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THE WINE PRESS

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THE WINE PRESS



Pressing into Truth, Pouring out His Grace

July 2026

Something to Sing About!

It's summertime! And we all look forward to a slightly slower pace, and time to rest and relax. Hopefully this can also be an opportunity to spend a little more time with the Lord. This month our focus is on Christian meditation—quietly reflecting on God's Word and allowing it to fill our minds and hearts.

Unfortunately our phones are always with us, there is always another headline to read, another concern to carry, another distraction competing for our attention. David understood what it was like to feel spiritually thirsty. He prayed, "My soul thirsts for You, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." He was out in the wilderness when he wrote it, and yet he ends the Psalm singing.

Our prayer is that the articles in this issue will be an encouragement to linger a little longer in God's presence and in His Word. Our prayer is that He will refresh our souls and give us, like David, something to sing about.

The Wine Press is a thoughtfully curated collection of articles from across the web, compiled to inspire, encourage, and deepen your walk with our King and Savior, Jesus Christ. All articles remain the property of their respective authors to whom we joyfully give full credit and our appreciation for sharing their wisdom and experiences with us. May these words uplift your spirit, strengthen your faith, and draw you into ever deeper communion with the God of all grace.

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Steep Your Soul

By David Mathis

My soul thirsts for You, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water... My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food. (Psalm 63:1, 5)

How will a thirsting, hungering soul be satisfied? In verse 2 the psalmist says, “I have looked upon You in the sanctuary, beholding Your power and glory.” And how does he do that? Verse 6: “I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the watches of the night.”

There it is — meditation. And what comes of it? David’s soul clings to God (verse 8). He sings for joy (verse 7). He rejoices in God (verse 11), and others catch the joy along with him — all because David, out in the wilderness, beheld God’s power and glory through meditation.

Not Emptying, but Filling

When I say meditation, I do not mean the Eastern kind — empty your mind and seek some peace in the nothingness. Biblical meditation is the opposite: fill your mind with what God Himself says, and let Him lead your mind and soul by His Word and His Spirit, that you might find peace and joy in the filling.

The Hebrew word for “meditate” in Psalm 63:6 means to ruminate, to reflect, to muse. Instead of letting the mind keep moving, you pause and stay on

something. So biblical meditation fixes the mind’s attention on God through His revealed Word, that we might stir up God-honoring affections. That focus on the heart — on enjoying God in Jesus Christ — is essential; without it I do not think it is Christian meditation at all. And it is what distinguishes meditation from Bible reading, from study, from prayer.

The Dutch Reformed pastor Wilhelmus à Brakel used a string of active verbs for it: in meditation the soul reflects upon, reasons about, approves of, delights in, and is astonished at God Himself and what He has revealed. Christian meditation begins with God’s revelation — with God speaking in His book — and then it is our reflecting, reasoning, approving, delighting, and being astonished at what He says.

A Bridge Between the Word and Prayer

Meditation is the internal application of God’s Word to the soul — to the inner person, through the mind, to the heart, with prayer as the first response. The Puritans called it a “bridge discipline,” the bridge between Bible reading on one side and prayer on the other. Thomas Manton: “Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the Word and prayer, and has respect to both. The Word feeds meditation, and meditation feeds prayer.”

So there is a relational arc to it. We hear from God first in His Word — that is the

priority — and in meditation we hear it all the way down, down to the heart, until we feel the weight of it. And then, in light of what He is saying, we pray. Begin with the Bible; move to meditation, lingering over some aspect of His Word; and then polish with prayer.

An Almost Lost Art

If this sounds strange — if you feel you have hardly heard of it, apart from a few apps and mindfulness trainings that have nothing to do with Jesus — you are not alone. Father Brakel, in the late 1600s, already called meditation “the secret art which is practiced but little.” Manton, four centuries ago, lamented that we live in “days of action and commotion,” so busy that too few of us care to converse with God. If that was true in the Puritan day, what about ours? Our anxious generation has special need to recover this lost art — both to hold back the faith-eroding tides of modern life and to feed our joy.

Two Kinds of Meditation

The Puritans spoke of two kinds. There is deliberate meditation — planned, habitual, usually in the morning, a daily

anchor for resetting the mind and stirring godly affections. And there is sudden or spontaneous meditation — when something in life catches you and you turn your mind Godward in a moment, meditating on His glory in creation or in the day’s events. My focus here is the deliberate kind: the planned, morning meditation over the Book that resets the mind, engages the heart, and sends us out to walk in joy for the day.

My two great influences here, under God, have been George Müller and John Piper. But the approach is not theirs; Scripture itself teaches it — in what it commands, in the examples it gives, and in its very nature as the living Word of the living God. What kind of engagement does a beach paperback deserve? A web page? A classic that has lasted for generations? And then — what about the living Word of God? What reading would be fitting for that? That is meditation: not the careless, hurried way we read everything else, but engaging the Word as the Word itself asks to be engaged.

Pictures, Not Rules

At this point someone says, “Just tell me



how. Give me the steps.” Ask a medieval mystic and he will gladly hand you a method — how many hours, how many days. But ask a Puritan and he turns careful. Father Brakel: “I do not wish to prescribe rules to you. Begin with it, and you will experience yourself which way is best for you.” Or Manton: “Do not bridle up the free spirit by rules of method. We do not prescribe, but advise.”

So instead of rules, let me gather a few of their images — the concrete pictures help, and you, with the Spirit’s help and the leading of the Word, can find your own way in.

The Well-Watered Tree

The first image is the great biblical one, from Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man whose 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.” The two verbs are delight and meditate. The one who delights in the Word meditates on it — and in the meditating, the delight deepens, so that delight feeds meditation and meditation feeds delight again. A tree may catch an occasional downpour, much of it running off; far better to be planted by a stream, where every day the roots drink. God has revealed Himself; we have a stream to park ourselves beside, and need not wait for the occasional rains.

Warm Yourself at the Fire

Over the years I have worked on my own images—steeping a tea bag (for you southerners who love sweet tea, you have got to let it steep); the kind of yard work you celebrate afterward with lemonade; watching a movie in regular speed, or slow-mo, or freeze-frame; gathering a day’s portion of manna from Exodus 16 (you are not there to build your whole theological education every time you open the Bible—just gather a day’s portion; how would He feed you today?).

But as I gathered the Puritan images these last couple of weeks, two main categories emerged. The first is fresh to me; the second has been my go-to for years.

The first is warming. Thomas Watson captured it most memorably: “Warm yourself at the fire of meditation.”

You can get more specific. Some Puritans talked about the fireplace—the temperature of our hearts rises and falls like a fire. As it burns, it burns up its fuel and dies down to embers. Meditation is tending the fire: keep it going, keep it hot, add fuel. Several mentioned the bellows—that bag-like instrument you expand and contract to feed oxygen and intensify a flame. Isaac Ambrose: “Meditation is the bellows of the soul that kindles and inflames holy affections.” Manton said meditative thoughts “are the bellows that kindle the affections” and “inflame those latent sparks of grace that are in the soul”—“ply the bellows, and blow hard.”

William Bates even points out that meditation is like building a fire from wet wood—so persist; do not give up too quickly. “Meditate ordinarily till you find some sensible benefit conveyed to your soul.” Some sensible benefit. That does not always mean bliss; it may be a rebuke from God, a warning, some new holy fear of Him—but some sensible benefit. “Persist till the flame doth ascend.”

Or they would talk about boiling water. George Swinnock: “Meditation to the Word is what fire is to water. Though water be naturally cold, yet put fire under it and it will make it hot and boiling. So, though your heart be cold, put this fire, meditation, under it, and it will boil with love.” How often have we tried, but not stayed next to the fire long enough for the heat—by the Spirit’s power—to be communicated? Manton: “Our hearts are naturally cold, but meditation makes them hot, causing them to boil with love

for God and His Word.”

Food for the Soul

The second category is feeding—chewing, tasting. This is the image I have found most helpful over the years.

Manton: “Faith will starve unless it is fed by continual meditation on God’s promises.” Samuel Ward: “Stir up your soul in meditation to commune with Christ. Look what promises and privileges you do habitually believe; now actually think of them. Roll them under your tongue; chew on them till you feel some sweetness on the palate of your soul.” Take what you already believe, and now seek to actually believe it—to experience it in the heart, to taste it, to find sweetness in it. Honey is to be savored, not rushed through.

I did not grow up on a farm, but the times I have seen cows chewing the cud, I have never seen one in a hurry. They take their time. So it is with the feeding of meditation.

One of my favorite images is from Edmund Calamy—the honeybee: “Be like the bee that dwells and abides upon the flower to suck out all the sweetness.” Which sounds like Müller: “I searched into every verse to get some blessing out of it.” That was his prevailing image—feeding. He spoke of seeking food for his own soul, and said his meditation was not for the sake of public ministry, not for the sake of preaching on what he had meditated upon, but “for the sake of obtaining food for my soul.” That is so consumerist, in one sense, is it not? A holy consumerism. You might say, a Christian-hedonist approach. He kept before himself that “food for my own soul is the object of my meditation.”

One last image, again from Manton: “Joy and delight are fed by meditation, for meditation turns God’s promises into food.” And he quotes Psalm 63 again: “My soul will be satisfied as with fat and

rich food, and my mouth will praise You with joyful lips, when I remember You upon my bed and meditate on You in the watches of the night.” Which brings us back to our pursuit of God and our joy in Him—turning the thirst and hunger of our souls to God for satisfaction, by beholding His power and glory, through meditating on His Word.

A Sweet Simplicity

The unfamiliar can sound complicated, but there is a real simplicity here. One way to put it: be a Christian hedonist with God’s Word. When you open the Bible in the morning, you are there for gain — to get your soul happy in Him, to warm your cold heart, to eat and drink and feast until the hunger and thirst are met. And, wonderfully, God is honored when we come to Him like that. “O God, You are my God; earnestly I seek You” — like a thirsty man seeking water.

So set aside enough margin to be unhurried. Find a quiet place and shut out distractions. Open the Word with some modest plan, follow its order and the Spirit’s leading, and look for places to slow down and go deep. And lest you think this art and its joys are only for the advanced, hear Matthew Bingham: “In meditation, we are really not doing anything more complicated than slowing down and reflecting honestly on the ways that biblical ideas intersect with our own hearts and lives.” There is a sweet simplicity to it. Our aim is to enjoy the true God and the real Jesus — crucified and risen, alive and reigning — to commune with Him and linger in awe before Him, that our hearts might be warmed and fed, and that we might go in peace and joy into our callings.

Full Sermon: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/steep-your-soul-with-christian-meditation>

Our Thoughts Really Do Matter

By Christina Fox

Have you ever sat with friends, found yourself deep in some strange topic, and wondered how you got there? Conversations take rabbit trails, one thought leading to the next, and the longer they wander the harder it is to find the way back.

Prone to Wander

The same happens in our thought life. We start with one thought and, like a distracted child, follow it wherever it goes. Think of the last time you were wronged. You thought how unfair it was, which reminded you of other times you were wronged, which led you to compare your treatment to others' — and before you knew it you were boiling with anger. Or think of a trial: you dwell on how hard it is, how you lack the strength, all the things that could go wrong, until you are paralyzed with fear. We come by such wandering naturally; as children of Adam, in our sin nature, we are drawn down meandering trails of half-truths, lies, and sinful thoughts.

We do not always see how much our thoughts shape us. But they hold real power over us — emotionally, spiritually, and behaviorally. What we dwell on is like the rudder of a ship, steering our affections. Like the invasive kudzu vine, a wandering thought can grow and wrap itself around the heart until it chokes our joy. And over time our thoughts spill into our actions. As Jesus said, “For the mouth speaks what

the heart is full of” (Matthew 12:34).

Be Alert and on Guard

As believers, what we think matters. Because Jesus bought and redeemed us, we are new creations; we have died to our former selves (Romans 6:6) — and that includes our thought life. When we think untrue and sinful thoughts, we are not living like the new creations we are. Paul says we must “no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds,” but rather “be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and... put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:17, 23–24).

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our affections.

So Scripture charges us to stand guard in our thinking. Paul “took every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5) — strong military language. We are in a spiritual battle, and in wartime we cannot be passive (Ephesians 6). That means being intentional about the thoughts we think: “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely... think about

these things” (Philippians 4:8). These are the thoughts to foster and let take root.

Scripture even speaks of an intentional “setting” of the mind. “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2). As John Piper writes, our emotions are largely governed by what we “consider” — which is why Jesus met anxiety with “Consider the ravens... consider the lilies.” The mind is the window of the heart: let it dwell on the dark, and the heart feels dark; open it to the light, and the heart feels the light. And above all, that window is meant for Jesus — “consider Him who endured such hostility... so that you may not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:3). It is as we fix our minds on the glory of Christ that we are changed “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The true thoughts we are to think are found in God’s Word, where He tells us who He is and what He has done for us

in Christ. We need to dwell there — on His love for us in the gospel, on what Christ accomplished in His life, death, and resurrection, on who we are in the sight of God as His children — not as a spiritual to-do list or a path to self-fulfillment, but because of who we already are in Christ.

Though we are prone to wander, Jesus has not left us alone. He has given us His Spirit, who convicts us of sin, reminds us of truth, and even prays on our behalf. If you struggle with wayward thoughts as I do, pray for the Spirit to prompt you when they go astray. Ask for discernment to tell the true from the untrue. Weigh your thoughts against God’s Word. Be alert, watchful, and on guard. And above all, set your mind on Christ.

Read the Full Article: <https://www.ibelieve.com/christian-living/our-thoughts-really-do-matter.html>



7 Keys to Hearing the Still Small Voice

By Debbie Kitterman

Will God speak to me and if so, how will I know it's His voice I am hearing?

I had just finished sharing a message on Sunday morning at a church and I was packing up to leave when a young woman approached me. There was a hesitancy in her eyes and timidity in her voice as she quietly spoke. I knew there was more story behind her simple question, so a quick response of John 10:27 "His sheep hear and know His voice" would not cut it.

I shared the following scripture-based advice to reassure her that she can hear God's voice, and that he longs to speak to us all.

1. Be Aware

We need to be aware that God still speaks today. We read in 1 Samuel 3 that "the word was rare in those days" and when God called Samuel's name, neither he nor Eli the priest knew it was God. But God was persistent until he made a connection with Samuel. It is within that connection that God communicated with him, but Samuel first had to respond to the voice of God. It is the same with us: we must be aware of God's invitation for connection, so we can respond to it.

Just like Samuel, we can respond in faith and ask: "God, Is that You? If so I am listening."

So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3: 9-10 NIV)

2. Be Discerning

We need to be aware that not all things we hear or receive are from God. There are many voices vying for our attention at any given time, but the three big ones are: God, Satan and ourselves. However, don't let this intimidate you. Remember John 10:27 above and know we can learn to discern whose voice is speaking to us. We must patiently and quietly listen for the still small voice of God.

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God." (1 John 4:1a CSB)

3. Be Expectant

God is speaking all the time. We just need to learn to discern His voice, and tune into His frequency. We should expect that God wants to speak to us and be eager to hear from Him when He does. We need to believe and expect God will speak to us just as He did with individuals throughout the Scriptures. It's not a once in a lifetime conversation, it's a daily ongoing one.

He says, “Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3 NASB).

4. Be Available

Yes, God is speaking all the time, but we are often too busy to notice. We need to make ourselves available to hear from God. This means being intentional to set aside time for Him to speak to us. Part of being available is also being ready and willing to respond when God speaks to us. God longs to move His people in obedience.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV)

5. Be in the Word

When God speaks to you, it will never be contrary to the Word of God nor contradict His character or nature. In order to know these things about God, we need to know what the Bible says about who He is and what His character is. If we are in the Word and know what it says about God, then we can confidentially discern we are hearing from God.

Every Scripture has been written by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God. It will empower you by its instruction and correction, giving you the strength to take the right direction and lead you deeper into the path of godliness. Then you will be God’s servant, fully mature and perfectly prepared to fulfill any assignment God gives you (2 Timothy 3:16-17 The Passion Translation).

6. Be in Relationship

God designed us for relationship with Himself and with others. Relationships by design includes two-way conversations. Just as Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the Garden, it is His desire to have the same kind of relationship with us

today. God wants to communicate with us on a daily basis. He wants an ongoing conversation that continues throughout the day, week, months and years. We are called friends of God.

No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:15 ESV).

7. Be Humble

God doesn’t just speak to the special people, He speaks to us all. We must recognize that hearing God speak is a normal part of our life as a Christ follower. But we also must not allow pride to sneak into our hearts as we begin to hear from Him. Staying in humility positions us to fully receive and respond to the messages God may share with us.

Read the article here:

<https://blessedtransgressions.org/keys-hearing-small-voice-god/>



The Speaking Voice

By A.W. Tozer

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [John 1:1](#)

God is Not Silent

An intelligent plain man, untaught in the truths of Christianity, coming upon this text, would likely conclude that John meant to teach that it is the nature of God to speak, to communicate His thoughts to others. And he would be right. A word is a medium by which thoughts are expressed, and the application of the term to the Eternal Son leads us to believe that self-expression is inherent in the Godhead, that God is forever seeking to speak Himself out to His creation. The whole Bible supports the idea. God is speaking. Not God spoke, but God is speaking. He is by His nature continuously articulate. He fills the world with His speaking Voice.

The Voice that Sustains Creation

One of the great realities with which we have to deal is the Voice of God in His world. The briefest and only satisfying cosmogony is this: "He spake and it was done." [Psalm 33:9] This word of God which brought all worlds into being cannot be understood to mean the Bible, for it is not a written or printed word at all, but the expression of the will of God spoken into the structure of all things. This word of God is the breath of God

filling the world with living potentiality. The Voice of God is the most powerful force in nature, indeed the only force in nature, for all energy is here only because the power-filled Word is being spoken.

The Bible is the written word of God, and because it is written, it is confined and limited by the necessities of ink and paper and leather. The Voice of God, however, is alive and free as the sovereign God is free. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." [John 6:63] The life is in the speaking words. God's word in the Bible can have power only because it corresponds to God's word in the universe. It is the present Voice which makes the written Word all-powerful. Otherwise it would lie locked in slumber within the covers of a book.

We take a low and primitive view of things when we conceive of God at the creation coming into physical contact with things, shaping and fitting and building like a carpenter. The Bible teaches otherwise: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. ... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." [Psalm 33:6, 9] "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." [Hebrews 11:3] Again we must remember that God is referring ere not to His written Word, but to His speaking Voice. His world-filling Voice is meant,

that Voice which antedates the Bible by uncounted centuries, that Voice which has not been silent since the dawn of creation, but is sounding still throughout the full far reaches of the universe.

The Word of God is quick and powerful. In the beginning He spoke to nothing, and it became something. Chaos heard it and became order, darkness heard it and became light. "And God said — and it was so." [Genesis 1:9] These twin phrases, as cause and effect, occur throughout the Genesis story of the creation. That God is here and that He is speaking—these truths are behind all other Bible truths; without them there could be no revelation at all.

God did not write a book and send it by messenger to be read at a distance by unaided minds. He spoke a Book and lives in His spoken words, constantly speaking His words and causing the power of them to persist across the years. God breathed on clay and it became a man; He breathes on men and they become clay. "Return ye children of men," [Psalm 90:3] was the word spoken at the Fall by which God decreed the death of every man, and no added word has He needed to speak. The sad procession of mankind across the face of the earth from birth to the grave is proof that His original Word was enough.

The Light that Reaches Every Heart

We have not given sufficient attention to that deep utterance in the Book of John, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." [John 1:9] Shift the punctuation around as we will and the truth is still there: the Word of God affects the hearts of all men as light in the soul. In the hearts of all men the light shines, the Word sounds, and there is no escaping them. Something like this would of necessity be so if God is alive and in His world.

And John says that it is so. Even those persons who have never heard of the Bible have still been preached to with sufficient clarity to remove every excuse from their hearts forever. "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while either accusing or else excusing one another." [Romans 2:15] "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." [Romans 1:20]

This universal Voice of God was by the ancient Hebrews often called Wisdom, and was said to be everywhere sounding and searching throughout the earth, seeking some response from the sons of men. The eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs begins, "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?" The writer then pictures wisdom as a beautiful woman standing "in the top of the high places, by the way in the places of the paths." [Proverbs 8:1–2]

She sounds her voice from every quarter so that no one may miss hearing it. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." [Proverbs 8:4] Then she pleads for the simple and the foolish to give ear to her words. It is spiritual response for which this Wisdom of God is pleading, a response which she has always sought and is but rarely able to secure. The tragedy is that our eternal welfare depends upon our hearing, and we have trained our ears not to hear.

This universal Voice has ever sounded, and it has often troubled men even when they did not understand the source of their fears. Could it be that this Voice distilling like a living mist upon the hearts of men has been the undiscovered cause of the troubled conscience and the longing for immortality confessed by millions since the dawn of recorded

history? We need not fear to face up to this. The speaking Voice is a fact. How men have reacted to it is for any observer to note.

Hearing God's Voice

When God spoke out of heaven to our Lord, self-centered men who heard it explained it by natural causes: they said, "It thundered." [John 12:29] This habit of explaining the Voice by appeals to natural law is at the very root of modern science. In the living breathing cosmos there is a mysterious Something, too wonderful, too awful [i.e., "awesome"] for any mind to understand. The believing man does not claim to understand. He falls to his knees and whispers, "God." The man of earth kneels also, but not to worship. He kneels to examine, to search, to find the cause and the how of things. Just now we happen to be living in a secular age. Our thought habits are those of the scientist, not those of the worshipper. We are more likely to explain than to adore. "It thundered," we exclaim, and go our earthly way. But still the Voice sounds and searches. The order and life of the world depend upon that Voice, but men are mostly too busy or too stubborn to give attention.

Everyone of us has had experiences which we have not been able to explain: a sudden sense of loneliness, or a feeling of wonder or awe in the face of the universal vastness. Or we have had a fleeting visitation of light like an illumination from some other sun, giving us in a quick flash an assurance that we are from another world, that our origins are divine. What we saw there, or felt, or heard, may have been contrary to all that we had been taught in the schools and at wide variance with all our former beliefs and opinions. We were forced to suspend our acquired doubts while, for a moment, the clouds were rolled back and we saw and heard for ourselves.

Explain such things as we will, I think we have not been fair to the facts until we allow at least the possibility that such experiences may arise from the Presence of God in the world and His persistent effort to communicate with mankind.

A Friendly Voice

The Voice of God is a friendly Voice. No one need fear to listen to it unless he has already made up his mind to resist it. The blood of Jesus has covered not only the human race but all creation as well. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." [Colossians 1:20] We may safely preach a friendly Heaven. The heavens as well as the earth are filled with the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. [Exodus 3] The perfect blood of atonement secures this forever.

Whoever will listen will hear the speaking Heaven. This is definitely not the hour when men take kindly to an exhortation to listen, for listening is not today a part of popular religion. We are at the opposite end of the pole from there. Religion has accepted the monstrous heresy that noise, size, activity and bluster make a man dear to God. But we may take heart. To a people caught in the tempest of the last great conflict God says, "Be still, and know that I am God," [Psalm 46:10] and still He says it, as if He means to tell us that our strength and safety lie not in noise but in silence.

Learning to Listen

It is important that we get still to wait on God. And it is best that we get alone, preferably with our Bible outspread before us. Then if we will we may draw near to God and begin to hear Him speak to us in our hearts. I think for the average person the progression will be

something like this: First a sound as of a Presence walking in the garden. Then a voice, more intelligible, but still far from clear. Then the happy moment when the Spirit begins to illuminate the Scriptures, and that which had been only a sound, or at best a voice, now becomes an intelligible word, warm and intimate and clear as the word of a dear friend. Then will come life and light, and best of all, ability to see and rest in and embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and All.

The Book that is Still Speaking

The Bible will never be a living Book to us until we are convinced that God is articulate in His universe. To jump from a dead, impersonal world to a dogmatic Bible is too much for most people. They may admit that they should accept the Bible as the Word of God, and they may try to think of it as such, but they find it impossible to believe that the words there on the page are actually for them. A man may say, "These words are addressed to me," and yet in his heart not feel and know that they are. He is the victim of a divided psychology. He tries to think of God as mute everywhere else and vocal only in a book.

I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever. Now we read the book as the

record of what God said when He was for a brief time in a speaking mood. With notions like that in our heads how can we believe? The facts are that God is not silent, has never been silent. It is the nature of God to speak. The second Person of the Holy Trinity is called the word. The Bible is the inevitable outcome of God's continuous speech. It is the infallible declaration of His mind for us put into our familiar human words.

I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is now speaking. The prophets habitually said, "Thus saith the Lord." They meant their hearers to understand that God's speaking is in the continuous present. We may use the past tense properly to indicate that at a certain time a certain word of God was spoken, but a word of God once spoken continues to be spoken, as a child once born continues to be alive, or a world once created continues to exist. And those are but imperfect illustrations, for children die and worlds burn out, but the Word of our God endureth forever.

If you would follow on to know the Lord, come at once to the open Bible expecting it to speak to you. It is more than a thing, it is a voice, a word, the very Word of the living God.

From: *The Pursuit of God* by A.W. Tozer



The One Thing Your Soul Needs

By Francis Chan

Yesterday some friends treated me to one of those all-you-can-eat places — high-quality Wagyu beef and seafood you dip in boiling soup. I ate until I couldn't eat anymore. It was so good.

Now, I didn't have to tell you that. I wanted to. I wanted to rub it in a little: I don't know what you had for lunch yesterday, but I guarantee mine was better. And that — that's evangelism. I experienced something amazing, and it isn't hard to talk about. It was just that good.

How Full Are You?

That's how it is meant to be in our walk with Jesus. We're so full, we've experienced something so good, that we can't shut up about it. So how alive are you? How full are you? Because if you're not full of life, you can't really preach good news — and you may need to understand how the Christian life actually works.

Alone With God

From the beginning, the Christian life has been about learning to be alone and to find life in the quiet. I love being alone with God. That's my center; that's what fills me. I have a little shed behind my house, and every morning I go in there — just me and God — and my whole heart leaps. Everything's fine, because

I'm alone with Him.

Psalm 90:14 says, "Satisfy us in the morning with Your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Is that what you feel in the morning? Are you ever just sitting there thinking, this is ridiculous — I'm with the Creator, and He's pouring His love into me? Honestly, is that you? Don't be ashamed either way. Just be honest.

A Person, Not a Belief System

This is the foundation, and if it's missing, we want that to change. Our faith isn't mainly a belief system; it's a relationship. He is a real Person. What's in this Bible isn't just words — these are the words of God, meant to lead you into the presence of a Person, so that you can say, "God, I love You, and You love me."

There are too many believers who feel empty: "I'm not satisfied. I need something else or I won't be happy." But if you need something besides Jesus to satisfy you, you'll never be truly satisfied. He is enough. If you need Jesus plus something, you'll never have enough. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God" (Psalm 42:1). That's what I feel inside — a craving. There's so much noise all day, and I just want to get alone and be with God. Get me alone in His presence, and I can survive anything.

The Only Sovereign

Yesterday I was meditating on 1 Timothy 6:15–16: “God, the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honor and might forever. Amen.”

Sovereign means control. God is the only one in control of anything. I can’t make a single thing happen today — I can’t get myself a better job, I can’t control my next breath. But God can, and He’s the only one. And that’s a relaxing thing. So much of our stress is just “I want this to happen, I want this to happen.” How much better to relax before God and say: I’m glad I’m not in control. I’m glad You are.

“Who alone has immortality.” There is only one Person who has life in Himself. I’m not immortal; I’m breathing because the only immortal One has decided to give me this breath. He depends on no one — everyone else depends on Him. That’s why James says you can’t announce, “Next year I’m going to do this or that.” You don’t know what tomorrow holds. You should say, “If the Lord wills, I’ll do this.”

“Who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.” Right now I can glance at the sun, but not for long. And God says, “I made that little light bulb. I dwell in light you cannot even approach.” So I think, this is the only right posture before You — I love to bow and know I’m secure in You. My life is not about making a name for myself. It’s not about my success, or how much I’ve achieved, or even my own happiness. I just want you to see Him — how blessed He is, how He alone is immortal, how He can satisfy you all your days. And then He turns and says, “And I love you.” You’re the only Sovereign, You dwell in unapproachable

light — and You’re crazy about me? You watched Your Son suffer and die so I could be forgiven of everything? God, just pour that love into my heart.

Then You Can’t Help but Talk About It

When you’ve tasted that fullness — the fullness that comes from the person of Jesus — it becomes natural to talk about Him. This is why Jesus got alone every morning before sunrise to be with the Father. When you know God, you can be in a dry, weary place and still find your cup overflowing.

Monastic, United, and Missional

But we’re not made to be alone with God and stop there. We’re made to be part of a body. Remember the one command: love one another as I have loved you. You have your time with the Lord so that you can come into the church and actually bless people — not show up empty every week needing to be filled, but overflowing, with something to give.

So if you’re not satisfied, maybe your time alone with God has gone missing. Or maybe you’re not joined to a body. And there’s a third thing: we’re also made to be missional. Monastic. United. Missional. It spells MUM — alone with God, joined to His people, sent into the world. Take one of those away and you won’t find the fullness you were made for.

“Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ... standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents” (Philippians 1:27–28). It’s good to share the gospel on your own. But Paul says something happens when we stand side by side, united and unafraid: it becomes a sign to our opponents. Much of our country hates



what we believe. If we were united and unafraid, the world would see that they were wrong. Because we're so often divided and terrified, they assume they're right. They're not. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, and His Word is true.

Go and Make Disciples

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18–20). There is something about the presence of God when we go out to make disciples. He says that in the very act of going, you'll experience Him.

Last Sunday I went to preach in the jail. At one point a man twice my size said, "I just take a little Jesus, a little Allah, a little Buddha — there's good in everything." My heart sank, because I knew I had to tell a man twice my size that he was wrong. I wasn't fearless. But I prayed, "Okay, God, You have to be with me," and I said, "You can't mix Him. Jesus says you shall have no other gods before Me. He says He is the Son of God, that He died for your sins and rose again. You can't blend that with a faith that says God has no son and Jesus

never died."

The more we talked, the more he opened up. Finally he admitted, "I keep coming in and out of here because I feel like God has to keep punishing me for what I did." I told him, "You're wrong again — and this is the best news. When the prodigal son came home expecting to be a slave, the father ran to him and put a robe on him and a ring on his finger. Our God isn't standing over you demanding you punish yourself. Jesus already took it. You can walk in freedom." And we gathered around him and prayed that he would feel it. That's life. That's the best.

Is That You?

So I'll ask honestly: are you monastic, united, and missional? You won't find the fullness of life if one of those is missing. Maybe some of this sounds like another language — maybe church has been religion to you, or you've been hurt by it, or you've simply been living for yourself. I don't want to talk you into anything. I want the Spirit of God to reach the core of you and make these things your own desire.

Full Sermon: https://youtu.be/V_yuhBMuDj4?si=kuS_BuE253iHlFYv

A Remedy for Too Much News

By Mike Judge

Before I was called to be a pastor, I trained as a journalist. For many years I was a media spokesman for a Christian organization, dealing with reporters almost daily, and today, alongside pastoring, I edit a Christian newspaper. I do not think I will ever lose that newshound instinct. But I am increasingly concerned about the way Christians consume and digest the news.

The Need for Wisdom

In this age of twenty-four-hour rolling news and social-media algorithms feeding us an endless stream of breaking headlines, we need wisdom. The Bible tells us that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 9:10) — not a cowering fear of a tyrant, but a reverent fear of a loving Father — and that if we lack wisdom we may ask God, who gives generously (James 1:5). Wisdom is not the same as knowledge; I have known many knowledgeable people who were not in the least wise, and many simple folk who were among the wisest I have met. Wisdom is good judgment to think and do what is right in God's eyes. So when you scroll the headlines, turn on the television, or open the newspaper, do it wisely. Does your heavenly Father approve of what you are viewing? Is it helping you

toward good judgment — or simply puffing you up, or even distorting your ability to see what is good and right? “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise” (Ephesians 5:15).

Show Self-Control

We also need self-control. Overeating can wreck your health, and so can overconsumption of the news. The number one platform for reading news is the smartphone, and the number one pathway is social media — whose addictive nature is well documented. The algorithms are built to keep us scrolling, handing out regular hits of dopamine and feeding us more of what we already like, until our perspective grows badly polarized. Many people check their phones compulsively every few minutes. Does that describe you? Christians should not be addicted to the news. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23); we are not to be intoxicated by anything — not wine, not greed, not the endless scroll. And if you have been hooked, remember that God “will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape” (1 Corinthians 10:13). So lock the device in a drawer, walk away, get some fresh air, talk to a friend, and

pray.

Discern What Is Primary

We need discernment, too. Sinclair Ferguson has said that true discernment is “not only distinguishing the right from the wrong; it means distinguishing the primary from the secondary, the essential from the indifferent, and the permanent from the transient.” The news media like to present everything as urgent, pressing, and vital — but of course most of it is not, especially compared with spiritual things. And we cannot speak of discernment without naming the worldly bias often present in the news. Mainstream journalists generally hold a worldview very different from our own; it is not only how stories are reported but which stories are chosen that can distort our picture of reality. That is partly why alternative media are growing so fast — but there too we need discernment, lest we tumble into rabbit holes of conspiracy and fringe. We are warned to “avoid foolish controversies... they are unprofitable and worthless” (Titus 3:9). There are good, godly, faithful outlets; learn to tell them from the rest.

Do Not Be Anxious

Amid the swirl of wars, pandemics, politics, crime, and scandal, it is easy to grow worried and depressed about the state of the world — and we can make ourselves needlessly anxious by consuming too much of it. Scripture counsels us against a fearfulness that doubts the sovereign care of the Lord: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). If the news is making you anxious, you may need to cut back sharply. Switch off the phone, shut the laptop, close the paper. Give your head and your soul

some time away from the drama, open the Scriptures, and remind yourself: “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand” (Proverbs 19:21).

Guard Your Heart

More and more infotainment masquerades as serious news — the latest celebrity gossip, the glossy pictures, all of it thrust before our eyes whether we look for it or not. Political commentary, too, is often laced with nasty invective that, if we are not careful, corrupts our own attitudes. So we must keep watch: “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Live as God’s Children

Do not misunderstand me. Journalism can be a noble calling, and the benefits of a free press are many. If we are to love our neighbor, we cannot be ignorant of the world; staying informed helps us speak the gospel to people who are crying out for truth. But many Christians are suffering from an unhealthy diet of too much news. Here is the Bible’s remedy: take a generous helping of wisdom, add a good deal of self-control and discernment, be aware of worldly bias, avoid needless anxiety, and guard your heart. In short, “Be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).

Read the Full Article: <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/too-much-news/>

God Has One Chosen People

Interview with J.D. Hall

If you listen to people online, every Christian is a Zionist. The proponents of this view will tell you that it is the de facto position on Israel and it always has been for Christians – to believe in the establishment and support and protection of a Jewish ethno state in Palestine.

Genesis chapter 12:3 says, “I will bless those that bless thee and curse those that curse thee.” And from that verse comes the theological notion that we as Christians have a duty-bound obligation to protect and to defend and also to help establish a nation for the Jewish people in Palestine.

Dispensationalism

Christian Zionism is tied to a theology called dispensationalism that was invented by John Nelson Darby. The term refers to different dispensations of time by which God operates differently and deals or interacts with man differently depending upon what dispensation of time it's in. So dispensationalism is juxtaposed against Covenant theology, and those are your two basic viewpoints of Christians throughout the history of Christianity.

The majority of the church from the first days of the Apostles through the church fathers, through the Protestant

reformation, whether we're talking Catholics or Eastern Orthodox or Protestant reformers, all of them are what you'd call Covenantal in their theology.

The New Covenant

Essentially the big difference is that Covenant theologians have always believed that God saves people via covenant. There was an old covenant in the Old Testament, and then Jesus came and inaugurated a new covenant.

Jesus did that at Passover right before he was crucified. The last supper, which was the last authentic Passover supper, was also the first Lord's supper, the first Eucharist. Jesus said, “This is the new covenant in My blood that's poured out for many.” And so in the new covenant, Jesus Christ is the means by which God's people are saved.

In the old covenant, the covenant people of God were Israel. And God, being very gracious, gave Israel rights and rituals for them to see as an explanation, a word picture of who their Messiah would be. So that when their Messiah came, they would say, obviously, that's what this is about.

Passover is a good example. Jesus was crucified at Passover. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the

world. All the imagery is right there for the Jewish people to see that this is the moment that we've been waiting for. Jesus installed the new covenant in His blood and by that, by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, we are redeemed by faith. And then we become God's chosen people.

Heirs of the Promise

So when someone quotes Genesis chapter 12:3, "I will bless those that bless thee and curse those that curse thee", a Christian covenant theologian is going to quote you Galatians 3:26-29

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So by faith, we're adopted into God's covenant people. Paul explains that those who believe in Christ are the children of Abraham, and we are the heirs of the promises. In Galatians 3:7 Paul also very clearly explains that the promise is not for the Jews. It never was for the Jews. The mission of God was much bigger than that.

Types & Shadows

Before Jesus came, God was preaching the Gospel through the rights and rituals of the Old Testament so that the Jews could understand concepts like grace and judgment and forgiveness and repentance. Because it was never about the sacrifice of bulls and goats. It's not as though that sacrificial blood shed ever took away sin. These rituals gave the Jews a picture of the blood that Jesus Christ would one day shed for us.

Through these practices they could

believe in what we call types and shadows. By putting their faith in the rituals that would one day be lived out in reality through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

A Global Messiah

And the great mystery of the gospel, as Paul calls it, is that Jesus was not just a Jewish Messiah. He was a global Messiah. He was everyone's Messiah. And that by faith we become the children of Abraham. And by faith, we receive Abraham's promises. In the very first part of Galatians chapter 3, Paul says that the promise is given to Abraham and to Abraham's seed. It doesn't say seeds plural. It says seed singular. The promise is a reference to Abraham's seed Jesus Christ. So the promise is: "Bless Christ and God will bless you."

Furthermore, not only is that promise just for Christ as the Seed of Abraham, but by the end of the chapter in Galatians 3, the Apostle Paul says, you are the heirs of the promise, meaning that promise is extended to us, Christian believers.

The irony is, you have Christian Zionists who believe that we have to bless Jews in order for God to bless us, and they're actually giving away their own inheritance. If you're a Christian, you're a child of Abraham. We receive the promises of Abraham because we inherit them by the virtue of of adoption in Jesus Christ.

That's what Christians have historically believed. There are other supporting texts, for example Romans chapter 9 where the Apostle Paul says that Jews who do not believe in Jesus are not children of Abraham. And Romans chapter 11 that paints the picture of the tree of faith in which unbelieving Jews are branches on this tree that have been cut off and severed from both Abraham

and God and in their place are grafted in believing Gentiles. So we are brought into the family of Abraham and in covenant with God by virtue of faith.

A Savior for All Mankind

There are glimpses in the Old Testament that God plans to redeem the entire world, and that it's not that God's mission on earth is just to protect this one group of people but everybody. Through Jesus Christ, every people group, every nation, every ethnos is going to be drawn to God in the end. That's our hope as Christians that God wins, that salvation is secured ultimately for every nation under the sun, and that God will bring unto Himself one chosen nation, one holy people for His possession.

When you talk to pastors about Israeli war crimes or the death stats in Gaza and you say, "Do you realize that almost eight people out of 10 that are being killed in Gaza are civilian non-combatants?" They will look at you and say that's propaganda from the Gaza ministry of health. But when Israel admitted those same figures in February, then that doesn't make the news.

It's really hard to convince someone who believes that Israel is chosen by God and special in a way that you're not special, for them to then evaluate what's happening in light of biblical ethics. They will think, "Who am I? I'm not special. Who am I to question God's special chosen people?"

And so that notion of God playing favorites, God having a special people based on ethnicity, that clouds their judgment from start to finish. It dismantles their ability to look objectively at what's happening in the Middle East.

But Scripture teaches the exact opposite message. In 1 Peter 2:9, the Apostle Peter says that we are God's chosen nation and royal priesthood and people for God's own possession. He's talking about the Christian church. We're the chosen nation.

Recently Mike Huckabee said that we have any eternal moral debt to the Jewish

people. How can he say that we have an eternal moral debt to the Jewish people? Jesus paid my debts. So this idea of an eternal moral debt is an affront to what Jesus actually accomplished.

Jesus belongs to the entire world and He came for all the nations. God the Son became an embryo and planted himself into the womb of a virgin, lived a life on earth that we should have lived and then He died a death on our behalf. He died as a substitute in our place vicariously on our behalf. And then proving that His sacrifice was accepted and that He truly is the Son of God, He rose again from the dead, 40 days later ascended to heaven.

That is the good news of the gospel: That Jesus shed His blood for sinners and that by faith we can all become the children of God, and by virtue of that we are children of Abraham. When I was a kid in church, there was a song that we sang, "Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord."

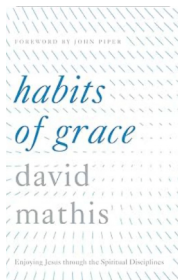
The story of Christianity is a universal promise to all people. God only has one chosen people, and that's those who believe in Jesus, whether they're Jewish, whether they're Gentile, it doesn't matter, we're all the children of God if we believe. Jesus came as a Savior of all mankind.

Watch the full interview here:
https://youtu.be/KN36yhie2_c?si=Cq_9tMwvjKEjH0OZ



Check It Out: Books, Apps etc.

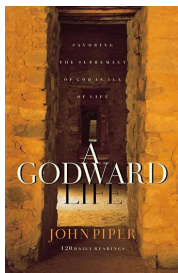
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Habits of Grace

By David Mathis

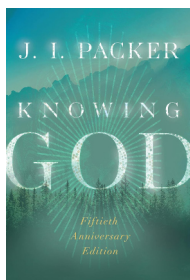
The everyday “habits of grace” we cultivate give us access to these God-designed channels through which his love and power flow—including the greatest joy of all: knowing and enjoying Jesus.



A Godward Life

By John Piper

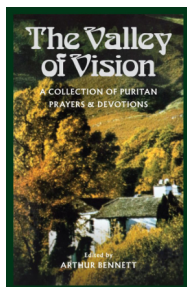
A Godward Life is a passionate, moving, and articulate call for all believers to live their lives in conscious and glad submission to the sovereignty and glory of God.



Knowing God

By J.I. Packer

For over fifty years, Knowing God has helped Christians discover the wonder, the glory, and the joy of knowing God. Explore the profound joy of both knowing about God and knowing Him personally through a close relationship with Jesus Christ.



The Valley of Vision

By Arthur Bennett

A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions. The strength of Puritan character and life lay in prayer and meditation. In this practice the spirit of prayer was regarded as of first importance and the best form of prayer, for living prayer is the characteristic of genuine spirituality.

I Set My Hope on Jesus

Song by Matt Boswell, Matt Papa, and Keith Getty

When this life of trials tests my faith
I set my hope on Jesus
When the questions come and doubts remain
I set my hope on Jesus
For the deepest wounds that time won't heal
There's a joy that runs still deeper
There's a truth that's more than all I feel
I set my hope on Jesus

Chorus:
I set my hope on Jesus
My rock, my only trust
Who set His heart upon me first
I set my hope on Jesus

Though I falter in this war with sin
I set my hope on Jesus
When I fail the fight and sink within
I set my hope on Jesus
Though the shame would drown me in its sea
And I dread the waves of justice
I will cast my life on Calvary
I set my hope on Jesus

Though the world call me to leave my Lord
I set my hope on Jesus
Though it offer all its vain rewards
I set my hope on Jesus
Though this heart of mine is prone to stray
Give me grace enough to finish
'Till I worship on that final day
I set my hope on Jesus

