

- I. Welcome to Week 3 of the Meeting with God Core Seminar. We're glad you're here. Let's start with a quick review of the past two weeks.
  - A. In the first week, we considered three things: Anybody remember what they were? They started with "P's."
    1. **SLIDE: Possibility:** that it is possible to meet with God
    2. **Participation:** that meeting with God is something that we should do.
    3. **Plan:** that God has provided a plan to meet with Him through Jesus our Mediator.
      - a) We've also considered the value of meeting with God and what exactly it is over the last two weeks.
        - (1) **SLIDE:** And, as you can see on the front of your handout, or maybe you remember...we learned that meeting with God is the ***"daily time that we set aside for fellowship with God in His Word, in prayer and through the church so that we would know Him more, know ourselves in light of Him, and know the world according to God's perspective"***
  - B. **SLIDE:** Well last week, we began our discussion of *how* we can meet with God, and we focused on what Donald Whitney calls *"Bible intake"*...
    1. Which is how we meet with God through His Word, the Bible.
      - a) **SLIDE:** It's during this meeting time where we can take full advantage of all five components of Biblical intake, listed on your handout:
        - (1) Hearing
        - (2) Reading
        - (3) Studying
        - (4) Memorizing
        - (5) Meditating
      - b) So maybe think of these 5 not so much as a buffet to pick and choose from...

(1) As in, *“Ooo I think I’ll try the hearing collard greens or the memorizing mystery meat or study the chocolate wonder fall...”*

c) **SLIDE:** Instead, think of these five things like a hand.

(1) The illustration of the hand shows us why exercising these five components of Bible intake are important.

(a) **SLIDE:** Because if we only do one or two of these things, we can’t possibly hold onto God’s word.

(b) However, when we utilize all five of these components, we have a firm grasp on the Word.

2. Last week, we considered the first two fingers...

a) Hearing God’s Word and reading God’s Word.

b) Tonight, we’re going to take some time to examine the other three:

(1) Studying, memorizing, and meditating.

(2) Because, again, if we are to grow in godliness and have a firm grasp of the Word...

(a) Then we need to begin to understand and apply *all* of these tools.

(b) So let’s pray for our time together this evening.

II. **SLIDE:** Let’s open God’s Word to our key text for this evening. Can I get a blessed reader to read Psalms 1:1-3: **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his 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 that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers.”**

A. This is what we want to be as people who intake the Bible: People who are like trees planted near streams of water that yield fruit.

**1. Questions: Can anyone interact with this text and make some comparisons to a tree planted by streams of water and us planted by the living waters of God's Word?**

- a) **Root:** When winter or the storms inevitably come, we want to be rooted so firmly in God's word that we do not wither.
- b) **Fruit:** We want to provide good fruit for the hungry who may approach our branches, even if they don't know what kind of nourishment they need.
- c) It says "in all that he does, he prospers". When we think about prospering, we need to be careful.
  - (1) The Bible is speaking here not of health, wealth, or prosperity according to the world's definition, but of *God's* idea of prosperity.
  - (2) That's really important to keep in mind as we think about meeting with God through His Word. We want to prosper according to His definition, not ours.
- d) **Natural Growth:** And here's the thing about trees planted near streams...they can't help but bring in water through their roots because of their location by the stream...
  - (1) We should be sure that the Lord *will* make us strong through the Living Waters of His Word when we are in it.
  - (2) Christians with little to gain on earth and much to lose have testified to this truth throughout the ages...
    - (a) We talked about Luther and Tyndale last week but just as a reminder if you go to the class website there is a link to Desiring God's Reformation stories where they do an excellent job of telling short stories of men and women in the Reformation who understood the sheer value of being planted near God's Word.

III. Let's now take a closer look at our three components for today.

IV. **SLIDE: Studying the Bible**

- A. **SLIDE:** Donald Whitney describes it like this: *“If reading the Bible can be compared to cruising the width of a clear, sparkling lake in a motorboat, studying the Bible is like slowly crossing that same lake in a glass-bottomed boat.”*
1. So crossing the lake in a motorboat gives us a sweeping overview of the lake, and we can get an idea of its depths from just being out on the boat.
    - a) And it’s important to get that overview.
      - (1) But the glass-bottom boat of studying the Bible takes you beneath the surface for the clarity and detail that would be otherwise impossible for those who just pass by quickly.
  2. So if you remember, we looked at Nehemiah 8 last week as an example of *hearing* God’s Word, when Ezra read and taught publicly.
    - a) Ezra himself provides us with an important example of *studying*, as well.
      - (1) **SLIDE:** Ezra 7:10: ***“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”***
        - (a) Ezra had come to Jerusalem to teach the people the laws of God and to lead them in the worship of God.
          - i) His heart was set on studying, living out, and teaching God’s law to His people.
          - ii) Ezra’s passion was for the Word of God.
            - (1) In fact, Ezra 7:9 tells us that *“the good hand of his God was on him.”*
            - (2) And what we see is that it pleases God when His people have hearts devoted to His Word.
- B. ***But the question is how do we study God’s word?***
1. Studying the Bible gets us into the depths of God’s word to carry on our glass-bottom boat illustration...
    - a) But how do we plumb those depths?

(1) Well...commentaries, concordances, and seminary degrees certainly help.

(2) But they aren't necessary for good study of God's word.

(a) In fact, let me tell you this...

i) My last semester at Dallas Seminary I was taking a Biblical Theology class and we were studying Gerhardus Vos' historical understanding of the development of post-modern Biblical Theology.

(1) Pretty heady stuff.

ii) And there was probably 7 of us in the class and if I remember correctly we were talking like we understood what we were talking about...

(1) Stuff like: "Well actually if you read Goldsworthy..."

(2) Yes but as Richtl said.

(3) Just real insufferable stuff from 25 year olds.

iii) And all of a sudden my professor takes off his glasses and he says, *"Boys...boys in 3 months time you will walk across a stage. And they will give you a piece of paper saying that you are a Master of Theology. Boys do not believe them when they do."*

(1) There's no such thing as an arrival on the journey of studying the Bible.

(2) Because the riches of God's Word are bottomless.

C. So again, how do we plumb those bottomless depths? I think there are three primary things that you need:

1. **SLIDE: A heart reliant on the Holy Spirit for understanding**

a) Pray and ask God to give you understanding by the Holy Spirit.

b) This is the role that the Holy Spirit plays in our lives.

(1) He illuminates our understanding of the Bible.

- c) As we discussed last week, Jesus promised in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit would come, remind us of His words, and teach us from the scriptures.
- d) So J.I. Packer passed away last year...
  - (1) He was a giant....but in his book *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, Packer said that the Holy Spirit has a floodlight ministry, which means that He illuminates God's Word.
    - (a) Good way to think about that is that if you've ever been to Washington at night.
    - (b) When we lived in Annapolis, MD, I used to go visit my dad for dinner when he was up in Northern Virginia on a business trip.
    - (c) And to get home at night, we'd cross the Potomac and there was the Jefferson Memorial and the Washington Monument...lit up with brilliance.
    - (d) But you know what you couldn't ever see?
      - i) The floodlights that illuminated them.
      - ii) **And yet you would never be able to see these monuments and memorials without the millions of dollars of lights that illuminate them.**
- e) Without God giving us His Spirit to understand, remember, and apply His Word, we will read the Bible no differently than we would a history book.
  - (1) In your study of the Bible, rely on the Holy Spirit to help you see and understand what you read.

**2. SLIDE: And when approaching God's Word, we should have a heart curious to understand.**

- a) This is especially important if you're pretty familiar with the Bible, because often we can get trapped in the thought that "*I've read this before*" and assume we can't learn anything else.

(1) So let's turn to Romans 11:33-36 to see how Paul approached meeting with God.

(a) This passage in Romans 11 will help us to think about our own knowledge of God's Word.

**(b) SLIDE: Romans 11:33-36: Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

i) If you know anything about Paul...he's not exactly a guy given to flowery language...

(1) He's very logical, very analytical...he understood clearly the doctrine and implications of God and the Gospel...

(2) What's more, he probably knew Christ better than any other man living at that time and had even encountered Christ personally on the road to Damascus.

(3) He knew God intimately...and yet it is clear from this passage that He was consistently amazed and astounded at the person and works of God.

(2) So if Paul, who knew God so well, could speak this way of God, may we never think that we can grow tired of God's Word.

(a) When we come to study God's Word, we should come with a heart reliant on the Holy Spirit and ever-deepening curiosity for understanding.

**3. SLIDE: What else do you need to Study God's Word? I know this may be obvious but you need a Bible.**

- a) Everything you need is in the text.
  - (1) Using the Bible to study the Bible is called inductive study.
    - (a) **SLIDE:** This kind of study brings you directly to the word of God apart from someone else's understanding or interpretation. And it involves four skills:
      - i) **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
      - ii) **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
      - iii) **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
      - iv) **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.
        - (1) Or H.E.A.R. if you would

D. Let's spend a few minutes considering each of these three skills.

1. **SLIDE: Skill 1: Highlight**

- a) As you read through a passage of scripture with the intention of studying it, train yourself to ask yourself several questions. **Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?**
  - (1) These questions are the foundation of observing the text and will help us to explain and apply the text better.
    - (a) If you've noticed, this is the method that is used here at Faith Fellowship in our Small Group Guides...
- b) **SLIDE:** Let's try it with Romans 12:1: **"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."**
  - (1) Let's use those questions quickly to study this verse.
    - (a) **Who is saying this? Who is speaking?**



i) (Answer: Paul)

(b) ***Who is he speaking to?***

i) (Answer: Christians in Rome...the book is called Romans.)

(c) ***What is he saying? Just the words here, not the meaning yet. Is he asking a question? Giving a command? An encouragement? A rebuke?***

i) (Answer: He is encouraging them by way of a command to live holy lives – pointing them back to what we read in Romans 11)

(d) ***Why is he telling them this - to live holy lives?***

i) Because this is what the Christians were called to do.

ii) This was their spiritual service of worship to God; living holy and sacrificial lives.

(e) ***How does he make this appeal?***

i) He makes this appeal “*by the mercies of God.*”

ii) Now what does that mean you think?

(1) Paul knew that *he* could not command spiritual things of people.

(2) He relied on God’s authority and grace.

(3) Paul wanted to make it exceedingly clear to his audience...as he so often did...that he was relying on God’s power, not his own.

(2) Great job!

(a) If you’re thinking that you don’t know how to study the Bible or you’ve never done it before...notice that for that one verse it only took us a few minutes to go through and answer some questions to help us understand the text better.

i) You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to study the Bible.

(1) God gave us His word and the Holy Spirit so that we could know Him.

(2) He is not trying to confuse us by His word.

(3) He has made it accessible.

- ii) This first step to highlight the text... reading and observing everything in the text...it helps us to understand what the verse says.

## 2. **SLIDE: Skill 2: Explain**

a) The second skill of ***explanation*** helps us understand what the verse *means*.

b) Let me quickly give you three basic guidelines that help us in discovering what the passage means in context.

### (1) **SLIDE: First guideline of explaining a passage: remember that context rules**

(a) Think about the verse in light of the surrounding verses.

- i) So as you study, ask yourself: *“Is my explanation and interpretation of a passage of scripture consistent with the theme, purpose and structure of the book where it is found?”*

(1) Even though it’s very easy to do, we should never take a scripture out of context to make it say what we want it to say.

- ii) A good way to keep from doing this is to read the entire chapter or book before you focus on studying a particular passage or verse.

(b) Examples

- i) **SLIDE:** Jeremiah 29:11...

(1) Jeremiah isn’t talking about immediate prosperity.

- ii) **SLIDE:** Philippians 4:13...

(1) Paul isn’t talking about football.

### (2) **SLIDE: Second rule of explanation: always seek the full counsel of God**

(a) Interpret God’s word against other Scriptures.

- i) When you know God's word thoroughly, you won't accept a teaching simply because someone has used a couple of isolated verses to support their idea.
  - ii) Knowing the whole of Scripture is your safeguard against false teaching and false doctrine.
    - (1) This is why we read and study.
- (b) There are times in our lives when we may not need to sit down and study every verse as much as taking time to simply read so that we can have a good foundation of the broader scope of scripture.
- i) Like we discussed last week, a good practice is to read the Bible in its entirety every year so that you're constantly confronted with the Bible's full scope.
    - (1) That takes time!
    - (2) If that's too ambitious for you at this point...a good way to start would be to expand your horizon to include less popular books like Lamentations, Nahum, Revelation or Obadiah.
    - (3) Or use one of the Bible Reading Plans we put out on the website...
  - ii) Start with bite-sized chunks but just remember 2 Tim. 3:16 – that “*all* scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.”
    - (1) Let's seek to know all of it.
- (3) **SLIDE: *Third rule of interpretation: look for the single meaning of the passage***
- (a) Always try to understand what the author had in mind when you interpret a portion of the Bible.

(b) This is what David Helm calls inebriated preaching when preachers do this...

i) **SLIDE:** He says: *“Some preachers use the Bible the way a drunk uses a lamp post...more for support than illumination.”*

(1) What he’s getting at is don’t twist its message to support a meaning that isn’t clearly taught.

(2) Don’t use a passage of Scripture to be a launch pad for something else that the author didn’t intend.

(3) We need to interpret the Bible as it was originally intended to be interpreted.

3. **SLIDE:** The third skill of studying the Bible is **application**.

a) Knowing what a verse says and what it means should help us to shape our lives around its teaching.

(1) We’re not people who gain an understanding of God and then do nothing.

(a) **SLIDE:** Instead, we should strive to resemble those people described in

James 1:22. **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only,**

**deceiving yourselves.”** If we hear the word or read it or study it and

don’t do anything about it, we are deceiving ourselves. **“For if anyone is**

**a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks**

**intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and**

**goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”**

i) Can you imagine looking at yourself in the mirror every day and then forgetting who you are once you leave the mirror?

(1) Yeah no.

(2) God’s Word should and does change us.

4. **SLIDE:** The final skill of studying the Bible is **responding in prayer**.

- a) Remember that Bible study is not you and the Bible by yourselves.
  - (1) As I used to say to guys and girls who sat really close to each other in high school youth group...you gotta make room for the Holy Spirit y'all...
    - (a) This is the finishing glue that binds everything together that you've done because remember, your just reading a book without the illumination of the Spirit.

**5. SLIDE: Question: which of the four steps (Highlighting, Explaining, Applying, Responding in Prayer) of Bible study do you find easiest or most difficult?**

- (a) Along with studying, an important and necessary means for receiving the word of God in our minds and lives is *memorization*. That's our second area of Bible intake for today.

**V. SLIDE: Memorization**

A. Committing the Word of God to memory helps us in a lot of ways.

- 1. Knowing God's Word by heart means that we can think on it anywhere we go.
  - a) All the benefits of the Bible, and ultimately knowing God Himself, are at the forefront of our minds.
  - b) Scripture itself tells us of many of the benefits of memorizing God's word. Let's look at a few.

**B. SLIDE: Benefit 1: Victory over sin**

- 1. **SLIDE: Psalm 119:11-13: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."**

- a) This is *not* a formula.
  - (1) It does not mean that if we memorize 10 verses this month...then when we're tempted, we're guaranteed victory over sin.

- (2) It *does* mean that by filling our minds and hearts with God's word we may be less deceived by sinful temptation...
- (3) And that certainly when we're tempted we'll have the word of the Lord there as a reminder of what is really good and right.
  - (a) **SLIDE:** Consider what Jesus taught:
    - i) *"Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34)"* and *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matt. 6:21)."*

C. **SLIDE: Benefit 2: Victory over Satan**

- 1. Satan is real.
  - a) As 1 Peter 5:8 says, he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking those whom he may devour.
    - (1) We are called to be like Jesus, so what did he use to defeat the devil?
      - (a) Lightning?
      - (b) Cosmic firearms?
      - (c) No, Jesus defeated Satan with scripture.
        - i) **SLIDE:** We spoke of Matthew 4:4 last week, when Jesus told the devil, *"It is written, man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*
          - (1) Satan cannot stand against the truths of scripture but see this is a reason why its important to study God's verse...
          - (2) It's not like Jesus was Gandalf out in the wilderness hurling Bible verses at the Balrog...
            - (a) Jesus understood their meaning...the three verses Jesus said to Satan were from Deuteronomy and they were all about His identity as God's Son.
            - (b) His understanding of Scripture was His power...again another reason to study it.

D. **SLIDE: Benefit 3: Preparation for witnessing and counseling**

1. Scripture memory can prepare us for unexpected gospel conversations.
  - a) Proverbs 25:11 says, “*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*”
    - (1) It is good and right when we’re ready with the word of God when it needs to be spoken.

E. So, we’ve seen some of the benefits of scripture memory. Let’s talk about some of the challenges of trying to do it.

1. **SLIDE: What if you don’t have a good memory?**

- a) Well, memorizing scripture is not about having a good memory.
- b) It’s about fighting for our souls.
  - (1) We remember what’s important to us.
    - (a) Our phone numbers.
    - (b) Our passwords.
    - (c) Mom’s or spouse’s birthday.
    - (d) Our way back home.
    - (e) Movie quotes.

2. **SLIDE: What if you’ve never memorized scripture before?**

- a) John Piper provides us with a few practical tips:
  - (1) **SLIDE: Pray** – that the Lord would help you to desire the Word, understand it, and remember it.
  - (2) *Set aside time* – just like reading and studying, you won’t do it if you haven’t made time. Use your commute!
  - (3) *Repeat the text* – Ten times read, ten times said.
  - (4) *Review the text*– Do it again the next day, and the next day, etc., etc.
  - (5) *Memorize word for word* – each individual word is important to get right. Again, we’re talking about God’s word.

3. And ultimately, by God's grace, memorizing God's word will help us meditate on it.
  - a) Meditation on scripture is a lost discipline in this age.
    - (1) But the Puritans warned that, "If you continue to neglect meditation, it will dampen or destroy your love for God."
      - (a) So what then does meditation mean?

## VI. **SLIDE: Meditation**

### A. **SLIDE: Question: What do you think of when you think of meditation?**

1. If you look up the word "meditate" in the dictionary, you may find the following definition "*to engage in thought or contemplation; to reflect.*"
2. That's a helpful definition, especially in light of the common idea of meditation today.
  - a) If you Google the word "meditate," most of the sites will be focused on one of four things:
    - (1) Trying to relax yourself;
    - (2) Meditating for good health;
    - (3) Buddhist meditation techniques
    - (4) The healing power of meditation.
      - (a) The Wikipedia entry defines meditation as "*a mental discipline by which one attempts to get beyond the conditioned, 'thinking' mind into a deeper state of relaxation or awareness.*"
        - i) This is *not* our goal when we talk about biblical meditation.
        - ii) **SLIDE: Richard Foster says, "Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian mediation is an attempt to fill the mind."**
  - b) Our goal in meditation is not to *empty* our minds, but to *fill* them with the truth of God.



- c) **SLIDE:** Biblical meditation focuses on the objective truth of who God is as revealed through his Word.
- (1) In Joshua 1:8, God commanded Joshua, *“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. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”*
- (a) Psalm 1, which we saw earlier today, speaks of meditating day and night on the law of the Lord.
- (b) **SLIDE:** Richard Foster wrote: **What happens in meditation is that we create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct an inner sanctuary of the heart.**
- (c) **SLIDE:** Thomas Watson defined meditation as **“a holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves.”**
- i) We live in a time that is so distracting and full of information that carving out time to meditate with careful focus on the truths of God is difficult.
- (1) In our society Satan has three major weapons at his disposal:  
noise, hurry, and crowds.
- (2) Carl Jung once said, “Hurry is not of the Devil; hurry is the devil.”
- (a) Origin for distracted...Braveheart**
- (b) Anyone feel like this?
- (d) To grow in godliness, we have to discipline ourselves.
- i) Sometimes we just need to turn off the computer or the TV or the mobile device, get alone with God, and turn our minds and our hearts toward his truth.

- ii) When we live distracted lives, it's much easier to be tempted to believe the lies of Satan about God and about ourselves.
- iii) Remember Jesus' prayer from last week in John 17:17 – *“Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth”*.
  - (1) God's word is our only reliable source of truth so we should meditate on it!
- d) The best way to meditate may be to choose a passage or verse or idea from your quiet time that impacts you the most as you read or study.
  - (1) Once you've selected a passage, there are several ways to engage yourself on a deeper level.
    - (a) It might help to rewrite the verse or passage in your own words.
    - (b) Some find that writing is their most helpful form of meditation
    - (c) Or, you might prefer to just read and re-read the passage over and over, that you might remember it and think on it.

**3. SLIDE: QUESTION: What are some other ways that you have found helpful to engage in meditation?**

- (1) Pray through the text – both for yourself and others – meditation fuels prayer
- (2) Don't rush – be patient and take your time
- (3) Sometimes reading less is more
  - (a) The goal of meditation is to meet with God, so that we might know him, know ourselves, and know God's world according to His perspective.
  - (b) It's spending effort and energy to know God's word in our mind and heart.
  - (c) It's repeating these thoughts and verses in our minds that we might, as God so often instructs us, remember Him and the truth.
  - (d) **SLIDE:** With that in mind, let's be like the psalmist in Psalm 77:11-12 when he says, **“I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will**

**remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.”**

4. This is the way of Jesus...Jesus the Philosopher...
5. Ultimately, we can think no greater thoughts of God than what He already really is. So, let's allow scripture to drive us into a deep pondering of God.
  - a) As the hymn on your handout says, "Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee / Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attending / Ponder anew what the Almighty can do / If with His love He befriend thee".
    - (1) Ponder who He is.
    - (2) What kind of a God would create the world from nothing?
      - (a) What kind of a God would part the sea to save His people from sure death?
      - (b) What kind of a God would send and sacrifice His own son so that His people could be restored to Him, to glorify and enjoy Him forever?
    - (c) Questions?
    - (d) Let's pray.