

**Delight yourself in the Lord and His Word**  
**January 22, 2012 - Psalm 1**

Delight is enjoyment, pleasure, happiness and enchantment. To delight is to appreciate, relish, savor and take pleasure in. What do you delight in? What do you really enjoy? What do you take great pleasure in? What causes you happiness, enchantment or satisfaction. Maybe it's a person. Maybe it's an activity. Maybe it's an accomplishment or someone you care about accomplishes something. What can you delight in when it's minus 30? Well let's try this. Some of you might delight in the beauty of winter like this forest. (Slide 2 – Winter forest scene). We used to have a forest near where we lived in Ottawa. It was delightful to walk through it in winter with our dog. You were sheltered from the wind. You kind of forgot about the city for a while and enjoyed God's creation.

Some of you might delight in a scene like this (Slide 3 – Skiing scene) where you stand at the top of a mountain before you ski or snowboard down it. There is something delightful about zipping down a hill and enjoying that rush of speed.

But some of you have a different philosophy. You don't do winter. You endure it and delight in winter's end. So you look forward to something like this. (Slide 4 – Beach scene) That would be delightful. Would anyone like to head to wherever this is for a week or two?

What do you delight in? There are probably as many different answers as there are people in this room. It might be a car or hobby or some music or some sleep. But what about this? (Slide 5 – The Bible). Would the Bible make your delight list? Would you have the same passion for God's Word that you have for some of the other things you've been thinking about? Honestly!

Some of us see reading the Bible as a chore. Or maybe we find it difficult to understand. In every new members and baptism class, I ask the question "what do you think of the Bible? Do you enjoy reading and studying it?" And then I ask the class members to be honest rather than giving Sunday sanctified responses that they think I want to hear. I appreciate the honesty. A lot respond that some parts are good. Some parts they get. But other parts are hard to understand or downright boring. The reality is that many of us don't read God's Word regularly. When we try, it's sometimes hard to read it let alone delight in it.

Yet our Bible text for today tells us that a person who delights in God's Word is blessed. How can we delight in something we find to be a chore or difficult or time consuming? That's what we will explore today.

Last Fall, we did the “Read the Bible for Life” material. It gave some background to the Bible and some basic teaching on how to read the different parts of the Bible. But now we’re reading through the Bible. The winter messages will focus on reading the Bible in modern situations – like personal devotion; during times of sorrow and suffering; with the family and with the church.

Last week we looked at how Jesus used the Bible to resist the devil’s temptations and instead continue on the path God has for Him. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. We asked “How will we live by every word if we haven’t read every word?”

But I am calling us to read through the Bible not as a teacher or professor who requires their students to do a reading assignment. I don’t want us to do this so we can check off the little box on the reading plan and think we’re done. No I’m inviting you to read the Bible AND respond to God in 2012.

I’m inviting you to discover that this is much more than a generally good idea. Engaging with God through His Word leads to life – the God centered life – the life He created us to live.

Over these next weeks, I pray that God will use these messages to stir in us both that hunger and determination to do our part in living from Him.

Today and next week, we’ll be talking about reading the Bible for personal devotion. Today we’re specifically talking about Reading God’s Word – next week – how reading God’s Word can turn our prayer life from drudgery to delight.

But what if we don’t delight in God’s Word. It will be much more difficult to engage in this. So today we will first examine the need to delight in the Lord and His Word. Then we will look at a Biblical way to cultivate this delight. I hope the Holy Spirit will work in you to further deepen your delight in and life from the Lord and His Word.

### **Psalm 1 (ESV)**

1 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; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 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. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

We looked at this Psalm this past October in Reading the Psalms. It talks about 2 different ways to live and the outcome of each way of living. As the first Psalm, it sets the tone for the entire collection. It encourages us to consider

these two ways to live – the way of the righteous or God-fearing person and the way of the wicked or the God-ignoring person.

The first verses proclaim a don't and do to experience blessing. The word translated blessing can also mean happy or joyful. So happy or joyful is the person who **does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.** A person can be happy and experience blessing by avoiding the advice, lifestyle and the assembly of wicked persons.

Remember the Bible defines a wicked person as anyone who does not walk or live according to God's way. If we even use the word wicked today, we're either referring to something we think is cool or someone who is a most morally repulsive person. But the Bible's term for wicked can refer to ordinary people. So it's not just talking about Hitler or some guilty criminal on death row but ordinary people who do not walk in the way of the Lord. The first verse emphasizes that avoiding the advice, lifestyle and attitudes of those who do not walk in the Lord's way, then we can experience a blessing and happiness. So don't follow or walk in the ways of the wicked.

**Do delight in the law of the Lord.** Do enjoy and cherish and appreciate God's Word. In other Scriptures like Psalm 37:4, we are instructed to "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." Or Isaiah 58:14. "Then you shall take delight in the Lord and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth." So the Scriptures instruct us to delight in the Lord and specifically in His Word.

#### **But what if we don't delight in the God's Word? Why might we struggle to delight in God's Word?**

**Maybe it's because we're only reading the Bible.** Now, don't get me wrong. Reading the Bible is important. It exposes us to Scripture. But if all we do is read, there is great likelihood that we will not delight in the Word and not have a great desire to do it. Why? Because unless we have a photographic memory, we forget most of our reading when we close the Bible. So we do our Bible reading, check off the box and get on with the rest of our lives. Then Bible reading becomes nothing more than an assignment that we need to get over with. There's little delight in that. And it fails to bring any life transformation. We're not changed by something we read for a few minutes and then forget about.

So what might change our attitude towards God's Word? The second part of Psalm 1:2 tells us: "On his law he meditates day and night." **To delight in God's Word, meditate on it day and night.** "Meditate" means to contemplate,

ponder, think, consider, reflect or turn over in your mind. I would define **Biblical or Christian meditation as “thinking deeply about the God of the Bible and His Word.”**

Meditating day and night means God’s Word is never far from our thoughts. When depressed or distressed, we call to mind its promises. When uncertain and perplexed, we consider its guidelines. When our sins loom before us like evil spectres, we ponder its glorious proclamation of the love of God in and through Jesus Christ. We discover that the Word of God has a joy for every sorrow and a truth for every situation, which means going to it can be a delight – a time of discovery if we add meditating to our reading.

But, as soon as I said the word meditating, some red flags or reasons not to do this might have arisen in your mind. Christians meditating on God’s Word. I could think of at least 2 obstacles to meditation.

### **1) Meditation in Eastern religions might discourage us from Biblical meditation.**

If you do a Google Search on meditation, the top results will point you to Buddhist and Hindu meditation practices. These have become popular especially in our culture as a way of calming down or reducing stress. But these practices that are not spiritually neutral. You may try to attain a higher realm of awareness or consciousness in a quest to escape this life. So when we hear the term meditation, we might associate it with these Eastern non-Christian religions and conclude such deep thinking is not for me. So we need to carefully distinguish between the popular understanding of meditation and the meditation in the Bible.

### **2) Most don’t do much deep thinking about anything.**

We are conditioned and encouraged not to think much by our culture. Think about it! If you watch a movie, what factors contribute to you giving it a good rating? Guys? – Is there action, good special effects, a car chase and some explosion. Gals – is there a good story about relationships? I suspect not many of us would say a movie was good because we had to deeply think about it. In fact, that’s counter to the expectation of a movie – many want to turn their brains off and just enjoy something mindless. That can be okay for a break from mental strain. But I think this is one small example of how we’re not encouraged to think deeply.

Watch a commercial on TV. The scene switches every few seconds to keep our attention. So we’re conditioned to seeing constant change and begin to expect something external to keep our attention. In a busy world, with busy lives, all kinds of things clamor for our attention which goes against deep thinking.

On top of that, people of what's called western culture, doing something is often valued more than thinking about something. After all, if you do something you can immediately see results. But what do you see after thinking? Not much. All of these weigh against deep thinking so if you do think deeply, you're considered weird.

Yet our distracted and always-doing-something culture fails to bring ultimate satisfaction. People discover that pursuing the "doing work to earn money so we can do recreation or buy more stuff" path leads to emptiness. That which was supposed to provide delight leads to disappointment. Sometimes, the only way we will consider discovering delight in the Lord is when we come to the end of all these other pursuits and find them wanting.

So you will not get a lot of encouragement from pop culture to think deeply. But this is a way to delight in God's Word. Psalm 1:2 talks about someone who's blessed because he or she delights in the law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night. I would argue that we can delight in God's Word by meditating on it day and night.

So what can we learn about Biblical meditation? Let's consider what the Bible says about mediation. I could find four facts.

### **1) God's people meditated in the Bible.**

If you are following along on the reading the Bible, you recently read Genesis 24. Abraham's servant has just gone out to find Abraham's son a wife. The servant finds Rebekah and brings her back to where Isaac lives. As they approach the land we read this in Genesis 24.

#### **Genesis 24:62-63 ESV**

[62] Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb. [63] And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming.

In Psalm 63, the writer reflects on the satisfaction he finds in God and His Word. Within this reflection, he reveals his practice of meditation throughout the night.

#### **Psalm 63:5-8 ESV**

[5] My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,  
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,  
[6] when I remember you upon my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;  
[7] for you have been my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.  
[8] My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

Maybe he was a watchman or woke up often then he thought of the Lord.

The Psalmist of the 77<sup>th</sup> Psalm is struggling. Within that struggle, he mentions his usual practice of meditating.

### **Psalm 77 ESV**

In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord

[In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord]

[TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF ASAPH.]

- [77:1] I cry aloud to God,  
aloud to God, and he will hear me.
- [2] In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;  
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;  
my soul refuses to be comforted.
- [3] When I remember God, I moan;  
when I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah
- [4] You hold my eyelids open;  
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
- [5] I consider the days of old,  
the years long ago.
- [6] I said, "Let me remember my song in the night;  
let me meditate in my heart."  
Then my spirit made a diligent search:
- [7] "Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?
- [8] Has his steadfast love forever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?
- [9] Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?" Selah
- [10] Then I said, "I will appeal to this,  
to the years of the right hand of the Most High."
- [11] I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
- [12] I will ponder all your work,  
and meditate on your mighty deeds.

So the Psalmist was meditating and found no relief until he meditated on the Lord's deeds.

So meditation or thinking deeply about God and His Word were practices found among God's people. Other verses tell us about the motivation and focus of meditation.

## **2) Meditation must be God pleasing**

### **Psalm 19:14**

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

**Psalm 104:34**

May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the LORD.

**3) It is appropriate to meditate on God's Word****Joshua 1: 8 (God to Joshua)**

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 good success.

**Psalm 119 (A Psalmist talks about God's Word)**

- 15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.
- 23 - Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- 48 - I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.
- 78 - Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
- 97 - Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.
- 99 - I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.
- 148 - My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise.

**4) It is appropriate to meditate on God's acts or creation****Psalm 77:12**

I will ponder all your work,  
and meditate on your mighty deeds.

**Psalm 119:27**

Make me understand the way of your precepts,  
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

**Psalm 143:5**

I remember the days of old;  
I meditate on all that you have done;  
I ponder the work of your hands.

**Psalm 145:5**

On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

**How do we delight in God's Word by meditating on it day and night?**

One way to think deeply – think through questions or write out questions about it in the margin of your Bible or in a notebook.

But a simple and very effective way to do this is to take one verse from your reading and think deeply about it on and off all day. Imagine you face a day of great uncertainty. You don't know how you're going to find your way through it. Think about the potential impact of turning over the phrase "The Lord is my shepherd." Philippians 4:19 "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory." Psalm 103:10 – He does not treat us as our sins deserve. He does not treat me as my sins deserve. Imagine if you approached your Bible reading each day asking the Lord to point out one verse to you. Then you focused on that verse for a few minutes after your reading. You wrote out that verse on a little card and brought it with you to work or on the bus or at school and placed it in your locker. Then

you brought that card home and had it by the kitchen sink or by the bathroom sink. Then you brought it to your night table and ended the day responding to the Lord in prayer for the ways in which you experienced and lived that verse this day. Might that increase our delight in the Lord and His Word if every day we discovered something about God from His Word that would go with us through the day?

But you may be thinking “that’s great for a monk or a retired person or Pastor Tom who has no life. But I don’t have time to meditate on that level. I have a crazy schedule or work 2 jobs or have young kids and by the end of the day I’m exhausted. I’m fortunate if I can chisel out 10 whole minutes a day to read the Bible. Then don’t read for 10 minutes. Read for 5 with that same initial prayer. “Lord, point out to me one verse you want me to see or focus on today.” Then meditate on it for 5 minutes. And go into your day or forward from wherever you’re at with that verse guiding you.

But what about reading the Bible in 2012? You’ve just led us into a Bible reading plan that has reading 18-20 chapters/week. How can we add that plus this deep thinking on God’s Word? Well, it is important to get a big picture view of the Bible. So we do need to do that. But ask the Lord to pick out one verse or paragraph from that entire reading. Then think deeply on that for the day. Ask the Lord to speak to you about it. Pray it to Him. Ask for His understanding. I believe you will experience the Lord’s presence and hear from Him and grow in your delight for Him. The more we delight in the Lord, the more we will experience the deep satisfaction and sustaining strength that He provides no matter what we’re going through in life.

If you’re not a Christian, one great way to explore Christianity is by reading the Bible and asking questions about it. So if you came with a Christian friend, then ask them to join you in reading parts of the Bible. Then you can ask them your questions. You’ll learn and come to understand more and more about God.

Or maybe, you’ve been exploring the Bible for a while and God has been speaking to you through it. You have discovered that God and His Word bring a lot of delight. Maybe it’s time today to take the step of actually becoming a Christian. You do that by coming to Jesus in prayer and faith. Instead of trusting your own way and your own resources, you put your trust in Him. You turn away from the way opposed to God. You personally trust Him. When you do that, God immediately begins His shepherd care in your life. He pronounces you not guilty forever for your sins based on Jesus’ work on the cross. You begin to walk in the delight of forgiveness and hope. Will you turn to Jesus now?

And Christian, what has the Holy Spirit said to you during our time together about the things you delight in?

Are there any that should not be there? Do you delight in things, activities or people that actually hinder or take you away from delighting in the Lord and His Word? Maybe during our prayer time you can confess that to the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in your delight for the Lord and His Word.

For further study

- What are the various ways you are involved currently in reading God's Word and prayer? Has there been a time in the past that you were consistent in these spiritual practices? If so, what helped you be consistent at that time?
- How do you respond to the idea that the key to enjoying Scripture is to meditate on it? Why do many Christians feel pressure to rush through a reading for the day rather than meditating deeply on the Bible?
- What would have to change in your life for you to make more room for a consistent, daily time for meditating on God's Word? What would be the benefits of those changes?