

Growing a Spiritual Heart

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[0 : 00] Well, thanks very much, Andrew. And thanks, as Andrew said, to everybody for coming along. It's been great having the opportunity to talk about biblical spirituality together. And I really appreciated the questions and conversations we've had after the talks in each case, too.

So thank you for that. My prayer is that these things have been practical and that we'll go away encouraged to value God's word and look for his working in us by his spirit through his word to make us more like Jesus as we go along.

So let's pray that that would be the case tonight, too. I'll just read from Mark 4, 24, a little quote there at the beginning, and I'll have a quick prayer, too. Jesus says, consider carefully what you hear.

He continued, with the measure you use, it will be measured to you and even more. Whoever has will be given more. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray that we would be people who would consider carefully the things that you say to us through your word. We pray that you have mercy on us, that you wouldn't judge us by taking what we do have from us, but that you would give us more.

[1 : 11] You'd help us to use a great measure in getting stuck into your word and believing it and acting on it and taking it into every part of our lives. And I pray that these things that we talk about tonight would be a blessing to us all.

Through your word, through your spirit. And that Jesus would be honoured and that you would be honoured through him. Amen. All right. So over the last three weeks, we've been exploring the topic of biblical spirituality.

And I hope if you've been coming along that you've been able to see the pattern. True spirituality is all about Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the word of God. In week one, we saw the source of spiritual life.

Jesus communicated by the spirit through the Bible. We saw in week two, the shape of a spiritual life, which is growing to be more like Jesus together as we encourage and serve one another by the power of the spirit working through the word.

And this week, I want to look more at what biblical spirituality means for us as individuals. Perhaps what we typically think of when we think of the word spirituality, my own spiritual walk.

[2 : 24] So having a look at the diagrams, if we could, on the overhead, we've got the first one shows us where we were last week.

So that was thinking about how the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ and joins us to each other so that we use the gifts Christ gives us and we encourage each other with the word and Christ's body builds itself up.

And this week, we're looking at the next one. The inner transformation or personal transformation of ourselves, our characters by the Holy Spirit through the word.

We're referring to those two passages, for example, as samples. Put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge of the image of its creator. Christ is all and is in all.

Or Romans 6, offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. In other words, we are in Christ, as the diagram shows.

[3 : 30] We want Christ to transform us from within as well. We are in his death and resurrection. We are objectively right with God, which is a great thing.

It can't be taken away from us. But we also want to live with Christ and be more like him. So how do we cultivate personal spirituality?

First, it's absolutely essential for us to note that we should be doing that. There are some strands of evangelicalism where the idea is that you just get saved and you sit there.

You've got your ticket for heaven. That's it. Joel Beeky, the Puritan expert who I make a reference to in the final page, gives the illustration of a man who gets married and just lets himself go.

Doesn't matter now. I've got married. I don't need to impress anybody. She can't leave me. I'm just going to go to seed. Some Christians are like that.

[4 : 35] We get saved. We are in Christ and that's where it ends. But the Bible says that God has a plan for us and we are wasting our lives if we don't pursue it actively.

Our faith will seem unreal. We'll be miserable because we won't understand what our lives are about or what we're missing out on. And we'll be headed for more and more misery because our hearts and minds will be set on trivial things rather than on the great realities that are found in Christ.

We'll be wasting our lives, in other words. So what does it mean to cultivate spirituality, to go on in Christ? Well, the essence of spiritual, personal spirituality is that every part of our heart, mind and will be brought into alignment with the reality that is Christ.

That is, we should look at ourselves and everything we do, everybody we encounter, all our relationships through the spectacles of the gospel. You might remember that great quote from C.S. Lewis where he says, I believe in Christianity not just because I see its truth, but because it's like the sun.

In its light, I see everything else that is true as well. Everything else becomes clearer. That's the essence, I think, where personal spirituality begins.

[6 : 00] And it's a massive theme in the Bible. Any verses I pick here are almost arbitrary because the whole Bible is about this. But here's some examples.

Have a look at Colossians 3.1, truncated form. But Paul writes, Since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. But Christ is all and is in all. A bit later, So notice how we pursue a spiritual life here.

[7 : 26] It begins with considering how the truth of Christ applies to us. So in that first paragraph, we see that Christ has been raised, that he's hidden in heaven with God, in verse 3, that he's soon to appear in glory, in verse 4.

And these things are true for us too, because we are part of his life. We too, somehow, mysteriously, are hidden with Christ in God. Though we don't see it, we are with him in glory.

And the truth of our lives is that when he comes back, this hidden reality will become apparent. And so we should live in the light of that.

Later on, we see that Christ defines what it means to be truly human. He's our new self, according to verse 10. The image of God, image of the creator, which, back in Colossians 1.15, we find out is Christ.

And we have a new self, renewed in the knowledge of its creator. In verse 11, we find out that Christ is the essence of our identity. Is it about, who are you?

[8 : 44] Are you a certain race, a certain gender? No, he says, the essence of our identity is Christ. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free.

But Christ is all and is in all. In other words, our life is all about Christ. Where are we really? We are with Christ in heaven. That's where we most truly are.

Our true life is hidden with him at the right hand of God. Who are we really? That too is defined by Christ. He's the way we are supposed to live.

He's the way we're supposed to think about ourselves and each other. And accordingly, coming out of these reflections on Christ, a spiritual life challenges us to actively engage our emotions and will.

So Paul says in verse 2, set your minds on things above. Or verse 1, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated.

[9 : 51] Notice the active setting, considering, making a lot of in our thoughts and to each other. We treasure these realities.

We remind ourselves of these truths. Later on, we pursue the same transformation of our emotions by singing with gratitude and thankfulness.

In verse 16. In other words, the knowledge of Christ, the knowledge of the gospel, isn't supposed to stay simply as knowledge.

It's supposed to be expressed in our emotions. We're supposed to work to consider it and reflect on it and use it to stir ourselves up and stir each other up actively.

And this is a spiritual life. I don't know if you realize that Colossians and Ephesians are parallel letters, obviously written at a very similar time by Paul. And the same kind of stuff that Paul writes in Ephesians 5 is described as the life that is filled with the spirit.

[11 : 12] This is a spiritual life, a life that reflects on the truth of Christ and expresses it in emotional and active living.

Our will, of course, is also caught up in this. In verse 17, he says, Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

In other words, all our lives are supposed to be now lived in the light of Christ. All our work, no matter what it is, all our relationships, no matter who they're with, are supposed to reflect the Lordship of Christ and are supposed to be done with reference to him.

He is our true master. He is the one we're always meant to be thinking of, trying to impress. Earlier on, we have other transformations, don't we?

Put to death, he says in verse 5, whatever belongs to your earthly nature and put on the new self. Again, an activity of the will. Realizing that Christ is everything to us leads to an execution of the old way of life and a putting on of Christ's character, which is what we really are.

[12 : 34] Of course, the whole Bible, though, is filled with this kind of thing. There's always exhortations to think and feel and act in accordance with the truth everywhere. Here are some other examples.

Hebrews 12.1. Again, these are kind of random examples, but these are ones I've picked just to kind of give some examples. Hebrews 12.1. The writer says, How do we keep going with the Christian faith?

How do we avoid growing weary and losing heart and becoming discouraged? We fix our eyes on Jesus. We turn our thoughts back to him again and again.

We consider him. We turn the truths of his life and his victory over sin and death over in our thoughts. His resistance to temptation, his trust in God, his father, all those things.

The joy set before him. The way he was able to look over the trials that were in the foreground to the glory that was in the background. That was forever. This is how we grow.

[14 : 00] This is how we persist. Here's another interesting example. James 1.9. James writes, So again, you see, there's the need for us, no matter what our circumstance, to be active in understanding our lives in the light of heavenly reality, ultimate reality, the reality of Christ.

And that's different according to our circumstances, isn't it? So if you're in poor circumstances, if you're doing it tough, what you need to remember most of all is the glory that you have in Christ.

You boast to yourself. I'm a poor person. I don't have a lot of money or prospects. The world might think I'm a loser. But the reality is the glory that I have in Christ.

I boast to myself about what I have in Jesus, the true nature of my life. On the other hand, if I'm tempted to be proud and distracted from Christ because I've got it good, life is going well, then the thing that I need to boast to myself about is the brevity of my life.

All these glories and good things that I have, they're just going to go. 20, 30, 50 years, I won't have them anymore. I'll be dead. What will be left of those things that now seem so real and valuable and pleasurable and distracting?

[15 : 57] I need to boast to myself of the brevity of my life and the frailty of my life. In other words, I need to act, no matter what circumstance we're in, we need to actively speak to ourselves, boast to ourselves of the truth.

But this is true of the Old Testament, too. In the Old Testament, we have continual reminders to remember the acts of God and live in light of them.

There are continual warnings not to forget the reality of where Israel has come from and who they are and what God has done for them and what will happen if they stray and forget these things.

For example, Deuteronomy 4.9. Some forms of evangelical spirituality have a very passive idea of how we grow as Christians.

The catchphrase of Keswick spirituality, of course, was let go and let God. You trust God and just wait for God to kind of impress things on you or change you.

[17 : 12] That's never the pattern in the Bible. Yes, it's God who changes us. Yes, it's his Holy Spirit who is active in our lives to change us. But it's all active on our part, too.

We are exhorted and encouraged and continually reminded to be careful, to watch yourselves closely, to not let these things slip from your heart, to teach them to your children.

These are all things that require discipline and action. What's it like to watch yourself and remember God's blessings? Well, here's an example of it in the next passage, Psalm 103.

And in similar passages where the psalmists speak to their own souls. Here, David is speaking to his own soul. Praise the Lord, my soul.

He says, speaking to himself. All my inmost being. Praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul. And forget not all his benefits. Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.

[18 : 11] Who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. Who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

David stirs himself up or keeps himself in line with the truth of his life by reminding himself, speaking to himself, lecturing himself about the truth of the things that God has done for him.

All those blessings God has done and will do for him in the future. Another way that this way of thinking about life is described in the Psalms is the language of meditation.

Psalm 1, the classic, of course. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

[19 : 21] Whatever he does prospers. I noticed there, of course, that we have a reminder that the alternative is to just be carried along by the impulses of the world around us.

There's a warning not to walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. Don't let ourselves be, as Paul would say in Romans 12, conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Or in this passage, meditate on God's word. That's the way to be prosperous in our Christian lives. That's the way to be fruitful, like a tree planted by streams of water.

So again, we see these exhortations to be active in our thinking. Not simply to know the truth about Jesus, but to be actively working it out and trying to make it work out in our lives.

Now, I wonder if this active remembering is something you try to do much. For example, if you are feeling defeated and discouraged or when you wake up in the middle of the night suddenly aware of all your past sins, do you actively remember that there's no condemnation for those in Christ, as Paul writes in Romans 8 verse 1?

[20 : 54] When you're struggling with temptation or disappointment, do you ever try to remember that the world and its desires will pass away, as John writes in 1 John 2 verse 17?

As you get older or experience sickness, have you ever taken comfort in the words of 2 Corinthians 4, 16 and 17? Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day, for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

In other words, do you have a store of scripture that you can draw on when you go through different parts of your life, different experiences, different disappointments, different struggles, different temptations?

The Bible's there for you, no matter what you're going through. Do you draw on it? Are you aware of how it can help you? Not too many of us, I think, are good at this these days.

But some of our Christian forebears were exceptionally good at it. And I'm thinking here of the Puritans, those non-conformist and often persecuted Christians in England of the 16th and 17th century.

[22 : 09] We know them mostly by caricature these days, straight-laced, judgmental and hypocritical, but that's very far from what they were in real life. They were Christians quite similar to us, except they were committed to longer sermons, personal, practical preaching, imaginative application of God's word, think Pilgrim's Progress, to detailed application of the gospel to every sort of human and every sort of personality type.

By the way, I haven't mentioned this in the notes, but I think possibly the most encouraging book I've ever read, it's slightly older English, but if you want the most encouraging book I've ever read, look up The Bruised Reed by Richard Sibbes, S-I-B-B-E-S.

The Bruised Reed by Richard Sibbes. Has anybody read that? It's an old classic, but it's terrific. If you want to be encouraged and you don't mind reading some old English, give it a go.

You'll find PDFs of it online and you'll be able to get it really easily. Just a Christian classic which will encourage you and strengthen you in your faith and help you to think about your doubts and struggles and the glory of Jesus.

That's a great book. Anyway, the Puritans are really good at that kind of thing. They believe in stirring up the emotions in accordance with the truth.

[23 : 45] And this is where meditation comes in because these guys were experts in meditation. Not, of course, meditation in the Eastern or modern sense.

This isn't mindfulness where you turn your thoughts in on yourself and examine your own thoughts. Or Eastern mysticism where you try and empty your thoughts or something like that or meld with the universe. This is Christian meditation as per Psalm 1 where we turn our thoughts to God's word.

This is where we fix our eyes on Christ. This is where we think deeply about the implications of the gospel. And we do this to pursue change in our hearts and minds.

So have a look at what Edmund Callum says about the art of divine meditation. A true meditation is when a man doth so meditate of Christ as to get his heart inflamed with the love of Christ.

So meditate of the truths of God as to be transformed into them. And so meditate of sin as to get his heart to hate sin when it is such a musing of God as kindles a fire in the whole soul as David doth express it in Psalm 39.

[24 : 59] While I was musing, the fire burnt. When a man doth so contemplate on God that his heart is all on fire with the love of God. When a man doth so think on the sacrament that his heart is all a fire with a holy thirsting after the sacrament.

When the heart is affected with the meditation of the head. Sorry, when the heart is meditated. Yeah, I'll stop there. The other quote is from Thomas Watson again saying similar things. There's lots and lots of books on this stuff and they say similar stuff.

Meditation is a holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance and seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves. It is a work which cannot be done in a crowd.

A Christian must retire from the world to have serious thinking upon God. It's not a few transient thoughts that are quickly gone but a fixing and staying of the mind on heavenly objects.

As the bee sucks the honey from the flower so by meditation we suck out the sweetness of a truth. He also says Satan does what he can to hinder this duty. He is an enemy of meditation.

[26 : 11] The devil does not care how much we read so long as we do not meditate on what we read. Reading begets knowledge but meditation begets devotion.

Holy meditation quickens the affections. The reason why our affections are so cold to heavenly things is because we do not warm them at the fire of holy meditation.

As the musing on worldly objects makes the fire of lust burn and as the musing on injuries makes the fire of revenge burn just so meditating on the transcendent beauties of Christ would make our love to Christ flame forth.

Meditation has a transforming power in it. The reading of the word may affect us but the meditating upon it transforms us.

Meditation stamps the impression of divine truths upon our hearts. By meditating on God's holiness we grow holy while by meditating we look upon God's purity we are changed into his likeness.

[27 : 18] Notice that insightful comment about whatever we think of we become like. If you think about the wrongs done to you all the time you'll become a vengeful and bitter person. If you think about desires or lusts you'll become a lustful person.

If you think about whether people are liking your posts on Facebook or Twitter you'll become a narcissistic person. But if we think about Christ we'll become like him.

If we meditate on him if we keep turning our minds back to him it will change us. So how do we do it?

Here are ten slightly random suggestions. Firstly allow time and quiet. William Bates another Puritan says when you blow on a fire at first there's a little smoke a little smoke arises but by holding on you raise sparks but then you go forward and at last bring a flame.

So it is the duty of meditation. At first you raise a smoke at last there's a flame of holy affections toward God. Bates also points out that the longer we leave it between meditation the harder it will be to get our minds back into that frame of mind.

[28 : 47] And so a lot of the Puritans would say it's good to have a bit of meditation at the beginning and the end of the day. Begin with your Bible and end with the Bible. I've actually found that's helpful.

If you go to bed having just read a bit of the Bible it changes the way you sleep sometimes. That's my experience. Second point begin with Scripture. Scripture there's a couple of three different ways you can begin but the normal way is to begin with Scripture.

John Stott gives an example of what that means. Read the text re-read it and read it again. Turn it over and over in your mind.

Probe the text like a bee with a spring blossom or like a hummingbird probing a hibiscus flower for its nectar. Worry it like a dog with a bone. Suck it as a child sucks an orange. Chew it as a cow chews the cud.

In other words keep at the Bible. Don't just read it but take it with you as you go about your work or as you drive to work or go on the train.

[29 : 54] There are lots of things to listen to of course and lots of noise and things that we can distract ourselves with these days wherever we are. We always have access to distractions but a great thing to do is to keep on through the day chewing on and going over the truths that we've already read.

So begin with Scripture or persist with Scripture I should say. Sometimes though we will begin with our own situation not because our own situation provides revelation but because we need to begin with where we are to see how Scripture answers that situation.

For example in Psalm 42 Why my soul are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God for I will yet praise Him my Saviour and my God.

Here of course the psalmist turns to himself and says what are you doing? Remember you're downcast you're discouraged remember the truth he says to himself.

And he keeps saying that he turns his thoughts back to the realities of God's provision and sovereignty and talks himself around and of course that's the pattern of so many psalms people talking themselves around by reminding themselves of God's truth.

[31 : 14] Another great example of this comes in Psalm 73 actually the psalmist there talks about how his feet almost slipped he envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked when I tried to understand all this it troubled me deeply.

In other words he looks around the world and he sees wicked people who have no respect for God just going very nicely in their lives. That's where he begins and then he says and yet it troubled me deeply until I entered the sanctuary of God then I understood their final destiny.

He says I'm always with you you hold me by my right hand you guide me with your counsel and afterward you'll bring me into glory. In other words he sets what he sees around him the disturbing and discouraging facts of the world as he sees it with his own eyes against the theological realities and the ultimate realities of God's covenant and promises and purposes and eternal redemption of his people.

He reminds him by looking at the temple that God is a God who offers himself to his people through his covenants and it's an eternal gift.

Worldly things will pass away again but God's purposes and his people will endure. so when we begin with our own situation we bring scripture to bear on the situation where we are.

[32 : 50] This of course assumes that we have a knowledge of scripture or we have people who can help us think about how scripture applies to our circumstances.

promises. So part of the take home here I guess is we need to be reading the Bible so we know how to apply it to ourselves we know how to think about ourselves and at the very least or in the meantime we need to be spending time asking questions of people who can help us our ministers those who encouraged us in the faith we need help with scripture we need to know how the Bible speaks to our situation.

Another way we can begin is with creation not here meaning natural religion as if we can use nature instead of the Bible but rejoicing in creation in accordance with what the Bible says that is letting creation and scripture speak to each other this is a helpful thing to do if you go out for a walk somewhere you probably know places you go which inspire you which inspire feelings of awe or appreciation of God's creation you remind yourself that these are the declarations of God's glory the heavens declare the glories of God according to Psalm 19 holy holy holy is the Lord almighty the whole earth is full of his glory say the seraphim in Isaiah 6 this too is a great pattern for the Puritans they would always be looking for things around them either in the human world or the created environment that would stimulate their remembrance of the words of scripture and the realities of

Christ here's Jonathan Edwards a great natural scientist and a Puritan born out of time of course he wasn't born in the 16th and 17th century but he was a Puritan even though he's in America he writes when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind we may consider that we only see the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ the easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are shadows of his infinite beauty and loveliness the crystal rivers and murmuring streams have the footsteps of his sweet grace and bounty there are also many things wherein we may behold his awful majesty in the sun in his strength in comets in thunder in the towering thunderclouds in ragged rocks and the brows of mountains in other words Edwards goes out and whenever he sees the beauty and majesty of creation he turns his thoughts back to meditations on Christ and God so we can begin with creation and we can use our imaginations again I don't mean making stuff up

I mean that we use our imaginations to understand the implications of scripture the Bible is there for us not simply to know information about God and the world it's truth to be received as meaning C.S.

[36 : 09] Lewis says at one point very helpfully reason is the organ of truth and the imagination is the organ of meaning reason is the organ of truth the imagination is the organ of meaning so to know truth you need to use your mind you need reason but if you want to know what something means the implications of it the the way it works out in the world imagination comes into play the Bible does this all the time of course think of the rich fool that Jesus tells many of the parables the truth is our lives are short we should be living for God or we're wasting our lives Jesus immediately encodes that truth using an imaginative story of a rich man who builds bigger barns and bigger barns and suddenly drops dead but there's imagination all the way through the Bible and we can use our imaginations too as well if if you're going through some kind of temptation that's threatening to take you away from God that seems more attractive than the gospel seems more attractive than

Jesus seems more real then we use we can use our imaginations can't we we can imagine what will this thing be left of this thing in 20 or 50 or 100 years on the other hand what will I be in that time what will I be in a hundred years or a thousand years or a million years we use our imaginations to think about the implications of the truth or perhaps you're dealing with a difficult person at work or at home well we can use our imaginations to to to imagine what Jesus does that's what one Peter tells us to do when they hurled insults at him he says this is talking to slaves and masters and family situations where there's there's difficulty or strife or struggle Peter says when they hurled their insults at him he did not retaliate when he suffered he made no threats instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly in other words we are to imagine how Christ dealt with his struggles and try and apply the same way of thinking to ourselves where to do what

Jesus did imagine looking over the shoulder of that person who's mistreating you and seeing him who judges justly looking on putting your trust in him who will vindicate you who will ensure that the justice is done in the end imagination is helpful and imagination was important to the Puritans too when it came to meditation the next point is thinking about eternal things in particular if there's one dominant theme in Puritan meditation and I think it's probably dominant in scripture as well it's remembering the big picture life is short eternity is forever and judgment is forever the glories that we have in Christ are the real thing let's live in light of those J.I.

Packer in his essay Hot Tub Religion uses the Puritan Richard Baxter as a terrific example of this Richard Baxter wrote a famous book called The Saints Everlasting Rest which is basically his reflections on heaven and the way he applied that and kept thinking deeply about that to get him through life Baxter was sick all his life basically like everybody was back then but he was particularly sick but he was able to function and triumph and transform the parish of Kidderminster because he had his eyes and heart fixed on heaven he lived for what was real for what was coming he was able to endure this fraction of time compared to the eternity that will be with Christ because he had his eyes continually fixed on that next suggestion try different things this is another thing the Puritans would suggest take note of when you find it easiest to read the Bible or concentrate take notice of when you have pockets of time or can create pockets of time you might want to try reading different amounts of scripture you might try for example reading through the Bible in a year or meditating on just a couple of verses a day you could ask other people what they do you could some people I know try writing out prayers or writing out their reflections of what they're reading to try to try and get around their distractions one thing I've found recently helpful is if I wake up in the night

I listen to an audio Bible I find that very helpful and my dad who just turned 95 and finds it hard to read the Bible these days does that too spends a lot of time listening to David Suchette's NIV readings which are terrific so try different things be creative use music to help the Puritan said what you should do after you meditate is finish with songs of praise that is you should take what you have learned the truths that have seeped into you and you should turn them into praise for God and his glory and mercy well we aren't necessarily singy people these days if we're by ourselves we might do that but it's a good thing to do and of course we have many access to lots of music and lots of good Christian music keep an eye out for what encourages you and try and ensure that the balance of your Christian non-Christian music is good in such a way that you will be stirred and encouraged this is I think is one way that we can maintain the warmth of our affections that Bates was talking about music helps us to do that in between our periods of meditating or reading remember to pray that is remember to pray before you read

[43 : 01] Peter Adam has a theory that it's very helpful to pray when you go to bed that when you wake up in the morning and have your quiet time that God will help you then I know personally that it's very helpful to pray before I go to bed or have Jen pray for me when I'm preparing talks it makes a difference to the experience of sleep and then finally look for ways to share your discoveries we saw last week that we're supposed to be speaking the truth in love to each other we will enjoy the things that we learn of God more and more the more we speak to each other about them the more we ask questions of each other have you been going in your faith have you been learning anything new about God recently look for ways to share your discoveries and you can praise God you can turn what you're learning of God into encouragement for others so that's meditation and our conclusion so we've been talking about biblical spirituality biblical spirituality means the

Holy Spirit connecting us to Christ and changing us to be like Christ as we encounter him in scripture it involves our minds but not just knowledge our hearts and emotions as well it involves emotional response to God but it doesn't put that first it puts God's truth first and tries to suck the emotion out of that to turn it into the meaning in our lives it involves the beginning of a new creation growing within us and between us by the bonds of the Holy Spirit connecting us to Christ 2 Timothy 3 14 but as for you continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in

Christ Jesus all Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching rebuking correcting and training in righteousness so the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work dear Heavenly Father make these words true in our lives and in our midst we pray we thank you for your word breathed out by you thank you that you change us by it thank you that you're at work through your word please equip us for every good work please teach us to be people who meditate on your word you don't simply read and pass by but who dig deep and who are changed radically in every part of our lives we pray these things in Jesus name and for his sake Amen