



forgiveness and brotherly kindness, and being dependable, people use their membership, and the threat of leaving, as a form of bribery to get their way. When they don't get their way, off they go to another congregation to exchange their old problems for a set of new ones yet to be realized. Then the process begins again.

I wonder if much of the "church hopping" we see today would cease if people were more concerned about what they can contribute to a congregation rather than focusing upon what a congregation can do for them. I believe we would all be better off if we would focus "less on self, and more on Thee."

### **A Few Thoughts About Thinking**

As life gets busier and busier, it gets harder and harder to find time to do all that we want to do. Some have been known to lament, "I'm pulled in so many different directions I don't even have time to *think!*" That's obviously an exaggeration. Or is it? Taken in another sense, I think it is completely accurate to say that many of us have not the time to think.

The Bible speaks frequently about "meditation," — a word that means "to think deeply; to ponder; to thoughtfully consider; to carefully reflect upon." Consider these pertinent passages: The blessed man is one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he **meditates** day and night" (Psa. 1:2). "When I remember You on my bed, I **meditate** on You in the night watches" (Psa. 63:6). "I will **meditate** on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways" (Psa. 119:15). "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my **meditation** all the day" (Psa. 119:97). "My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may **meditate** on Your word" (Psa. 119:148). "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—**meditate** on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

These pearls from God's word show us the necessity of carefully reflecting upon the message of the Bible, the activity of God in the world, and our own attitudes and responsibilities. Yet I wonder how many Christians regularly take the time to sit down and quietly reflect upon these things. Has our Bible study time, if we set aside time for it at all, become a few quick minutes to read a few short verses so we can move on to matters of more pressing need? If so, it's no wonder that we aren't profiting from our Bible "study."

While it is good to read the Bible (1 Tim. 4:13), our reading of it will be so much more meaningful and helpful if we will also take the time to meditate upon what we read. With that in mind, let me offer some suggestions for good Bible reading and meditation.

**Schedule time each day for reading.** Most of the time we fail to study our Bibles as much as we should because we simply try to work in some reading time when we have nothing else to do. As busy as are, we will seldom read our Bibles if we just wait for "free time." Instead of that, mark off at least one hour each day for Bible study—and faithfully keep that appointment.

**Spend half of your scheduled time reading and the other half thinking about what you have read.** God did not give us the Bible just for some entertaining stories. It is to be the guide for our lives. Therefore, we should read it with a view toward how it is to affect us. When you have read for a half-hour or so, stop and ask some questions about the text from which you are reading. "What does God want me to gain from this passage?" "How should this passage affect the way I view God? Myself? Others? My responsibilities to God?" "Does this passage point out

an area of my life that I could improve?” “How can the message of this text change me for the better?” “How might I use this passage to help another?”

By doing more than just reading the Bible and setting it aside, you can transform your Bible reading time into a valuable period of learning—about God and about yourself. Remember: we should never be so busy that we don't have time to think.

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