

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Memorizing Scripture is a critical part of living out our faith as a soldier in God's army, but only if it is accompanied by meditation, prayer and honest application of the Word.

"Scripture memory has paid greater dividends in my Christian life and ministry than any other form of Scripture intake. I'm 80 years old and battling cancer. Daily quiet time and review of Scripture are essential to my walk with God." - Lorne Sanny (former leader of the Navigators)

Disciples who follow Jesus...

- Desire to be equipped to fight in the spiritual battle. *Ephesians 6:18*
- Abide in the Word of God. *John 8:31,32; 15:7*
- Give and receive scriptural correction. *2 Timothy 3:16-17*
- Love God's Word. *Job 23:12; Jeremiah 15:16*

... Therefore, your commitments are:

- Audio: "[Scripture Memory](#)" Max Barnett (28 min.) (Take notes)
- Bible Study: "Scripture Memory"
- Try [Learn Scripture](#) and practice memorizing Scripture online
- Discuss with your leader a Scripture memory review program with the goal of retaining God's Word in your heart and mind for the rest of your life. (Ps. 119:11; 1 Cor. 10:31)
- Read chapter 5 BIFSG
- Read and discuss "Scripture Memory Considerations"
- Memorize **one** of the following verses about hiding God's Word in your heart:
 - Psalm 119:9-11 with topic: Scripture Memory
 - Colossians 3:16 with topic: Scripture Memory
 - ...or any of the verses in #6 of the Bible Study
- Meditate: HA #3 and supporting verse Hebrews 3:13
- Share your KEY THOUGHT with your group
- Remember that your Quiet Time is an encounter with the Almighty God
- Attend CV, take notes, and write down your main idea
- Complete Graduation Test with your leader

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON:

How can the Holy Spirit use the Scriptures you have memorized in day-to-day life?

Bible Study: Scripture Memory

1. How could Scripture memory enhance your spiritual life? And why is it so important to your walk with God?
2. How did Jesus and his followers use Scripture memory to help them in their lives?
 - a. Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus)
 - b. Acts 2:14-28 (Peter)
3. Why is memorizing God's Word necessary? If you read it and study it regularly, isn't that enough?
4. What is the first function of Scripture in a person's life? 2 Timothy 3:14-15
5. Why is it necessary for the Word to be a part of one's life after becoming a Christian? 2 Timothy 3:16-17
6. How will Scripture memory help you accomplish God's purpose in your life?

Divide out the verses listed below amongst the members of your group, with each person reporting back to the group how your assigned verses address the question above. Please use a separate piece of paper to write out your answers.

1 Peter 2:2 & Hebrews 5:14
John 5:39
Matthew 22:29
Proverbs 22:20-21 & Psalm 45:1
1 Peter 3:15
Psalm 19:11
Matthew 4:4

Ps. 119:102, 104
Matthew 12:34
James 1:21
Revelation 10:9 & Proverbs 27:7
John 14:6
Deuteronomy 30:14
Ezekiel 2:8, 3:3 & Jeremiah 15:16

7. Five steps to owning passages of God's Word.
 - a. Memorize it
 - b. Meditate on it
 - c. Ask the Holy Spirit for His leading on how to live it out -- then do it!
 - d. Review it daily for at least two months
 - e. Ask God for a system of review that will keep you meditating on His Truth throughout your life
8. How many minutes have you spent this week memorizing God's word?
9. How many hours have you spent this week memorizing and reviewing material you are required to know for classes at school?
10. Is Scripture memory a priority as you schedule your time?
11. What are some of the reasons you have found it difficult to memorize Scripture consistently and retain what you have memorized?
12. These are some suggested times for Scripture memory and review.
 - a. Time you usually waste
 - b. Walking to class
 - c. Waiting between classes
 - d. In the car
13. Why does Satan make Scripture memory so difficult for you?
14. What does God tell us to do with His Word?
 - a. Deuteronomy 11:8
 - b. Proverbs 7:2-3
15. What does the phrase "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" in Colossians 3:16 mean to you?

Basic Ingredients for Spiritual Growth

Chapter 5: Scripture Memory

Scripture memory rarely draws a crowd. Next to other means of Scripture intake, such as Bible study and listening to sermons, it does not win a popularity contest. Over the years the Navigators have sponsored conferences to help people in their spiritual growth. Some of these conferences have been quite large, offering a wide variety of workshops from which the conferees could make a choice.

Workshops on “How to Study the Bible,” “How to Know the Will of God,” “How to Witness,” and “How to Have a Quiet Time” were usually well attended. But there was one that never seemed to attract very many people. In fact, there were times when not one person signed up for it. Which one? You guessed it “Scripture Memory.” It was an embarrassment to the leader to discover his workshop had been canceled for lack of interest. Even though he had prayed diligently and prepared thoroughly, no one signed up. How do I know? I’ve had it happen to me. So I would bundle up my notes and my handouts and my transparencies and quietly slip into the back row of a well attended, exciting workshop conducted by a colleague. And it didn’t do much for my self-image when someone asked, “How did your workshop go?” and I would have to answer, “No one came.”

Scripture memory seems to be the least popular form of Scripture intake. Just why do you think this is so? What is it about Scripture memory that turns people off? Could it be that we have been led to believe that Scripture memory is not for people like you and me? Could it be that somewhere we have gotten the idea that Scripture memory is just for children?

In my own church we have made Scripture memory a vital part of the life of our Sunday School. A little child showing up for class on Sunday morning meets the Scripture Memory Lady sitting just outside the classroom door. She welcomes the child with a friendly smile and asks, “Did you memorize your verse for Sunday School this morning?” When the child says, “Yes,” and recites the verse, the Scripture Memory Lady puts a gold star on the chart beside the child’s name. There is no lady outside the door of my class.

Are we quietly convincing ourselves that Scripture memory is for kids? But think with me for a moment. Who was it who wrote, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word ... Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:9,11). Was it a child who wrote those words? Or were they written exclusively *for* children? No. These are words of David, the King of Israel, and one of the greatest military leaders the world has ever known. These are the words of a man who discovered the power of the Word of God lodged in his heart.

Who was it who wrote, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart”? (Deuteronomy 6:6) They are the words of Moses, the man who led an entire nation to freedom. And who encouraged us all to write the Word of God on the tables of our hearts? It was Solomon, one of the wisest of men. The practice of Scripture memory is not only for children, but for you and me as well.

The Benefits of Scripture Memory

Quite possibly one of the primary reasons why Scripture memory is not embraced enthusiastically is that people do not know the marvelous benefits of writing the Word of God on their hearts. Let’s look at a few.

Scripture memory helps us to keep from sinning against the Lord. Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, had a little saying that he shared with us. He said, "God's Word will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from God's Word." You recall we have already looked at David's testimony in this regard when he said, "Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). You and I do not want to sin against God. As we walk with Him day by day, we earnestly desire to be moment by moment in sweet communion and fellowship with Him. But we have a problem. I identify with the hymn writer who wrote, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." But if we lay up the Word of God in our hearts, the blessed and powerful Holy Spirit of God can take those words and enable us to live under their influence. So if we really and truly do not want to sin against God, we will saturate our hearts and lives with His Word.

Scripture memory is an aid to meditation. Now I realize that some of you may be saying to yourselves, "What's so great about that?" And my answer would be, "Plenty!" The promises God makes to the person who will consistently meditate on the Word of God are so staggering that we have a hard time believing them.

Scripture memory enables us to have the Word of God ready for us at a moment's notice. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). And if we do not have the Word of God memorized and ready for instantaneous use, we have a severe spiritual handicap. Why is that so? If you look carefully at the armor of the Christian in Ephesians 6, you discover that all the parts of the armor except the sword of the Spirit are defensive. The Sword of the Spirit is the only weapon that can be used both defensively and offensively as well. Our Lord's use of the Scriptures when attacked by Satan is a clear illustration of what you and I must do when tempted. The example of Christ should be sufficient incentive for us to fortify ourselves with God's Word so that we have it available for use when the devil attacks.

What further motivation could we possibly need? Think of it! When our hearts are filled with God's Word, we can defend ourselves against the onslaughts of the enemy and win the battle with the same power in which Jesus placed His trust. But if we launch into the battle with purely human strength and wisdom, without the Spirit's sword, we are heading for defeat.

Scripture memory helps us to have an answer when someone comes for advice and counsel. Note Proverbs 15:23, "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and word spoken in due season, how good it is!" Some years ago a young man came to me for advice. He had graduated from the Air Force Academy and was pursuing a career as an officer teaching R.O.T.C. at a school on the East Coast. He had recently been approached by some zealous Christian workers urging him to give up his career as an Air Force officer and come and join them as a full-time worker in the ministry to which God had called them. They told him that he could either do that, or live his life as a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God. It seems that they thought that unless you were a full-time Christian worker, you were really a nobody.

After a rather lengthy explanation of all this, he asked, "LeRoy, what do you think?" My answer was, "It doesn't really matter what I think. What really matters is what God says." I suggested we open our Bibles to Ephesians 4 and read verses 11 and 12. After we had done that I asked him a few questions. "Do you believe God called you into the service?" He believed God had done that. I then asked, "Do you believe you can serve God in the Air Force?" He thought he could. In fact, he told me about some men he had led to Christ and some new Christians who were in his Bible study.

As we discussed his situation, I pointed out that as far as I could tell he was

doing exactly what God wanted him to do, and that certainly was not second-class service performed by a second-class citizen in God's kingdom. He was serving God as a worker in His ministry and was being used by the Holy Spirit to build up the body of Christ, both numerically and in depth. I am happy to say he is still active in the Lord's work while serving Him as a full colonel at an overseas Air Force base. In fact, he has recently been asked to give his testimony to a gathering of Air Force officers from another nation.

Rather than live as a second-class citizen as was predicted, he has been used by God to minister to people in places where full-time Christian workers are unable to go. So, remember, when people have a need and you know an answer from the Bible to help meet their need, you experience great joy. Therefore, the more Scripture you have memorized, the wider the variety of needs God can enable you to meet.

A friend of mine tells the story of two girls who had been memorizing Scripture rather faithfully but had stopped. He asked one of the girls a question. "What will you do if a friend comes to you with a problem and you have nothing from the Scriptures to share with her?" "Well," she replied, "I guess I'll be in trouble." The other girl thought for a minute and then replied, "No, the friend who comes to you for help will be in trouble." God wants His people to be ready with an answer for those in need of Spiritual counsel. "Have not I written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth; that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?" (Proverbs 22:20-21) Here we learn that God has given us His excellent Word that we might have a firm grasp on that Word - know the *certainty* of the Word of truth -and that we might be able to share His Word with others who are in need of help.

Scripture memory provides a good supply of the Word of truth that the Holy Spirit may bring to my remembrance. I recall being in a meeting many years ago where Dawson Trotman was speaking on the subject of Scripture memory. At the end of his sermon, he then asked if there were any questions. A man spoke up and said he didn't think Scripture memory was necessary because Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would bring the Scriptures to our remembrance when we needed them. If we were witnessing to someone and needed a verse, the Holy Spirit would cause us to remember it. Dawson's answer was, "If you have never *learned* the verse, how would it be possible for the Holy Spirit to help you *recall* the verse?"

The Holy Spirit sealed this truth to my mind from Proverbs 22:18. "For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips." It is my responsibility to put in me the Word of God within me through Scripture memory and to keep these verses fresh through systematic review. When I do this, the verses will be fixed upon my lips by the Holy Spirit. If I do my part, the Holy Spirit will do His. We can count on His faithfulness. Can He count on us to provide a good supply of the Word of truth for Him to bring to our remembrance?

Scripture memory keeps our minds on Christ. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." I have learned that I can be in turmoil, with the winds of adversity and heartache raging around my soul, but if my mind is fixed on Jesus, I can have perfect peace within.

Scripture memory helps us set priorities. Some time ago I asked my children what their friends were giving their lives to. They came up with a list of five things, and at the top of the list, by a wide margin, was the accumulation of wealth. Now there is nothing wrong with having money. In fact, God may give a person great wealth, as He did to David and Solomon. The problem comes when we fix our minds on riches and not

on God. If we do that, we will go through life unsatisfied and discontented. The Bible says, "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). And listen to the admonition of the Apostle Paul, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:9-10). If a person has those few verses memorized, when he is tempted to get his eyes on the dollar sign, the Holy Spirit has a powerful warning device to remind him of the danger of his ways.

Scripture memory helps us be encouragers. We all need encouragement from time to time. And the problem is that the people who need a word of encouragement are not always sitting in my study where I have various translations of the Bible and devotional books from which I could read an appropriate paragraph. No, all too often those people are out there in the hurly burly of life, and if I am to share a word from the Lord it will have to be a memorized word.

A few weeks ago I met a man and his wife who were in a ministry to children. They were discouraged, downcast, and tired, and they wondered if they were doing any good. I reminded them that today there is an army on the march that will -- should the Lord tarry -- eventually take over every seat in the Supreme Court, every seat in the House of Representatives and Senate, every pulpit in the land, every judge's bench, the presidency of the United States, and will become chief executive officer of every corporation in America. That army is called children. And the kind of world they make will be determined by the kind of job we do in teaching them. I could see my friends pepping up a bit, as they realized afresh the importance of their work. As we talked the Lord brought to mind Galatians 6:9, "And let not us grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." When we parted I could see that the Spirit of God had used His Word to encourage them.

The Method of Scripture Memory

We've just looked at good reasons to begin the practice of Scripture memory. We've considered the why. Now let's look at the how.

Determine to do it and set a goal to shoot for. I like to begin my stated goal with the words, "By the grace of God, I will." For me that takes it out of the realm of human endeavor and declares my dependence on God. By the grace of God I will have the eleventh chapter of the Book of Hebrews memorized by the end of summer. Or, by the grace of God I will memorize two verses each week until Christmas. Pray for God's help. Remember the promise, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Memorize the verses word perfectly. It is helpful if you memorize from the same translation you use for your daily reading. Select a good, clear, accurate translation and memorize the verses exactly as they are written. In his commentary on the Sword of the Spirit, in Ephesians 6:17, R.C.H. Lenski sets forth a strong and convincing argument for memorizing "word perfectly." He points out that the Word of God is powerful because it is the very utterance of God. It is the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It is the Sword of the Spirit that is so deadly in striking down the foe of God and of man. He then goes on to say, "When we use it in our battle, we are to use it only as 'God's utterance.' Any alteration takes the power and the edge off this Sword." It is the Word of God that wins the victory over Satan. And if we alter that Word through sloppy and careless memory habits, we do so at our own peril.

Through careful memory and review, the Spirit of God will keep our verses sharp, as any good sword should be. Let us then be diligent to arm ourselves with the very Word of God in order that we might have this weapon of supernatural power available at a moment's notice.

Memorize Scripture during times that you normally waste. Early in my Christian life, I was taught to redeem the time in this way. Every day when I walked to work at the Sears store on Lake Street in Minneapolis, I carried my little Scripture memory verse pack with me. I would either spend the time memorizing a new verse or reviewing the verses I had already learned. Years later I found out that one of the most famous men who ever lived had the same practice. William Wilberforce (1759--1883) was a member of the House of Parliament and a prominent figure in London society. He devoted his life to the abolition of the slave trade and against strong opposition was eventually successful in passing a bill that outlawed slavery -- just three days before his death. During much of his life he lived with criticism, threats, and ridicule. But he had a practice that kept his mind at peace. In the midst of the storm and turmoil of a political crisis in 1819, he wrote in his diary -- "Walked from Hyde Park corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort."

Many have found it helpful for another person to listen to their Scripture verses to check them for accuracy. Scores of business and professional men phone each other long distance to make sure their memory partners are getting their verses "word perfect."

The Topical Memory System has proven to be a helpful tool for people all over the world, to get them started in Scripture memory. This system can be purchased at your local Bible bookstore.

Encouragement from the Word

As we close this chapter let's look at two passages of Scripture. The first is Proverbs 4:4, "He also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain My words; keep My commands, and live.' " These are important words from a father to his son. And they are even more important when they come from our Heavenly Father. We must retain His words by lodging them in our heart.

The second is Proverbs 4:20-21, "My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart." Here again we see that if it is important to heed the words of an earthly father, it is imperative that we do the same with the Word of God. In his commentary on this passage Matthew Henry said,

- We must have a continual regard to the Word of God, and endeavor that it may be always ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us to duty and danger; and therefore,
- We must receive them readily; "Incline thine ear to them (v. 20) humbly bow to them, diligently listen to them." The attentive hearing of the Word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped that those are resolved to do their duty who are inclined to know it.
- We must retain them carefully; (v. 21) we must lay them before us as a rule; "Let them not depart from thine eyes; view them, review them, and in everything aim to conform to them." We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man; "Keep them in the

midst of thine heart, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing.”
Let the Word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

Chap. 5 - Basic Ingredients for Spiritual Growth

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Scripture Memory Considerations

Most people who choose not to memorize Scripture, claim as their reason that they are not good at it, and just can't memorize things very well. So the question I always ask is this:

Will you ever be "good" at memorizing Scripture? For the huge majority of us, the answer is a resounding NO!! You will usually misquote or blank out or forget references or in some way goof up. So What!?! Why would you expect anything else? Tell me one other area of life where you are always perfect in your performance.

So, should you quit or give up memorizing because you aren't good at it, or it's too hard? Certainly not! It makes about as much sense as the following scenario...

Say that you work very hard at brushing and flossing your teeth; you are diligent, disciplined and consistent. Then you go to your dentist and he says you have a couple of cavities. Do you walk out of the dentist's office saying, "I quit. I give up. It's too hard. I'm obviously not very good at brushing my teeth, so I'm just not going to do it anymore"? Or do you go home and start working harder at keeping your teeth clean, even though you're not perfect at it, because you know how important it is?

Don't ever memorize Scripture because you're good at it – do it because the Holy Spirit leads you to, and because it is helpful to God's Kingdom work through you! And just maybe, God keeps it difficult on purpose, so that we won't be motivated by our talents or by our pride. And just maybe, it's pride that says I'm not going to do it because I can't be perfect at it.

If something is important to you, you *will* commit it to memory. So even if it's hard ... do it anyway! Hebrews 12:11 tells us that discipline is never pleasant at the time, but produces a great harvest later on. (A perfect verse to memorize as you begin this new habit.) Start memorizing now while you are young and you still have a young brain – the older you get, the harder you will have to work at it.

Where do you find verses to memorize? A great place to look for verses is during your Quiet Times and Bible studies, but there are many other avenues: sermons, podcasts, discipleship-group materials, or the Navigators' Topical Memory System. It is a good idea to keep a list of future Scripture memory verses that you can write down as the Holy Spirit leads you to them. Another great project is to memorize an entire passage or chapter.