

The W's And H's Of Meditation (Part Five)

Spiritual Legacy Box

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Greetings. We will turn to several related scriptures upon which I intend to weave a theme for this message. All scriptural references will be taken from the Lockman Foundation's *Amplified Bible*.

Psalm 119:89 Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

This verse seems to echo an insight contained in Psalm 19.

Psalm 19:1-2 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech [remember that Jesus Christ is the Word]; night after night they reveal knowledge.

Because Jesus Christ put together the physical creation, designing the laws of physics, aerodynamics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, electronics, harmonics, music, and every other physical law that exists, the laws of physics are also God's laws and a major part of God's composite Word. Some sincere Bible scholars mistakenly believe that if they have knowledge of the Holy Scriptures only (the private revelation given to God's called ones, made sense only through the means of God's Holy Spirit), they can ignore the vast public revelation of His creation. Both the physical creation and the Holy Scriptures are testimonies of Almighty God, and if we ignore either one of them, we do it at our spiritual peril.

We know, for example, that the both the fool in Psalm 53 and the fools described by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:22 were not castigated for ignoring the Holy Scripture, but for ignoring the public revelation of God's existence—the physical creation (described by Paul in Romans 1:20 and David in Psalm 19).

The more we know about Scripture, the more meaningful will be the public revelation, but conversely, the more we study and are aware of the immutable laws in the physical creation, the more meaningful will be the Scriptures. The valuable insights we gain from physical creation should never be denigrated as the foolish wisdom of man.

Since we are in Psalm 119 let us look at verse 111.

Psalm 119:111 Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

One of the synonyms of heritage is “legacy.” Over the past year, radio commentator Rush Limbaugh has been advertising a product called Legacy Box, a company based in Chattanooga, Tennessee that digitally converts consumer videotapes, camcorder tapes, VHS tapes, 8mm film reels, prints, old photographs and 35mm slides (my dad took way over 10,000 of these) to cloud storage (that somewhat prefigures eternal treasures in heaven), thumb drive, or DVD, through a mail-in service. One of the analogies I used in my October, 2016 feast sermon “From Pilgrims to Pillars” was how the film restoration organizations have taken perishable silver nitrate films, converting them to high quality digitized electronic files. Through digitalized enhancement, movies and television programs I watched as a ten-year old and my father and grandfather listened to in the 1930’s are as crystal clear as though they had been recorded yesterday. I asked my techy-savvy son about the shelf-life of these digitized files. He replied that as long as they are digitally reproduced, they will last indefinitely.

Please scroll forward to verse 142.

Psalm 119:142 Your righteousness is everlasting, and your law is true.

Psalm 119:152 Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever.

Psalm 119:160 All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

Let us move into the New Testament with our Savior's words in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:18 For I assure you and most solemnly say to you, until heaven and earth pass away [has that happened yet?] not the smallest letter or stroke [of the pen] will pass from the Law until all things [which it foreshadows] are accomplished.

You are familiar with this next verse just a chapter over.

Matthew 6:19 Do not store up for yourselves [material] treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

We need to seriously reflect what will be permanent about us as we enter the grave. The funtrivia.com site reported (not that this is fun, but rather interesting) that within a year all that is usually left of a decomposing corpse is the skeleton and teeth, with traces of tissues on them—it takes 40 to 50 years for the bones to become dry and brittle in a coffin. In soil of neutral acidity, bones may last for hundreds of years, while acid peaty soil gradually dissolves the bones.

If my bones were all dissolved, I still have a stainless-steel lotus nail in my right tibia and a stainless-steel plate in my right jawbone that should last several centuries. But in the aftermath of II Peter 3:10 (describing the Day of the Lord), when the heavens will vanish with a thunderous crash and the [material] elements [of the universe] will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works upon it will be burned up—that would include my metal tibia and metal jaw.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth [as now known] will pass away, but My words [which includes the immutable law of God] will not pass away.

Finally, let us move forward to a very familiar verse.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh conveys no benefit [it is of no account]. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life [providing eternal life].

The only part of us that will survive through the grave, as Bill Gray explained in his 1996 *Forerunner* article, is our character, our thoughts, the contents of our hearts, what we think about all day long. Bill concluded that God will access the lifelong file of and make a judgment upon how we have lived.

In this fifth installment of the “W’s and H’s of Meditation,” we will focus on some strategies to guard and protect our spiritual legacy box, and how proper use of meditation can strengthen and solidify our memories. Back in the fall of 1971, while I was in graduate school in Minnesota, I had a discussion with one of my professors, complaining that memories fade with the passage of time, prompting him to quickly answer back, “unless they are periodically reinforced.”

In my April 25, 2015 message, “Never Again: God’s Purpose for Bad Memories,” we learned that over the past 153 years, advances in psychosurgery enabled doctors to electrically stimulate regions of the brain, causing neurosurgical patients to spontaneously retrieve memories, including sounds, sights, and smells, as if they were occurring in real time in the present. Consequently, scientists have concluded that everything we have experienced in our lives—good or bad—has been permanently stored. In the case of dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, the connections may have been damaged or scrambled, but, thankfully, the data is still there. We can be sure that Almighty God has a data retrieval system to put it all back together in the fullness of time.

Even though our physical nervous systems are fragile as the apostle Paul metaphorizes in II Corinthians 4:7, we possess this precious treasure [in frail human vessels of earth], and though our cerebral cortexes and the gray matter will all dissolve back to dust, the spirit in man, that factor in human personality which proceeds immediately from God, which Proverbs 20:27 describes as the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts. We

could liken the spirit in man, in short, to a permanent digitalized record of our accumulated character as we have lived our lives.

The apostle Paul assures us in II Corinthians 4:6 that though our outer man is (progressively) decaying and wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day.

After God individually calls us and places His Holy Spirit within us, we find ourselves in a very uncomfortable lifelong state. We have two minds in our nervous system competing for dominance-one could perhaps liken it to spiritual schizophrenia. The apostle Paul agonizes over this internal battle taking place throughout Romans 7:14-23, at which time he cries out in agony

Romans 7:24 “O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? O thank God!” [He will!] “through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) our Lord! So then indeed I, of myself with the mind and heart, serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

In Romans 8, Paul describes our precarious state of double mindedness: “Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever]. In verse 13, Paul delivers to us God’s ultimatum: “For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, you will surely die. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever.”

In May of 2009, I had the pleasure of listening to Dr. Ben Carson addressing our Wiley College Commencement in Marshall, Texas. Dr. Carson is a former neurosurgeon and currently serves as the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. He gave a detailed description of how he had separated several sets of Siamese twins conjoined at the head, sharing the same brain.

Gentle Ben, as his patients and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins lovingly call him, does not minimize the risks of separating conjoined twins at the head,

but he also has calculated that without the surgery—which normally lasts 19 grueling hours or more, the twins would have been condemned to a terrible existence. In each procedure, one twin fared a great deal better than the other. In one case, one of the twins is still in a vegetative state.

(In my humble opinion Dr. Carson is one of the very few good guys in government, a God-fearing man, a devout Sabbatarian, a believer, and practitioner of prayer, who gives God the credit for all His successes.)

We share some of the same miserable, almost hopeless characteristics as these conjoined twins Dr. Carson operated upon, pulled incessantly toward sin and death by our carnal impulses. Unless our two opposing natures, our two warring minds, or two conflicting worldviews can become safely bifurcated, we will die spiritually. Both Jesus' brother James and his grandfather David warned of the danger of having two competing minds, as we see in James 1:8: "[For being as he is] a man of two minds (hesitating, dubious, irresolute), [he is] unstable and unreliable and uncertain about everything [he thinks, feels, decides]. In Psalm 110:113, David exclaims, "I hate double-minded people, but I love Your law," implying that the other mind, the other worldview we carry around in our nervous systems is lawlessness (or sin), whose wages constitute death.

As God's called-out ones, we are obligated to stockpile our minds (as David recommended in Psalm 119:11, "I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You"). Hiding God's Word continuously and incessantly deep within our cerebral cortex will not only feed the spirit but will simultaneously starve the carnal nature to death. We must remember that nature abhors a vacuum. Those of us who have lived on farms realize if we do not plant and cultivate corn and soybeans, the fallow ground will gladly yield cockleburrs, thistles, and burning nettles.

Our memories are no different than a fallow field. Whatever we plant will germinate and come back to us as the fruit of our thoughts. Sowing Scripture into the fallow fields of our minds will bring a bumper crop of the fruits of the Spirit, while sowing in worldliness will poison the mind.

In a different but related metaphor, Oliver Wendell Holmes said about the memory: "Memory is a crazy witch. She treasures bits of rags and straw and

throws her jewels out the window." Most of us have burned into our precious memories foolishness which will reverberate in our nervous systems until we take our last breath. I can still remember the first dirty joke I learned in grade school. The graffiti on the restroom walls in the college I attended are just as clear as yesterday. I can vividly recall the silly limerick my late Aunt Ruth taught me when I was eight years old, "Nobody loves me everybody hates me, I guess I'll go eat worms." Very few within the sound of my voice can convince me they have a poor memory. The problem we encounter is what we have chosen to preserve in our precious legacy boxes containing our emerging character.

The late Presbyterian clergyman Dr. James Montgomery Boice once challenged members of his congregation to memorize the entirety of Psalm 117 (at the very center of the Bible), consisting of two verses. As some of the members accepted his challenge, he informed them that in past days it was not uncommon for people to memorize [Psalm 119:1-176](#), including British author John Ruskin, William Wilberforce, the British statesman who was largely responsible for the abolition of the slave trade throughout the empire, and David Livingstone, pioneer missionary to Africa, who won a Bible from his Bible school teacher by repeating Psalm 119 by heart—when he was only nine years old. Boice later revealed that "Many years ago, the village priest in Kalonovaka, Russia, took a special liking to a pug-nosed lad who recited his Scriptures with proper piety. By offering various inducements, the priest managed to teach the boy the four Gospels, which he recited nonstop in church one day. Sixty years later he still liked to recite Scriptures, but in a context that would have horrified the old priest. The prize pupil who memorized so much of the Bible was none other than Nikita Khrushchev, former premier of the Soviet Union—a confirmed atheist!

We should remember that memorizing prodigious quantities of Scripture does not automatically make us scripturalists and spiritual minded. After all, our adversary Satan knows more Scripture than all of us combined. On the other hand, memorizing Scripture does provide the fuel upon which we meditate. Conversely, meditation, by creating a sharpened unimpeded focus enhances the memory and makes our spiritual legacy box more permanent and immutable.

Our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, obviously committed to memory enormous quantities of Scripture, having stated 92 times, including during His temptation from Satan in Matthew 4, “it is written.” Having the Holy Spirit without measure, these insights floated into His human conscious without effort. For us, having received merely a smidgeon of His Holy Spirit, we must work harder at it. But the average person has apparently been given 50 years from baptism to death and resurrection to place the Word of God, the spirit of truth, and the very mind of Christ into his spiritual legacy box.

Meditation not only creates memories, but metaphorically digitally enhances their permanence. Over the past year, I have studied many programs for memorizing Scripture, including the practice of adding a memory verse per day or week, and the practice of memorizing entire chapters. As an experiment this past month, I used my allotted meditation time to commit to memory an entire chapter to memory, namely I Corinthians 2 containing the apostle Paul’s insight of having the mind of Christ in verse 16. Starting from verse 16 back to verse 1, I devoted a solid hour per day on each verse until arriving at verse 1. Then for an hour each day I would slowly go through the entire chapter until the glitches went away. I have learned that it takes a minimum of 49 repetitions for the average person to commit any item to memory. Advertisers know that and have taken advantage of that insight.

The three laws of memory are:

- 1) Impression (attention)
- 2) Repetition
- 3) Association

Meditation follows and bolsters all three of these laws.

We are going to focus on the first law of memory today. Attention, or impression, demands that we rid ourselves of all things competing for our attention, emptying our minds of chatter so that we can concentrate with a single mind.

As Alexander Graham Bell stated, "Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until brought to a focus." This means we must seek solitude as our Elder Brother Jesus Christ did continually, breaking away from crowds and seeking privacy of the mountains to communicate with our heavenly Father. In Simi Valley, we are blessed to have national wilderness areas to the north and south, spacious state parks on the east and west, and an impressive system of city parks and conservancies, including my very favorite hiking location, Corriganville, an old movie ranch, where I can hear my favorite sound on earth: crickets rubbing their legs together . . . and the wind strumming on sagebrush guitars.

When I crave this same kind of solitude at home, I turn on a 10-hour YouTube of crickets, frogs, and owls in a Georgia swamp. These rhythmic sounds put me back in sync with the Creator's magnificent handiwork, reminding me of Walt Whitman's statement in "Song of Myself," stanza 30: "Logic and sermons never convince, The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul." The solitude and sounds of nature were designed by God as relaxing and calming, preventing the pesky hormone cortisol to flood our bloodstreams, causing brain fog, confusion, and forgetfulness. One cannot effectively memorize anything under a cloud of anxiety or the stress of trying to concentrate on two things at once.

The Institute for the Exploration of Consciousness has reported that in just over a decade (2000 to 2013) researchers have measured a whopping 33% downgrade in our average attention span, from 12 seconds to 8 seconds, one second shorter than that of a goldfish (9 seconds). A goldfish cannot absorb the mind of God, but we human beings, created in God's image, meditating on the Word of God, storing it in our nervous systems and absorbing it into our character, will ensure that our spiritual legacy box, with all the memories of our sanctification process will be permanently protected.

Please turn to the concluding scripture, the verse that ignited this message.

I Corinthians 2:16 For who has known or understood the mind (the counsels and purposes) of the Lord to guide and instruct Him and give Him knowledge? But we have the mind of Christ (the Messiah) and do hold the thoughts (feelings and purposes) of His heart.

Brothers and sisters, the mind of Christ, the spirit of truth, God's precious Holy Spirit, is our spiritual legacy box, the treasure we now carry around in earthen vessels but will translate to dazzling spiritual bodies at our resurrection into God's Kingdom.