



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

MEDITATING ON THE WORD OF GOD

KEY PASSAGE: James 1:1-4 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Joshua 1:8-9 | Psalm 63:6; 119:148 | Isaiah 9:7

► SUMMARY

As Christians, many of us read our Bibles and pray, but are we meditating on God's Word? And do we even know what this means?

When the Lord called Joshua to lead Israel after Moses' death, He told him, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Josh. 1:8). The Lord wanted to fill Joshua's heart with the Word so he would know precisely what to do and how to lead the people according to God's standards and commands. And that's exactly what He wants to do in our lives as well. If we'll meditate on Scripture, the Lord will unfold for us His truths and instructions.

► SERMON POINTS

Meditation involves three activities.

- **Shut out the world.** That means no television, phone calls, or other outside distractions.
- **Shut ourselves up to God.** Meditation is not a group activity but a private time alone with the Lord.
- **Focus our attention on a passage of Scripture.** This is not just a casual reading of God's Word before heading out the door, but a private conversation with the Lord. We begin by asking Him to reveal what He wants to say to us. Then we listen for His instructions and guidance while reading, thinking, and praying about the passage.

Effective meditation has four requirements.

- **Priority.** The devil will try to thwart our efforts to focus on God's Word because he knows we are absorbing it into our souls. If meditation is not a priority in our lives, we probably won't do it.
- **Place.** We need a private place where we can meet alone with God.
- **Purpose.** The purpose of meditation is to hear from the Lord. When we concentrate on His Word and seek His guidance, He sometimes uses very specific passages of Scripture to answer our requests. Once we've understood what He's told us, our trust in Him increases and our worries lessen.
- **Plan.** We must set aside a time to meet with the Lord to read His Word, ask for direction, and listen for His voice. This opportunity to be alone with Him will soon become the most precious part of each day as we learn to know almighty God more intimately and hear Him speak to us personally through Scripture.

Meditation includes three steps.

- **Observation.** Let's look at James 1:1-4. Begin by asking these questions: Who is the writer? To whom is he writing? What is the passage saying?
 - **Verse 1** says the letter was written by James, who was probably Jesus' half brother. He wrote to the 12 tribes who were dispersed abroad. Although these people lived a long time ago, Scripture was written for every generation, including ours. James gave clear instructions regarding what God desires to

accomplish through our trials and how we should respond to them.

■ **Interpretation.** What does the passage mean, and what can we learn from it? By focusing on these verses, our entire perspective regarding trials will be changed. Instead of being consumed by the hardships, we will understand what God is trying to achieve in our lives through them.

- **Verse 2,** “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.” In the midst of difficulties or suffering, we want relief from pain and a way out of hardship, but James says the solution is a change of attitude. Instead of becoming bitter or resentful, we are to count it as joy, not because we enjoy the experience but because we know God is sovereign over it and promises to walk through it with us. Our joy is in the Lord and His purpose, not in the situation.
- **Verse 3,** “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” The reason we can consider trials joy is because of what we know to be true. Whatever God sends or allows in our lives is not a random event but a test of our faith. His purpose for testing is approval not defeat. This is how we become strong and are able to endure. We’ll never develop this quality if life is always easy, and if we lack endurance, we may quickly yield to temptation or give up and walk away from God’s will. This verse teaches us that God is up to something good even when our circumstances look bad.
- **Verse 4,** “And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” If we refuse to endure our trials, we short-circuit God’s purpose for allowing them. He has a perfect result in mind—that we may be perfect and complete. The word perfect does not mean sinless but complete, strong, and mature. The Lord loves us so much He doesn’t want us to lack any of these qualities.

■ **Application.** Based on what we’ve just learned, how should we respond? How does God want us to think about our trials? The following are a few specific practices to help us rejoice even in trouble or suffering:

- **Continue meditating on this passage until it becomes real in our thinking and belief system.** Once we truly believe this, we’ll be able to confidently face whatever we’re going through.
- **Continually affirm that God loves us unconditionally.** Knowing that He always does what is best for us increases our trust in Him.
- **Ask the Lord to show us what specific areas of our lives He’s targeted for spiritual growth.** Each trial is designed to strengthen us in a particular area of weakness.
- **Agree with God that the end result is worth the pain.** Whatever He allows us to go through is for our benefit.

Meditation is a gratifying and rewarding experience that increases our intimacy with the Lord and our fascination with the Bible as we hear Him speak to us personally through His Word. God has also given us His indwelling Holy Spirit, who enables us to interpret Scripture rightly and empowers us to apply it to our lives.

► RESPONSE

- If you consistently meditate on Scripture, how has it affected your relationship with the Lord? Your trust in Him? Your perspective on life? Your thought patterns?
- If meditation on the Word is new to you, what can you do to make it happen? How do you think it will affect your life and your relationship with God?
- How has meditation on James 1:1-4 changed your perspective regarding trials? What have you learned about God and His purposes? How does He specifically want you to apply this to your life?

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