

**A Few Thoughts from Samuel Richardson**  
**From The Saints Desire, 1647**

**Concerning Reading.**

To read with profit requires diligence, wisdom, preparation, meditation, conference, faith, practice, prayer. For the first consider Pro. 2. 12. Mat. 13. 54.

2. Wisdom is necessary for the choice of matter, order, time; for the matter, it must be suitable to our necessities and capacities; for order, first that which concerns the foundation, and after the building: also order is a help to memory and understanding, and for want of order, some read much, but profit little: also wisdom must difference the fittest time to read in respect of other business: God hath made every thing beautiful in its time, Eccle. 3. 11.

3. Preparation requires, first humility, and a sensibleness of our own insufficiency, to teach our selves, and prayer to God to teach us, and to give us sound judgment and good affections.

Secondly, Faith in Christ, for him to open the book that is sealed, and the heart also believing he will bless his means unto us.

Thirdly, a heart prepared to learn, Pro. 17. 16. Such as received the Word with a good & an honest heart, brought forth fruit, Luk. 8. Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?

**After we have read, meditate.**

Meditation makes that we have read to be our own; Blessed is he that meditates in the Law day and night, Psal. 1. 2. And unless by meditation the judgment be refined and settled, and work it upon our affections, and lay up what we read in our minds, all our reading and hearing will come to nothing.

Conference with others,\* who are able to direct us, is necessary to inform us in what we understand not.

The Word must be mixed with faith,\* else it profiteth us nothing, Heb. 4. 2. Luk. 18. 18.

The end of reading is to practice, and the best way to know is practice; He that will do his will, he shall know it.

Without prayer we cannot well use the means, nor expect a blessing by them, 1 Cor. 2. David prayed and praised God, Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes, Psal. 119.

He that profits by hearing and reading.

1. He must have his mind turned to Christ, and fixed upon him in his Word, as Psal. 119. 15. Mark. 7. 14. He must believe, and he shall know.
2. He must not be wise in his own eyes; The humble he will teach, Psal. 34. Psal. 119.
3. Pray continually, 1 Thes. 5.
4. Search the Scriptures, John. 5. 39.
5. His end must be good, 1 Cor. 10. 31.
6. He must love the Word, Psal. 119.
7. He must resolve to obey, John 7. 17.

### **Of Meditation.**

Meditation is a serious reviving of those truths we have heard, or the administrations of God towards us or others, of that which we know, we further debate upon it, that both mind and heart being seasoned with the savor thereof (in applying it to our selves, that we may have some use of it in our practice) and be furthered thereby to duty. In which the memory is exercised to remember some things past, also the understanding gathering some other things, as namely in finding out the causes, fruits, properties, as when a man meditates on the Word, remembers and museth on it, so going from point to point, applying generally some things unto himself, and wisely examining how the case stands between the Lord and himself, in those things whereby he hath his heart thereby stirred up to put some things in practice. The work wrought in the affections, is that they are framed, either to love or hatred, joy or sorrow, love, fear, according to the diversity of the thing, with the reasonable part, hath seriously considered of.

## **Of the excellency of Meditation.**

Meditation is a pondering in the heart, a considering, a weighing with our selves; by meditation we retain truths, and are enriched by them, and it makes them sweet unto us, by it we ascend up to heaven; it's the life of all means, the way to knowledge, the mother of wisdom, it refines the judgment, and cuts off errors within and without, it increases love, it makes the mercy of God fresh unto us, it is the life of hearing, reading, conference, praying, &c. By it all means are made profitable unto us, it reveals truth to us, and acquaints us with our selves, it makes all to become our own, it removes lets, and settles truths upon our spirit, it breeds good affections, and quickens them, and makes us profitable to others, and makes things easy & sweet unto us, and fires the soul with love, it helps the memory, and stirs up affection, and fills us with experiences, and enables us to apply it to our own use, and benefit of others. Judge then how useful this duty is, and what a treasure we forgo when we neglect it.

### **Before Meditation.**

1. Read and confer with reverence and diligence, Psal. 119. Reading the Word fits us to meditate on it.

2. Be sure thou hast fit texts or occasions of matter fore laid, suitable to thy wants, and spirits, provide matter suitable, of all sorts, precepts, promises, &c. Be not barren of fit matter to meditate on, fit for thy necessity and capacity.

3. Choose a fit time, the morning is the fittest time for religious duties, and noon, and evening, day and night, Psal. 1. 3. We ought to frequent this duty, for the morning, Psal. 119. 147. Mark. 1. 35. for the night, vers. 148. In the morning our memories are the quickest and strongest, and our selves the readiest to conceive things, our natural powers being revived, have the greatest liberty; at night we are more dull and heavy: Idolaters will rise early in the morning to worship an Idol. Oh that we were so wise to prevent the morning light, Psal. 119. 147. Mary came early to the Sepulcher, Mat. 28. The holy Spirit came upon them in the morning, Act. 2. It was the third hour of the day: Consider Jer. 7. 13. John. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 28.

4. Separate thy self to this work; for a mans desire he will separate himself, Pro. 18. 2.

5. Choose a fit place, as for prayer, so for meditation, where thou may not be disturbed by any thing.

6. Love the Word of God, and meditation will follow, Psal. 119. What we love, we think on, love draws our affections, according to the love we have to any thing, so accordingly is our pleasure, study, and delight in it.

7. Believe God will bless it unto thee.

8. Pray to God to bless it unto thee.

### **In Meditation.**

1. Look up to God and mourn for thy estrangement of spirit from holy things, which should be familiar, and bend thy self (after separation of thy thoughts from frothy things) to consider seriously of the truths set before thee, and look up to God for strength to resist a hard wandering dead defiled heart, which makes thee weary of the work of God.

2. Let the Word of God be the object of thy meditation, Psal. 1. 2. Psal. 119. 99. and from generals proceed to particulars.

3. Meditate but of one thing at once, and at one time, and observe order, 1. travel with our memories; 2. judgment; 3. our affections, before we come to make use of it in our hearts: after our memories, let thy judgment consider what weight the thing is of, & how it concerns Gods glory, our selves, or others, and whether we have it at all, or in such a measure as we need, and may have; how we came by it, what are the lets of getting and enjoying it, and how they may be removed, what means are to be used to attain it, both for manner, measure, end, time; and having so done, rest not in over fights, but stir up and provoke our affections accordingly, and so work it upon our hearts. Take an instance, when we come to make use of that we meditate of in our hearts and affections, thus put case it be some special promise, how happy were I if I could enjoy it, what things here below are like unto it? then proceed to remove all the objections and temptations against it, lay all in the promise, and hold the promise until thou canst suck sweetness out of it, till faith and comfort issue in thy soul; if any should do all this, unless God add his blessing, & with his almighty power bless means to us, all is nothing, yet we must use the means.

4. If in meditation, thy mind rove and wander after other matters, as soon as thou perceives it, sigh deeply to God, and fall to prayer to be established, from whence Satan & our corruptions would draw us, and having desired the Lord to deliver thee from a vain, light, and frothy spirit, &c. fall to meditation again.

