

A walk with Mr O (3)

Making Bible reading fruitful.

Mr O, I've taken on board what you said about Bible reading being no substitute for church. Nonetheless you said that we could talk about 'how our personal reading of God's Word can be more fruitful.'

Yes, I remember. Reading God's Word for ourselves is a marvellous privilege. But I am going to stress again that it is not an obligation. However, meditating on the Scriptures is an obligation, as the Bible itself makes clear. Sadly, we don't hear much about that today.

You are very insistent on this point, aren't you?

Yes, that is because I have in mind the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph and Mary, working from memory, would have taught Him the Scriptures at home. He would have heard them read in the synagogue every Sabbath day. And, of course, He would have studied them closely at school, because village schools were attached to the synagogue.

There is also no doubt that He would have learned vast tracts of Scripture by heart. On all this He meditated, as His subsequent ministry made clear. But having a time of personal Bible reading each day is something He clearly could not have done.

And yet ever since my conversion I have been given the impression that it is sinful not to read the Bible every day. It's obvious that can't be true because, if it is, Jesus was sinful.

Yes, and if Jesus was sinful, we have no Saviour. But please remember, He did not neglect Scripture. The Word of God governed everything He thought, felt, said and did. Being the fulfilment of Psalm 1, He delighted in the law of the Lord and in His law He meditated day and night. That is why everything He did prospered (Psalm 1:2-3).

Yet I am still a bit muddled. I can see that we must meditate on the Scriptures every day, even if we don't actually read them physically. But what about the opposite? Is it possible to read the Scriptures daily and NOT meditate on them?

I think you can answer that for yourself!

Yes, you're right, because that's what I have been doing for years. Every day after breakfast I set aside a time to read the Bible and pray. I have a system and I think I've read almost the whole Bible by now. But I can't say I've been doing much meditating. I'm not even sure that I know what it is.

You will never regret having a regular 'quiet time', and I'm sure you've got far more out of it than you realise. Keep it up! Enjoy it! But, once more, please remember that Bible reading is a privilege, while meditation is an obligation.

The Lord wants you to meditate on the sermons you hear, the Bible studies you attend, as well as the Scriptures you read for yourself, until your whole being is saturated and impregnated by the Word of God.

So how do I go about doing that? I'm out of my depth here.

First of all, forget everything that the world has taught you about meditation. Biblical meditation is not emptying the mind; it is filling it. It is not zoning out, but zoning in on the truth that God has revealed and written down.

It is not going into an altered mental state; it is prayerfully sitting down at a feast where you slowly suck the full flavour out of every mouthful, even if some of the food requires a bit of chewing. The only thing that satanic meditation and biblical meditation have in common is that they both take time.

Please tell me more.

When you hear Scripture read and preached, or when you read it for yourself, take time to mentally recall as much of it as you can. Now talk to the Lord about everything that you can remember. Has He revealed something about Himself?

Worship Him for it. Has He put His finger on some sin in your life? Go to the cross and confess it. Has He shown you a duty to fulfil? Do it right away. And never, ever, leave the place of meditation until you have seen afresh that 'Christ crucified' is the theme of the whole Bible...

Woe, Mr O! I can't handle any more right now. See you soon!
