**Do You Meditate? By Thailer Jimerson**

When I ask that question the image that frequents most people’s minds is that of the Buddhist monk sitting and chanting, or maybe a housewife going through her yoga videos, but what we don’t usually think of is biblical meditation. I don't think that many Christians have thought much about the biblical disciplines - especially meditation. Even the word itself sounds "eastern," but the concept is thoroughly biblical.

       Once I watched a documentary on Amazon Prime covering the culture of Japan. One chapter of the documentary was focused entirely on Zen Buddhism. It was fascinating. The narrator was taught to sit silently, cross-legged, and to slow his breathing as he focused on purging his consciousness of any thought. Only then, the Zen teacher said, would you discover your true self and be liberated for the day.

Biblical meditation, however, contrasts this not by emptying the mind but by filling it. Now, in one sense it does seek to empty the mind, but it doesn't throw the baby out with the bath water. It removes the unnecessary, the distracting, the banal and godless. Then it seeks to fill that vacuum with the "mind of Christ" (1Co.2.16; Php.2.5).

       The Bible presents meditation in the highest light. The Hebrew ordering of the scriptures - the Tanak - brings this out with the beginning of the division of the Prophets. We're shown Joshua, the general who would meditate on the Law of the Lord day and night (Jos.1.8). The division of the Writings begins with Psalm 1, about the righteous man who delights in the law of the Lord, upon which he meditates day and night (Ps.1.2). (Interestingly, the Hebrew word for meditate is ‘haggah’ elsewhere translated as the cooing of birds, and means ‘to mutter’.) Even the law given to kings, in De.17, states that he was to write his own copy of the law and meditate on it that he might not depart to the left or the right. This practice of deep "chewing the cud" on the reading of scripture only changes under the new covenant in that the image is brought to focus on the person of Christ.

       We're to meditate on his person, his life, seeking the imitation of his being, since our ultimate destination is to conformed to his image (2Co.3). It's funny: I'd never read 2Co.10 ("every thought captive to obey Christ") as referring to myself before. I've only ever thought of that passage as referring to capturing other minds, washed with the lies of various media, to the obedience of Christ - not mine! But if this applies to others, it most certainly should apply to us first.

       This is important for apostles, those sent out from Christ, especially if we're to model his own teaching style (I do, you watch). We must first make sure that we're actively being conformed to his mind, then will we be equipped to actually go out and show others how to do the same.

So, here are a few tips to get your started on biblical meditation:

* First, read the text slowly, asking questions like “What does this teach me of God? And what is he telling me, specifically, in this text for today?”; “What does this teach me about human nature, myself?”; “What does this teach me about Christ, or life in the church?”
* Second, think of application. Are there any examples to emulate or avoid? Commands to obey? Promises to claim? Warnings to heed?
* Third, try to paraphrase a given passage.
* Fourth, try Luther’s method of turning each passage you read into a “school text, a song book, a penitential book, and a prayer book”.