

Meditation

March 21, 2010

Psalm 119:97-100; Revelation 3:19-22

Remember the Sabbath Video

How many people feel guilty that you don't come to church more often? I think most of us fit into that category in one way or another. Our lives are so busy and rushed. We're always in a hurry. The video this morning talks about the importance of a Sabbath, a rest day, but seriously folks that's laughable isn't it? Any one of us could be up on that screen giving that testimony, couldn't we? Whether you have kids in baseball and soccer and scouts, or if you're single rushing around to work two jobs and go to school, or if you're retired and realizing that there is no such thing as retirement, life just seems to be going even faster now...how many people here suffer from a case of hurry?

Hurry is a real sickness these days. We're haunted by the fear that there are just not enough hours in the day to do what needs to be done? Do you read faster, talk faster, and when listening finishing other people's sentences? Have you ever found yourself pulling up to a stoplight and there's two lanes of traffic each with the same number of cars and so you try to guess which one is going to pull away fastest—based on the year, make, and model of each car? If that sounds like you, you probably have hurry sickness.

Or at a grocery store, when you have a choice between two checkout lines, you find yourself counting how many people are in each line and then multiplying that number by the number of items in each cart? If you're really bad like me, then even after I get in line I keep track of the person who would have been me in the other line and if I get through my line before the "alter-me" then I'm thrilled and celebrate a quiet victory. If that's you, you've got hurry sickness.

It invades every aspect of our lives. Everything is sped up. We want work to go faster so we can get home to be with our loved ones. When we sit down to eat a meal, we're the first ones done and we tell ourselves that it was because the meal was so good or we were just so hungry, when in reality we couldn't have slowed down if we tried! We're so hurried and rushed that we don't even have time to love our families. We've got to rush through the baseball games and the band concerts so that we can get back to work, or back to our own hurried lives. When we actually get home at the end of the day, we're so tired from rushing around that we give the family our leftovers, not only on the dinner table, but also in our hearts. Let's be real folks, we're exhausted from a long day and sitting the kids in front of the TV so we can take a nap isn't a half bad idea.

Our Hurried Lives leave Leftovers for our loved ones.

Yeah a hurried life leads to a scattered brain that's never able to concentrate or finish a task. And it leads to a scattered heart that struggles to find time for the people we love. If you're like me and if I've just described your life, I want to tell you that there is a cure. And that is to slow down. Sure it's sounds simple, but it's harder than it looks. Try it for just a day and you'll realize how much you will rely upon God. First drive in the slow lane on the highway and get in

the longest lane at the grocery store. It will be completely against you're nature, but as you do it and enjoy it, you may even start to have conversations with people you were zooming past! Eat more slowly. You'll actually get to taste your food. You'll be fuller sooner (which means you're more likely to drop a few pounds). You won't have nearly as much indigestion, and you'll actually get to talk to the people who are eating with you.

We can slow down by Driving Slower, Eating Slower, and Meditating.

But the final thing you can do to cure your scattered brain, hurry sickness is to meditate. Now for those of you who have just turned me off, please tune back in for just a little while longer because Christian meditation is not the same as Zen Buddhist Meditation or any other New Age Stuff that's out there! You don't have to sit around like a Yogi for hours on end. You don't even have to sit perfectly still, like when you're doing the meditation exercise on Wii Fit. But then I guess that's where people get a little confused. With all of the mumbo jumbo out there we're tempted to think that meditation is about "emptying the mind of clutter and confusion and coming to a peace and balance with the energy of the world around you." Or even about finding the "god" that is within ourselves. Look ya'll, that may be fine and dandy for the world, but that is NOT Christian meditation. Christian meditation is about meeting the one and only God of all creation. It's about calming the noise in our mind so that we can hear God's word loud and clear. It's about setting aside a time of thought, reflection, and contemplation for God. And it's a spiritual discipline that God wants us to practice.

**Christian Meditation is NOT Emptying the Mind and Finding Our Own "god"
It IS Filling the Mind with the One and Only God.**

Look at Psalm 119. It is the longest of the psalms and it's entirely about the value of meditating on God's will and God's law. In verses 97-100, David writes:

97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. 98 Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

For David, it's not a question of if we meditate. He cannot imagine living his life without contemplating the word of God. He draws strength, wisdom, guidance, and direction from God's word. In it he finds the heart of God and in God he finds protection. You hear it in verse 97 of the psalm. "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long." When we meditate we try to fill our minds with God's thoughts. Starting with scripture is a great way to do that! It's the same principle that's behind watching what you read. Our minds, like our bodies, are high performance vehicles and just like a car, if you put junk in, you get junk out. If you put junk into your mind, you get junk out of your mouth. But, if we put good stuff into our minds, if we have God stuff in our thoughts, then we get God stuff out in our words and actions.

Inevitably, though, some people think this discipline is too complicated, that you have to be some high and powerful spiritual warrior, but let's go back to the psalm. Did you hear what David wrote in verses 99 and 100? "I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on

your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.” Sure, David was a wise king, but even he had teachers and elders, people who were more learned and experienced than him. But in these two verses he notes that because of meditating on God’s word, he has been given greater insight and understanding than even the people he looks up to. The same applies to you and me. The spiritual disciplines, and meditation in particular, are a level playing field. You don’t have to be a spiritual giant to get something out of them.

What you do need, however, is the time to do it. Meditation does not take a great deal of time. The key is to have a dedicated time and place and stick to it. By that I mean, take 10-15 minutes out of your day. Most people like to carve that out in the morning. Find your place. Maybe it’s your bedroom or your living room—some place where you will not be disturbed. Open up by reading something. Maybe a devotional from the Upper Room, or maybe you’re reading through the Bible. Both are great starting points. Then, when you’ve finished reading, close your eyes and open your mind to God. Talk to God.

A Guide to Meditation:

- 1. Have a Set Time and Place**
- 2. Open with a Devotional**
- 3. Ask God to Speak to You**

Pray to God and ask for God’s guidance. Ask God to explain what you’ve read or apply it to your life. Ask God to reveal things to you. Maybe you have a difficult conversation with your boss later that day. Ask God what you should say and then listen as God brings things to mind. Do this for 10-15 minutes. (If you’re just starting out it can be five minutes, but work your way up). That is *at least* 10 minutes, and no more than 15 minutes. Don’t cheat God out of time with you and don’t get swept away in feeling so wonderfully fed that you don’t want to leave because if that doesn’t happen the next time you meditate, you’ll probably feel defeated. Don’t do that to yourself. Don’t worry, God’s a planner. He knows just how to use the time you’ve allotted.

As you come out of your time of meditation, the hardest thing is to remember what God has just revealed to you. If you need to, write it down. This is where journaling is a great practice. When we write things down we’re reinforcing God’s word to us. But also we need to be on our guard to earnestly hear what God is telling us. Sometimes God will call you on the carpet and you’ll be convicted of something you know you did or something you know you need to do. Don’t ignore that. Remember what God says in Revelation 3:19-22:

¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²²He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

God is speaking into your life right now and when we meditate, God speaks louder and even more clearly. The key is to hear it. Jesus is always knocking, waiting for us to answer the door, but we often don’t hear Him because we’re too busy in our own lives.

Meditation helps us to Slow Down and Listen for the Voice of God.

That's the point of meditation. If you fill yourself with God's presence, God's wisdom, God's words, but you never truly stop to hear them or pay attention to them, then what good have you really done? This week in our sermon-based small group lesson you're going to get a chance to meditate and experience what it means to listen for the voice of God. I know that sounds scary and abstract, and radically new and different, but do not be afraid. God talks to each and every one of us. We all just need practice in listening. ***So if you're not in a small group, we have people here this morning who can tell you where to find one that you can try out this week—no strings attached.***

Regardless, the point is that a time of meditation does wonderful things for our lives. It helps us to focus in on God's word. It helps us to see our options clearly. Does your life seem out of focus at times? Maybe your life is just rushing by and you need it to slow down a bit. Do you count the number of people in line at the grocery store? Do you encourage your kids to race through bath time just so that it goes by more quickly? Maybe it's time to work a rest day into your schedule or at very least a time of meditation and renewal with our God. We only get one shot at this life and if you're rushing through it, then before you know it you'll be standing before the Almighty wondering how you got there and where you're going. Try meditation, try meeting with a small group and see where that leads you. I'm willing to bet that in no time you'll Bii Spiritually Fit.