

## Pondering the Proverbs

The Psalmist wrote of the blissful man whose:

**Delight is in the law of the Lord,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.**  
—Psalm 1:2

Some folks associate *meditation* with the practices of eastern pagan religions. Actually meditation is nothing more than focusing one's thoughts on something to gain a better or deeper understanding.

There are times that we need to pause in our Bible reading to focus and think about what we have read. It is often productive to ask oneself questions about the things just read.

If you started reading the Book of Proverbs on December 1st\*, then you will have read the following verse:

**Wisdom shouts in the street,  
She lifts her voice in the square. (1:20)**

Wisdom is being personified as a woman. Why is she shouting? What would that look like if it were taken literally, that is, if a woman actually stood in the streets shouting? (Focus and think.)

In verse 22 Wisdom calls out:

**How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded  
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing  
And fools hate knowledge?**

What is the relationship between:

- The naïve and simplicity?
- The scoffer and scoffing?
- The fool and knowledge?

What is the difference between the three individuals: naïve, scoffer, and fool? (Ponder.)

The naïve 'loves,' the scoffer 'delights,' and the fool 'hates.' What is the significance of these action words? (Meditate.)

When we stop and ask questions about the things written, we tend to look more intently at the text. We envision the scene, the action, and all the various elements described in the text. We may see connections not seen before. We will often grasp a deeper meaning. We will remember more easily and longer.

Simple observation is a part of meditation. What do you remember about Proverbs 2? For me it is the 'path' chapter. The word *path*, or a synonym (*way, course, or track*), appears twelve times. Why is there such repetition? Is there an overarching message or emphasis? If so, what?

Sometimes the text seems to jump off the page with a pattern. It may be merely poetic or it may suggest a deeper meaning. Either way, it makes the reader stop and look, and perhaps ask, "Why?" and ponder.

Sometimes the text seems to jump off the page because of an exception or change. Solomon addresses 'my son' numerous times in the first seven chapters, but in 4:1 and 5:7 he addresses, "my sons," plural. Why? Is there significance?

Some questions may be answered in the immediate text. Others may be answered when considering the book as a whole and its repetitive themes. Some questions may go unanswered. Yet even then, our minds are sharper as we continue to read further in the book, as we re-read, and as we explore other sections of scripture.

Pondering the proverbs is not a science, but rather a simple means of delving more deeply into God's word. What will you see today!?

Mark Stinnett

\*In last week's bulletin article I issued a challenge to read the entire book of Proverbs, one chapter each day, beginning in the month of December.