

# REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

## DEEP & WIDE

**By Pastor Brian De Jong**

When considering the goodness of our great God, the depth and breadth of His kindness is undeniable. Jesus makes that plain when He tells us to *“Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!”* God is good to the birds of the air, though birds neither sow nor reap. Ravens live hand-to-mouth (claw-to-beak?) They do not make plans, or prepare for days to come, yet God graciously and generously provides for their every need.



Christ employs another analogy when the Savior asks us to *“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.”* Lilies have no capacity for sewing clothing for themselves – they lack the brains and the limbs necessary for garment making. Yet even Solomon in his royal splendor could not compare in elegance, beauty and simplicity.

The strength of Jesus’ argument lies in the questions that follow the statements: *“And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?”* *“If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?”* *“But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You*

*men of little faith!”*

Arguing from the lesser to the greater, Jesus powerfully proves that God’s goodness is both wide and deep. If God cares for birds and plants, will He not much

more care for men and women created in His own image? The truth is this: God’s lovingkindness extends to the entire human race, even though much of mankind lives in outright rebellion against their Creator. Their inexcusable ingratitude does not keep God from feeding and clothing them, or from filling their rebellious hearts with the common joys of this life.

God’s goodness also runs deep – touching the souls men as well as their bodies. God showed His supreme generosity when He sent His only Son to live, suffer, die and rise again. Christ’s life and ministry is the greatest act of love ever shown. Furthermore, God regularly brings fallen men to a sense of their sin, and He enlightens them to their spiritual peril. He mercifully gives them new hearts and grants the graces of repentance and faith. In His consummate kindness He forgives their sins and imputes the righteousness of Christ to their account. They are justified, adopted, sanctified and glorified – though they neither earned nor deserved such goodness. And this is to say nothing of the good He has in store for all eternity as we enjoy Him forever.

So as we think on God’s kindness towards unworthy creatures, let us give Him the gratitude and the glory due His name.

Volume 3, Issue 12

December 2008

### Inside this issue:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <i>Pastor’s Article</i>                        | 1   |
| <i>Meditation by Thomas Watson</i>             | 2-4 |
| <i>E-mail Address</i>                          | 5   |
| <i>Comments on Finance by Joel Moody</i>       | 5   |
| <i>December Birthdays</i>                      | 6   |
| <i>What Happened to the Christmas Program?</i> | 6   |
| <i>December Calendar</i>                       | 7   |
| <i>Recipe Corner</i>                           | 8   |
| <i>Pastor’s Pizza &amp; Bowling Party</i>      | 9   |
| <i>Ritsman Update</i>                          | 9   |
| <i>Craft &amp; Bake Sale</i>                   | 10  |
| <i>Did You Know</i>                            | 10  |

### Mnemonics...

- *Pine Haven Bake Sale, 5th*
- *Session Meeting, 9th*
- *Pizza & Bowling Party, 29th*

# Meditation

By Thomas Watson

“His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he *meditates* day and night.” Psalm 1:2

... *Grace* breeds *delight* in God, and delight breeds *meditation*. Meditation is a duty wherein consists the essentials of religion, and which nourishes the very life-blood of it. That the Psalmist may show how much the godly man is habituated to this blessed work of meditation, he subjoins, “In his law does he meditate day and night;” not but that there may be sometimes intermission: God allows time for our calling, he grants some relaxation; but when it is said, the godly man meditates day and night, the meaning is, *frequently*—he is much conversant in the duty.

It is a command of God to pray without ceasing, 1 Thess. 5:17. ...Meditation is the *chewing* upon the truths we have heard. ... Meditation is like the watering of the seed, it makes the fruits of grace to flourish.

## 1. Showing the NATURE of Meditation.

If it be inquired what meditation is, I answer—Meditation is the soul’s retiring of itself, that by a serious and solemn thinking upon God, the heart may be raised up to heavenly affections. This description has three branches.

a. Meditation is the soul’s retiring of itself. A Christian, when he goes to meditate, must lock up himself from the world. The world spoils meditation; Christ went *by himself* into the mountainside to pray, Matt. 14:23, so, go into a solitary place when you are to meditate. “*Isaac* went out to meditate in the field,” Gen. 24:63; he sequestered and retired himself that he might take a walk with God by meditation. *Zaccheus* had a mind to see Christ, and he got out of the crowd, “He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, Luke 19:3, 4. So, when we would see God, we must get out of the crowd of worldly business; we must climb up into the tree by retiredness of meditation, and there we shall have the best prospect of heaven.

*The world’s music* will either play us asleep, or distract us in our meditations. When a mote has

gotten into the eye—it hinders the sight. Just so, when worldly thoughts, as motes, are gotten into the mind, which is the eye of the soul—it cannot look up so steadfastly to heaven by contemplation. ...when a Christian is going up the hill of meditation, he should leave all secular cares at the bottom of the hill, that he may be alone, and take a turn in heaven. If the wings of the bird are full of slime, she cannot fly. Meditation is the wing of the soul; when a Christian is beslimed with earth, he cannot fly to God upon this wing. Bernard when he came to the church-door, used to say, “Stay here all my worldly thoughts, that I may converse with God in the temple.” So say to yourself, “I am going now to meditate, O all you vain thoughts stay behind, come not near!” When you are going up the mount of meditation, take heed that the world does not follow you, and throw you down from the top of this pinnacle. This is the first thing, the soul’s retiring of itself—lock and bolt the door against the world.

b. The second thing in meditation, is, a serious and solemn thinking upon God. The Hebrew word to *meditate*, signifies with intenseness to recollect and gather together the thoughts. Meditation is not a cursory work, to have a few transient thoughts of religion; ... but there must be in meditation a fixing the heart upon the object, a *steeping* the thoughts. Carnal professors have their thoughts roving up and down, and will not fix on God; like the bird that hops from one branch to another, and stays in no one place. David was a man fit to meditate, “O God, my heart is fixed,” Psalm 108:1.

In meditation there must be a staying of the thoughts upon the object; a man who rides quickly through a town or village—he minds nothing. But an artist who is looking on a curious piece, views the whole portraiture of it, he observes the symmetry and proportion, he minds every shadow and color. ... A wise Christian is like the artist, he views with seriousness, and ponders the things of religion, Luke 2:19. “But Mary kept all these things, and *pondered* them in her heart.”

c. The third thing in meditation, is, the rais-

## Watson Continued...

ing of the heart to holy affections. A Christian enters into meditation, as a man enters into the hospital—that he may be healed. Meditation heals the soul of its deadness and earthliness; but more of this afterwards.

### III. Proving Meditation to be a DUTY.

Meditation is a duty lying upon every Christian, and there is no disputing our duty. Meditation is a duty, 1. Imposed. 2. Opposed.

a. Meditation is a duty imposed—it is not arbitrary. The same God who has bid us believe, has bid us meditate, Josh. 1:8. “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth—but you *shall meditate* therein day and night.” These words, though spoken to the person of Joshua, yet they concern everyone; as the promise made to Joshua concerned all believers, Josh. 1:5 compared with Heb. 13:5. So this precept made to the person of Joshua, *you shall meditate in this book of the law*, takes in all Christians. As God’s Word does direct, so his will must enforce obedience.

b. Meditation is a duty opposed. We may conclude it is a good duty, because it is against the stream of corrupt nature. As one said, “you may know that religion is right—which Nero persecutes;” so you may know that is a good duty—which the heart opposes. We shall find naturally a strange averseness from meditation. We are swift to hear—but slow to meditate. To think of the world, if it were all day long, is delightful. But as for holy meditation, how does the heart wrangle and quarrel with this duty; it is like doing of penance. Now truly, there needs no other reason to prove a duty to be good, than the reluctancy of a carnal heart. To instance in the duty of “Let a man deny himself,” Mat. 16:24, self-denial is as necessary as heaven—but what disputes are raised in the heart against it? What! to deny my *reason*, and become a fool that I

may be wise; nay, not only to deny my reason—but my *righteousness*? What, to cast it overboard, and swim to heaven upon the plank of Christ’s merits? This is such a duty that the heart does naturally oppose, and enter its dissent against. This is an argument to prove the duty of self-denial good; just so it is with this duty of meditation; the secret antipathy the heart has against it, shows it to be good; and this is reason enough to enforce meditation.

### IV. Showing how Meditation differs from MEMORY.

The memory...sits and pens all things that are done. Whatever we read or hear, the memory does register; therefore, God does all his works of wonder that they may be had in remembrance. There seems to be some analogy and resemblance between meditation and memory. But I conceive there is a double difference.

a. Meditation has more sweetness in it, than the bare remembrance. The memory is the chest or cupboard to lock up a truth, meditation is the palate to feed on it. ... When David began to meditate

on God, it was “sweet to him as marrow,” Psalm 63:5, 6. There is as much difference between a truth remembered, and a truth meditated on, as between a cordial in a *glass*—and a cordial *drunk down*.

b. The remembrance of a truth, without the serious meditation on it, will but create matter of sorrow another day. What comfort can it be to a man when he comes to die, to think he remembered many excellent notions about Christ—but never had the grace so to meditate on them, as to be transformed into them! a sermon remembered—but not ruminated, will only serve to increase our condemnation...

### XVIII. RULES concerning Meditation.

**Rule 1.** When you go to meditate—be very SERIOUS in the work. Let there be a deep impression upon your soul. That you may be serious in

“*Meditation  
heals  
the soul  
of its  
deadness  
and  
earthliness...*”

## Watson Concluded...

meditation, do these two things:

1. Get yourself into a posture of holy reverence. Over-awe your heart with the thoughts of God, and the incomprehensibility of his Majesty. When you are at the work of meditation, remember you are now to deal with GOD. If an *angel* from heaven did appoint to meet you at such an hour, would you not prepare yourself with all seriousness and solemnity, to meet him? Behold—a greater than an angel is here; the God of glory is present! He has an eye upon you, he sees the state of your heart when you are alone. Think with yourself, O Christian, when you are going to meditate—that you are now to deal with him in private—before whom the angels adore, and the devils tremble! Think with yourself, that you are now in his presence before whom you must shortly stand and all the world with you—to receive their everlasting sentence. You must die, and how soon you know not; from the *closet* to the *tribunal*.

2. That your heart may be serious in meditation, labor to possess your thoughts with the solemnity and greatness of the work you are now going about. As David said concerning his building a house for God—the work is great, 1 Chron. 29:1. So it may be said of meditation—the work is great, and we had need gather and rally together all the powers of the soul to the work! If you were to set about a work wherein your life was concerned, how serious would you be in the thoughts of it? In the business of meditation, your soul is concerned; eternity depends upon it! If you neglect it, or are slight in it—it will have eternal consequences. If Archimedes was so serious in drawing his mathematical line, that he minded not the sacking of the city; O how serious should a Christian be when he is drawing a line for eternity! *When you are going to meditate, you are going to the greatest work in the world!*

**Rule. 2.** READ before you meditate. “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1:8. Read before you meditate. The Law must be in Joshua’s mouth; he was first to read--and then meditate.

“Give attendance to reading,” 1 Timothy 4:13. Then it follows, “meditate on these things,” verse 15. Reading furnishes the mind with matter. Reading is the oil which feeds the lamp of meditation. Reading helps to rectify meditation. Augustine well says that, “meditation without reading will be erroneous.” Naturally, the mind is defiled, and will be minting thoughts; and how many untruths does it mint! Therefore first read in the book of the Law—and then meditate! Be sure your meditations are grounded upon Scripture.

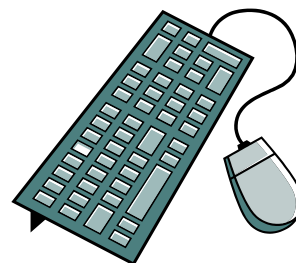
There is a strange Utopia in the imaginations of some men; they take those for true principles, which are false; and if they mistake their principles they must needs be wrong in their meditations. Thus the mind having laid in wrong principles--the meditation must be erroneous, and a man at last goes to hell upon a mistake! Therefore be sure you read before you meditate--that you may say, “it is written!”

Meditate on nothing but what you believe to be a truth; believe nothing to be a truth, but what can show its letters of credence from the Word. Observe this rule--let reading usher in meditation. *Reading without meditation—is unfruitful! Meditation without reading—is dangerous!*

**Rule 5.** Seal up meditation with PRAYER. Pray over your meditations. Prayer sanctifies everything; without prayer they are but unhallowed meditations. *Prayer fastens meditation upon the soul.* Prayer is a tying a *knot* at the end of meditation—so that it does not slip. Pray that God will keep those holy meditations in your mind forever, that the savor of them may abide upon your hearts, 1 Chron. 29:18. “O Lord, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.” So let us pray, that when we have been musing on heavenly things, and our hearts have waxed hot within us, we may not cool into a sinful tepidness and lukewarmness—but that our affections may be as the lamp of the sanctuary—always burning.

*Taken from A Christian on the Mount, by Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686), “A Treatise Concerning Meditation.”*

## *New E-mail Address*




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# Comments on Finance

*by Joel Moody*

General Fund receipts for October totaled \$12,400.04, while General Fund disbursements for October totaled \$15,832.39. October year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$124,320.00 as compared to the budget of \$116,025.54 (an excess of \$8,294.46), while October year to date disbursements of \$115,002.97 were \$1,022.57 below budget. Through the end of October, the General Fund has increased by \$11,570.86. Year to date General Fund receipts through October are 2.5% below the prior year's amount, while disbursements were 3.0% higher.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for October totaled \$1,191.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,429.17. Year to date benevolence receipts through October totaled \$15,441.94, while the budget amount was \$14,291.67. Each month, \$450.00 is sent to Worldwide Outreach for the General Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In addition, approximately \$192.00 is sent each month to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension Committee. Please remember to pray for the ministries that our church helps to support.

Gift directed towards the Capital Fund/ Church Expansion Project totaled \$37,988.76 through the end of October. Included in that total are gifts of \$3,598.45 received for the Kings Men Gifts from several churches within the Midwest Presbytery. Disbursements for the Church Expansion Project through October totaled \$38,792.06. The Capital Fund balance as of the end of October stands at \$56,568.32.

We have recently provided some information in the bulletin directed to those who may be interested in lending funds to Grace Church for the Building Expansion Project. Since we have been making payments for the project from funds on hand, we will need to pay for the remaining project expenses from the unused Capital Funds on hand, or from loan amounts from the back or from individuals. For those who had already expressed an interest in lending funds to Grace Church, we have provided them with forms to complete to be returned to the Treasurer, Joel Moody. These loan funds may currently be turned in directly to the Treasurer. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

# December Birthdays



*Happy Birthday!!!*

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## Where Did the Christmas Program Go?

In past years at Grace Church we have had a Christmas program featuring our Sunday School classes. Most recently this has been held on the Sunday evening prior to Christmas. At the Sunday School teachers' meeting in September it was decided that we no longer have the 'human resources' to put on such a program. The number of children participating has declined in recent years, and our capacity for such programs has suffered. In addition, it has become increasingly difficult to find God-glorifying and Scripturally sound Christmas program materials. Much of what is available is

unsuitable for our use, and would require significant re-working to become acceptable. Altogether, it seemed wise to our Sunday School teachers to discontinue the program at this time.





Grace OPC

# December 2008

*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*



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| Sun   | Mon  | Tue                               | Wed                         | Thu | Fri  | Sat  |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|--|--|
|   | 1<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.                                    | 2<br>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.  | 3                           | 4   | 5<br>Pine Haven Craft & Bake Sale, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. | 6<br>Men's Breakfast & Study, 7:30 a.m.    |
| 7   | 8<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.                                    | 9<br>Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.   | 10<br>Prayer Meeting 7 p.m. | 11  | 12   | 13<br>Deacons' Lunch for Widows & Widowers |
| 14<br>Missions Sunday Meadowview Manor, 2:00 p.m. | 15<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.                                   | 16<br>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. | 17<br>Prayer Meeting 7 p.m. | 18  | 19   | 20   |
| 21  | 22<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.                                   | 23                                | 24                          | 25  | 26   | 27   |
| 28<br>Lord's Supper (p.m.)                        | 29<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Bowling/Pizza with Pastor De Jong | 30                                | 31                          |     |  |  |

## Pumpkin Cheesecake Dessert

- ★ 32 gingersnap cookies, crushed (about 1 1/2 cups)
- ★ 1/4 cup butter, melted
- ★ 5 pkg. (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened (I used some fat free, and some low fat)
- ★ 1 cup sugar
- ★ 1 can (15 oz.) solid packed pumpkin
- ★ 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ★ 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ★ 5 eggs, lightly beaten
- ★ Dash ground nutmeg
- ★ Maple Syrup

In a small bowl, combine gingersnap crumbs and butter. Press into a greased 13in x 9-in. baking dish; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in the pumpkin, cinnamon, and vanilla. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Pour over crust; Sprinkle with nutmeg.

Bake at 350° for 40-45 min. or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 min. Carefully run a knife around edge of baking dish to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight.

Cut into squares; serve with syrup. Refrigerate leftovers.



“There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can have enjoyment without Him?”

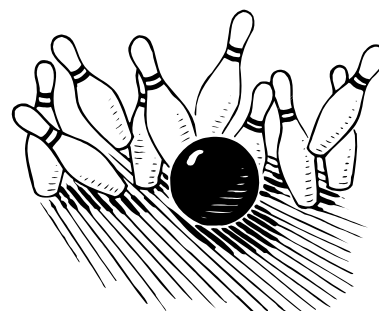
*Jenna De Troye*



*Pastor's De Jong's Annual*

# **Pizza & Bowling Party**

Everyone is invited to come to Pastor De Jong's Annual Pizza & Bowling Party on Monday, December 29th. Join us for some bowling at Odyssey Fun Center in Falls from 3-5 p.m. Afterwards we will all meet at the church for some delicious pizza. The cost will be \$5 per person for bowling and \$3 per person for pizza. There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board if you are able to attend to ensure enough pizza & bowling lanes for all.



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## **Update from Don Ritsman**



Proclaiming the  
Excellencies of our  
Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monthly Newsletter  
of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

**SERMONAUDIO.COM/**

**GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:

**OPC.ORG**



- ★ Did you know that the Pilgrims held their well-known Thanksgiving feast on December 13, 1621 and that it lasted for three days?
- ★ Did you know that England also had similar days of Thanksgiving before for this?
- ★ That other “services” of thanksgiving happened in the colonies before this famous day after trying times that the colonists experienced?

★ Did you know that George Washington gave a proclamation in 1789 in which he stated , “to recommend to the people of the United States, a day of public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God...”, on Thursday, Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> mainly for the formation of the Constitution?

([www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/firsts/thanksgiving/original.html](http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/firsts/thanksgiving/original.html))

- ★ That the States were the ones that made the date official for themselves for many years?
- ★ Did you know that on the prodding of Mrs. Sarah Joseph Hale (who requested this for 30 years), Abraham Lincoln declared the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday a national day of thanksgiving?
- ★ Did you know that it was in 1941 that Congress actually set the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday as a perpetual national holiday?

*Information found at <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-wall/wal-g007.html>, <http://chi.gospelcom.net/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps071.shtml>  
hanksgiving for Avoiding an Explosive Situation*

## Like to Bake?

Your culinary or craft skills are needed!! The Pine Haven Auxiliary will hold its annual Craft & Bake sale on Friday, December 5th at the Oostburg Bank from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. If you could donate a baked good or a craft item by December 4th, please speak with Debbie Boss or Kate Nagle.

