

### A. MORE OF GOD

- Having God's Living & Active Word planted deeply within our hearts allows us to fulfill our life's greatest purpose – to know God more intimately and progressively.
- The Lord reveals Himself to us primarily through Scripture. Our pursuit of deeper relationship with Him requires us to internalize His Word and to let it change us: James 1:21 – 25 JBP -- Have done, then, with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept the message that God has sown in your hearts, and which can save your souls. Don't I beg you, only hear the message, but put it into practice; otherwise you are merely deluding yourselves. The man who simply hears and does nothing about it is like a man catching the reflection of his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, it is true, but he goes on with whatever he was doing without the slightest recollection of what sort of person he saw in the mirror. But the man who looks into the perfect mirror of God's law, the law of liberty (or freedom), and makes a habit of so doing, is not the man who sees and forgets. He puts that law into practice and he wins true happiness.
- We grow most in our relationship with God and His Word when pursuing abiding, faith, prayer, plus dealing with what hinders (spiritual warfare, scars, sin). (Lessons 15 & 16)
- Practicing meditation while having these spiritual essentials as our foundation will allow us to receive the greatest benefit from God's Living & Active Word!
- God says meditation will prosper our inner lives and strengthen us to live according to His Word in any circumstance. (See Joshua 1:1-9, God's Living & Active Word, Lessons 7 & 8)
- Brief bites of many different passages won't provide optimal spiritual nourishment. Instead, meditation will ground us and cause us to flourish: Ps 1:1-3 NLT -- Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.
- "Total fulfillment and well-being. How do we get that? The answer in Psalm 1 is that blessedness comes to a person who has learned to meditate on the law of the Lord. That's an enormous promise. So let's ask ourselves what we can learn about meditation, which is one of the disciplines by which we work grace into every nook and cranny of our lives."(Keller)
- Insights:

### B. MAXIMIZING DEPTH

- It is hard to consistently meditate even though we truly want to know God more and experience the blessed life. It can be especially difficult getting started.
- Deep contemplation of Scripture is so incredibly different from the way we operate in the world! We must come to the practice knowing how to handle the challenges:
  1. Quieting busy minds is challenging! Before interacting with the Scripture try focusing on the breath: slow down your breathing with deep inhales and exhales.
  2. Worship music is another way to break from the world and turn your attention on God. Choose songs with lyrics about God's character, love and goodness.
  3. Distracting thoughts will intrude. Have a pen and pad handy so that you may quickly jot down anything important. Promise yourself that you will get to it.

4. Remember that your ability to maintain stillness will grow with practice.
  5. Bible study and meditation are complementary. Christian meditation doesn't empty the mind but allows God's Word to occupy both head and heart.
  6. Meditation, by definition, involves returning to the same passage repeatedly. This enables the words to go deeper and our understanding to increase.
  7. The experts suggest 10 - 12 verses per meditation session. If your chosen portion is longer, divide it up and devote more days to it. (Jan Johnson)
  8. Prayerfully contemplating Scripture is the best way to begin to recognize God's voice. His thoughts are different than ours and will have the ring of love and truth.
  9. If you are unsure if God was the source of your insight, make sure it lines up with the Scriptures. Running your insight by a mature believer is also helpful.
  10. Sometimes (especially when spending multiple days in a passage) there won't be any new thoughts. This is normal and allows you to go deeper on previous truths.
  11. It is not unusual for tears of awe, gratitude, or relief to flow as you push deeper into God's presence. You are on holy ground and your inner being senses this.
  12. God's Word will reveal hidden things that are in need of restoration and emotions of all kinds may surface. Don't resist but receive this cleansing, healing work.
- We now know that the practice of meditation is greatly beneficial, prescribed by God Himself and yet full of challenges.
  - Let's make the choice to pursue knowing God more with this powerful practice. Prayerfully consider how you might make room for meditation in your weekly routine.
  - LISTENING EXERCISE:
    - *Please highlight which of the items listed above will prove to be the greatest obstacles for me personally as I seek to know You more through meditation:*
    - *Lord, I pray that You would show me specifics on how to start this practice so that I might experience the blessings that You have promised to those who meditate. What windows of time in my typical week provide the best opportunity?*

*How many times each week is it realistic for me to meditate (15 – 30 min)?*

*I ask you now to help me see when and where the enemy attempts to thwart my fellowship with You by using fear, shame or pride. I want the abundance You offer:*

### C. MEDITATION MODEL

- Lectio Divina is a meditation model that helps us know God more. It consists of 4 readings of a short passage, going deeper each time, and combining it with prayer.
- As you come to this time in God's presence, take a few minutes to calm your mind. Appropriate God's Word: "Be still and know that I am God." (Ps 46:10)

### 1. READ (Lectio)

- Read through the passage slowly. Take a brief pause between sentences. This reading is to take in the general content of the text.
- It may be helpful to read aloud. Try it both ways as you continue to practice this model.
- End this first reading with a time of silence. Tune in to the reality that the Spirit is right there to lead you into what He wants you to see and experience.

### 2. RECEIVE (Meditatio)

- In this reading, focus on what the Lord has to say to you personally in this passage.
- If your Scripture is a narrative/story, allow yourself to enter the scene. Tune into the setting, the sensory cues, the people and the message.
- For teaching passages that consist of principles vs. stories, be open to the Spirit revealing new layers of meaning or addressing an issue in your life.
- Read the Scripture again and notice what part draws your attention. You may want to circle a word or a phrase or jot it down.
- Silently focus on the portion that has spoken to you. Let it penetrate your mind and heart. Notice how your inner being is impacted by these words.
- Now pray, thanking God for His presence and His Living & Active Word.

### 3. RESPOND (Oratio)

- Reread the passage a third time with the purpose of responding back to God about what He has shown you through it.
- Be ready to follow His lead, as you pray asking what His Word is saying to you a) about Him, b) about yourself or c) about something He wants to give you.
- Respond to the nudges you've felt in prayer. Tell the Lord that you are ready and willing to follow Him as you count on His enabling power to do so.

### 4. REST (Contemplatio)

- The fourth reading is about connecting with God and how His Word has ministered to you vs. gathering new insights or information.
- Enjoy the sense of the Lord's nearness and savor the truths He has spoken. Linger and allow His message to go deeper.
- Pray, expressing your love for Him and your desire to experience more of Him and His good, acceptable and perfect will for your life. (Romans 12:2)

- God has more for you! Return to this text 1-2 more times to gain greater depth.

### ● LISTENING EXERCISE

#### 1. READ: Is 43:1-7 NLT –

But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine.

<sup>2</sup>When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

<sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

<sup>4</sup>Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me.

You are honored, and I love you. <sup>5</sup>"Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west.

<sup>6</sup>I will say to the north and south, 'Bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth.

<sup>7</sup>Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them."

2. RECEIVE – *On this 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, what word or phrase most drew your attention. Write it here:*

3. RESPOND – *Focus on the portion you wrote in the “Receive” section. Pray:*

*What do You want to plant deep within my soul?*

*Is there a specific way You want me to respond?*

4. REST – *Savor the Lord’s presence and the message He has imparted. Let it sink in deeply.*

### PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING

Briefly record your takeaway from the Lectio Divina practice on Isaiah 43:1-7:

- PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse or principle stood out to you this week? Write it below taking some time to review it often. Be still in God’s presence, alert for new insights. Record them here.

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

Prayerfully consider the Listening Exercises from this lesson. Ask the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal any specific faith steps He is calling you to take. Write down your insights.