

# COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE  
WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

## 3.1 Meditating on the Text Meditating and Memorizing

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Hey Family! Pastor Charles, here. And today, we are going to practice the art of meditating on the words of Jesus.

As disciples of Jesus, who are students of his words, we meditate on the words of Jesus in order to allow Scripture to read us, to ignite our imaginations, to engage our wills and to shape our hearts.

Now, it's no secret that my favorite holiday is Thanksgiving—and yes it is purely because of the food. Every year, my family would travel to the small town of Thomaston, AL, to meet our maternal grandparents and extended family. And the glorious family chefs would prepare a FEAST of greens, beans, mac & cheese, cornbread, ham, turkey, sweet potatoes, potato salad, you name it!

When I was a child, I treated Thanksgiving dinner as a sprint—consuming as many plates as possible as quickly as possible. To me, this was how you honored the chefs. But as I got older (and that metabolism started slipping through my fingers), I realized a better way to honor them and honor my own body. You see, Thanksgiving in the Williams-Smith household is a marathon. Slowing down, tasting every flavor, every note, every spice, every aroma, how every bite complements the next, discovering the hint of rosemary and other subtle herbs. These rich beautiful nuances of the meal begin to become alive. And my appreciation for the chef becomes so much more deeper.

Meditating on the words of Jesus and the words of Biblical writers before & after Him do the same thing. Like slowing down to eat, when we slow down to engage Scriptures, the rich beautiful nuances of the Text begin to become alive. Meditating on Scriptures is how we move from reading the words of Jesus to allowing the words of Jesus to read us.

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law

he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:1-3 NKJV

There are many different ways on how to slow down and meditate on Scripture. But, can I share three ways that have helped me to slow down?

- Silence. After reading a passage of Scripture, just shut up, pause, and take a moment to listen. When engaging with the Text, we should always invite the Spirit of God to illuminate the Text for us. When we sit in silence, listening over the Text, sometimes the Spirit nudges us with thoughts, questions, images, or a memory. Lean into those promptings by studying deeper. By taking the time to enter into silence after reading Scripture, we give room for the Spirit of God, the one who “searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10), to read alongside us in order to reveal new revelations or to simply sink into the richness of the passage.
- Free writing. Sometimes, when I want to sit in a passage, I pull out my journal, rewrite the passage, and then journal through whatever is on my heart & mind. It can be a thought, a personal experience, a connection to another Biblical story, a question, or even a prayer. Here I give myself complete freedom to allow myself to write out what Spirit is speaking to my heart. The best part about this method is that I now have a written record of my reflections. I love returning back to my free-writing journals from college or years ago, because it tells me so much of what God was doing within me and teaching me in that season.
- Lectio Divina. This is one of my favorite ways to marinate on Scripture. Lectio Divina, which is Latin for Divine Reading, is a contemplative practice where you read over a passage four times, each with a different intent.
  1. The first intent is a Lectio, a simple reading of the passage with the Spirit of God. It is encouraged to sit in stillness and pray a prayer of invitation before stepping into the passage. After reading, think through what words or phrases stick out to you and write them down.
  2. The second intent is Meditatio. As we read the passage again, our focus is on listening more closely to the heart of the passage with the Spirit of God. After reading, think through what Spirit may be speaking regarding this passage.
  3. The third intent is Oratio, meaning prayer. This is where we dialogue with the Spirit of God about the passage. After reading the passage, share any questions, memories, images, or stories that come to mind and follow that rabbit trail for a while.
  4. And the fourth (and final) intent is Contemplatio, which calls for us to simply rest in the passage. Here, there is no agenda beyond resting in the words & truths inspired by our God of compassion.

This is just scratching the surface on contemplative practices that help us to meditate on the words of Jesus. But do you see a theme here? I would argue that the theme is STILLNESS. When we get still before God, we get to, like Moses, stand in awe and wonder before our God who is compassionate & gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:5-7).

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Now next time you open up the Bible, posture yourself like it is Thanksgiving dinner by slowing down, savoring every flavor, every note, every spice, every aroma, and every herb the chef diligently prepared for us .