

Scripture Memorization

A Joy to Share

by

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Scripture Memorization: A Joy to Share

Is the Lord encouraging you to begin memorizing His Word in its context—that is, not just a verse here and there, but building verses into chapters and chapters into books? Then you are in for an exciting adventure. There is living power and exhilarating joy in memorizing and meditating on God's very words. You will delight in absorbing God's pure truth into your thinking and into your daily life. It will feed your soul and bathe your spirit as nothing else can. You will get to know the Author in new and wonderful ways.

But, as you're looking forward to getting started yourself, you may want to invite some of your family and friends to come along with you. This little manual is to encourage you to do just that. A small informal get together provides a comfortable format for God's children to share Scripture they are memorizing and grow together? God can use you, yes you, to change lives and even destinies as you encourage and help others to begin what has been a life changing adventure for many.

Why is a Small Scripture Memorizing Group Important?

As we have encouraged God's children to memorize Scripture, we've found that there are several kinds of people in our audience. This is what our Lord referred to in Matthew 13:19-23 where He talks about the way seed responds when introduced into different kinds of soil.

In His illustration, the seed represents truth and the types of soil represent the different ways people respond when truth is presented to them. He says:

- 1. The seed that fell on the hard path represents those who hear the Good News about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches the seed away from their hearts.*
- 2. The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems . . .*
- 3. The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life . . . so no crop is produced.*
- 4. The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God's message and produce a huge harvest—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times as much as has been planted. (NLT)*

This is as it is with all truth. This describes what happens when Christians are challenged with the idea of starting to hide the precious seed of God's Word in their hearts, memorizing chapters and even books or as we say, memorizing Scripture in its full context.

1. Some people are not interested in memorizing Scripture because the enemy has closed their minds. The idea does not even penetrate their thinking and with no one to encourage them and/or emphasize its importance, the impact that this powerful application could have in their life is never given any serious thought.

2. Then there are those who are challenged to memorize in context *and receive it with joy. But like young plants in (rocky) soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but after awhile with no one to help or encourage it becomes a drudgery, and when the original excitement wears off, the whole idea is discarded.*

3. *The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the idea of memorizing God's Word in context, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life . . . so no crop is produced.* These are people who start out with great excitement and enthusiasm but other things start taking priority and soon it is all lost in the agenda of a busy day.

4. *The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God's message and produce a huge harvest—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times as much as has been planted.* These are people who have experienced the joy and the powerful impact that memorizing whole chapters of Scripture can have on their daily life as it nourishes their very soul and feeds their spirit.

These are people who are reaping a harvest in their own lives. But their harvest may be multiplied many times over as they are used to help, encourage and inspire others along the way.

You have, undoubtedly, heard the illustration of how a glowing ember stays hot as long as it remains in the fire with other burning coals, but if removed, it quickly cools. This is the way it is for some who begin memorizing Scripture. As long as they are with others who are like minded their enthusiasm is sustained, but they have difficulty standing alone. The "burning coals" of a support group often helps them to stay on course.

Whereas we are all responsible for our own actions as individuals, as Christians, we are also *our brother's keeper*. And if our brother, or sister, needs someone to come alongside, we should be there with encouragement and support. The glow and enthusiasm the Lord has given you about memorizing His Word is contagious and you can be a tremendous resource for Him to use in inspiring and helping others along the way.

So, why should **you** be interested in starting a small Scripture memorizing group? The illustration above reveals the overall thinking, but let's turn the diamond and examine some of its facets a little more closely.

1. As alluded to above, one of the important things in getting started to memorize Scripture is having someone to whom we can be accountable, someone to be excited with us, to encourage us if the going gets tough, someone to look out for us. A small group provides a place where each one encourages the others and everyone is more or less accountable to everyone else. A small group is also a place where you can bring your friends so they can see what a joy it is and how exciting it can be.

2. Another advantage of meeting in this way is the fellowship and bonding that naturally develops. This grows and becomes precious as everyone shares and grows together. It becomes a comfortable place to test and develop individual abilities to quote Scripture from memory as well as to help each other to keep focused.

3. There is great power and spiritual nourishment in hearing Scripture quoted from hearts in which the Lord is planting His Word. After meeting with a small group it occurred to me that I could read my Bible all afternoon and not receive nearly the nourishment that is mine when I just

spend a comparatively short time listening to the Word shared from the hearts of others—as well as having the privilege of sharing what I have learned with them. Time set aside to share Scripture becomes a great haven that is shielded from the cares and tears of the world. Few places are so protected and it is a special experience to be enveloped in pure truth for even a short period of time.

4. As those in your group become comfortable in sharing Scripture with each other, some of them will grow to the point where they'll be comfortable sharing it with others outside your circle, in their Sunday School Class, their Bible Study Group, in a church service or even at private dinners or in casual fellowship with family or friends. This often helps to awaken others to the realization of the joy and power there is in making God's word their own personal treasure.

5. These group meetings are also a time of nurturing in which those who come may grow into organizers and promoters, themselves. Some of them may reach a place where they are ready to branch out and start a group of their own.

The Lord may even inspire them (and/or you) to take a little bigger step and be willing not only to quote but to make presentations in other circles about the importance and joy of memorizing Scripture in its context. You may want to make yourselves available to address one of your church Bible Study groups or Sunday School classes, to even make a presentation in church or at a Christian conference. There is a great need to spread this message as far and as wide as is possible. And the Lord can use you to help make this happen.

6. In some of the larger churches we have today it is easy for people to get lost in the crowd. A small group helps them to relate in a more personal way. A small memorizing group could have a double impact on their lives. It could satisfy their desire for more fellowship while at the same time encouraging another important aspect of their Christian life, that of memorizing God's Holy Word and making it a practical part of their daily life.

7. We don't know what is ahead for us, but we do need to be prepared. We live in uncertain times. It could be very important for us to have God's Word stored in our hearts where no one can ever take it from us. We are looking for the Lord's imminent return *but should He tarry, and should the time come when your church is forced to go underground, small Scripture memorizing groups could well become the back-bone of the surviving body of believers.*

The Lord is always looking for willing hearts that are open to doing His work. One who is willing to help others get involved in memorizing His precious Word could be used to powerfully impact many lives.

What Qualifications are Important for one Starting a Scripture Memorizing Group?

Someone interested in starting a Scripture memorizing group must, of course, have a deep love for both the Living Word and the Written Word. He must know what it is to rely on God's Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom. He must have a love for people and a desire for God to use him in ministering to their needs. Beyond this, a contagious enthusiasm regarding the memorization of Scripture in its full context is a must. If this is you, you are armed and ready!

Perhaps the Lord has already started to prepare the way for your small Scripture memorizing group:

a) if you are experiencing the joy and power of God's Word as you have started to memorize it for yourself and this new delight is starting to spill over into the lives of others who are interested in knowing the secret of your new found joy.

b) if the Holy Spirit has stirred your heart through the inspiration of another of His servants, maybe while reading an article or our book, hearing a speaker and/or having contact with someone such as the person mentioned above, and even if you haven't actually begun to memorize for yourself, your excitement and enthusiasm in getting started is strong enough to inspire others.

We are finding more and more people, recently, who have been prompted by the Holy Spirit to start memorizing His Word in its full context without any outside urging or input. Some are even starting small groups on their own. God's Holy Spirit is obviously starting a grass roots movement in this direction and it is exciting to see it happen.

On the other hand, if you are aware of the importance of memorizing Scripture and you want to be used of the Lord to promote it, but you really aren't excited about it, then you're not quite ready to lead a group. To approach the memorization of God's Word as a duty or legalistic exercise would be very unwise. It would be best for you to ask the Lord to give you a zeal and excitement about His Word, to give you a "fire" with which to "ignite" others. Our book *The Sword! Scripture Memorization: A Must For Today*, might help you with this. It has been an inspiration to many and you can buy it or download it free of charge on this web-site. Or if you have the opportunity, you might also benefit from attending someone else's group for a time.

So, *who does the Lord use to start a small Scripture memorizing group?* Anyone who loves Him and is excited about memorizing His Holy Word; anyone who has a God-given desire to help others know the joy of memorizing Scripture, not just a verse here and there, but in its full context, building verses into chapters and chapters into books. Perhaps, if you look in the mirror you may see a good prospect.

*... the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to **shew Himself strong (to strengthen)** those whose heart is fully committed to Him. (II Chronicles 16:9, KJV/NIV)*

How Do I Get People To Come?

1. If the Holy Spirit has given you a burning desire to be involved in starting a Scripture memorizing group, continue to pray about it and have others pray with you

Pray that the Lord will work in the hearts of those He wants to be a part of your group and give them a hunger for memorizing His Word. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you to these people, open the way for you to share with them and give you the words that will speak to the needs in their life.

Be especially tuned in to new Christians. They often have a great appetite for spiritual nurturing. Memorizing the Word in its full context helps to satisfy this longing. Missionaries have reported

that when their new converts start memorizing Scripture in its full context, they have found that they grow more rapidly, spiritually, and become more quickly grounded in the faith than others.

2. If you are excited about memorizing Scripture, never fear, your enthusiasm will be contagious. Sincere people will see it, and probably already have, as the Lord is using you to open their eyes.

If you have already started to memorize, share with your family and friends how the Lord has been working in your life since He introduced you to this joy. Quote a passage or chapter of Scripture for them. Don't hesitate to quote to just one person if the Lord opens the way. And even dinners or social gatherings are a great place to introduce the idea to friends and family. If you yourself are just getting started, tell them about the things that helped you to see this need. Just spread the enthusiasm God has given you, everywhere you go. It is very contagious.

(Note: Your best response will be through personal contact, one on one. But it is good to also get the word out to the broadest audience possible to include others who might appreciate the opportunity of becoming involved.)

3. If you have memorized a chapter or reasonable part thereof, ask to quote it to your Sunday School class, Bible Study group, or any other Christian gathering in which you participate. Give them your testimony. Explain about your group and invite them to come and memorize along with you. Follow up on any who respond positively.

4. Your pastor may be willing to let you quote a chapter or passage of Scripture and/or make an announcement in a church service. Be sure to ask him how much time he would allow for you and be careful not to exceed it. Include a short testimony and invite anyone who is interested to meet with you after the service.

If the day and time have already been determined, have little handouts with this information and a simple map, if necessary, to give to those who respond. Also, be sure to get names and phone numbers so you can contact them to either arrange the time if that has not been set, or let them know if there is an unanticipated change in plans

5. You may be able to put an invitation in your church bulletin or newsletter or post it on bulletin boards.

If someone expresses concerns about their ability to memorize or inability to attend regularly, invite them to just come as they can and *enjoy*. Let them know that they are welcome to just come and be part of the group whether or not they choose to actively participate. (Although you will, of course, be praying that the Lord will "woo" them into more active participation.)

A word of caution: If you are not experienced in quoting in front of a group, be sure to practice ahead of time with friends or family. Quoting to a group is very different from doing it by yourself. I sometimes practice in front of a mirror when preparing for a public presentation.

Also, no matter how well you may know the Scripture, be sure to have someone ready to prompt you, or better still, have your Bible open in front of you. Even the most experienced professionals presenting a passage they have done many times, sometimes have to refer back to their text for a quick prompt.

When Should We Meet and How Often?

Here in the United States, women who do not work outside the home often like to meet in the morning. Career people usually meet in the evening or Sunday afternoon.

You may wish to start a group for families with children. (Be sure to clearly designate such a group as being "*for families*".) The ages of children involved would be a deciding factor in groups that include them. If you have Christian friends at your place of employment, you may even consider meeting during your lunch break.

Meeting once a week usually works well, then if someone misses it will only be for two weeks. If you meet every other week or less often, a person missing one session could easily forget or lose interest because the span of time between sessions would be too great.

Should We Serve Refreshments?

This is a matter of choice. You may opt to serve only a beverage. But if you decide on more, be sure to keep it simple (quick and easy). And alternating those responsible will take the burden off the hostess.

What Should Be The Order Of The Meeting?

Every group will take on its own "personality". Even the Scripture that is shared influences its character. As you get to know each other and begin to bond you will be able to tailor your agenda to accommodate your unique situation. And the Lord will give you wisdom as you seek His guidance.

Refreshments: If you have refreshments, it is best to serve them as the group is arriving. This provides an activity for those coming early and gives you an opportunity to introduce new comers during an informal time of fellowship..

Introductions: At your first meeting you will want to have everyone introduce themselves and include any aspect of their life that may apply or be interesting. You may have them include the aspect of whether they have memorized in context before and if so, perhaps, what they have learned. After your first meeting the introduction of visitors and new members will fall into your planned agenda.

It is a good idea to pass around a sheet of paper for everyone to put their name, address and phone number so you can contact them in case of an emergency or change in plans. At some point, you may want to make this list available to the entire group so they may contact each other if they so desire.

Prayer Time: In the beginning, and from time to time, you should explain the aspect of spiritual warfare and the importance for all to pray protection for themselves, their families and others in the group. (See *Spiritual Warfare* on page 8 of this manual.) Assure them that this will be an important part of their journey.

Because you will be bonding in different ways, it would be good to take brief requests that are heavy on the hearts of those present. Assuming each others burdens and holding them up in prayer will become a part of the spiritual battle you will be dealing with, as a group. The time you spend in prayer at your meeting will of necessity vary depending on the number of people present and the length of Scriptures shared.

Sharing: After prayer and quoting, as time permits, encourage members to share how the Lord has been blessing in this new venture. Be aware, however, that there are always some in every group who are very vocal while others may try to shrink into the background. Try to encourage those who are a little more timid while gently restraining those who may have a tendency to take over. Be careful, however, not to stifle enthusiasm. It is always exciting for everyone to hear how the Holy Spirit is working in the lives of fellow memorizers as they start experiencing the *power* of the Word influencing their thinking, their prayer life and their daily walk.

How long should the meeting be?

This should be discussed in your first time together. An hour and a half usually works well. But again, this will depend entirely on your group and when it meets. Custom, availability, powers of concentration, etc., should all be taken into consideration. You can always adjust the length, either way, as you progress.

Miscellaneous Tips:

1. Different people will arrive with different ideas of what to expect. It will be important for you to assure them that everyone will be encouraged to memorize in a manner and speed that is comfortable for them. Also mention that everyone will be selecting their own Scripture and should use the translation they prefer.

2. If someone needs help on what to memorize first, suggest that a shorter chapter works best, perhaps, Psalm 1, 23 or 121. (A workbook for these and other chapters can be purchased or downloaded, free of charge, from this web site.) A favorite chapter may work well. It is always revealing and a blessing to see how much more light the Holy Spirit is able to shine on Scripture that is memorized than when it is just read or even studied. And then, some may wish to start out by just refreshing their memory on passages they have learned in the past.

3. Be sure your group understands the importance of going slow. Sometimes it's easy for zeal to overpower reality, so watch for goals that may be overly ambitious. If someone boxes themselves into specifics of anticipated accomplishments and time frames, it could become more of a chore and less of a joy. And then, if they come up short, it could be very discouraging, seriously affecting what should be a positive, joyous experience.

4. Mention that it is not good to look at a chapter thinking, "I'm going to memorize this chapter". Suggest that it is best to look only at the first verse and think, "I'm going to memorize this verse." If it takes a day to memorize it, fine. If it takes a week, who cares. If it takes longer, no one is counting and no one is keeping track. It is much better to go slow and get a good grasp as you proceed rather than trying to rush through it and then, later, having it all crash in on you. You might want to point out that those who memorize fast tend to forget just as fast unless they maintain a vigorous review schedule.

People sometimes tell me, "I memorized a verse the other night and the next day I couldn't remember a thing." In their mind, they tried and failed and that is the end of their memorizing. Make sure it is understood that it takes time to establish a verse or portion of Scripture in our mind and it is important to constantly refer back to the text for help until it is accomplished. This, of course, takes longer for those taking their first memorizing baby steps and/or when they are a little further along in the journey of life.

5. It is important to emphasize that *it is not just getting to know the words that is important, it is getting to know the Author*. If someone just memorizes words, in a rote, legalistic manner, it may be a very dry, tedious process. Scripture should be approached with joy, excitement and enthusiasm realizing that the God of the universe has given us His Word to guide and bless. If this joy is not a part of their experience it would be good to make this a specific matter of prayer. Ask the Father to quicken their appreciation and appetite for His precious gift.

6. Sometimes people get discouraged if they have memorized only a verse or two when others have accomplished more. If this happens, be sure to emphasize that just one verse or two is more than they knew before. When someone tells me, "Oh, it takes me so long!" I often say, "That's great, because it means that the Holy Spirit has that much more time to impress His truth on your heart and mind."

7. Everyone should be encouraged to quote (or even read, if necessary) what they've been working on, be it little or much, whether it is something they are reviewing from the past or that is completely new to them. Sometimes people will write their verse(s) out on cards or pieces of paper, others just like to use their Bible. Be sure to encourage them to bring whatever it is they use, to look at the text as often as they need to and not to feel self conscious about doing so.

Be Prepared For Spiritual Warfare:

Whenever someone starts in the direction of spiritual advancement, the enemy is very aware. Starting a small Scripture memorizing group is a spiritual venture that must be guided and empowered by the Lord. It is very important that no one makes the mistake of trying to do it in their own strength because more than just *personal charm* and *powers of persuasion* are needed.

Trying to start a memorizing group simply with human wisdom and ability would be like someone who has never flown an aeroplane, trying to fly, impromptu, without an instructor. And, aside from the power and guidance needed for getting started, there is the added opposition that frequently surfaces when the god of this world becomes involved. You will need to be prepared for a war that is not waged against an enemy you can see, but with the unseen forces of darkness.

When you become involved in memorizing God's Word and especially when you are also encouraging others to do it, you can know that you will surely be targeted by an adversary that is shrewd and sinister.

The Word of God is the Spirit's Sword! *God's Word is a powerful, multipurpose weapon.* The Lord will use it to train and equip you and others for His army, to grow you, to stretch you, to correct you, encourage you, teach you, and empower you. No one knows the potential of God's Word memorized and branded on the hearts and minds of His people better than the evil one and he is not likely to stand by and let it happen without a struggle.

Be sure to bathe your group in prayer. Pray a hedge of protection around yourself and your family as well as those in your group. Also caution your members not to assume that this will be just a casual time of "fellowship". It will, indeed, be a special time of fellowship and learning, but where the Lord is blessing, the enemy will surely be at work. Point out that they are entering a "battle" zone and that they should be prepared for spiritual warfare. The Lord will be using you to guide them into spiritual territory they may never have explored before and in a way that is completely new to them.

Yes, we have a very powerful and ardent enemy, but praise the Lord, greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Rely solely on the One who *is able* (through *His* strength and direction) *to accomplish infinitely more* (in and through us) *than we would ever dare to ask or hope*. (Ephesians 3:20, NLT)

Other Sheep, in Another Fold:

What I am about to suggest may or may not be a possibility where you live. But I feel the Lord would have me include it. Opportunities will vary widely in different locations, cultures and countries. But, I believe. this booklet would not be complete if I omitted the possibility of reaching out beyond the comfortable confines of your church, beyond your circle of Christian friends and acquaintances to some that are often less attractive and less fortunate.

Prisons are a great wasteland where a captive audience longs for attention and where lives are waiting to be harvested for the Lord. Perhaps no one has more time to absorb God's Word into their thinking than a prisoner. No one needs the *renewing* of their minds more and the positive influence that only memorizing *pure truth* can give. This is a fertile field where Scripture memorizing groups have been used by the Lord in wonderful ways not only to encourage and help those who know Him but even to lead others into His kingdom.

If you have a prison or other needy institution near you, this may be an area where the Lord would have *you* channel some of *your* enthusiasm. But please proceed with caution. Be sure not to undertake such a venture without assurance from the Lord that this is His will for you. *Also, do not proceed without much prayer backing* and ***until/unless He gives you a partner to go with you***. He sent His disciples out by twos and for you to go into unfamiliar, enemy territory, alone, would be very unwise. If/When all is confirmed, make an appointment with the chaplain or appropriate person. Explain to him what you have in mind and find out what is required and how you should proceed.

Remember, Jesus had a tender heart for the needy, the sick and *those in prison*. In Matthew 25:34-40, He speaks about those *on His right* to whom He will say "*Come, you who are blessed by my father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world . . . I was in prison and you came to visit me . . . whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*" (NIV)

Conclusion:

This has been a smattering of suggestions, but only suggestions. The Spirit of Truth is your ever present teacher and guide. Seek His wisdom. But if we, as brothers and sisters in the ministry, can help or encourage in any way please give us this privilege.

If you let us know when you begin praying about starting your group we will be able to pray along with you.

Now,

. . . since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-2, NLT/KJV/NIV)

Registration for your Scripture Memorizing Group:

The Lord is laying it on my heart to start a Scripture memorizing group. Please pray for us and we will pray for you.

Date Started(ing) _____ Location of Group _____ Starting Attendance _____
Church Affiliated: Yes___ No___ Name of Church (if yes) _____
Name of Leader _____ Address/Street _____
City _____ State _____ Country _____
Zip _____ Phone (____) _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Your Church Affiliation _____
(Optional)

Comments/Special Prayer Requests/Praises _____

(Please use the back if needed)

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