

SPEAK, THINK, DO

Joe Slater

Moses was dead. Israel waited, encamped in the plains of Moab, just across the Jordan from Jericho. God commissioned Joshua to lead His people into battle to conquer the promised land and pledged to be with him every step of the way. Among other things, here is what God required of Joshua: *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”* (Joshua 1:8).

Note the three directives relative to God’s word: **speak** it; **meditate** in it; **do** it. By speaking it, Joshua would be teaching his people on a regular basis. Constant meditation would keep Joshua himself focused on his divinely-appointed mission. But words and thoughts have no practical value without careful obedience. Faithfulness has never been merely an academic or mental exercise. God requires obedience!

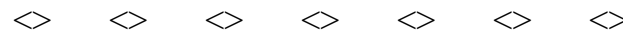
Almost 1500 years later, Jesus commissioned His apostles to take His gospel to the world. We inherit that commission. Our sword is the gospel of Christ; we march toward Heaven, our promised land of rest. Like Joshua, we are to speak God’s word. *“Preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15); *“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:20). Christianity is a taught religion; when the teaching stops, the church stops growing.

Meditation also keeps us focused on what we are supposed to be doing and teaching. After exhorting young Timothy regarding both doctrinal and practical aspects of his ministry, Paul instructed him to *“meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your*

progress may be evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:15). We live in a world filled with distractions; staying focused on the Lord and His work requires us to discipline our thinking!

Obedience may be out of sync with current notions of “toleration” and “acceptance,” but God’s word still mandates it. *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we obey His commandments”* (1 John 2:3). *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 John 5:2, 3).

We have a commission from God, just as Joshua did. Let us preach the gospel to every creature! Let us center our thoughts upon God’s word! And let us demonstrate our love for God and for each other by keeping His commands!



Acting Out Our Songs

“We have to stand as we sing this,” the song leader may say as he announces “Stand Up for Jesus” or “Soldiers of Christ, Arise

Then why do we not bow when we sing, “We bow down,” or why stand but not fall when we sing, “We stand to praise you and we fall on our knees”?

I am not objecting to standing when we sing about standing. However, when we stand up to sing “Stand up for Jesus,” we should understand we are not fulfilling what the song is exhorting us to do. The song is telling us to have boldness to stand for the right day by day.

“We bow down” reminds us to approach Almighty God with appropriate humility in our hearts when we worship and pray.

-- Cecil May, Jr. (via Preacher Talk)

Not An Option

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2).

Many times Paul enjoins us to pray. Probably best known is 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which simply states, “Pray without ceasing.” The NIV says, “Pray continually.” Perhaps Paul remembered God’s admonitions to His people. In the Old Testament we can read such verses as “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6) and “Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens (Lamentations 3:41).

For the Christian, prayer is not an option. It is a commandment. Jesus did not say “If you pray.” He said “When you pray” (Matt. 6:5). God’s Son knew his Father. He separated himself from others often, just to have time to talk to God. He was so confident in God answering prayer that he said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened” (Matt. 7:7).

The Christian can have the same confidence that Jesus had. After all, we, too, are children of God. It is our Father’s will that we pray until him (1 Thess. 5:18). He tells us over and over (Col. 4:2), 1 Tim. 2:8). More than that, God tells us to come before him boldly (Heb. 4:16) because “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16).

Besides sinning, one of the most successful ways of ruining our spirituality is not praying. We cut ourselves off from God, our strength and our help. When we don’t pray, we pull ourselves away from communing with God and knowing him. King David said, “One thing I ask of the Lord...that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (Ps. 27:4). May we, like David, have being with God as our greatest desire.

--Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO)