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**COMMUNING WITH GOD**

**TOGETHER IN HIS WORD**

TOGETHER IN HIS

**Equipping Class: Learning To Hear The Voice of God In The Individual And Corporate Setting (How To Study The Bible/**

**Responding To The Voice Of God In The Read, Sung and Preached Word in The Corporate Worship Setting**

**Grace Reformed Baptist Church**

**Lesson 6**

**Lesson RoadMap.** At this point take your Week 6 Handout and find the section titled “*Communion With God In His Word*” on Page 1. We’ll complete all of Week 6 Handout, and then return if time permits to Page 4, Week 5 Handout and follow to the end. We will endeavor to cover as much as we can given the time remaining. A reminder I am not concerned if everything in my notes is not covered. I am at the pace the Spirit is leading me (I pray) and covering what He believes needs to be taught to us (I hope).

**(SLD 2)** It is my joy to share with you the overflow of what I learn as I continue to be a good and faithful student of the Holy Spirit as He leads me into the Word and to gifted men of aged past and present with such great knowledge, insight and wisdom. I take no credit for original thoughts.

**PRAYER**

**(SLDS 3-5) SPEAK, O LORD**

**(SLD 6) COMMUNION WITH OUR GOD IN HIS WORD**

**(SLD 7)** The believer’s life is not a leisurely stroll but a purposeful journey. Jesus tells us we must “strive to enter through the narrow door,” knowing that the believer’s life permits no complacency, that salvation must be “*worked out*,” not waited out (Luke 13:24; Philippians 2:12). The believer is not a passive spectator in sanctification but an active participant.

**(SLD 8)** The Book is more than paper and Ink: It talks with us. Was not that the promise, “When thou awakes, it shall talk with thee” (Prov.6:22 KJV)? We open the Book with this prayer, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears” (I Sam.3:9), and we often close it with this feeling “Here I am, for you called me” (I Sam 3:6). As surely as if the promise had never been uttered before, but the Lord had made Holy Scripture to be His direct word to our heart and conscience.



**(SLD 9)** It is here I ask should we not sense a great need to commune with God in Scripture every day? Whatever else we are as believers, are we people who long to meet our Triune God in His Word. Communion with God in Scripture is one of the great distinguishing marks of a Christian, an acid test of true spiritual life. Whatever else we are as believers, we are people who meet God in the Bible.

Communion with God in Scripture is one of the great distinguishing marks of a believer, an acid test of true spiritual life. Whatever else we are as believers, we are people who meet God in the Bible. We may see His glory elsewhere, but only in Scripture do we hear His voice. **How should we then approach**

**Are you passing the acid test of the true spiritual life?**

True spiritual life?

**reading the Bible?**

* **(SLD 10) Come Fearfully**. We should read “rejoicing with trembling” *(Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* [*Ps. 2:11*](https://www.esv.org/Ps.%202%3A11/)*).* 2 Tim.3:16; I Cor.2:16; Deu.8:3; 2 Cor.3:8
* **(SLD 11) Come Prayerfully**. Plead for strength to obey every precept, embrace every promise, pursue every example, and experience every truth.
* **(SLD 12) Come Thoughtfully**. Ps.119:11; Ps.39:3. Scripture does its best work in us when we linger and hide its truth deep within. “Thy word I have hidden in mine heart that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11, KJV). Enter into the psalmist’s experience, *“As I mused, the fire burned” (39:3).*
* **(SLD 13) Come Realistically**.
* **(SLD 14) Come Systematically.** Ps.1:2 We must resolve, therefore, to mine its depths all day, every day (but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night Ps.1:2). Only then will it become our constant reference point, the lens through which we view all of life.
* **(SLD 15) Come Submissively.** Determine to hear God’s mind, not your own; to pursue His will, not your own.
* **(SLD 16) Come Expectantly.** John 1:1-3. When we come to the Bible, we should come expecting to meet the Lord Christ. It is His book. It is all about Him. He is the righteousness of the Law, the wisdom of the Proverbs, the singer of the Psalms, the king on the throne, the voice of the Prophets, the sacrifice on the altar, the judge in the end, and the glory of it all. He is all of this in union with us, His people.

(SLD 17) Consider, God communicates with us in many ways through the Bible and seeks the response of our communion with Him. Is that true in your relation with your heavenly Father? **I refer you to Ken Ramey and his book on Expository Listening for some insightful and instructive teaching on how we can better know God’s heart.**

* **If God indicts us**, **we respond to him with sorrow and repentance.**

**SLD 18**

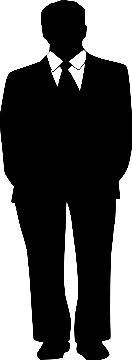
* **If he commends us**, **we respond to him with humble gratitude and joy.**
* **If he commands us to do something**, **we look to him for strength and resolve to obey with his help.**

**REMEMBER,** the words of Scripture are there for us to know God’s heart, to commune with the Living Christ, and to respond appropriately to His beauty and

to His voice.

* **If he makes a promise**, **we marvel at his grace and trust him to do what he says.**

**SLD 19**

* **If he warns us of some danger***,* **we take him seriously and watch with a thankful sense of knowing his presence and protection.**
* **If he describes something about himself**, **we affirm it and admire it and pray for clearer eyes to see and enjoy his greatness and beauty.**

**SLD 19**

**Notes:**

**(SLD 20) Reading the Bible always is a noble goal. And it’s a goal that positions us well to commune with God. Keep communion as your aim, and remember the words of Scripture are there for us to know God’s heart, to commune with the Living Christ, and to respond appropriately to his beauty and to his voice.**

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**As we read the Word, we must ask God to give us eyes to see the worth of Scripture and to awaken in us an unyielding desire for the Word of God. Why is that important? What are the benefits we receive?**

**SLD 21**

* **The Word of God** awakens and strengthens faith. When we go the Word of Christ, we put ourselves in the path of the Spirit’s willingness to reveal Christ to us and strengthen our faith.

**The Scripture is profitable for all things.** If we are deserted, here is spiced wine that cheers the heavy heart; if we are pursued by Satan, here is the sword of the Spirit to resist him; if we are diseased with sin's leprosy, here are the waters of the sanctuary, both to cleanse and cure. Oh, then, search the Scriptures! There is no danger in tasting this tree of knowledge. (Unknown)

* **The Word of God** creates and Sustain Life.
* **The Word of God** gives us hope.

**SLD 22**

* **The Word of God** leads us to freedom. John 8:32
* **The Word of God** is the key to answered prayer.
* **The Word of God** is our source of wisdom. Col.2:3

**SLD 23**

* **The Word of God** gives us crucial warnings.
* **The Word of God** enables us to defeat the devil.
* **The Word of God** is, therefore, the source of great and lasting joy. Because of the last nine reasons. “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps 119:97)

**(SLD 24) Now, As we conclude our time today, we turn our thoughts to answer the questions, as we sit under faithful preaching of the Word in corporate worship: (1) “why should we be under the preaching of our pastor physically present in the corporate worship setting, not remotely as our first choice?” (2) “what is the proper spiritual posture we should take for listening to the sermon?” and “what does that require?”; and (3) when we are “graced” by the receiving of our Triune God ‘s Word, what do we receive”?**

**The Preached Word. (SLD 25)**

**Five reasons why you need to be under the preaching of our pastor physically present in the corporate worship setting, not remotely as your first choice**

**Five responses required of you when you hear the Word preached**

**Five blessings/benefits received from hearing well the faithful preaching of God’s Word**

**(SLD 26) First, why do you need to be under the preaching of our pastor physically present in the corporate worship setting, not remotely as your first choice?**

* **Our Christian’s Faith Is Fueled by Hearing God’s Word.** We will be most inclined to listen and engage with preaching by being present where it is preached alongside others who have also come for the express purpose of hearing and submitting to God’s Word proclaimed.
* **Hearing God’s Word from Our Own Shepherd Is Unique to Every Other Encounter with God’s Proclaimed Word.** It is an entirely different experience to sit in person and hear God’s Word expounded and applied directly to us from one of our elders, the men who knows our struggles, difficulties, and doubts, and who will give an account for our souls (Heb. 13:17).
* **Never Underestimate the Power of Personal Connection.** There is a powerful connection made between a shepherd and his flock when he preaches God’s Word to those he has been thinking about and praying for as he prepared.
* **Spiritual Fruit Comes from Hearing with Others.** When a congregation collectively sits under the preached Word, a level of accountability is established and nourished among the hearers to urge each other to go and apply that sermon. A greater obligation to “do something” with the Word preached and to rely on one another for help and strength to obey it exists in this kind of community life that is not present when we listen in isolation.
* **Public Sermons Lead to Corporate Discipleship.** When the whole church hears God’s Word proclaimed, that Word then becomes the basis for further conversation and growth in the one-on-one discipleship conversations that follow. The sermon gets everyone on the same page; personal discipleship expands on the details of that page. God has powerful and unique purposes for every believer in the local church. So many of those purposes are fueled when a group of God’s redeemed people covenant together to gather in person with one another weekly to hear the voice of God through his preached Word by their Pastor Teacher. (Calvin Institutes, 4.1.9.)

**(SLD 27) Second, my next question/s to you: What is needed for us to be able to effectively listen to God? What can we do to prepare our hearts so we are in a position where we can hear what the Lord is seeking to reveal or communicate to us *through the preaching of the Word?***

**(SLD 28)** Let’s listen to Ken Ramsey as he helps us to understand our responsibilities, ““Whereas I have shelves of books on how to preach, I have only one book on how to listen to sermons. This wonderful Catechism question (Q.160. Westminster Larger Catechism) helps to correct the misnomer that preaching is only upon the preacher. All of us as the Body of Christ have a part to play when it comes to the preached word and having the “ears to hear.” Let us therefore give greater diligence to the requirements of the word preached for our individual and corporate good.”

**(SLD 29) Q.** What is required of those that hear the Word preached? The Westminster Larger Catechism, question 160:

**A.** It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

**(SLD 30) The first thing that hearers need to do is to attend on it with diligence, preparation, and prayer. In other words, benefiting from preaching requires active listening. You need to attend to it, prepare for it and pray for it.**

**NOTE: SLD31 optional for insertion or deletion in this section.**

For congregations the hearing of sermons was the most momentous event of their lives, and the Puritans pleaded with worshippers to appreciate this fact, and listen to the word preached with awe, attention, and expectancy. **(SLD 32)** Baxter put the point this way in the course of his “Directions for Profitably Hearing the Word Preached” in the Christian Directory: Come not to hear with careless heart, as if you were to hear a matter that little concerned you, but come with a sense of the unspeakable weight, necessity, and consequence of the Holy Word which you are to hear; and when you understand how much you are concerned in it, it will greatly help your understanding of every particular truth….

<https://www.gracegems.org/28/directions_for_profitable_hearin.htm>

**(SLD 33)** Jeremiah Burroughs, in his sermon “Gospel Worship “says “preparation consists in the readiness of the faculties of the soul and the graces of the spirit of God, presently to act upon the setting upon a holy duty. When a man or woman shall find the faculties of their soul and the graces that are in them, to be ready to act as soon as ever they fall upon duty, just as you see a company of Ringers when they have made all preparation for the raising of the bels, then in an instant when they begin to pull, all the bels go in that tune that according to their skill they set them in. And so it should be with our hearts, the faculties of our souls and graces, though now we are not upon duty, yet we should be so ready that as it were upon a pull, all the faculties of our souls and graces of Gods Spirit should work in a melodious way; There are those that keep their hearts so prepared as at the very first moment that they set about the duty of Worship, all faculties and graces begin to act and to stir and are working towards God, as a fire, when all the matter is ready laid, presently it comes to be kindled and flame out; and thus it should be with our hearts:” <https://www.apuritansmind.com/puritan-favorites/jeremiah-burroughs-1599-1646/gospel-worship-by-jeremiah-burroughs-1599-1646/>

**(SLD 34) Second, what is required of us that hear the Word preached? “examine what they hear by the Scriptures** 3**.” (SLD 35)** The Bereans, you remember in the Book of Acts, tested what they heard, according to the Scriptures *(11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Acts 17:11*). We ought to also hear what is preached and examine it according to the Scriptures: is this faithful to what the Bible teaches?

**(SLD 36) Third, “receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, readiness of mind as the word of God.”** We are to receive the word of God with **love**, because our heavenly Father loves us; it is His word of love to us, and we are to receive it with love to Him. This also may indicate that we are to receive it with love for the one another as well – for we are gathered in one spirit in worship to our God.It is arrogant and prideful to place our opinion over God’s. (Not the time to wordsmith the pastor, or get into a silent debate.)

**(SLD 37)** There is a certain posture in which we should receive faithful preaching:

* We are to receive the truth with faith.
* We are to believe what God says is true.
* We are to trust what God tells us to trust.
* We are to do what He tells us to do.
* We area to think how He tells us to think.

**(SLD 38)** When you read the Bible or listen to faithful preaching, there is more happening than mere communication of ideas. The Word is more than ink and paper, and preaching is more than a speech. The Word is living, as the Lord is working effectually by His Holy Spirit through it. There are many pictures of this in Scripture:

* the Lord through His Word is sowing imperishable seeds (1 Peter 1:23),
* bringing about repentance and faith (Rom. 10),
* feeding our souls with the Bread of Life (Matt. 4:4; John 6:35), creating a source of living waters in our hearts (John 7:38),
* and washing His church (Eph. 5:26).

To have the Word abide in us is to be in union with Christ and to be conformed to His will so that we learn to desire what is godly and holy (John 15:7).

**(SLD 40) Fourth, “to meditate and confer of it.” (SLD 41) If** you study the Bible, you need to reflect deeply about what it says and what it means for you, for others, for the church, and for the world. And then you need to confer of it.

**(SLD 42) The Fifth exhortation is this: “hide it in your hearts and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.”**

**(SLD 43)** At the very least, that means there is some memorization going on. You’re going to hide the word in your heart. There are certain words of Scripture that you store up in your heart

**(SLD 44)** And then what? “Bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.” We never want to be satisfied with simply being hearers of the word. How does Jesus finish the Sermon on the Mount? Be hearers and doers of the word. (Matt.7:24-27). How does he put it in the Great Commission? “*Go make disciples . . . teaching them to obey all that I have commanded*” (Matt.28:19-20)

**(SLD 45) Third, as we sit under the faithful preaching of the Word we are “graced” by the Triune God in so many ways. What are these blessings or benefits? I want to share five mentioned by David Mattis, habits of Grace:**

* **TO FORGET OURSELVES -** One of the great blessings of good preaching is that it helps us in the life-giving act of self-forgetfulness. Faithful preaching exposes our sin and challenges us to change, but it does so in the stanzas, while the chorus calls us away from self to Savior. It is a glorious thing for our souls to be free from our regular pre-occupation with self, even if only for a few moments at the sermon’s climax, so we are captivated by Christ.

**SLD 46**

* **TO FILL OUR FAITH** -- We need an external word, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” *(Rom.10:17)*
* **TO GROW IN GRACE --**  And according to I Cor. 15:1-2, *(Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.)* the preached gospel is not only what we have received in the past to become believers, but it is the grace in which we presently stand, and that which we will be finally saved, if we continue to receive and hold unto the gospel. The ongoing preaching of the gospel is vital to the ongoing life of faith.

**SLD 47**

* **TO BE EQUIPPED --** It is a great benefit of faithful preaching. God gave *“the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ”* *(11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, Eph.4:11-12).*
* **TO ENCOUNTER JESUS --** Such will significantly change our perspective and experience of preaching. What if you came to worship in the next hour not merely to hear Pastor Ndzi, but to encounter Jesus?

**(SLD 48) Conclusion**

Brothers and Sisters, as you hear the preaching of God’s Word from our Beloved Pastor/Teacher ask yourself this question: “**what is the proper spiritual posture I should take for listening to the sermon?”**

As you sit quietly and pray and meditate on the text and the songs, remind yourself of what [Psalm 19:10–11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2019.10%E2%80%9311) says about the words of God: “*More to be desired are they then gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”* So, because the Word of God is greater than all riches and sweeter than all honey, take heed how you hear. Desire it more than you desire all these things.

**(SLD 49)** As [Proverbs 2:3–5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%202.3%E2%80%935) says, *“If you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”* May God make us a people who hear the Word of God and bear fruit a hundredfold so that the lamp of our lives will be on a lampstand giving light to all who enter the kingdom of God. Take heed how you hear!

Yes, those are in fact Jesus’ words to all of us: *“Take care how you listen” (*[*Luke 8:18*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%208.18)*).* We take care because how we listen to the sermon today reveals a lot about the condition of our own hearts, making Sunday a good day to evaluate our own posture of intake.

**May God make us a people who hear the Word of God and bear fruit a hundredfold so that the lamp of our lives will be on a lampstand giving light to all who enter the kingdom of God.**

**(SLD 50) Let’s Pray**



**Homework For Week Nine**

**Number One.** Read and consider [Philippians 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.8)*.* ***“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”***

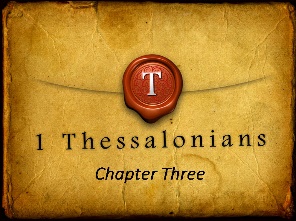
All of these adjectives have the duty of thinking, or meditation in common. Each of these adjectives describes the “things” we are to meditate on. This is Paul’s exhortation (the Holy Spirit’s *command*) to meditate on them. It is a duty which connotes a thought process of careful deliberation. People often attribute meditation to something akin to oriental mysticism. I believe this is not what biblical meditation is about. Instead, the bible exhorts us to *ponder the word of God*. I further believe pondering God and His works is the duty of every believer and commanded by God for daily piety. The Reformers and Puritans believed this emphatically, and they were master exegetes at drawing God’s mind on this matter out of the word of God. What then, does it mean to meditate? Meditation will not be sweet to you until it is first understood, exercised, and then exercised with profit. You cannot know how sweet it is without doing it. And, it is not merely head knowledge of something done. It is an experience with the Savior, Jesus Christ.

**So, what, if any, is the role of meditation when you are reading and studying the Word?** What thoughts are triggered in your heart and mind as you read the paragraph on meditation I provided before I asked you the question?

**Number Two.** Read the following practical counsels for meditation and be prepared to provide any insight you might possess on whether following such counsel would be beneficial or fruitful.

* “Begin with reading or hearing. Go on with meditation; end in prayer.” (William Bridge, “The Work and The Way of Meditation”)
* “The Word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer…Meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer…What we take in by the Word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer.” (Thomas Manton, Complete Works, Vol.7)
* “The reason we come away so cold from reading the Word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation.” (Thomas Watson, “How We May read Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit, dir.8)

**Number Three. “**Learning the text ‘by heart’ is secondary; taking the text *to heart* is primary.” **If** that is the case, why so much emphasis on Bible memorization. In an age where we have the complete Word of God in our purse or pocket 24/7, is memorization the best use of our time as a disciple (learner, servant, sent one) of Jesus Christ? What is your story regarding memorizing the Word? It’s worth and benefit? The struggles and setbacks? Write it out.

**Number Four.** Read I Thessalonians, Chapter One a minimum of three times a week, the weeks of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We will be using this specific chapter throughout the last three week of our journey together. It will be very helpful if you are acquainted with each of its verses in your mind and heart.

Chapter One