

The Disciplines of a Godly Life: An Old Testament Giant of Meditation – Ezra and the 119th Psalm

Open with me to Ezra 7.10.

God created you and me for some great works for His Glory. He wants to do something in you -- that only you AND HE can accomplish.

God wants to write Himself all across the pages of your life. How is He doing? Usually any holdup is on our part isn't it?

God has designed a plan for the complete takeover of your heart and mind. He wants us to ponder -- What are we here for? If we lose sight of our purpose in life, we often compensate by increasing motion. Yet it is motion without purpose.

Daily time in the presence of God is not nice -- it is necessary.

God wants us to have a Passion to know the Word of God.

God wants us to have a Passion to spend time with the Lord.

Some believers can be 30-40 years in the faith and cannot work their way out of anything doctrinally. Some believers can be 30-40 years in the faith and not know what their gifts are or why they are here.

Eph 2:8-10 Created for works... We are here to do something. We are here to do the works God prepared in advance for us to do... There is a vast difference between your career and calling. Career is what you are paid to do my calling is what I have been prepared to do. You cannot communicate out of a vacuum. You have to speak from what you have taken in. **A lot of people are under the word but not in it... it is not like some mother bird who is dropping some worm in your mouth.**

Many Christians are like poor photographs they are over exposed and under developed. Ezra wanted to study God's Word -- but also had an equal desire to practice God's Word.

To the Jews only Moses eclipses Ezra in Jewish history. Why? Because his life actually has touched every Jew and every Christian for the past 2500 years? How? Ezra launched the Jewish Synagogues, wrote the reading schedule Jews follow to this day.

And it is Ezra who copied all the Scriptures into the Hebrew that we have today. The entire Old Testament is the product of his careful work!

Ezra faced a worldly congregation, soaked in all the worldly ways of Babylon and Persia. What was his plan to bring about lasting change in those he served? He started with his own life. He learned to point his heart frequently toward doing God's Will.

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word.

Meditation meant Ezra “prepared” Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared **(to establish, set up, accomplish, make firm; to direct toward (moral sense); to arrange, order)** his heart to seek **(to resort to, frequent (a place); to consult, to investigate, to ask for, require; to practice, study, follow)** the Law of the Lord, and to do **(to observe, celebrate, to acquire)** it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in God's Word.
And God is mentioned 176 times in these 176 verses.
God's Word is mentioned in 173 of these verses.
Prayer requests are given 70 times.
Suffering is mentioned 66 times.
He refers to himself 325 times.

And who wrote this? We're not sure. Many different men are possibilities -- David - Hezekiah – Jeremiah - Nehemiah – Malachi; or Daniel because there is no mention of the temple. But there is one who stands out above the others in his life and work, and that is Ezra. And after 40 years of reading this Psalm, that is who I think was used by God to pen these words.

The result? Psalm 119 is Ezra's testimony and also probably the content of his teaching and preaching to the exiles that came home to seek the Lord in Jerusalem!

Lets examine the heart of Ezra through his teaching, by the words of this his testimony to the result of meditating upon God's Word

First Ezra shares in Psalm 119 a list of his resolves.

1. He chooses to turn his life toward God. Psalm 119:59 **I thought** about my ways, And **turned my feet** to Your testimonies. ***Like a person who hears something, sees something that stops and turns to go in that direction. Ezra examines his life, looks at the Word and goes the way of the Lord.***
2. He chooses to hate evil in any form, and chose personal restraints to avoid those ways. Psalm 119:101 **I have restrained** my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. ***What do you restrain yourself from?***

3. He chooses to lean God's Way by obedience. Psalm 119:112 **I have inclined** my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, to the very end. ***What do you lean towards?***
4. He chooses to set his hopes in the Lord. Psalm 119:114 You are my hiding place and my shield; **I hope in Your word.** Just like Paul asked the Roman believers to do in Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ***What do you have your hopes set upon?***
5. He chooses to cultivate spiritual appetites. Psalm 119:131 **I opened my mouth** and panted, For **I longed for** Your commandments. ***What do you pant for?***
6. He chooses to cultivate spiritual disciplines. Psalm 119:147 **I rise** before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; **I hope** in Your word.
7. He chooses to live a life of praise. Psalm 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments.

How did Ezra do this on a consistent basis? By meditation. Remember Meditation is a soul that thirsts and drinks of God in His Word; that longs for the waters of life and drinks them of God in His Word; that drinks from an ever present oasis in the arid, sun baked, lifeless deserts of life through finding and communing with God in His Word.

Seven times Ezra confesses his secret, it is called meditation (after finding God's Word and eating it – then we digest or meditate upon it). Here is his pathway:

1. PURIFYING MEDITATION, look at v.9. Psalm 119:15 I will meditate on **Your precepts**, And contemplate **Your ways**.
2. ILLUMINATING MEDITATION, look at v. 18. Psalm 119:23 Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on **Your statutes**.
3. REFRESHING MEDITATION, look at v. 25. Psalm 119:27 Make me understand the way of **Your precepts**; So shall I meditate on **Your wonderful works**.
4. TESTIFYING MEDITATION, look at v. 46. Psalm 119:48 My hands also I will lift up to **Your commandments**, Which I love, And I will meditate on **Your statutes**.
5. REFINING MEDITATION, look at v.75. Psalm 119:78 Let the proud be ashamed, For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; But I will meditate on **Your precepts**.
6. FOCUSING MEDITATION, look at v. 101. Psalm 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, For **Your testimonies** are my meditation.
7. INTERCEDING MEDITATION, look at v.147. Psalm 119:148 My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I may meditate on **Your word**.

Finally, mediation free Ezra to just ask the Lord for each area he needs to live fruitfully for the Lord. Remember Ezra faced a worldly congregation, soaked in all the worldly ways of Babylon and Persia. What was his plan to bring about lasting change in those he served? He started with his own life. He learned to point his heart frequently toward doing God's Will.

Thirty-three times with eleven phrases, Ezra cries to the Lord. The secret of his fruitful life was his choice to invite the Lord into every part of his life, and invite Him into every part of his day.

1. Teach me: 12; 26; 33; 66;68;108;124;135.
2. Remove from me: 22.
3. Make me: 27; 35.
4. Give me: 34; 73; 125;144;169.
5. Revive me: 37; 40; 88; 107; 149; 154; 156; 159.
6. Help me: 86.
7. Save me: 94; 146.
8. Uphold me: 116; 117.
9. Redeem me: 134; 154.
10. Hear me: 145.
11. Deliver me: 153; 170.

So how do we adopt Ezra's strategy? Here are so elements to practice getting alone with God.

1. Try to spend at least 12 minutes each day in reading God's Word and seeking to find one truth to hold on to all day long.
2. From that time alone with God, think through your entire day. Ask HIM what would be the best use of your life for this day.
3. Try to also get in the habit of a weekly time of evaluation. Just a half hour reflecting on where you are, and where you are headed in life and ministry.
4. Finally, try one time of strategic planning each month, to truly reflect on life for a couple of hours. Take a spiritual retreat. Sit with a pad of paper, your calendar, and an open Bible. List your priorities for the next month. Pray over them, change them, decide upon them and then do them!