

# THE LANDBETWEEN MINISTRIES

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*“Joel Francis just taught a 2 week series on faith in the Old Testament in our church. It was instructive, encouraging, interactive, and enjoyed by all. I would highly recommend supporting Joel in his ministry.”*

— Rev. Kenneth Loehe, Senior Pastor, Battle Ground Bible Church

### Ministry News:

- The Board of Directors of this Ministry has recommended that Joel Francis begin putting teaching materials on the Internet. There has been interest for this material internationally and here in the U.S. for these materials.
- Please pray concerning the needed funds for recording equipment: \$2,750 min.
- **Q: What is the purpose of The LandBetween Ministries? A:** It exists to equip believers to grow in their trust relationship with Christ. This is done by pointing others to the character of God primarily by teaching principles from the OT, bridging them to the NT, and applying them to life.

## HOPE: LESSONS FROM THE LAND OF THE BIBLE PT. I

Late Oxford scholar C.S. Lewis describes hope as “*A continual looking forward to the eternal world*” (Mere Christianity, p. 104). Although it is true that hope is the idea of

looking forward, how does hope impact your life today? Does your life have a rich, biblical hope or is “hope” for you merely a wish that can be gone in a second? Former Dallas Seminary President Don Campbell accurately describes the *casual* usage of hope as “...fantasy that is uncertain of fulfillment.” In contrast to this



“casual” usage of hope, God’s Word teaches that hope is a *command* of God (Ps. 42:5) -

and all that God commands is for our *good* and *His* glory. Since hope is a key ingredient to our life in Christ, the following insights from the Bible will begin to answer these

**WHAT IS BIBLICAL HOPE? WHY IS HOPE IMPORTANT?**

questions: What does ‘hope’ mean in the Bible? Why is hope important? How can you have hope in a world of turmoil?

**What Does ‘Hope’ Mean?** In the Bible, the words used for “hope” can mean to ‘trust’ or to ‘wait expectantly.’ It can also involve a ‘trustful anticipation’ especially in regards to God fulfilling His promises. The Biblical teaching

on hope takes you to the One on whom you can fully rely. Psalm 147:11, “The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.” *Cont. p. 4*

## PRAYER:

*. Provision for the minimum \$2,750.00 needed to meet the needs for computer-based recording technology.*

*• That God would raise up more financial donors and prayer supporters to this ministry.*

*• For more speaking and writing opportunities which will advance the purposes of this ministry.*

*Thank you!*

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## MEDITATION — CANDLES AND DARKROOMS? BY JOEL FRANCIS © 2008

When you think of ‘meditation’ what comes to your mind? Someone sitting cross-legged with their eyes shut — seemingly amiss to the world around them? Meditation has both great importance in Scripture and is also quite misunderstood in our world. Like any other good gift from God, the concept of “meditation” is often skewed and taken in a direction the Bible never intended. Today’s idea of meditating is self-focused and includes engaging in a mental exercise (i.e. special breathing techniques) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness. It can also mean to focus, ponder, etc. Meditation for many in the US and overseas is to attempt reaching an alleged state of “utopia” by emptying ones inner-self. Other contexts of meditation might include being in a darkened room that is only lit by candles, etc. to help set the “mood” of meditating. Yet, what is Biblical meditation? Why is Biblical Meditation Important?

**“HIS MOUTH OF PRAISE TO GOD WAS CONGRUENT WITH THE MEDITATION OF HIS HEART. THIS IS...BIBLICAL MEDITATION.”**

**What Is Biblical Meditation?** In the general sense, meditate can mean to ponder or reflect on God and His Word. Yet, there is more to meditation in the Bible than merely pondering or reflecting. There are two main words in Hebrew that are translated into our English word “meditate.” One root word from which is translated to “meditation” is (haga’) which can mean to “read in an undertone” (Ps. 1:2). Or, it can mean to “mutter” as in Ps. 77:12, “I will ponder also of all thy work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.” (ESV)

Here, “meditate” can be rendered “muse” (NASB) which can be a way to speak of God’s works. Also, an ungodly form of meditation (muttering) is in Isaiah 59:3b it says, “...Your lips have spoken falsehood. Your tongue mutters wickedness.” This root word for “meditation” can also mean, “speak” as in Ps. 35:28, “Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long.” In this psalm, David is expressing his praise of God from his mouth that flows out of his inner reflecting on the truth of God’s righteousness. His mouth of praise to God was congruent with the meditation of his heart. This is consistent, Biblical meditation.

Joshua 1:8 is a key verse for meditation as it outlines the goal of meditation: The word of God was not to depart from Joshua’s *mouth* but he was to *meditate* on God’s law (teaching). In Josh. 1:8, meditate means to “utter” or “speak” or “muse.” The goal for Joshua’s meditation was living out all the teachings of God and being successful in His ways. In our lives, when we *say* a passage of Scripture, it helps *solidify* it in our hearts which can lead us to *live out* the teaching.

### Why is Biblical Meditation Important?

Biblical meditation is important because if you are reflecting, pondering, and speaking of God and His Word you will not have time to participate in sinful habits that eat away at your soul. The question is not *if* you ponder, reflect, or speak of things, but on *what* and *who* you ponder, reflect and speak. For example, it still amazes me how many people can quote verbatim (with emotion!) their favorite parts of a movie they enjoy. It takes a lot of pondering and reflecting on a movie before you can easily talk about it to others. Do you meditate on God’s Word to the point where the very life of its message easily flows out of your life to others? God is worthy of our focus and continual meditation.

You are consistently pondering decisions you make throughout the day. You spend time reflecting on the past in order to hopefully make better decisions for what needs to be done today. But, if you refuse to meditate on God’s Word and really ponder what it says for your life, then you are missing out on the richness of life and the unending wisdom God is wanting to give you as you face each day. The Psalmist wrote that a description of a blessed person is one who actually takes *delight* in God’s teachings and “...in His law he meditates day and night.” (Ps. 1:2b) In contrast, if someone says, “I don’t have time to meditate” this is a misstatement. We “meditate” on something all day long, but is it on what God wants us to meditate on during our day?

Biblical mediation is a key element to living a balanced, fulfilled life. Why? Because if you primarily reflect or mull on what others say, or CNN says, or the newspaper or a talk show’s opinion on various subjects, you will not have the right perspective on life. Your life will be misguided and be marked with confusion and hopelessness. The more you meditate on life from your perspective instead of God’s, life will be miserable. In contrast, Biblical meditation means that no matter what you are going through, you will reflect, ponder, and speak about the greatness of who God is and the infinite love from Him that brings you fulfillment and peace.

### How Can I Apply Biblical Meditation to My Life?

There are numerous ways to apply this truth to your life.

Here are two ways to meditate on God and His Word:

- 1) Reflect on God’s Word like you should eat a good meal: Savoring it. To benefit from meditating on the Word, take a passage one phrase at a time and pray about each phrase. Ask the Lord to show you insights from a phrase that you can put to practice that day in your life. *A phrase that is applied in its context is better than a chapter that is read but forgotten.*
- 2) Speak about the good ‘food’ you’ve eaten. If you take time to thank God for what He has taught you and tell others about it, your meditation will be complete and healthy.

## IGNORANCE & IMMATURITY: THE SAME? BY JOEL FRANCIS © 2008

In his book "Quiet Strength" Super Bowl champion Head Coach Tony Dungy shares at least two core expectations for his teams: "No excuses. No explanations." In other words, if a player does not live up to the standards set by the coaching staff, the staff will not take any excuses or explanations for failure on the part of the player. When it comes to how we live our lives before God, we can be trapped in spiritual mediocrity by coming up with excuses and explanations for our sin. For a believer in Christ, sin leads not only to destructive consequences but to the gnawing frustration that results from being out of close fellowship with Christ. There are two key ways believers can continue living the unfulfilled life of not growing in Christ: Ignorance and Immaturity.

### Ignorance

Knowledgeable believers should not be quick to judge anyone, let alone those new to the faith. The fact is that most new believers do not want to stay ignorant of the vast truths found in Scripture. The old saying, "What you don't know can't hurt you" is the furthest thing from the truth in the context of Biblical knowledge. As believers, whether new to Christ or not, we are all called to be life-long learners of the truths that God wants us to apply. We are not called to making excuses or explanations, but to growing in our knowledge of how to glorify God in all areas of life. The prophet Hosea brought the word of Yahweh to the ancient Israelites and told them they were heading for destruction for their lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Ignorance is not bliss, but can lead to incredible pain in your relationships and in the work God has called you to do.

There are at least two types of ignorance in the spiritual life. One type is somewhat benign, as it can be due to a lack of solid Bible teaching available to a group of people. The other type is sinful, as a believer can purposefully ignore the opportunity they have to become informed of Biblical truth. 1 Pet. 1:14-15, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

### Immaturity

A pastor said, "Someone can be a one-year old believer for twenty-five years." In other words, too many believers remain immature. The word "immature" in Rom. 2:20 means "simple-minded." Paul used strong wording to the church in Corinth when he wrote: "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature" (1 Cor. 14:20). Being simple-minded carries a sense of not using discernment between what is righteous and sinful.

### Are Ignorance and Immaturity the Same?

The short answer is no, they are not the same. There are believers who are not ignorant of Biblical truth on a matter, but justify themselves for sinning because they were just being "immature." This reasoning is rampant in our culture and has led to untold destruction and spiritual apathy. God is not pleased with those who are looking for excuses for their sin instead of seeking to honor the Holy Spirit in all they do. Then, when the believer experiences the shallowness of life that comes from being out of fellowship with God, they can become disgruntled with God for "shortchanging" them. Yet, God is not the problem, but He is the only solution to the problems of both ignorance and immaturity that plagues today's Christian world. We need believers in Christ with a maturity that keeps us on course for Christ's honor.

### Spiritual Maturity

In sharp contrast to ignorance and immaturity is spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is the goal prescribed for believers. What is "spiritual maturity"? Hebrews 5:14, "But solid food is more the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." The mature believer is one who discerns or distinguishes the righteous path from the evil path and chooses the righteous path. For example, when one trusts in Christ as their Savior, they are complete in Christ in regards to their new identity as a son or daughter of the King of kings. Yet, as children are "complete" in the sense of being fully human, they are designed to grow and to develop into mature men and women, ideally being more capable of discerning right from wrong.

Another analogy for maturity is that even though a tree might be young, it's still a tree. A maturing tree grows unified rings around the core. These rings can represent the various areas of the life of a believer. A new believer might not know anything but to pray, read the Bible and be faithful to his wife. This is an excellent start. These might be the first "rings" in his spiritual tree. As he obeys more of Christ's commands, such as involvement in missions and loving others, it will add rings to his spiritual tree. This growth in his spiritual tree will strengthen him and produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit. *It is only when you obey* God's Word and the Holy Spirit by discerning between evil and good, then choosing the good path, that maturity is realized.

Thus, maturity is not merely accumulating Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge is imperative, but it alone does not equal maturity. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and discernment" (Phil. 1:9, NASB).



## CONT...HOPE: LESSONS FROM THE LAND OF THE BIBLE PT. I

Another way of translating the word for “love” in this verse is God’s “loyal love.” God is love (1 Jn. 4:16) and because of His unwavering love you can wait with confident expectation that His plans for your future are good (Jer. 29:11). Biblical hope is counterintuitive to how the world views hope because Biblical hope is based on the Person and Promises of God. For example, God promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5b ESV). In contrast to placing hope in God’s promises, Job got to a low point in his journey and said, “What strength do I have that I should still hope?” (Job 6:11). In this verse, the Hebrew word for “hope” literally means to “wait patiently.” Although hope is not listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), patience is listed and is closely related to hope. Here’s the cycle: If you lose hope you will be impatient, and if you are hopeless and impatient it is an indicator you are expecting of this world what you can only find in Jesus Christ and His promises. 1 Tim. 1:1 describes Jesus as “our hope” and in Col. 1:27b Paul writes of the glorious riches which is “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Because of our hope of glory, who is Christ, we can live with confidence that God will keep all of his promises for both now and eternity future. For example, as believers we can fully expect to reside in the New Jerusalem and all its glory.

The book of Revelation does not use the word “hope” in the original Greek. However, the theme of patient endurance (hope) is throughout the book of Revelation. Patient endurance has consistently characterized God’s people of hope. For example, “patient endurance” is exemplified in the lives of Abraham and Sarah. Although they had lapses of hope, they still confidently expected God to keep His promises to them (Gen. 21:1). Thus, today you can have hope as you patiently trust in Christ and in His numerous promises for your life.

The LandBetween Ministries is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. All contributions to The LandBetween Ministries are tax-deductible.

Any monthly or annual gift is greatly appreciated.

**The LandBetween Ministries**  
 831 North 550 East  
 Lafayette, IN 47905  
 Phone: (765) 430-9821  
 Email: [jfrancis4@yahoo.com](mailto:jfrancis4@yahoo.com)  
 Internet: [www.landbetween.org](http://www.landbetween.org)

**Why is Hope Important?** Biblical hope is based on Jesus Christ. Thus, hope is imperative to living a life where we are not defeated due to relying on expectations of this world outside the Person and promises of Christ. Further, the importance of hope was vividly exemplified by numerous WWII POW and concentration camp prisoners. Many died not only because of the torture or physical attack they received, but because they gave up hope. How? By giving up the confident expectation that they would ever be free again to see their friends and family. In contrast, as a believer in Christ, you have every reason to live a life of confidence and to look forward to the future inheritance you have in Christ (Eph. 1:18-23). The wealth of this world’s greatest inheritances is nothing in comparison to what those inherit from God who have the hope of Jesus Christ alive in their heart.

**How Can You have Hope in a World of Turmoil?** The land of the Bible has been in conflict for thousands of years. It appears a hopeless situation for all sides. Yet, since it is first God’s land, hope can grow even in such a bitter battle. A growth of hope can occur in your own spiritual battle field by relying on the leadership of the Word and the Holy Spirit to convict and increasingly guide you in all areas of your life. As you lower your expectations of what this world’s reasoning, wealth and “security” can give you, you can then grow in your trust of God and your hope will increase. Why? Because your expectations are based on who God is and what He alone can do for you and not on circumstances that are constantly fluctuating.

Professor Howard Hendricks wisely said in effect that we take ourselves too seriously but don’t take God seriously enough. How true. One way you can take yourself too seriously is to expect to find hope in your life apart from Christ. You can take the world too seriously by having an expectation (hope) that this world’s pleasures, money, wisdom, and status will somehow make life “better” for you. In contrast, taking God seriously includes putting all of your confidence and expectations in Him. For example, the Apostle Paul writes about a great man of faith in Rom. 4:18a, “Against all hope, Abraham believed and so became the father of many nations...” Abraham’s belief meant he trusted. His trust was based on God’s trustworthiness to His Word. You can confidently put your highest expectations in God and as a result his living hope will not disappoint you regardless of life’s battles (Rom. 5:5).

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### **Upcoming Topics:**

- † *What is the Significance of the 2nd Resurrection?*
- † *Galilee: Lessons from the Land of the Bible Pt. 2*
- † *What Does it Mean to ‘Cry Out’ to the LORD?*