

Thirsty


12 WEEKS
of DRINKING DEEPLY
from GOD'S WORD

HANNAH C. HALL

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*For my pray-ers:
Jennifer, Sally, and Mom.*

And for Josh, my love.



*“I thank my God every time I remember you”
(Phil. 1:3 NIV).*

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INTRODUCTION

I'll never forget the moment it happened.

It was a normal day. I stood at the kitchen sink doing the same thing I did every day, three times a day, forever and ever, amen. I washed dishes.

A young wife and mom, I had a good, easy-ish life. I did what women with good, easy-ish lives do. I cared for my family's needs. I loved my husband and submitted (sometimes) to his leadership. I read my Bible. I served in church. I had no reason to question my existence, nor did it seem like prime time for a major spiritual crisis.

But then it happened.

Like a rude and uninvited guest, a question barged into my mind. Coming out of nowhere, it suddenly crowded out every other thought, elbowed its way to the front, and bellowed its frustration.

This is the abundant life? Really?

How disappointing.

I stopped scrubbing, shocked at myself. Where had that come from? Was it true? Did I really feel that way?

I knew enough to know that my question was based on something Jesus had said. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Good news, right? Jesus promised his followers abundance. *Life to the full*. Which, in Jesus-speak, can be translated to mean overflowing joy, peace that passes understanding, guidance from the Holy Spirit, powerful and effective prayers, faith strong enough to move mountains, hope that abounds despite our circumstances . . .

All of which was foreign to me.

Life was good, but it wasn't abundant. I was missing out. And I do not like missing out.

The problem, I knew, was not on Jesus's end. The Bible is true, its words without error. Any disappointment I was experiencing was not a failure on God's part but on mine.

For years I had skimmed, snoozed through, and skipped around in Scripture. I'd even started and stopped an embarrassingly impressive number of Bible reading plans. But these herky-jerky approaches to my quiet time had done me no favors.

I remembered another promise Jesus had made—to a woman he met at a well—that, should she just ask, he would give her a gift: *living water*. She never had to be thirsty again (John 4:10–14).

Suddenly I knew—with such clarity I couldn't believe I hadn't realized it sooner—that I wanted more. I wanted abundance. *Fullness*. I longed to be satisfied in Christ. I needed living water.

I was thirsty.

And it was time to do something about it.

But how?

Let's just be honest: I wasn't in a season of life when I could reasonably rearrange my days to work in hours of personal Bible study. The devotionals I tried seemed fluffy and light on doctrine, but heavy-duty Bible studies overwhelmed me.

I needed a way to dig into Scripture that was doable for a busy woman but deep enough for a thirsty soul.

And God was gracious.

Hannah, reading the Bible is not a race to the finish. (The voice of God sounds an awful lot like the voice of reason sometimes, doesn't it?)

It's okay to take it slow.

And my whole spirit sighed *deeply*.

What God revealed to me in the days and weeks after that moment was not a fresh, bold concept but rather an ancient spiritual discipline, often overlooked but oh so practical.

Scripture meditation.

Beloved, we are allowed—nay, *encouraged*—to slow down and savor truth, one passage, one verse, one word at a time.

Flashy? No.

Effective? *Oh my goodness, yes.*

Through my meditation on Scripture, God worked to rearrange my heart. I learned to drink deeply and intentionally from the pages of the Bible, and he opened my eyes to riches that I would have never seen had I not slowed down to look. Linger. Enjoy.

Scripture meditation is not fast and furious, but it *is* sweet and fruitful.

Not so sure? *Just give me twelve weeks.*

We'll read the same verse or brief passage together each week. Every day of that week, in a short devotional, we will pause to look at, linger over, and enjoy what God says. We'll study to understand, prayerfully ask God to reveal, and boldly believe that we will be changed by the truths we discover.

Best of all, we will slowly begin to lose our good, easy lives as we joyfully find better, abundant lives in Christ.

There will still be dishes to do. Life will probably always be busy. And there will be a million reasons not to sit ourselves down and soak in the Word.

But now we'll know better.

Because once we've tasted and seen God's goodness and the all-satisfying abundance he offers us in Christ, we'll know we'd have to be crazy not to drink as deeply and as often from that sweet living water as we possibly can.

One of my favorite verses, Psalm 90:14, is my daily prayer: "Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days" (NIV). Another version translates that first line, "Let thy love dawn on us undimmed" (Moffatt).

Yes! This is my prayer for us too.

Lord, we are thirsty. Satisfy us with yourself. Dawn on us fresh every morning with your undimmed love. Pour out on us, Father, so that

we, your beloved daughters, may sing for joy and be glad in you all our days. Amen.

And together, I believe we will say, “We’ve drank deeply and we’re satisfied. Life in Christ truly is fully, wonderfully, beautifully abundant.”

Week 1

PSALM 1:1–3



DAY 1

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

Not too many years ago, I was a dedicated disciple of what author Jen Wilkin refers to as the “Pinball Approach” to Bible reading.¹ Unsure of what to read each day and not disciplined enough to plan it out beforehand, I’d randomly open the Word and pick whatever Scripture my eyes landed on. The next day I’d do the same.

I’d pinball from passage to passage without any thought to where I was headed or where I had been. It was a brilliant way to ensure that my daily Bible reading had little to no impact on my daily life.

I was the person James described as a hearer of the Word but not a doer (James 1:22). You know, the gal who looks at herself in the mirror but then walks away and immediately forgets about the spinach nestled in her teeth. Why bother looking if I’m not going to be changed by what I see?

Trouble was, my problem went deeper than just being forgetful.

I was moving too fast through Scripture and not meditating on what I was reading. I wasn’t wrestling with the truths I was discovering or checking my heart to see if I believed them. I certainly wasn’t allowing the Holy Spirit time to reveal my sin and change me.

I was checking “Daily Bible Reading” off my list and assuming that was enough.

It wasn’t. And before long, the lack of spiritual nourishment in my life began to show.

I love that one Hebrew word for “meditation” (*hagah*) is the same as a Hebrew word translated “growl” in Isaiah 31:4—like a lion roaring over its prey, establishing its possession of it, undaunted by any distractions.² *I wanted this. I fought for this. This is mine.*

Though it may sound boring or uncomfortable at first, meditating on Scripture is a fearsome thing in a believer’s life. It’s being so hungry for truth that we fight for it. Take possession of it. Believe it. We make it ours. And we’re changed.

It’s an intentional pursuit with Christ as its prize.

It won’t be easy.

But let’s try it anyway, shall we?

Let’s slow down and savor this together. God’s Word is absolutely worth the fight.



- 1 • Write Psalm 1:1-3 on a note card and work on memorizing it this week. Hiding the Word in your heart will prove to be a beneficial and long-lasting companion to your time of meditation.
- 2 • Think about the connection between the Hebrew word for “meditation” and a lion’s growl. How does this change your perspective on Scripture meditation?



DAY 2

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

I recently sprained my ankle. I was jogging, it was dark, and I was on a dirt road. (Upon reflection, it's not the most brilliant combo ever.) I used to think that skunks and stray dogs were my greatest threats on my morning runs, but my main problem has turned out to be far less exciting.

Potholes. Those suckers will sneak up on you.

That day, I let my eyes stray off the path directly in front of me—the small area illuminated by my headlamp—and I paid for it.

Our psalmist, David, also knew the hazards of taking his eyes off the road. “Your word,” he sang, “is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).

I know now what David knew then. It's dangerous out there in the world without some illumination.

David had only the first five books of the Bible to read—which are called “the Law” or “Torah.” *Torah* means “direction” or “instruction.”

David valued these directions from the Lord so much that he tells us in our verses this week that the man who delights in them and meditates on them is blessed.

“Blessed” here isn't some generic hashtag or cultural catchphrase. It's not referring to material or financial success either. Rather, “blessed” is an exclamation of joy that means “Oh, how happy!” or “Oh, the best!”¹

As in, *Oh, how happy* are we when we delight in God's instruction. *Oh, the best* it is for those who meditate on God's Word.

To David, the Law wasn't some dreary list of rules to follow or study begrudgingly. He *delighted* in it.


I confessed to a friend once that I didn't know how to make myself suddenly start loving my daily Bible reading, and she reminded and reassured me that I could ask God for anything—including that he would help me delight in his Word.

It's a prayer worth praying and one I'm fairly certain God loves answering.

He certainly did for me.

Oh, how happy it is that we have the whole of Scripture to give us instruction, light the dark paths ahead of us, refresh us with God's love, and point us, again and again, to Jesus.

We are blessed, indeed.

- 
- 1 • Do you delight in reading God's Word, or does it feel like a chore to you? Ask God to give you a desire for his Word. Trust him that he will.

- 2 • Think about what we consider "blessed" to mean and what God calls "blessed." Be honest—are you disappointed? Ask him to help you delight and find joy in his deeper, better version of "blessed."



DAY 3

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

An empty-nester friend of mine was recently reflecting on the long days at home with a growing family. “You just gotta keep slinging chow,” she said with a laugh.

I laughed too . . . but not quite as hard as she did. It hit a little too close to home, you know?

As soon as I clean the kitchen, it’s time to cook again. My people are always eating. Three times a day. It’s ridiculous.

Though I’m certain that serving my family is my primary calling right now, there are moments in this season when I wonder what—other than temporarily full bellies—I am producing here. Is there going to be any fruit from all this work? Why can’t I see it yet? When, if ever, will all this labor pay off?

David, I think, must have understood my frustration.

He lived in a dry, arid land. Because rainfall wasn’t a guarantee, fruit trees needed to be purposefully planted near a water source. These healthy trees could then grow to produce delicious food for people to enjoy.

But it certainly didn’t happen immediately.

Newly planted fruit trees can take *years* to bear their first crop. Before those blossoms form, trees will appear to be barren and unproductive. Fruitless.

This time of barrenness is necessary in the life cycle of the tree. It’s not an indication that the tree isn’t healthy, just that bearing fruit requires maturity. And maturity takes time. *Good fruit* takes time.

I can be so impatient. I hustle and strive to be productive at home or in ministry and then expect to see the fruits of my labor immediately. Yet we all know how disappointing it is to bite into a firm peach or a green banana. You just can't rush good fruit. It's always best enjoyed *in season*. Not too early. Not before it's ready.

While we wait to see the fruit in our marriages, our jobs, our children, or our ministries, purposeful planting in the Word is necessary. Jesus said, "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me" (John 15:4).

After we've been faithful to feed ourselves off of God's Word in the waiting, fruit will come at just the right time. And it will be beautiful. Lovely. Satisfying.

Faithfulness yields fruitfulness. So hold fast, beloved. Good fruit cannot be rushed.



- 1 • Are you in a time of waiting? What can you learn about God in times of waiting that you don't necessarily learn in times of fruitfulness?

- 2 • The funny (or frustrating?) thing about fruit is that it's not grown for the tree to enjoy. It's always meant for someone else. Read Galatians 5:22-23 about the fruit of the Spirit. If this fruit is not for us, who must God have in mind to benefit from our seasons of fruitfulness?



DAY 4

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

In a basic economics class at my Christian college, we held a debate: “Is it okay for Christians to be rich?”

I was assigned to argue on the side of the affirmative. My team contended that God confirmed our position because he had blessed men like Abraham, Job, and Solomon with great material prosperity.

The other side’s rebuttal came quickly: “And what about Jesus?”

They had a point.

Our passage this week tells us that the one who meditates on and delights in Scripture will prosper in all he does. This wasn’t just wishful thinking or an unsubstantiated promise. God himself had assured Joshua, Moses’s successor as leader of the Israelites, that if he would meditate on the law and obey it carefully, he would also be “prosperous and successful” (Josh. 1:8).

But shouldn’t Jesus have been prosperous if anyone was? And what of the many biblical and modern examples of people who, despite loving the Lord, not only have not been “successful” but also have experienced incredible suffering or poverty?

Where was their promised prosperity?

The answer is simple. God holds to an entirely different definition of prosperity than our world does. As is often the case with our heavenly Father, his idea of prospering and success may seem a bit upside down.

C. H. Spurgeon elaborates: “Our worst things are often our best things. . . . There is blessing concealed in the righteous man’s crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the saint are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth abundant fruit.”¹

There it is again. Fruit.


Prosperity—in God’s economy—may or may not mean we ever achieve material, financial, or ministry success, and there’s a strong chance either way we will still face suffering, losses, and sorrows.

But, without a doubt, God’s prosperity promise includes a 100 percent guarantee that when we delight in and meditate on Scripture, God will produce in us eternal, life-giving, soul-satisfying fruit.

God determines and defines prosperity, and when we align our lives with him, we can know that we will benefit from this promise.

No, prosperity will likely not be what we expected.

It will be better.

- 
- 1 • Can you think of a time when one of your worst things actually became one of your best things? What did God teach you through that experience?

- 2 • Psalm 32:1 says, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Try substituting “Oh, the best” or “Oh, how happy” into the place of “blessed” in the verse. How does this help confirm God’s definition of *prosperity*?



DAY 5

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

I'm ashamed to admit how many times I've seen the early-nineties film *Dumb and Dumber*. My teenage self found the crude, slapstick humor to be highly quotable and wildly hilarious. (To be clear, unless you're really into toilet-related gags, I do not recommend this movie.)

Despite its (many) faults, the movie's main characters, Lloyd and Harry, provide a marvelous picture for us today. As indicated by the film's title, the lesson here is obvious.

For better or worse, the people you're around *will* rub off on you. Be careful of the company you keep.

Our verses warn us right away whom to avoid specifically. The wicked, the sinners, the scoffers.

Though David elaborates in more detail about the fate of these in later verses, we get a quick glimpse into the life of the ungodly right here. We're warned not to walk in their counsel, stand in their ways, or sit in their seats. Rebellious, anxious, unsettled, they're all over the place—both literally and figuratively.

Contrast this with the one who delights in and meditates on God's Word. He is like a tree *planted*. Rooted. Solid. Held fast.

And not alone.

Undoubtedly, any gardener in that region with access to a water source would have taken full advantage of that wonderful resource. *Why plant one fruit tree, after all, when you can plant many fruit trees?*

God has likely surrounded us with an orchard of others. Godly women, firmly planted in the Word, desiring to see his name glorified, and just as in need of Christ-honoring friendships as we are.

Find these women. ASAP.

The company we keep is vital. I've seen it in my own life. I have wept many tears of joy over the godly women—older and younger—whom God has allowed me to walk through life with. Good friends and godly mentors are *critical* to our spiritual health.

The writer of Ecclesiastes confirms this wisdom: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil" (4:9).

It's simple. More trees, more fruit.

Find a woman (or two) who loves Jesus, and plant yourself beside her. Grow together and watch God graciously and beautifully bless your life with fruit.



- 1 • During trials, are you steadfast and solid, or does your faith waver? What does your reaction to difficulty reveal about how "planted" you are?

- 2 • Do you have a mentor, an accountability partner, or a godly woman who walks closely with you through life? If not, ask God to provide a woman you can ask to plant yourself beside and grow deeper with.



DAY 6

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

Take a few minutes today to journal and reflect on what God revealed to your heart through our verses this week. What did you learn about yourself or God? Is there a sin you need to confess and turn from or a truth you need to apply to your life? How have you been changed by meditating on this passage?



DAY 7

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

PSALM 1:1-3

Praying Scripture is a powerful practice that is simple, meaningful, and the perfect complement to your time of meditation on the Word. When we pray the Word, we can be sure we're praying God's will and therefore be confident we'll receive what we've asked for (see 1 John 5:15).

To close each week, spend some time praying our weekly Scripture back to the Lord. Feel free to use the suggested prayer as a guide, or simply pray as the Spirit leads. Then rest! God's promises are true. Let them satisfy and quiet your heart today.

***Father God,** I want to be a woman who is blessed by you! Please protect me from relationships that dishonor you and glorify sin. Teach me to delight in your Word and to meditate on it continually. Plant me beside godly people who are grounded in truth so that I am fruitful and strong in my faith. I pray you would cause me to prosper in all that I do for your glory and according to your perfect plans. Amen.*