.

And so we begin to live a different way. I begin to live a different moment. I cast off the anxiety. I just stop for a moment, I begin to pray, I begin to be thankful for what I have. I begin to be thankful for the answers that I know He is going to bring when I make these requests known to God. And then the peace of God... Wow! The peace of God, which surpasses understanding, guards your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. This is so necessary.

One thing about the word *peace*, if we have it in the Hebrew understanding, *shalom*; shalom means "to be complete, to be finished, to be finalized." God is going to finish in me what I need. It is not just like a feeling of peace that surrounds you. I mean, that happens too, but the peace that we get from God is because He actually brings the solutions, He brings the answers. We not only know and are thankful that it is in motion, but then we experience Him bringing those needed answers to us. And in that we find that we are made complete, because He imparts to us the gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and these are the things that we need to face life, to face the challenges that we are facing. Those gifts and fruit of the Spirit will come to us, and by virtue of them, by virtue of being complete in Christ, then we find ourselves in a peace that surpasses our own comprehension or ability to understand how we could go from one moment of stress to another moment of feeling peace and like everything is going to be okay. And it does something very specific, this peace of God: it guards our hearts. It not only gives you an initial sense of peace, but it becomes a shield around your heart. It guards you from what is going to happen in the next ten minutes and the next hour, and through the rest of the day. God guards your heart.

Our heart is our emotions, it is our feelings, and so He protects us as He brings this peace. It is not some passive thing, it is like a mighty shield. We are told to take up the whole armor of God, and we take up this shield that is able to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary and help us to stop ourselves from going into this emotional turmoil. (Ephesians 6:13-16) This is always important for me and my mind, because we know that the accuser of the brethren is standing there constantly trying to accuse us day and night before God; he is telling you all these things that you are not, and how you have done this and that wrong. Much of our stress as believers comes through the spiritual warfare that we experience as believers. So our minds being protected in the peace of God is something that is really awesome, and we should be thankful for it all the time, that God is protecting our minds. We put on the helmet of salvation so that our minds cannot be battered by the lies of satan, where we begin to repeat them and then that becomes the way we think about ourselves, or the way we think about people around us. No, this shalom of God is going to protect our hearts, and protect our minds.

Not only does He pull us out of the anxiety, not only does He pull me out of the stress, but I know there is an ongoing protection that is also there as I continue to mutter these verses and speak these verses. And when you see some of these attributes that come by meditation, this is where you can begin to proclaim them, to speak them forth with an intensity to say, "You are guarding my heart. You are guarding my mind. You are removing the anxiety and the stress from me, and I am presenting the needs of the answers I am seeking back to You in prayer and supplication, Lord, and I am so thankful that You will answer every need that I have." So we draw this. We draw this peace of God that protects our hearts and minds.

Verse 8. "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable," and I have to stop really with truth, because He is the way, He is the truth, and He is the life. It is so important that we know truth. We are surrounded in a world of lies. We are surrounded by confusion, we are surrounded by the opinions. But we are not to have our minds conformed to this age; we are to have our minds transformed into the truth of God. (Romans 12:2) And again, the way we do that is by His Word. His Word is the truth. And as we learn this process of meditating on the Word of God, again I encourage you, find the verses that work for you. Find the Scriptures that speak to you and impart to you those things you need – His truth about you, His truth about your circumstances and your situations, what you are living and what you need in your life. Lord, give us Your truth; You are the truth. So he is saying, "Whatever things are truth, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence, if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

There are two things happening here for me when I do this, and I think it will happen for you also if you use these specific verses. He is saying to think about these specific types of things in your life. And so it makes you, number one, stop and find the truth in your life. What in your life is lovely? What in your life is of good repute, of good reputation? What are the things that you have done and accomplished in God? What is it that God has done in your life? What have other people done? What good things are going on in the world? Tune in to God's news, not the world's news – what is He focused on? What is He bringing about in this age? What excellence is there that surrounds us? Our mind should think about these things. So stop for a moment, as you are muttering to yourself or speaking out loud these verses, and say, "Let me write down just a few things that qualify for the truth and the loveliness and the honorableness and the rightness and the purity that surround me in my life, from my family, with my community." Then once we have identified those things, he says to think about them, to have our minds

dwell on these things. If we keep our minds dwelling on the things of God, there is tremendous, tremendous response from that. In Isaiah 26:3, NKJV, it says that “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” There is something of a trust in God that is expressed when we have our mind stayed on Him. So whatever things are good, whatever you can find that really is from God in your life, keep your mind dwelling on these things constantly, and it will really bring a change to your life.

He goes on to say in verse 9, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me....” Now I am hoping that everybody in their life has some mentor that has been a blessing to them, who has been an example to them. If you say, “I have not had that experience,” then let me point you to the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd of the sheep, to Christ. Go to the Gospels, read about Him and who He was, how He lived and what He did. Or if you have had a mentor or someone in your life that has really helped you, really imparted to you and made you into who you are in many of your talents or abilities, that is what Paul is saying. He was that to people. He fathered people, he mothered people in the Lord. And he makes that statement, “I was a father to you. I was like a nursing mother to you, caring for you.” So he was this to people, and he is encouraging them to go back: “The things you have learned, the things you have received, the things you have heard, the things you have seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Yet it is not enough that we have examples. It is not enough that these verses are giving us illustrations of our life and how we should live and what we should do. We have to exercise them. There has to be an action with this that we ourselves enter into; and I really want you to find, not just the meditation itself, but as you are meditating I want you to be asking yourself, “How do I apply this? What do I do in this moment of my need and in this moment of my day? What little action can I take to apply these things that I have learned and heard and seen in the Lord, and make them become a true expression in my life?” That is what I want you to get out of this as a real takeaway.

So I encourage you with a couple of things. Remember, get up in the morning and rejoice. Enter into a rejoicing – actually, let that rejoicing be your strength that carries you through the day. I also encourage you to have in the morning a time of prayer where you are waiting on the Lord for His Word, His Scriptures, to come to you. The Scriptures you need, draw them; believe, ask Him in your morning time. Write things down that come to you as verses that you can look at and go back to and see, “Are these the verses I should be using?” Then memorize the Scriptures. When you find things that speak to your heart, memorize those Scriptures, because they will impart to you all that you are needing.

A last thing I would really encourage you to do is to set a timer. I do this. What works best for me is if it is my watch, because it is right there; it vibrates, I look down on it, and it reminds me of the verses that I am to be meditating upon. So set a timer. If it is your watch, your phone, your computer calendar, whatever it is, make some type of a reminder. And however often you need that, if it is every hour in the beginning, maybe it is three times a day, whatever it is that works for you, find how it works for you; but make a reminder several times a day where you are going to stop for a moment and you are going to meditate on these verses.

It does not take that long. Sometimes we think, “Oh, this is too difficult to do.” No, it is very, very simple. It can be done very, very quickly, and it will be very effective, because every time you do this, it will change your day. And that is why if you memorize it, it is even quicker, because it is already in your mind

and you simply repeat it. You mutter it, you meditate on it, you groan over it, whatever is appropriate for the moment; you are enabled to go back to it throughout the day, and that is what will make this very, very effective.

So I want to thank you for being with me today. I have enjoyed sharing this podcast with you. And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon you, and may the Word of God live and mature in you.

Amen.