

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one resource of the God of the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this twelfth series, the Bible teaches five truths about God's resources. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: GOD'S PRESENCE. We will meditate a new Bible passage, memorise a new Bible verse and then review the previously memorised verses together.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Hebrews 13:5-6.

The memorisation verse is: God's presence. Hebrews 13:5-6. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you". So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6.

(T) **First. Contentment in the presence of God.**

One. What does Jesus teach about money?

Jesus teaches that serving money is opposed to serving God! The presence of money in your present life can take away the presence of God in both your present and future eternal life!

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Jesus actually calls *money* with the name 'Mammon', which is the name of an idol or demon. He regarded money as an idol that people worship and give all their time and energy to. Or he regarded money as a demon that possesses and controls people.

Why does Jesus regard money as so dangerous? Because when people *depend on* money for their lives, they usually turn their backs on God. Money or materialism has become the world's greatest idol and demon.

In Luke 12:15, Jesus teaches, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." In the world today, the value of people is often calculated by the amount of money he possesses! However in the eyes of God, every human being has incalculable value, no matter if he is rich or poor, because he is a creation of God and has been created to live *for* God! When people replace the purpose of living for God with living for making and enjoying money, then they have fallen in the trap of greed. They are in uttermost danger!

(S) Two. What does the apostle Paul teach about money?

The apostle Paul says two important things about money and material possessions.

In 1 Timothy 6:7 he teaches that every human being brought nothing into this world when he was born, and he will also not be able to take anything out of it when he dies! Therefore, all people should acknowledge that money and all other material possessions are *temporary*. They should not throw away *eternal* life and the kingdom of God for the sake of the temporary enjoyment of money and material things.

In 1 Corinthians 4:7 he teaches that everything a person possesses in this world, he has received from God and should therefore not boast as if he has earned it himself! Therefore, all people should acknowledge God as the Giver of money and all other material things on earth. And if God is the Giver of all money, then he has also the right to tell us how to use money in this world and he has the right to take it away again.

In 1 Timothy 6:6-8 Paul teaches that *contentment* is the right attitude towards material things. If people have food and clothing, then they should be content with that. And in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, he warns that people who are not content, but who want to get rich, fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. He warns that people who have chosen to live for money and material things have wandered away from the faith in God and as a result have pierced themselves with many kinds of grief! People, who depend on money instead of depending on God, always have a gnawing anxiety about how to acquire money, how to spend money and how to protect their possessions.

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus teaches that people should not worry about how they live their lives, about what to eat and what to wear. He says that the unbelievers run after these things, but believers have God the Father in heaven, who

knows that they need things to eat and to wear. Jesus promises that if anybody seeks first God's kingdom and what is right in God's eyes, then God will give him all his basic needs, like food, clothing and shelter. Therefore, Christians should learn not to worry about tomorrow, because God will be present tomorrow to care for them tomorrow!

(T) Three. Does contentment not cause people to become lazy, live irresponsible and become thriftless?

No. People, who are not content, live irresponsible, because they spend all their time and energy to gain the things of this world. In the mean time they lose their souls! Christians know that God has commanded them to work six days a week and do all their work. Christians know that they are responsible to God and accountable to God. Christians show contentment during their work and lives on earth. Contentment is an expression of trusting God and of depending on God's presence and nearness and help!

(S) Second. Confidence in the presence of God.

One. When are people usually afraid or anxious?

People are usually afraid or anxious when all the odds seem to be against them. Psalm 118 is a Psalm of thanksgiving, thanking God for his presence, nearness and help especially in very difficult situations. In situations where all the odds seemed to be against him, the writer experienced fear and great anxiety. Enemy nations surrounded him on every side and swarmed against him like a swarm of angry bees. He was pushed back and he was very close to falling (Ps 118:10-13). Christians often face situations where all the odds seem to be against them, when they are pushed back and persecuted by the political and religious authorities, by their neighbours and by the propaganda made against them in the mass media.

(T) Two. What should the Christian attitude be towards difficult circumstances?

It is especially in situations of great difficulty that Christians may expect to experience the reality, presence and nearness of God! Then they may depend on God's promise made in Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Then Christians can say with confidence what the Psalmist said in Psalm 118:6, "The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

In Romans 8:31, the apostle Paul confidently says the same, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" That is why the Bible teaches that it is better to take refuge in God, than to trust in people, even if these people are princes (Ps 118:8-9)! People cannot protect us or really help us in the very difficult situations in life. Our family or friends or even all high government officials cannot save us from disasters on earth, from dying, and finally from God's judgement! Therefore, whoever depends on people, will be utterly disappointed. But whoever depends on God, his presence and nearness and help, will *never* be disappointed! Christians who depend on God's reality, presence and nearness, will have *confidence* in spite of every difficult situation on earth they face!

(S) Third. Experiencing the presence of God.

One. Why are there people who do not experience the reality and presence of God?

According to 2 Corinthians 4:4, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they *cannot see* the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God". The greatest reason why people do not experience the reality and presence of God is because they are *bound* by the lies of the devil. According to Luke 8:12, the devil will do everything possible to keep people away from the truth in the Bible, so that they will not believe in Jesus Christ!

Two. How can such people begin to experience the reality and presence of God?

In Hebrews 11:6 God promises, "God rewards those who earnestly seek him". In Matthew 7:7 Jesus Christ promises, "Seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you". One way to begin to experience the presence of the God of the Bible is to earnestly seek him. 2 Timothy 2:23-26 teaches that Christians teachers should not get involved in stupid arguments with these people, but rather gently instruct them in the truth of the Bible. Christian teachers teach them the truth in the hope that God will give them the grace to convert. Their conversion will lead them to a knowledge of the truth. It will bring them to their senses. And they will escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

(T) Three. Why are there times in which we Christians do not experience the reality and presence of God?

In Psalm 27:9 David prays, "Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; ... Do not reject me or forsake me." Just like with David, at times we Christians too think that God is hiding from us. We suspect that God must be angry with us. We feel rejected and forsaken by God! These experiences of God's absence cause us to despair and feel very lost. The reasons of our experiences of God's absence may be our sin and rebellion against God. It may be our dependence on this world, man, money or ambitions instead of on God. Or it may be that God wants to use difficult circumstances to train our character!

Four. Are there times in which God is *really* absent?

The burning question for many people is whether God is *really* absent? Read Psalm 139:1-12 for yourself. The Bible says that God is present everywhere! He is in the highest heaven and in the deepest depths. He is in the East and in the West. He is in the light and in utter darkness. There is no place where we can flee from God's presence! (Ps 139:7-12). Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and lies bare before the eyes of God. And all people must give an account of how they have lived to God. (Heb 4:13). God knows our inner thoughts. He knows our words even before we speak them. He knows what we do with our money and time. God is familiar with all our ways (Ps 139:1-4). Although God is present everywhere, yet *we are not always aware* of God's presence! Because we are earthly and unspiritual, we often lack a sense of God's reality or God's nearness. That is why we often lose the sense of divine sacredness in our times of prayer or worship services. That is why we lack confidence in our trials and difficulties. And that is why we lack contentment in what we possess or in the circumstances of our lives.

(S) Fourth. Practising the presence of God.

One. How can we again experience God's presence?

How can we restore the sense of God's reality in our life? How can we consciously experience the presence and nearness of God? Let us learn from David. How does David again restore the awareness of God's reality? How does he again experience the presence of God? How does he again feel the nearness of God? Let us read Psalm 27:4,8,13-14. "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. ... My heart says to you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek. ... I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." David's heart says to him, "Seek God's face!" Whenever David experiences the absence of God, then he *deliberately and consciously enters into God's presence*. He stands or kneels down before God's face and begins to gaze upon the beauty of God. That means, David meditates on God's wonderful attributes, on God's beautiful character. While David thinks about God's love for him and God's faithfulness to him in the past, David *patiently waits for God to act*. David waits with expectation and with assurance that, in his own time, God will again make his nearness felt to him. This is how David practises the presence of God. This practising of God's presence is *the one thing David seeks every day of his life*.

Likewise, practising the presence of God is something we should practise every day of our lives. Every day, we should seek God's face. We should deliberately and consciously enter into God's presence. We should meditate on God's characteristics. Then we should wait with expectation and assurance that God will again make his reality, presence and nearness felt.

(T) Two. What are the right attitudes in God's presence?

The right attitudes in God's presence are taught in the following three Bible verses. In Hebrews 12:28-29 we read, "Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us *be thankful* and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." Whenever we worship God, we should enter into God's presence with *awe for his majesty and power*; with *respectful fear for his holiness and righteous judgements*; and with *humility with regard to our own weakness, failures and powerlessness*. We enter into God's presence in breathless silence, because with our inner consciousness we are deeply aware of his existence, presence and nearness. We enter into God's presence with respectful admiration of his characteristics.

But we may also enter into God's presence with *confidence*, because Jesus Christ opened the way to God. Ephesians 3:12 says, "Through faith in Christ we may approach God with freedom and confidence." And Hebrews 4:16 says, "Approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." We may freely enter God's presence, ask him for help and thank him for answers given.

(S) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is "God's presence" and the reference is Hebrews 13:5-6. Let us memorise the Bible verse together. Then let us take turns to say that part of the verse alone without looking at the Bible or notebook.

(T+S) God's presence. Hebrews 13:5-6. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

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(S) **POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED**

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.
Series "God's greatness", verses 1-5.

(T) God is incomparable. Isaiah 40:25-26. "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Isaiah 40:25-26.

(S) God is all-glorious. 1 Chronicles 29:11. "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom: you are exalted as head over all". 1 Chronicles 29:11.

(T) God is sovereign. Ephesians 1:11-12. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:11-12.

(S) God is all-knowing. Hebrews 4:13. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:13.

(T) God is all-powerful. Jeremiah 32:17. "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you". Jeremiah 32:17.

(S) **POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".