

## The W's And H's Of Meditation (Conclusion)

**David F. Maas**

**Given 30-Sep-18; Sermon #FT18-07B**

We will be turning to several related scriptures upon which I intend to weave a theme for this message. All scriptural references will be taken either from the Lockman Foundation's *Amplified Bible* or the Lockman Foundation's *New American Standard Bible* or *New American Standard Bible E-Prime*. All three of these versions are available in electronic format on the CGG website.

**Proverbs 4:23** (NASB) Watch over [or guard] your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

This was the lead-off scripture I used in my Feast of Tabernacles sermon on "Meditation: Preventing Spiritual Identity Theft" fourteen years ago in Mesquite, Texas, a message which was coincidentally also given on a Sunday morning. Please scroll forward to II Corinthians 10.

**II Corinthians 10:5** (NASB) We destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

As responsible stewards of the spiritual gifts God has bestowed upon us, we must take control over the contents of our thoughts, a feat more impressive in God's eyes than a military general who conquers a fortified city (referencing Proverbs 16:32).

**Revelation 3:11** (NASB) "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

All three of these scriptures imply that God's called-out ones have a somber life-or-death responsibility and struggle to take charge of our thoughts,

monitoring not only what goes into our minds, but proactively filtering the contaminated, toxic sewage that too frequently percolates out of our carnal nature which defiles us from within, as our Savior pointed out:

**Mark 7:21-23** (NASB) "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

My specific purpose for this message is to make the case that meditation is the spiritual tool best equipped to give us the ironclad self-control we need to yield to and cultivate the little dab of Holy Spirit planted within us (the genotype of our emergent spiritual body) to grow into our glorified spiritual body as members of God's Family.

In this series of seven (actually eight sermons if we count the October 2004 sermon), I have endeavored to provide comprehensive understanding into questions as to why we must meditate. What should we meditate upon? What should we not meditate upon? What meditation is not? What constitutes false and harmful meditation? When to meditate? How to meditate? How often to meditate? Where to meditate? What methods of meditation are most productive? Why is meditation beneficial and supportive of spiritual health?

Actually, the first time I broached the topic of meditation was 33 years ago in an April 27, 1985 sermonette, given in North Hollywood, titled "Meditation: the Rusty Spiritual Tool." It later appeared 30 years ago in the November-December 1988 Good News magazine, titled "The Most Neglected Spiritual Tool." This article can still be downloaded from the Herbert W. Armstrong Searchable Library on the Internet. In this article, I had used the analogy of the spark plugs in a four-cylinder car, suggesting if one of the plugs were fouled or defective, it would have a deleterious effect on the other three plugs causing the engine to sputter and misfire.

If meditation represented the defective plug, the other three spiritual tools could not function properly. Without the self-control demanded of meditation, prayer can be hampered by mind-wandering and losing focus. Without the discipline of meditation, fasting is simply an exercise of going

hungry. Without the focus of meditation, studying takes on a Teflon memory excursion, in which one quickly forgets what he or she has tried to assimilate. I concluded in that article that meditation was the most neglected of the four essential spiritual tools.

In my October 2004 Feast sermon, titled “Meditation: Preventing Spiritual Identity Theft,” focusing on Proverbs 4:23, I cautioned us to jealously and protectively guard what goes into our minds because we will “turn into” what we assimilate. Remembering Bill Gray’s July 1996 *Forerunner* article, “Taking It Through the Grave,” we will take nothing out of this life except our character. Our character is melded by our cumulative thoughts—the contents of our thoughts, constituting what we continually and habitually think about all day long. Proverbs 23:7 teaches us that whether good or evil, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he,” while Proverbs 10:24 qualifies this maxim, stating, “What the wicked fears will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will come to him.”

At the 1969 Feast of Tabernacles at Lake of the Ozarks, Al Portune, giving a sermon on the devastating effects of fear and worry which he described as a perverted form of meditation, exclaimed, “Many of you are past masters of meditating—just not on the right things.” He concluded, “Fearing is a form of meditation intently focusing and concentrating upon failing.”

Consequently, my previous assumption about meditation being a neglected tool shifted to a more accurate understanding that meditation had become a hijacked spiritual tool used for fear, worry, daydreaming, yielding to media bombardment, and over-stimulation, such as video games, Internet-surfing, Netflix, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, toxic hate-filled cable news, e-mail, and texting. In addition, some eastern disciplines using the term meditation, such as Transcendental Meditation, encourage detachment and losing the mind to mysterious cosmic forces.

Godly mediation is a ruminative process, demanding a fully attached, active, engaged mind capable of bringing every thought into captivity, as the apostle commands us in II Corinthians 10:5. If we fail to cultivate the ability to apply godly meditation to shape our world view (or I should say our Kingdom of God view), we run the very real risk of letting someone else take our crown, as our Lord has cautioned in Revelation 3:11. We should

remember that the book of Ecclesiastes is reserved for the Feast of Tabernacle because it provides a meditative reflection of Solomon's lifetime (and by extension, mankind's futile 6,000 year) cumulative experience, ending with the emphatic conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12.

**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** (NASB) The conclusion, when we have heard it consists of the following: fear God and keep His commandments [echoing the sole purpose for the Feast of Tabernacles stated in Deuteronomy 14:2 that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always], because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which you have hidden, whether it has come from good or evil [motives.]

Everything that we have ever thought, said, or done has been faithfully recorded into the recesses of our heart or nervous system through the means of the spirit in man which Proverbs [20:27](#) declares resembles the lamp or the candle of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being.

In Part One of the "W's and H's of Meditation," we returned to Solomon's admonition to faithfully and diligently guard our hearts (Proverbs 23:7), adding that both essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson and the late Robert Schuller, TV evangelist from Garden Grove, California, have offered insightful corollaries or maxims to this verse: Emerson writes "You become what you think all day long." Robert Schuller asserts more emphatically, "You are what you think all day long." This caution about guarding our hearts in Proverbs 4:23 becomes especially problematic when we reflect upon the warning in Romans 8, verse 6.

**Romans 8:6** (AMP) that the mind of the flesh is death [both now and forever—because it pursues sin]; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace [the spiritual well-being that comes from walking with God—both now and forever].

Robert Deutsch, in his February 2008 article, "Meditation 101," reported that "researchers have determined that we produce up to 50,000 thoughts a day and 70% to 80% of those are negative. This translates into 40,000 negative thoughts a day that need managing and filtering." Are we careful about what we allow into our minds to ponder, mull over, and consider?

**Proverbs 15:15** (AMP) All the days of the desponding and afflicted are made evil [by anxious thoughts and forebodings], but he who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances].

**Proverbs 17:22** (AMP) A happy heart is good medicine and a joyful mind causes healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

**Proverbs 18:21** (AMP) Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it and indulge it will eat its fruit and bear the consequences of their words.

Our thoughts—what we mull over and contemplate all day long—are potentially as lethal as the words and the deeds which are given birth by our collective recursive thoughts. Thoughts and words can maim and kill just as surely as knives or bullets. Thoughts can poison us and make us mortally sick, and possibly put our salvation in jeopardy. But wholesome and pure thoughts can heal us and sustain our spirit.

Meditation, when properly focused, can cleanse and heal our diseased thoughts, displacing the constant negative self-talk and the dispiriting lies and the contaminated garbage on the toxic cable and mainstream media which has been systematically draining our hope and vitality. Meditation can revitalize our cast-down spirits and point them back to our refreshing journey toward the Kingdom of God and our emergent role as members of God's Family.

Part One, focusing on some of the “how’s” of meditation, explored the Hebrew etymology of the word “meditate.” According to William Akehurst, the Hebrew word transliterated ha-gah is derived from the Hebrew letters hey, gimel, and hey. *Hagah* can be rendered: To murmur, moan, utter, muse, mutter, and growl, carrying the connotation of subvocalizing, or moving the vocal bands silently, almost like a whisper. Other synonyms include to speak softly, study, talk, utter, as well as to chew on.

Breaking the word down into its constituent syllables we discover the letter hey to signify “to behold” or “to signify” as in the Hebrew word *hineh*, meaning behold. The gimel in Hebrew is symbolic of the camel, the ship of the desert. Akehurst provides a graphic description as to how the camel has a unique ability to travel long distances without water or food. “First, it eats and drinks in as much as it can hold, filling its hump to capacity. Secondly, on the trip, it regurgitates its food, chewing on it, pulling out the nourishment it needs for the journey.” Consequently, to meditate, using the associations of the three Hebrew consonants creating the word *hagah*, means to mutter, utter, speak softly, and chew on God’s Word.

Famously, camels are ruminants, which means they “chew the cud,” an action which resembles pondering over a deep thought. God defines those ruminants which chew their cud and have split hoofs as “clean” (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14). Their four-compartment stomachs enable them to purge out all the impurities from their food. Their ruminating action provides a powerful analogy for meditating or digesting thoughts.

The word ruminate suggests a metaphor illustrating how one can thoroughly purify the thoughts in our nervous system, enabling us to ingest, assimilate, and digest the bread of life—and the manna from heaven, namely the Word of God, which His called-out ones have been given a lifetime to digest. In John [6:35](#) Jesus replied, I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never be hungry, and he who believes in and cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me will never thirst anymore (at any time).

In Part Two of this series, going into a number of whys of meditation, we explored a list of related scriptures in Psalm 119, including my second favorite scripture Psalm 119:165, “Great peace have they who love Your law; nothing shall offend them {or} make them stumble.” Meditating on God’s holy law produces profound peace and stimulates our memory. Meditation fosters peace and tranquility, and vastly improves memory consolidation, safeguarding the integrity of our emerging spiritual body.

In his massive article, “Scientific Benefits of Meditation—76 Things You Might Be Missing Out On,” Giovanni Dienstmann provides a clearing house of recent scientific experiments examining physiological and psychological

benefits of meditation. Dienstmann provided the names of the scientific journals, the methodology measuring the control and experimental groups, and the conclusions. Regarding the relationship between meditation and memory, the results were highly encouraging, including the findings that meditation improves focus, attention, and ability to work under stress. Meditation improves information processing and decision-making. Meditation increases the ability to keep focus despite distractions, improves learning, memory, and self-awareness. Meditation improves rapid memory recall. Meditation reduces risk of Alzheimer's and premature death.

Equally encouraging were the studies showing meditation's role in reducing stress and anxiety, including the findings that meditation may be effective to treat depression to a similar degree as antidepressant drug therapy. Meditation practices help regulate mood and anxiety disorders. Meditation reduces stress and anxiety in general. Meditation prepares one to deal with stressful events. Meditation helps reduce symptoms of panic disorder. Meditation helps manage attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Meditation improves mood and psychological well-being. Meditation affects genes that control stress and immunity.

One fascinating study on meditation carried on at Harvard, reported by [Sara Lazar](#), asserts that in meditators, MRI scans show that the grey matter concentration increases in areas of the brain involved in learning and memory, regulating emotions, sense of self, and having perspective. Other similar studies conducted at UCLA, revealed through neuroimaging, show a larger hippocampal and frontal volumes of grey matter for long-term meditators. In fact, there is confirmed empirical [evidence](#) that meditators had thicker prefrontal cortex and right anterior insula, and also to the effect that meditation might offset the loss of cognitive ability with old age.

Consequently, researchers have scientifically proven that meditation improves memory consolidation, as well as generates profound peace as an antidote to agitation, stress, chaos, and confusion. The act of meditating, even if the focus is on our breathing or on an idyllic scene, is beneficial physically or psychologically, but the maximum benefit will accrue if we meditate on the things God has mandated—namely His law and His Word.

In Part Three of this series, after observing the stark contrast between God's holy character and our inherent carnal nature (described graphically by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:5-7), we learned that by yielding to the prompts of God's Holy Spirit, we can displace our deadly carnal nature, replacing it with godly character—the very mind of God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ.

**I Corinthians 2:16** (AMP) For who has known or understood the mind (the counsels and purposes) of the Lord so as 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.

Because character is the product of matured habits and morality is the product of matured manners, we must be content with beginning with small steps. Evidently, God does not execute His greatest works with frenetic bursts of energy, but instead contemplatively, beginning with small and apparently insignificant steps, such as recruiting the undistinguished to confound the wise. Because meditation requires a venue of solitude, quietude, and a greatly slowed-down pace, meditation's most fruitful timeframes are those moments before falling asleep and the time before the business of the day begins in earnest.

We can take our cues from our Elder Brother and Savior Jesus Christ, who habitually prayed, as we see in Mark [1:35](#), “In the early morning, while it still remained dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and prayed there.” Isaac, as we learn from Genesis [24:63](#), “went out to meditate in the field toward evening.” David, in Psalm 63:6, set the example of nighttime meditating, “When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.” Joshua instructed us in Joshua 1:8 to meditate night and day: “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may take care to do according to all that you find written in it.”

If we habitually make God's Word our last thought every day, and with the help of God's Spirit collaboration with our ever-active human spirit, we will be able to meditate on the Word of God "day and night."



The key to our next day is what we think about before we hit the hay. Over the years, I have found it helpful to prime the pump with the Proverbs and Psalms daily. I listen to the Proverbs in the early morning when I need wake-up stimulation and the Psalms in the evening when I need to wind down. Because Proverbs has 31 chapters, each chapter corresponds with a specific day of the month. In the evening, we can listen to the Psalms, in chunks of five chapters a day. 150 chapters can be easily negotiated in 30 days.

Consequently, every month, I habitually listen to the Proverbs from the audio *Amplified Bible*, narrated by the golden-throated voice of Steven B. Stevens. In the evening, before I get ready for bed, I listen to the hypnotic narration of the Psalms in the NIV version by Max McLean, replete with subtle, soothing background music.

In Part Four of this series, we focused on the plaintive admonition by Moses in Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom.” This poignant psalm focuses upon the stark contrast between God’s eternity and the fragile mortality experienced by all of mankind. The brevity of our life is a pervasive, recurring theme throughout Scripture. We may consider life long when we measure it by the year, but when compared to eternity, life is a mere vapor.

The Scriptures refer to the concept of death more than 1,300 times (in such expressions such as die, death, dead, etc.). Obviously, it is a perennial topic in both the Old and New Testaments. The Scriptures are replete with similes and metaphors describing the brevity of life, including a shadow, a sigh, a breath, smoke, withering grass, a vapor, a weaver’s shuttle, a hand-breath, etc.

The antidote to despairing about the brevity of life is to number our days and live in day-tight compartments, as was modeled by Jesus Christ, who taught us in Matthew 6:34, “So do not worry or be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.” The day-tight compartment aspect is repeated by our Savior in John [9:4](#), “We must work the works of Him Who sent Me and be

busy with His business while it is daylight; night is coming on, when no man can work.” Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on Psalm 90:12, concludes that “God has ordained that the entire universe functions one day at a time.”

American business leader D. J. De Pree, a champion of biblical principles in the workplace, a legendary dynamo of productivity, lived to be almost 100 years old. He developed the practice of calculating his age in terms of days. If you asked him, “How old are you?” he answered immediately with the number of days. He based this practice on [Psalm 90:12](#), “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Literally counting his days reminded him of the swift passage of time and the need to live with eternity’s values in view. As an experiment last March, I started calculating my age in days, keeping the daily calculation in my journal. Today, I have reached 26,759 days. I find the concept of overcoming in daily chunks more negotiable and user friendly than thinking I have years and years to accomplish that goal.

In Part Five of this series, we focused on Old and New Testament scriptures establishing the permanency of God’s word and His immutable laws: “Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.” Jesus assures us in Matthew 5:18 that “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.”

Even though the law will never pass away, the mortal bodies will (just like the metaphorical clay jars or earthen vessels as described by the apostle Paul in II Corinthians 4:7). This fragile temporary feature has been deliberately planned by God Almighty so that the surpassing greatness of the power will emanate from God and not from ourselves. As God’s called-out ones, we live our entire mortal lives having two minds—one spiritual and carnal—in mortal combat with each other until one permanently perishes. We share some of the same miserable, almost hopeless characteristics experienced by Siamese twins conjoined at the brain. Our conjoined carnal twin is pulling us toward sin and death. Unless we, with God’s help, bifurcate or surgically separate as Dr. Ben Carson has successfully done, our two opposing natures, our two warring minds, we will die spiritually. Remember, the only part of us that will survive through the grave is our character—our thoughts, the content of our hearts, what we think about all day long. Psalm 119:111

assures us, “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 1930s, are as crystal clear as though they had been recorded yesterday. I asked my tech-savvy son about the shelf-life of these digitized files. He replied that as long as they are digitally reproduced, they will last indefinitely.

In the fifth installment of the "W's and H's of Meditation," I focused upon some strategies to guard our spiritual legacy box, including the systematic practice of committing Scripture to memory. Proper meditation can strengthen and solidify our memories. If we systematically and incrementally stockpile God's Word—the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16)—into our nervous systems, even though our outer man is (progressively) decaying and wasting away, while our inner self is being renewed day after day (II Corinthians 4), we will nurture our spiritual legacy. Meditating on the Word of God, storing it in our nervous systems and absorbing it into our hearts, our nervous systems, or characters, will ensure the secure protection of our spiritual legacy box. The mind of Christ, the Spirit of truth, God's 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.

In the sixth and penultimate installment of this series, I doubled down on the prospect of Scripture memorization as an integral part of meditation—

providing the necessary fuel in the absence of an electronic or paper Bible. The admonition to remember is one of the most dominant themes in both the Old and New Testaments—from the Shema in Deuteronomy 6 to Jesus' promise of the Comforter (God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, or the mind of Christ) in John 14:26, "to teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

Over the course of our lives, we have permanently stored in our nervous systems or memories useful, practical knowledge, and also, sadly, foolishness. We learned that the average human mind can store immense quantities of Scripture into our memories, as demonstrated by the Baptist theologian in Durham, North Carolina, who has over the years memorized no less than 42 books of the Bible and has published a valuable guide to enable anyone who wants to stoke his or her mind with the mind of Christ. After a period of 50 years, when such memorization was a foolish, unproductive exercise of intellectual vanity, I am thoroughly on board, recommending Scripture memorization to occupy a portion of our daily meditation. By investing a mere 15-20 minutes a day, over a period of months and years, we will be enabled to displace our carnal thoughts with the very mind of Christ.

We learn that as we exercise our memories, feeding our daily meditation, they will not fade, but instead become increasingly strengthened as the gray matter thickens on the hippocampus of the cerebral cortex, safeguarding us from dementia and forgetfulness. To be sure, the gray matter will eventually turn back to dust, but the electrical impulses—the collected data of our thoughts—will be preserved in permanent form, as does the Legacy Box convert perishable data from photographs, 35-millimeter slides, cassettes, mylar tape, wire, Dictaphone belts, 8 track tapes, and VCRs onto permanent digital files in the cloud or on a thumb drive. As the film industry can take silver nitrate film from 1935 converting it and enhancing it to digitalized files, God Almighty will take the electric impulses stored in our perishing nervous systems, transferring them into dazzling spiritual bodies bright as the sun. In my October 2016 sermon, I concluded with a preview of our new spiritual bodies, referring to Jesus words in [Matthew 13:43](#), "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

As we begin to wrap up this message, I would like you to turn to my favorite scripture, in Hebrews 8, a purposeful redundant repetition of Jeremiah 31:31.

**Hebrews 8:10-12** (AMP) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will imprint My laws upon their minds, even upon their innermost thoughts and understanding, and engrave them upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And it will nevermore be necessary for each one to teach his neighbor and his fellow citizen or each one his brother, saying, Know (perceive, have knowledge of, and get acquainted by experience with) the Lord, for all will know Me, from the smallest to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful and gracious toward their sins and I will remember their deeds of unrighteousness no more.

In the lives of God's called-out ones, this process has already begun. We have an obligation to cooperate with our Maker to yield to the shaping of God's Holy Spirit, referred to by the late Herbert W. Armstrong as God's law in action. Our destiny and heritage will be to be completely composed of God's holy and spiritual law, enabling us to gaze on the face of God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ without burning up as we learn in I John 3:

**I John 3:2** (AMP) Beloved, we are [even here and] now God's children; it is not yet disclosed (made clear) what we shall be [hereafter], but we know that when He comes and is manifested, we shall [as God's children] resemble and be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He [really] is.

The mind of Christ, the Spirit of truth, God's 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.