

# Meditation on Scripture

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*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. —Psalm 1:1-3*

Notice 3 things we see here about how to read Scripture:

1. It is not enough simply to avoid being conformed to this world. It is not enough simply to try to escape the counsel of the wicked. We must also seek to be transformed, to have our minds renewed by what God says to us.
2. There is great benefit when we do this. As we invest ourselves in listening to God rightly, we experience fruitful and resilient lives, even in the face of hardship.
3. The way we are to listen to God is with **extended deliberation** (“talking to self day and night”), **engaging our affections** (“delight”), and **seeking to nourish ourselves** by what we hear (“planted by streams of water”).

Tim Keller highlights these three elements well: “According to Owen [in his *Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*], meditation means analyzing the truth with the mind; bringing it into the feelings, attitudes, and commitments of the heart; and then responding to the degree to which the Holy Spirit gives illumination and spiritual reality. We could say that meditation before prayer consists of thinking, then inclining, and, finally, either enjoying the presence or admitting the absence and asking for his mercy and help. Meditation is thinking a truth out and then thinking a truth in until its ideas become “big” and “sweet,” moving and affecting, and until the reality of God is sensed upon the heart.”—Tim Keller, *Prayer*.

Let’s try at an individual level to develop this way of listening by going through these three steps. Let’s use one of the stanzas of Psalm 119 as an example. Aim to spend at least 30 minutes with this passage. Spend most of your time focusing, not on what is confusing to you, but on what you basically understand. Aim to break through the “familiarity boundary” (where familiar concepts keep us from engaging) and instead allow what God is saying to penetrate and change you. If it’s helpful, use a pen to underline, write questions and reflection in the margin.

## Psalm 119:57-64 (ESV)

*57 The LORD is my portion;*

*I promise to keep your words.*

*58 I entreat your favor with all my heart;*

*be gracious to me according to your promise.*

*59 When I think on my ways,*

*I turn my feet to your testimonies;  
60 I hasten and do not delay  
to keep your commandments.*

*61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,  
I do not forget your law.*

*62 At midnight I rise to praise you,  
because of your righteous rules.*

*63 I am a companion of all who fear you,  
of those who keep your precepts.*

*64 The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love;  
teach me your statutes!*

### **Thinking:**

Are there any phrases/verses that are difficult to understand?  
What do you think this passage is about? What is it saying?

### **Inclining:**

As you read the text again, what images do you notice? Try to imagine them.  
Take some time with some of the statements (perhaps one or two stick out to you). Try to think deeply about the reality that lies beyond the words: why is this person saying this? What might it feel like for this person? What do these commitments really mean?  
As you ponder, seek to allow what you are hearing to connect with you. God is present, speaking to you. What is God showing you? In what way might he be inviting you to change?

### **Responding:**

On different occasions, we will experience different things as we meditate on Scripture. There is no technique that will guarantee a certain outcome, for we are engaging with the living God. If you feel his presence, savor, seek to listen, respond in praise and gratitude. If you find yourself aware of your disconnection from him or your need to change, allow this to prompt you to ask God for help and his mercy.

### **Next Steps**

After you've tried this for this week, build on it by on future occasions meditating on other portions of Psalm 119. Follow that with meditating on other Psalms, since Psalms are especially oriented toward meditation on Scripture. After a few weeks of this (or longer), take a familiar letter in the New Testament or one of the gospels, and seek to go through the same process.