

## Reflecting on Scripture

We come to the end of our series on Measuring Up. We have looked at how we might grow in the Christian life and saw that firstly we need a spiritual context in which to grow - the local church and the encouragement (provocation) of other brothers and sisters.

Secondly there are a few basic spiritual practices - serving, giving and mission and we have looked at how we might grow in each of these areas and finally we have looked briefly at the spiritual disciplines, which undergird all spiritual life.

There is a whole range of spiritual disciplines:

Praise, thanks giving and confession, prayer, fasting, reflecting on Scripture, journaling, solitude and hearing from God. These are all valuable disciplines for every follower of Christ and these empower our spiritual practices and also enable us to take part fully in the local church. Today we conclude by looking at:

### **Reflecting on Scripture.**

As a spiritual discipline it is better to speak of Bible Reflection than Bible Reading as reflecting is so much more than just reading.

How do we tend to handle the Bible in the different stages of growth?

**1. Exploring Christ.** A person may find themselves devouring the Bible avidly; may read it through completely. Others try to read it but find it so difficult they give up so they prefer to hear people explaining the Bible, as we do in Christianity Explored.

**2. Growing in Christ.** A person may well find Bible Reading Notes helpful with the discipline of digging into the bible. Chris & Julie obtain notes for people, ask them if you would like to subscribe.

**3. Close to Christ.** Have fairly regular times most days of reading scripture, getting to know what the Bible is all about, may use daily notes and may take time to reflect on what it says or memorise verses of scripture.

**4. Christ-centred.** Has developed a substantial knowledge of the Bible. Sits down with it most days and spends time reflecting on it and journaling their reflections. Often reflects on scriptures during the day or at night in bed. They see reflecting on scriptures as essential in maintaining their relationship with the Lord.

### **What does the Bible Say**

The Bible actually speaks of reflecting on scripture in a number of places, but the two key passages are Joshua 1:8 & Psalm 1:1-3.

Jos 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; reflect on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Ps 1:1-3. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he reflects day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

An older word for reflecting is meditation, which you will find in your bibles in both these verses. But meditation has connotations with eastern mysticism and other odd practices so let's adopt this fresh term reflecting and reflection on Scripture.

The Heb word *hagah* translated at meditate or reflect actually means to moan or to mutter. Have you ever walked past someone in the street 'talking to themselves' or done it yourself? We all do it. We all to some extent reflect upon life. But too often our reflections are negative or unhelpful and feed our worries, our fears, our selfishness and many other ungodly things, rather than things that are 'true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy.' (Phil 4:8) So we tend to fill our lives with noise and business and information, so we don't have to be still and think. Solitude is an important human need and necessary for Bible Reflection. We have to go into our room and shut the door, or go out for a walk in a 'lonely place'.

So given that *hagah* means to mutter or talk to yourself, the key to Bible reflection is talking everything through with the Lord. It is form of prayer based around what we are reading in the Bible. It is easier to pray-read the Bible than it is to pray and it easier than reading the Bible. So when we reflect on scripture by pray-reading it back to God we turn every thought that comes to our minds into either: PRAISE, THANKSGIVING, CONFESSION, ASKING or INTERCEDING.

If you want a mnemonic to remember these think of IMPACT (Where M stands for mutter, discussing with the Lord, asking him questions, telling him what you think and how it make you feel, and C stands for Confessing both the truth & our sin.) Sometimes as we are reflecting a person may come to mind. This is not a distraction for the Devil, as I once thought it was. It means the Lord is drawing your attention to someone that he wants you to pray for using the thoughts that have come out of your reflections on a verse of scripture.

The best way I can teach this is by giving an example. So I am going to reflect on these two verses above, and hopefully this will illustrate how easily we can do this.

*(if you want to hear Phil's reflections on these two verses download the mp3)*

*(Otherwise have a go at writing your own reflections alongside the phrases below)*

Do not let :

This book of the Law :

Depart from your mouth :

Reflect on it :

Day & Night :

So that :

you may be careful to do :

everything written in it.

Then you will be :

Prosperous and successful.

Blessed is the man (opp. of cursed is the man)

Walk > stand > sit - a slippery slope.

counsel of wicked –( who are the wicked? See v 4-6)

they are not righteous - ie don't do what is right but what is wrong and not godly. There is a right way and the way of the wicked. The wicked are not well rooted but like the chaff blown around by the wind. So they cannot stand in 'the judgment'. But they love to give advice and persuade other to join in their wickedness. Rom 1:32

way of sinners - they will not stand in the assembly

of the righteous, They keep missing the mark.

seat of mockers - scornful, cynical unbelievers.

His delight is in the law of the Lord. (What is my delight?)

(So) and he reflects on his law day & night. (As before)

he is like a tree planted by streams of water

which yields its fruit – (good fruit Gal 5:22)

in season - times and seasons  
whose leaf does not wither -  
whatever he does prospers – (the same promise.)

Turn it all into IMPACT as you go!

*Phil Rogers 22/11/09*